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From Bandung to NAM: Non-alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65

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ABSTRACT   *This article seeks to clarify the relationship between non-alignment as the most distinctive feature of Indian foreign policy thinking during the Cold War and India's interest in helping form the non-aligned movement (NAM). Precisely because of the early success of its independent non-aligned policy, India's decision to join and help shape the non-aligned movement needs explaining. This article offers new historical evidence to argue that India's decision to associate with the non-aligned movement – and thereby turn away from the racialised legacy of the Bandung Conference – was driven by contingent political factors rather than the intellectual and moral superiority of non-alignment over racialism.*

Non-alignment is most often represented as either a counter-hegemonic critique of contemporary world order or a rhetorical justification for the maximisation of national interest, both plausible descriptions of India's foreign policy behaviour at certain moments during the last 60 years (Bajpai, 1983; Mohan, 2003).[1] The former viewpoint understands non-alignment as a product of the 'Gandhian' legacy in Indian foreign policy, the moral force of a political subjectivity grounded in non-violent struggle, and draws a direct line from the anti-colonial struggle to independent India's foreign policy worldview (Mishra & Narayan, 1981). While seeing non-alignment as the natural outcome of a moral critique of power politics is effective in explaining, for example, India's long-standing and principled position

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against South African apartheid, its starring role in the Korean war armistice commission, and early efforts to reduce the global threat of nuclear weapons, it is less effective in explaining India's close relations with and support for the Soviet Union from the early 1960s onward, not to mention other, less consequential, inconsistencies through the decades of the 'short' Cold War.

Of even more concern from an historical standpoint ought to be the habitual representation of non-alignment as a novel set of ideas filling a policy vacuum that coincided with Indian independence. All too often it appears as if non-alignment emerged fully blown from the collective minds of Nehru, Nasser and Tito in Brioni in 1956.[2] If we take non-alignment seriously as a foreign policy that became dominant at a certain moment, at the very least we need to specify also what went before it, what it replaced, and how this process took place.

More recently, it has become fashionable to treat non-alignment as nothing more (or less) than the rational outcome of a calculated approach to maximising national interests in a context shaped above all by Cold War bipolarity (first argued by Rana, 1969). By this logic, a policy of non-alignment was the best way of gaining leverage, especially economic, from competing superpowers seeking to attract newly independent countries to their side. While there are undoubtedly moments in the history of Indian foreign policy when the appearance of such a fence-sitting strategy paid great dividends, it would be a considerable historical mistake to reduce the complex history of non-alignment to such a narrow, if omniscient, perspective. In particular, this line of argument would predict that a non-aligned India would never have joined a non-aligned grouping of countries. Rational calculation would assess that the uncertainties and costs of maintaining group cohesion of a heterogeneous and militarily weak group of countries in a highly unequal international system would far outweigh the benefits of going it alone – yet that is exactly what India did from 1955 to 1960, taking the lead in helping to create a bloc of countries that has both grown and nominally continued this identification to this day.

While this suggests that the core ideas constituting non-alignment were always more than merely rhetorical cover for the free play of national interests, more to the point is to propose that the analytic choice of rationalist versus ideational arguments in understanding the emergence of non-alignment – as a national policy and as a grouping of countries – does not take us very far. Starting from these concerns, this paper seeks to offer a historical understanding of India's policy of non-alignment in both senses, namely, the articulation of an individual foreign policy and the formation of a 'social movement' of non-aligned nations.

This explanation begins with the recognition that the ideas at the heart of non-alignment were already in circulation before the movement took shape,

and also that the non-aligned movement was not the first grouping of new nations founded around these principles. Abhorrence of racialism and demands for the end of colonial rule were, not surprisingly, among the most prominent principles shaping the foreign policies of postcolonial states (Jackson, 1993). A direct extension of these concerns, for Asian countries, was the demand for a place at the negotiating table on issues of regional relevance, for reasons of self-interest and as at least partial evidence of the democratisation of a historically unequal international system (Boquérat, 2005). From these demands comes postcolonial Asia's long-standing insistence on the norms of non-interference in internal affairs and mutual respect for the sovereignty of all countries.[3] The first objective of this paper, hence, is to locate the emergence of non-alignment in relation to the international circulation of ideas critical of the prevailing status quo.

Non-alignment has also to be understood in relation to the organisational history of new countries seeking a voice in the international system, the second objective of this paper. The views of the soon-to-be newly independent world acquired their first collective expression at the Asian Relations Conference, held in Delhi in April 1947. The power of these emerging international norms were further buttressed by efforts at the United Nations to protest at the genesis of the apartheid system in South Africa from 1946 to 1948, the 19-country conference seeking to free Indonesia from Dutch rule in 1949, and the creation of the 'Colombo Powers' – a group of independent Asian countries consisting of Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan. A contradictory combination of increasing efficacy and continued exclusion from the inner circles of the international community led the Colombo Powers to propose holding a major international conference of the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. This conference would be held in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955 (Abdulgani, 1981; Appadorai, 1955; Barnett, 1955; Kahin, 1956; Mackie, 2005; Romulo, 1956; Wright, 1956). For many observers, Bandung represents the first step in the eventual formation of the non-aligned movement.

However, in sharp contrast to the postcolonial considerations shaping earlier efforts at producing joint multilateral action, the first non-aligned conference held in Belgrade in 1961 was composed of a diverse group of countries from Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe whose primary point of agreement was the dangers of the Cold War and the collective need to act to reduce world tensions (Crabb, 1965). The distance between Bandung and the first non-aligned conference can be seen in terms of their intellectual content, the considerably different set of participants at each event, and the degree to which the superpowers sought to influence their outcomes. From this standpoint, the movement from Bandung to the first non-aligned conference would appear to represent policy rupture

(rather than continuity), summarised as the end of the colonial legacy in foreign policy decision-making and the rise of an alternative conceptual frame that took as its first priority the need to overcome the bipolar division of the world.

For Indian foreign policy, this historical moment maps onto the emergence of non-alignment as the preferred description of its 'grand strategy' and, simultaneously, as the moment when its leadership in the non-aligned movement appears least contested. Rather than accepting either this narrative of a linear progression of ideas or seeing the rise of Indian influence as a natural outcome of its past leadership of the postcolonial world, this paper explores the circulation and contest of critical ideas, and the history of group formation among the military weak states of the international system, to identify the contingent political reasons for the privileging of non-alignment in Indian foreign policy. In other words, this is an effort at giving both ideas and material interests their proper due in explaining transitions in foreign policy thinking.

The first two sections of the paper explore two aspects of the colonial legacy on foreign policy. The first section demonstrates the hold of racially defined 'civilisational' thinking on Asian elites at the moment of political independence, views that mimicked but did not go beyond Western colonial thought. The second section of the paper discusses the divisive effects of Cold War alliances on the internal dynamics of the Bandung Conference, indicating the limits of a common colonial experience in effecting multilateral agreement. Together these sections propose that the colonial legacy was unable to offer either a coherent conceptual grid – due to its inherent racialism – or basis for multilateral agreement – due to Cold War pressures – for newly independent countries like India. The functional inadequacy of this legacy did not mean, however, that such a way of thinking or of identifying would simply go away.

The third section outlines the distinctive elements of what would become the non-aligned perspective and critique of Cold War power politics, and reiterates the centrality of sovereignty and independence from that perspective. The final section explores the contingent political reasons for the eventual displacement of a racialised approach to international relations by the policy of non-alignment through an examination of India's behaviour during preparatory meetings for a proposed 'second Bandung' conference. By exploring the historical record of India's involvement with international gatherings critical of the status quo, this paper shows that the institutionalisation of non-alignment as Indian foreign policy was the contingent outcome of a sophisticated analysis of world order as well as the difficult political choices facing a leadership that was very much on the defensive in contemporary regional affairs during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Race and Civilisation in Postcolonial International Relations

> [In South Africa] I was – that is my countrymen were – in a hopeless
> minority; not only a hopeless but a despised minority. If the Europeans
> of South Africa will forgive me for saying so, we were all *coolies*. I was
> an insignificant *coolie* lawyer. At the time, we had no *coolie* doctors. We
> have no *coolie* lawyers. I was the first in the field, nevertheless a *coolie*.
> (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Asian Relations Conference)

The importance of the Asian Relations Conference in helping mark the trans-
formation of Asia from a congeries of colonial empires into the modern world
of independent nation-states cannot be overstated.[4] The conference was organ-
ised by a private membership-based council, the Indian Council of World
Affairs (ICWA) in April 1947, with the full support of the Indian government.
Although sovereign political independence was still a few months away, the
interim government of India was under the control of the Indian National Con-
gress party, led by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru appears to have been thinking of
such an event as early as December 1945 (Shiva Rao, 1945; Asian Relations,
1948: 2). The choice of the ICWA as the official sponsor of the event was
largely window-dressing, reflecting the ambiguity of whether or not India was
a full member of the international community at the time. In fact, Nehru and
other members of the Congress party were intimately involved in all aspects
of the organisation of the event, from the invitation of delegates to the choice
of the wall mural behind the speaker's dais (Asian Relations Conference, 1948).

   The political sequestration of Asia due to imperial divisions was the
premise that generated the desire for such a conference: as Nehru would put
it the people of Asia hardly knew each other:

> India has always had contacts and intercourse with her neighbour
> countries . . . With the coming of British rule in India these contacts
> were broken off and India was almost completely isolated from the
> rest of Asia. . . . This Conference itself is significant as an expression
> of that deeper urge of the mind and spirit of Asia which has persisted
> in spite of the isolationism which grew up during the years of European
> domination. (Asian Relations, 1948: 23)

Efforts to overcome enforced isolation, to get to know one another better and
thereby to forge a common platform for dialogue, inevitably foregrounded two
closely related terms, 'Asia' and 'civilisation'.

   The concept of civilisation was a crucial plank in the retrospective ideological
justification of colonial rule (Gong, 1984; Said, 1993). By imagining and affirm-
ing a global hierarchy of civilisations and their corresponding values, colonial

apologists could argue that illiberal rule in European colonies was permissible due to the primitive condition of colonial subjects (Mehta, 1999). The evasions necessary in order to sustain this set of contradictory arguments are now well known; they hardly need be rehearsed here (Grovogui, 1996; Persaud & Walker, 2001). What is more important for our purpose is to remember that the power of this worldview, and the reliance on civilisational categories for understanding global differences, was not restricted to Europeans alone. Generations of local political elites in the colonies had grown up internalising these categories and they remained potent means by which to understand the world.

The rewriting of 'civilisation' and its conversion from a source of domination to a means of political empowerment remains one of the outstanding achievements of Mohandas Gandhi, the Indian political leader (Brown, 1989). If, on the one hand, Gandhi sought to shock his international audience at the Asian Relations Conference by using, in a highly public and respectable forum, the hated word *coolie*, by the same token he reminded those listening, particularly but not only Europeans, that they were the ones to establish its meaning and hence bore no small responsibility for making South Africa's Indians 'hopeless' and 'despised'. On the other hand, the public use of the word, and its repetition in front of such an august audience, helped begin to take away the horror of the word 'coolie' (Fanon, 1967). With every use and re-use of the word, its power diminished, its stigma weakened, and its effect lessened: eventually, those speaking it were 'coolies' no longer.

Gandhi was hardly the only one using such a rhetorical strategy at the conference, even if he may have pushed it to the limit. The reversal of familiar racial hierarchies, especially around the trope of civilisation, recurred in the opening speeches of delegates from across Asia. The charge in their statements was directed, in the first instance, against the European colonial rulers of Asia. Framing most speeches, however, was the concern to go beyond the purely antagonistic in order to establish the terms on which Asian civilisational difference would first be established and, second, shown to be superior to the European.

The most common means to establish Asian difference was the evocation of a universal spiritual register. In speech after speech, the sign 'Asia' was typically identified as the zenith of the world's moral and ethical intellectual thought, especially during a past Golden Age when Asian thinking set the world's moral standards. For instance, the Chinese scholar and Guomindang (KMT) official, Dr. Tai Chi-T'ao would remind his audience that Asia, uniquely among world regions, had been the origin of the great religions and saints. Also, he noted, their teachings addressed the world as equals, 'free from … national and racial discrimination'. Likewise, the Indian philosopher S. Radhakrishnan also reaffirmed the unique cultural and spiritual contributions of Asia, but went further. In his speech he stressed the

self-aggrandising tendencies of European claims to civilisation, which were always framed as superior to other world regions: 'In Europe, when the Greeks were preeminent, they thought that all non-Greeks were barbarians and fit to be treated as slaves only' (Asian Relations, 1948: 64–67).

Such arguments followed a position first articulated in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, which equated European civilisation with the excesses of technological modernity, and arguing that modern technology had caused Europe to lose its collective soul (Gandhi, 1997: 34–111). If the West had historically dominated Asia by assigning it the space of mystical other-worldly and impractical knowledge, in contrast to their own material superiority and knowledge of physical sciences, Asians now responded by asking, what had that led to? Asian knowledge, it was proposed, was the only solution to the global political disorder that European domination had led to and, in sharp contrast with European methods, this knowledge would be offered to the world without conditions, reflecting its ontology as universal patrimony.

This discursive rewriting of the hierarchy of world civilisations during the Asian Relations Conference was a means of establishing the right of Asia to be politically free. But it was not merely a rhetorical device to be used and dropped when circumstances changed. The logic of civilisational thinking had sunk deep into the minds of Asian elites, as is most clearly demonstrated in a telling comment on the condition of Asia's own civilisational Others, i.e., 'backward' and 'indigenous' peoples. Reporting on discussions in Group B, the conference proceedings note:

> The Group finally discussed the problem of *indigenous* and *backward* populations . . . Some backward tribes had already been assimilated into the local communities, others were in the process of assimilation, and some still remained *untouched by civilisation*. A scientific study of these people was advocated with a view to finding out how and why the aboriginal tribes had remained *primitive in the midst of civilisation*. International cooperation seemed to be called for in handling the problem of backward and tribal people. (Asian Relations, 1948: 98, italics added)

Discussing this aspect of the report in the group plenary, the well known Indian scholar, administrator, and diplomat, K.M. Pannikkar, would point out that 'these people', also known as 'backward tribal communities' were 'distinct from the rest of the population' not due to 'political development, nor to administrative arrangements', but 'owing to their age-old cultural and racial isolation. Their assimilation to the standards of advanced civilisation was by no means easy and could not be left to chance' (Asian Relations, 1948: 101).

The irony of discussing, in words that could have been taken directly from the mouths of much-reviled European colonial administrators referring to

Asia, the 'problem of indigenous and backward populations' seems to have been completely missed by the conference delegates. Castigating European arrogance in one session, and turning around and using the same language and approach when speaking of 'these people ... untouched by civilisation' in another, demonstrates vividly how deeply European ideas of racial and civilisational superiority had become a part of the Asian elite worldview. Gandhi's strident remonstrations notwithstanding, Europe's victory in this regard would remain a characteristic feature of postcolonial thinking across Asia.

This slippage should not come as a surprise. Modern Asian elites had long been steeped in the knowledge-systems of Europe: indeed, such expertise was a condition of having political voice and being taken seriously within colonial societies. Hence, that Asian elites would adopt and internalise the tacit and explicit conditions of distinction embedded in authoritative social and political institutions is to be expected. Asian articulations of their own difference worked by inverting the familiar hierarchy, but were not able to transcend it, as Gandhi among others would have hoped. This new articulation did little more than relocate Asian civilisation in global hierarchies, seeking to make it pre-eminent rather than subordinate; it did not go further and offer a critical appraisal of the idea of civilisation. The limits of such thinking, epitomised by the low esteem indigenous people were held in, show that Asian elites were not able to think *outside* the category of race and civilisation as a way of identifying and marking their social and cultural boundaries. Even as they sought to go beyond colonial categories, we find Asian elites had internalised entirely the racial logics through which the world was seen and its hierarchies naturalised, a practice that would have important implications for foreign policy decision-making.

The Asian Relations Conference would end on a high note. Delegates returned to their homes with a strong sense of the historic nature of the meeting, far more aware of their newly discovered neighbours and their mutual concerns, and conscious of the range of political and economic difficulties that free Asian countries would soon have to come to terms with. A sense of confidence and hope about the future suffused the meeting and later memories of it, though in historiography it was soon overwhelmed by the Bandung Conference. At a more practical level, assembled delegates were unanimous that the age of colonial rule was over, and collectively affirmed the illegitimacy of such political arrangements in this new era of national sovereignty.

The Limits of Racialism

'I think that the Asians and the Africans are trying to gang up on the Western world', a young woman, a journalist, told me. (Wright, 1956: 16)

Indonesian president Sukarno's eloquent speech opening the Asian–African conference on 18 April 1955 expresses continuities with the spirit underlying the Asian Relations Conference while also acknowledging significant changes that had taken place since 1947. In the latter part of his speech, the practical problems of international relations make their appearance, notably Asia's lack of military power and, hence, its limited international influence. Notwithstanding this lack, he proposed, Asia had achieved remarkable successes due to an effective exhibition of joint action by the Colombo Powers. These actions, he argued, were entirely driven by an enlightened self-interest; furthermore, these actions were necessary due to the interdependence of all world regions.

> In this struggle, some success had already been scored. I think it is generally recognised that the activity of the Prime Ministers of the Sponsoring Countries which invited you here had a not unimportant role to play in ending the fighting in Indo-China. ... It was no small victory and no negligible precedent! The five Prime Ministers did not make threats. They issued no ultimatum, they mobilised no troops. Instead they consulted together, discussed the issue, pooled their ideas, added together their individual political skills and came forward with strong and reasoned suggestions which formed the basis for a settlement of the long struggle in Indo-China. ... The days are now long past when the future of Asia can be settled by other and distant peoples. ... However we cannot, we dare not, confine our interests to the affairs of our own continent. The states of the world today depend one upon the other and no nation can be an island unto itself. ... The affairs of all the world are our affairs, and our future depends upon solutions found to all international problems, however far or distant they may seem. (Indonesia, 1983: 8–9)

Military weakness and global interdependence, themes that would become the hallmark of the non-alignment movement, soon lost ground, however, against the backdrop of battles fought by Cold War allies and clients during the Banding Conference. Nowhere was the influence of the Cold War on Asian relations better illustrated than in the heated debate that broke out in the conference's Political Committee discussions on 21 April 1955. This committee was where the conference heavyweights were to be found. The day before, discussion on the Palestine issue had already shown some fracture among the assembled delegations, with Arab countries demanding nothing less than a complete condemnation of Israel and Zionism, while Burma and India sought to dilute the proposed resolution, arguing that there was little point in making resolutions over issues that they could have little influence over.

On the afternoon of 21 April, the issue under discussion was Racialism, which would have been among the items least expected to cause serious dissension among the Asian–African delegates. This was, at least, until the impetuous and blunt Prime Minister of Ceylon, and one of the conference organisers, Sir John Kotelawala, requested permission to speak:

> There is a further aspect of the question of colonialism which I would like to go into. All of us here, I take it, are against colonialism. ... But let us be equally unanimous and equally positive in declaring to the world that we are unanimous in our opposition to all forms of colonialism and in our determination to take decisive and expeditious action to wipe out all forms of colonialism throughout the entire world. ... Colonialism takes many forms. The first and most obvious form is Western colonialism ... There is another form of colonialism however about which many of us represented here are perhaps less clear in our minds and to which some of us would perhaps not agree to apply the term colonialism at all. Think, for example, of those satellite states under Communist domination in Central and Eastern Europe – of Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland. Are not these colonies as much as any of the colonial territories in Africa and Asia? And if we are united our opposition to colonialism, should it not be our duty openly to declare our opposition to Soviet colonialism as much as to Western imperialism? (Bandung Conference, 21 April 1955: M2, M3, 1)

According to Kotelawala, considering these questions were crucial if the conference was to be taken seriously on the question of colonialism, in order to produce a statement that Afro-Asian countries had no extra-territorial ambitions 'upon our neighbours and no intention and desire at any time to impose our own institutions and way of life upon peoples of a difference language or race or religion'. This reasoning was peculiar to say the least, given the mention of specific countries in the Soviet bloc, as none of the countries at the conference shared borders with them. For listening delegates, such a statement could only be directed at India, Ceylon's large and threatening neighbour, or Communist China, an abiding concern for many of its neighbours. Not surprisingly, Zhou Enlai was the first to respond, and sought the right to respond to Kotelawala's statement the next day, as soon as he had had a chance to read the transcript of the remarks.

The political committee was thrown into disarray by this intervention. Initially, the content of the speech was not at issue. Rather, discussion centred around trying to find an appropriate place on the agenda to include it. Nehru, with the help of the Indonesian chairman, tried to scuttle this line of

argument on procedural grounds, noting that the issue of Soviet domination was not on the agenda. They were faced with immediate opposition from Fatin Rustu Zorlu, Deputy Prime Minister and head of the Turkish delegation, who used the occasion to say, 'I listened with great interest to the speech of the Prime Minister of Ceylon. He said that communism was a new form of imperialism. I was very pleased indeed to hear his speech' (Bandung Conference, 21 April 1955: 1A). He would go on to insist that the discussion on this issue begin at once and not wait for later, as proposed by the chair. This view was quickly supported by Charles Malek of Lebanon, 'I think the themes raised in the speech we have just heard are more important than the things we have been taking up today' (Bandung Conference, 21 April 1955: 2). With this support, Kotelawala would claim that his comment fell under the agenda item on 'dependent peoples'. India would bitterly disagree with this categorisation, noting that the discussion could 'not run around the world' and talk about everything from 'the sun and the moon' (Bandung Conference, 21 April 1955: 2–3).

When the discussion resumed the next morning to take up the issues raised by Kotelawala, Burma was the first to speak. Premier U Nu, appealing for unity, requested the Prime Minister of Ceylon to withdraw his statement, in order for the conference to proceed without a 'battle of diatribes' (Bandung Conference, 22 April 1955: M1). Kotelawala replied, disingenuously, that his comment only reflected his concern about 'the degree of independence of those [Eastern European] countries' (Bandung Conference, 22 April 1995: 1) Zhou Enlai spoke next, in a conciliatory tone. After noting that his objective was to seek 'agreement and harmony' and not to get into arguments about ideologies, he rejected the suggestion by Kotelawala and his supporters that Eastern Europe represented a 'new' form of colonialism, and proposed instead to restrict the discussion to the Asian–African region.

Pakistan followed. Prime Minister Mohammed Ali returned the conversation directly to the contentious issue. Supporting entirely the view expressed by Kotelawala, he noted, 'it would be wrong and unrealistic on our part to ignore or make no mention of another form of imperialism, namely Soviet Imperialism'. He quickly added that this criticism applied only to the Soviet Union. 'China is by no means an imperialist nation and she has no satellites' (Bandung Conference, 22 April 1955: M1). For consistency, he argued, the Soviet Union should be condemned, along with France and other 'old' colonial powers. Pakistan was followed, in short order, by Iraq, Turkey, and Iran, all in support of this view. India responded vehemently, arguing that these concerns were not appropriate for the conference for a variety of reasons. Eventually only Syria would join India, Burma and China in their vocal opposition. None of the latter group tried to defend the Soviet Union's alleged behaviour, but instead offered their objections on the principle of not weakening the unity of the conference by raising divisive issues.

The correspondence of views between Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran was not a surprise. All were members, along with Great Britain, of the recently formed Baghdad Pact, which would become the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), promoted by the United States for the containment of the Soviet Union. Clearly, the four had coordinated their viewpoints and had agreed to use this opportunity to criticise the Soviet Union. Their intervention would also act to deflect the widely expressed concern that Asians and Africans, the coloured world, were 'ganging up on the Western world' and that this meeting would inevitably become a stalking horse for condemnation of the West (Espiritu, 2006).

What is more surprising is that this entire discussion was set off by Ceylon, which was not a member of a Western alliance. Having made this initial statement, Kotelawala, described by Indian ambassador to Indonesia Badruddin Tyabjee as representing a combination of 'bluster and bathos', would explain the next morning that he sought only to discuss the position of 'dependent peoples' and not make a statement on 'political ideologies'. As one of the organisers, he added, it could hardly be his intention to subvert the conference. Ultimately, the reason for this intervention can be attributed to the strong anti-Communist views of the Prime Minister, who appears to have decided to make this point on his own initiative, on the spur of the moment, without preparing his fellow national delegates and in the interests of capturing the headlines (Kotelawala, 1956). In the end, the Soviet Union would not be condemned by name: the compromise language that appeared in the final conference declaration referred only to 'colonialism in all its manifestations'.

However, the rot had set in. Speaking later that day in the session on 'world peace and cooperation', the Indian Prime Minister proceeded to castigate, directly and by name, the countries that had promoted the attack on the Soviet Union. Nehru particularly attacked them for their membership in 'pacts' – alliances – 'that have been organised in Western and Eastern Asia'. According to him, 'every pact has brought insecurity and not security to the countries that have entered into them'. He added:

> I am afraid of nobody. I suffer from no fear complex; my country suffers from no fear complex. We rely on nobody except the friendship of others; we rely on ourselves and none others [*sic*]. . . . Am I to lose my freedom and individuality and become a camp follower of others? I have absolutely no intention of doing that.

And, if that were not enough:

> If I join any of these big groups I lose my identity: [if] I have no identity left, I have no views left. I may express it here and there generally, but

I have no views left. . . . It is an intolerable thought to me that the great
countries of Asia and Africa should come out of bondage into freedom
only to degrade themselves and humiliate themselves in this way. Well,
I do not criticise these powers. They . . . know what is best for them-
selves. (Bandung Conference, 22 April 1955: 1–13)

The tenor of Nehru's speech and its overripe condemnations led to
considerable anger among the targeted delegates. Pakistan reacted to these
insults with fury. 'We do not have to justify our actions either to the Prime Min-
ister of India, or for that matter, any other nation. Pakistan is a sovereign and
independent nation' (Bandung Conference, 22 April 1955: 5). Turkey and Iraq
were more temperate in their responses. Lebanon, not a member of a pact, but
closely aligned with the West, commented unfavourably on 'occult meanings'
in Nehru's speech and pointed out that more than half the countries sitting
around the table were members of one bloc or another, including the British
Commonwealth. General Carlos Romulo of the Philippines, a member of the
pro-US Manila Pact (later, South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO)),
and fully expected to defend the US during the conference said, 'We would
[have] much preferred [the speech] however, if there was less heat and less
dogma in his statement'. Following some caustic remarks on the extent of mili-
tary spending in India and Pakistan, he went on to argue that small countries had
different needs than large ones like India, and that the Manila Treaty was first
defensive in nature, and second in complete conformity with the principles
expressed in the United Nations Charter on the right to self-defence. In other
words, this pact was a force for peace in the region, the exact opposite of what
was suggested by Nehru (Romulo, 1956).
   The lines had been clearly drawn. Even as delegates would find common
ground on a number of issues, especially criticism of European colonialism
and racialism as a world phenomenon, there was little agreement on the
meaning of military and security threats facing each country and the world
and appropriate responses to them. The strains of organising collective inter-
national action based on assumptions about race, history and geography –
these countries' common experience of colonialism and proximity to each
other – had come out into the open. In less than a decade since the Asian
Relations Conference, and following political independence for much of
Asia and the Arab world, the hope for common action from the coloured
world appeared to have given way under the pressure national self-interest.
   Policies based on the commonalities of experience did not disappear at
once, of course. The unanimous final Conference Declaration is testament
to the abhorrence of colonialism 'in all its manifestations'. Specific struggles
in South Africa, West Irian (Papua), Yemen, Palestine, and French North
Africa, were mentioned as prime examples of this anachronistic political

condition. The unequal conditions characteristic of the contemporary international community, reflected in the difficulty of countries like Japan, Ceylon, Jordan and Libya, among others, of gaining entry into the United Nations, came in for justified criticism. The scourge of nuclear weapons was agreed to be of the greatest importance, and the desirability of their prohibition and the need for general disarmament strongly encouraged (Indonesia, 1983: 137–144). Yet, and especially once the anodyne opening statements were dispensed with, the primary discursive theme of the Asian Relations meeting, namely the common civilisational ethos and a distinct approach to international relations based on Asian traditions of tolerance, was strikingly absent from the discussions at Bandung. At the Bandung Conference, political considerations reigned paramount; culture appeared to be banished to the sidelines.

As the minutes of the Afro-Asian meeting show in great detail, mutual disagreements were rife, dislike of particular individuals strong, and the possibility of a breakdown in consensus always present. That it did not break down was, in the retrospective assessment of one of the main organisers, among its greatest achievements. Nehru would write to Sir John Kotelawala in December 1955 explaining why holding another Asian–African conference was premature: 'The Bandung Conference created a very good effect not only in Asia but all over the world. *This effect was largely due to the unanimity of the final decisions arrived at*' (India, 1955, italics added). In other words, a mere six months after the end of a conference hailed for its great success, a very different reading was being offered of the meaning of that success. Reflecting a more sober assessment of the achievements of the conference, it was now realised that the danger of a break in the consensus had been so high that its absence was among the greatest successes of the Bandung meeting.

A Struggle of Geopolitical Imaginings

The tensions among delegations were reflections of very different understandings of the significance of a newly won sovereignty and the nature of the international system (Brecher, 1968: 3–11). For those in agreement with Nehru's and Sukarno's views, the international system was understood in terms of global interdependence, rather than the Manichean oppositions typical of Cold War discourse. As early as the Asian Relations Conference, Nehru would argue,

> We cannot separate the fate of one nation from that of another today. [The world] acts and reacts on each other and if any person thinks that Asia is going to prosper in the future at the cost of Europe, he is mistaken, because if Europe falls it will drag Asia too with it. Or if Asia

remains fallen, undoubtedly it would drag Europe and other parts of the world with it. . . . You cannot have – it has long been said – a world part free, part slave. You cannot have a world part warring, part peaceful. . . . You are going to have either war or peace in the world, you are going to have either freedom or lack of freedom in the world. . . . You will not be able to end the conflicts of today unless you approach the problem from an entirely different viewpoint. (Asian Relations, 1948: 68–70)

Interdependence, in this context, did not mean merely enhanced interaction among independent countries. The recent experience of the Second World War had shown how a 'regional' conflict would be impossible to contain due to alliances and networks tying together far-flung places; further, the possible use of nuclear weapons in any future conflict would inevitably have a severe global impact. Interdependence was, in other words, a structuring condition of natural security. For Nehru, the idea of a fixed bloc of countries was both politically repugnant and strategically unwise. In the first place, membership in a bloc suggested the need to coordinate behaviour across bloc members even when self-interest would require other courses of action. This was unacceptable for a politically sovereign state (Nehru, 1958: 344–346).

But, further, Indian geopolitical logic also opposed blocs. In contrast to a perspective that focused on the dynamic relation of a centre and its peripheries, a geopolitical tradition that began with Halford Mackinder, the vision held by Indian elites drew instead on classical (Newtonian) mechanics and the idea of friction between moving objects. This alternative spatial model proposed that the likelihood of military conflict between belligerents would increase in the absence of any mediating force between them. What was needed was a buffer that would reduce international friction and allow for outcomes other than war. If every country in the world belonged to one or another bloc, the two opposing blocs would be in a constant state of tension and such a world would have too many points of possible friction. In order to prevent the Cold War from breaking out into a global military conflict, it was crucial that some countries remained outside the fray, unaligned with either side, precisely in order to provide that buffer zone within which inter-bloc friction could be dissipated. Formation of one's own bloc, hence, would not solve the problem but exacerbate it. As Nehru put it in the course of his long speech in the session on world peace:

If all the world were to be divided up between these two big blocs what would be the result? The inevitable result would be war. Therefore every step that takes place in reducing that area of the world which may be called the 'unaligned area' is a dangerous step and leads to war.

It reduces that objective, that balance, that outlook which other countries without military might can perhaps exercise. (Bandung Conference, 1955: 1–13)

This 'entirely different viewpoint' would not be greeted with favour in either Washington or Moscow, or by their Asian allies. With the superpowers busily seeking to line up the world on their side and on their terms, this kind of thinking smacked of neutralism at best, and outright opposition at worst. Policy planners were all too aware that in a highly fluid international system, with conflicts in Korea and Indochina holding the potential of becoming sites of confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, the political allegiances of Asian states with their huge populations would help shape the global balance of power decisively. The Soviets may have hoped to foster Asian allies through their acknowledged support for movements of national liberation, but regional anti-Communist sentiments would make this support difficult to convert into political capital. In the West, the implications of a postcolonial Asia were typically expressed in terms of the strategic costs of neutrality and the implications of an independent Asian geopolitical bloc. Neutrality, for fervent Cold Warriors like John Foster Dulles, was among the highest sins a state could aspire to. For him, not signing up as an ally of the United States was nothing more than a front for adopting policies opposed to US interests (Brands, 1990). But 'neutrality', if that is the correct term, was, from the Asian standpoint, all about protecting their newly acquired status of political independence and national sovereignty.

The problems of international relations in Asia, according to Nehru and others who took his lead, might be summarised as follows. First, Asia was the most likely place for the outbreak of war, as nuclear-armed superpowers directly confronted each other in two separate conflict zones. In an interdependent world, if conflict broke out, it would inevitably become global, putting paid to any hope of meeting national priorities of economic development and uplift. Second, reflecting anger at the historical exclusion of Asian countries from peace talks and negotiations in spite of their proximity to military threat – clearly a racial exclusion – there was an obvious need for Asia to take control of its own destiny. Third, all this had to be done without formation of a new bloc, or by adopting the patterns of Euro-American foreign policy thinking, as these were the historic factors that had led to these conditions in the first place.

What is remarkable about this formulation is how little it depended on the terms that had been established to mark Asian difference. Race and civilisation, once the dividing line between Asia and Europe, had dropped out of the narrative. Differences among countries assembled at the Bandung Conference are most clearly expressed in terms of their geopolitical imaginaries, and also,

perhaps, their size. As Romulo of the Philippines would affirm, the smaller countries of Asia, fearing neighbouring giants India and China, found it easier to imagine their security protected under the umbrella of the superpowers. Romulo was well aware that this position was not without domestic costs for its effect of diluting newly won sovereignty (Romulo, 1956). In other words, all of postcolonial Asia feared the loss of sovereignty and independence, and the return of neo-colonial subjection in international relations. However, only the larger countries had the means to resist it without resort to external allies.

Failure of the Second Asian–African Conference

A year after the Bandung Conference, a new political formation would establish its international presence. This arrangement would come to be known as the non-aligned 'movement' and stands today, along with the overlapping G-77 group, as the largest caucus of states within the United Nations. Structured by the desire to maintain a careful distance from superpower alliances in the interests of world peace, the movement of unaligned or non-aligned states would first take shape in a series of conferences that began with a meeting between Nehru of India, Nasser of the United Arab Republic, and Tito of Yugoslavia, in the town of Brioni in July 1956.

Initially, most political positions taken by the non-aligned movement were not that distinct from views outlined in the final declaration of the Bandung Conference, if expressed at greater length. What was different was the non-aligned analysis of the primary causes of world disorder, which identified that condition unequivocally in the struggle of the two superpowers for global dominance. If the Asian–African meeting sought to deploy the power of Moral Violence, as Sukarno put it, by expressing collective outrage at the continuation of discredited political systems and Asian exclusion from global decision-making, the non-aligned states sought to define a more active engagement with the international system in the joint pursuit of their individual and collective interests. Nehru's views expressed at Bandung and its later refinements now defined the terms on which the non-aligned states would seek to act to address the primary causes of global disorder; in the first instance by remaining outside superpower blocs, and eventually also by using their collective power to shape outcomes at the United Nations.

Even as these developments were taking place, the desire for another meeting of African and Asian states, a racially defined conference that was promptly dubbed a 'second Bandung', had not gone away.[5] This objective was promoted by Indonesia, China, and Pakistan. The three had developed close mutual ties since 1955, and by the early 1960s were going through a radical and aggressive phase in their foreign policies. In spite of foot-dragging

tactics by India, in particular, the momentum behind a second African–Asian meeting would finally lead to a preparatory conference in Jakarta in 1964.

India was deeply ambivalent about a second Asian–African meeting. For one thing, it would be a forum where India would have to confront China directly. In spite of their earlier good relations, China and India had fought a border war in 1962, in which India had come off very poorly. China, now a country that would gladly endorse the idea expressed at Bandung that the Soviet Union was an imperialist power, would undoubtedly seek to use this meeting to establish its primacy in Asia. India's ongoing dispute with Pakistan over the status of disputed Kashmir was also of deep concern. Pakistan, a strong supporter of a second Bandung meeting, had made clear that it would try and use this forum to promote the need for new and binding mechanisms outside the United Nations system to resolve international disputes. Clearly it had Kashmir in mind. Indonesia, led by an increasingly unstable Sukarno, was obsessed with *necolim* – neo-colonialism, colonialism and imperialism – the main cause, as they saw it, of injustice in the world. Indonesia was also aggressively moving – *Konfrontasi* – to block the merger of the British colonial enclaves of Sabah and Surawak located in northern Kalimantan (Borneo) with newly independent peninsular Malaysia (Guan, 2002: 111–128).

India had much to fear from association with this radical gathering. However, it was also an original member of the Colombo Powers and co-sponsor of the first Bandung Conference; it had a lot to lose by disavowing its own international legacy. Further, Indonesia was also manoeuvring to ensure that the second African–Asian conference was held before the second non-aligned conference planned for Cairo in October 1964 (Bandung Collection, 1964). Pre-emption would effectively dilute the importance of a forum in which India was an acknowledged leader and had far more invested in. Already weakened by its loss of face after the China war, India had few tools by which to stem its eroding position among its Asian–African peers. Potential Indian allies, Asian countries that had attended the Bandung Conference but had yet to recognise China, had been excluded from conference preparations. Under these difficult circumstances, Indian diplomats defined their immediate objective as seeking to undermine the Jakarta preparatory meeting as best they could, and without being too overt about it.[6]

The Indian delegation, led by Agriculture Minister Swaran Singh, arrived to 'a rather cool reception' in Jakarta. This first impression was reinforced by informal discussions with other delegations that were summarised as 'gloomy' and 'hostile'. Indian diplomats, hoping to assert their prestige by being the country to nominate the Indonesian Foreign Minister as chairman of the conference, found their efforts stymied, 'things had been pre-arranged

among Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Iraq and Pakistan' to allow China to take on that symbolically important role. India was reduced to seconding the motion 'without mentioning China's proposal' (Bandung Collection, 1964: 1–2). From the outset, matters seemed to be slipping beyond India's control.

Indian diplomats give credit for the turnaround in their fortunes to the opening speech by the head of the Indian delegation, Swaran Singh. Singh's speech contained three proposals which, taken together, constituted the heart of the Indian effort to subvert the meeting. First, he proposed inviting the USSR to the second African–Asian meeting, a proposal that was intended to strike directly at China's leadership ambitions. (During the working sessions, India would also propose inviting Malaysia to do the same for Indonesia.) Second, he proposed that this meeting be held on the tenth anniversary of the original Bandung meeting, a decision which, if accepted, would safely remove the conference from any proximity to the Cairo non-aligned meeting. Third, Singh proposed that the meeting be held in Africa, which was the last thing that Indonesia wanted.

The response to these proposals was gratifying from the Indian point of view. As the Ministry of External Affairs post-conference summary report puts it,

> [these proposals] seemed to have caused considerable disarray in the China-Indonesia-Pakistan camp. As the shrewd Yugoslav Ambassador at Djakarta observed, the proposal [to include the USSR] was of such immense consequence to China that from the moment it was made, [head of the Chinese delegation, Marshall] Chen Yi's entire attention would be concentrating on fighting it. (Banding Collection, 1964: 11)

India found it had considerable support, especially from African states, for two of its three proposals, namely to hold the meeting on the tenth anniversary of Bandung and to hold it in Africa. The question of invitations to the USSR and Malaysia was far more contentious, of course, but since the point of the proposals was first and foremost to muddy the waters, India had succeeded admirably.

The Indonesian chairman created a sub-committee comprised of nine countries to consider the proposal to invite the USSR, including Pakistan, Philippines and Indonesia, but not India. The sub-committee eventually agreed on language that stated: 'In the case of the USSR, after full discussion, no decision was reached', meaning that no invitation could be issued (Bandung Collection, 1964: 9–11). In the plenary session, India, ably supported by Ceylon (no longer led by Sir John Kotelawala), fought an intense procedural battle to prevent the USSR from being denied an invitation.

'After several hours of heated discussions, the following draft was agreed to as a compromise: "Some delegations supported and others opposed the proposal to extend an invitation to the USSR. ... Therefore, no agreement was reached"' (Bandung Collection, 1964: 11). By forcing a diplomatic stalemate, and altering the language of the statement, India was able to postpone a decision into the future, ensuring confusion and continued disagreement for some time to come. The Malaysian invitation similarly led to a considerable diplomatic struggle, with India pushing to make explicit the names of the countries that opposed its invitation. The final decision was to push the decision up the command ladder, and place it on the agenda of the forthcoming Foreign Ministers Meeting. With the support of the African states, India was able to win agreement for its proposal to hold the conference in Africa on the tenth anniversary of the original conference: the second Asian–African conference was scheduled to take place in Algiers in 1965. However, at the last minute, and for a variety of reasons, the meeting was cancelled with 'half of the forty two delegations ... already seated' (Pauker, 1965: 431). India had succeeded in its mission of preventing the second Bandung Conference from taking place.

Conclusion

This article clarifies the relationship between non-alignment as the most distinctive feature of Indian foreign policy during the Cold War and India's role and interests in helping form the non-aligned movement. The discussion is set against an appealing, if incorrect, genealogy of events that typically identifies the Bandung Conference as the founding moment in the formation of the non-aligned movement; it also questions the familiar formulation that a policy of non-alignment was the natural conceptual extension of the struggle for Indian independence from British rule. Both the novel ideas underlying non-alignment and the urge to create international formations that contested and questioned the prevailing status quo have histories that preceded the creation of the non-aligned movement. By offering a historical overview of Indian foreign policy, this article helps separate and clarify the intellectual origins of non-alignment as an idea, and the particular forces giving momentum to India's desire to join a non-racially defined group of countries that took as their starting point the insecurities produced by the Cold War.

This article uses India's undiplomatic behaviour during the Jakarta preparatory meetings for the 'second Bandung' Conference to illustrate the arguments outlined above. While India's territorial, ideological, and status conflicts with Pakistan, Indonesia, and China would appear to be sufficient reason for its 'spoiler' behaviour at Jakarta, this analysis shows how such a conclusion is far less productive than a reading which combines ideational and material

factors, while also giving each factor its respective historical due. By taking a longer view, and by setting these events in the context of the circulation of critical ideas and the history of multilateral gatherings of weak states, this article argues that the events surrounding the Jakarta preparatory conference are better understood in terms of the choice it finally imposed on India: between association with a group identified with the politics of racial affiliation, epitomised by the idea of a postcolonial Asian–African gathering, and a heterogeneous group identified around the critique of prevailing international order, epitomised by the non-aligned movement. Both ideas – racialised thinking and anti-systemic critique – represent important and continuing parameters of Indian foreign policy thinking. Eventually, the choice of joining the non-aligned movement over the racial gathering was justified not because of the inherent superiority of one worldview over another but because of contingent political factors as noted above.

The conventional view of non-alignment proposes that newly independent countries facing external pressures of alignment with global military and political powers found themselves with a weighted choice to make as they decided how best to protect their national security and to seek international standing. By this logic, non-alignment was a 'weapon of the weak', destined ultimately to fail under the material pressures of power politics, regardless of its intellectual merit. Such a position over-simplifies the choices faced by policy-makers and understates the intellectual importance of the colonial legacy in foreign policy-making. Before endorsing this simple affirmation of realist principles, consider the tensions inherent in a postcolonial foreign policy based on alignment. The case of the Philippines and its tortured relationship with the United States over four decades is possibly the outstanding example of this dilemma (Espiritu, 2006), but such ambivalences are also characteristic of ongoing US relationships with close allies such as Pakistan and Korea. It is important not to discount the immense difficulties faced by postcolonial states seeking to combine deeply felt and popular policies that affirmed a committed anti-colonial perspective at the same time as they were openly aligned with white superpowers in an international system perceived to be racially unjust.

It is tempting to argue that even if there were no ongoing disputes with Pakistan, China, and Indonesia, India's commitment to international affiliations based on racial commonality had already passed, founded on the superiority of the non-aligned worldview as a strategically viable universalist argument. This is the position taken by nationalist votaries of Indian non-alignment. Yet there is little evidence that a foreign policy based on non-alignment could not have continued to co-exist with a politics of racial affiliation, especially given how strong was the racial and civilisational frame in shaping contemporary Indian and Asian elite worldviews. While

the sharp political disagreements that took place at Bandung clearly forced an initial reconsideration of a perspective Indian elites were deeply socialised into and took for granted, it did not lead them simply to replace one set of ideas with another: instead they attributed their adversaries' 'degrad[ed] and humiliat[ed]' behaviour to a kind of false consciousness. The inertia of prevailing sentiments would have allowed India to defer making a choice between policies of racial affiliation and unaligned independence, for both represented, in different ways, deeply felt responses to the bitter history of colonial rule.

The legacy of colonial rule in shaping the foreign policies of newly independent countries is not uniform. On the one hand, it continues to be reflected in the expression of racial and civilisational exceptionalism that was prevalent during the Asian Values debates (Koh, 1993; Tang, 1995) and the self-conscious adoption of 'culturally distinct' norms of international behaviour in the Southeast Asian regional forum, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Acharya, 2001). On the other hand, the constant international pressure that finally led to the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa, in spite of the opposition of Western great powers, and other reformist projects during the last 50 years, reflect a liberal democratising tendency in international relations that is a direct product of decolonisation (Klotz, 1999). In other words, colonial ways of thinking and postcolonial reactions to them are still very much a part of the international system. What non-alignment uniquely brought with it was a worldview that broke decisively with this co-production of colonial and postcolonial modes of international relations: it offered a critique of prevailing modes of injustice while also articulating new universal norms for the formation of a global society. In that sense, the vision non-alignment offers remains all too relevant today, even if the force of the movement seems to have dissipated. It is ironic that for India, one of the founders of the movement and most able articulators of its principles, non-alignment became its foreign policy in spite of its intellectual merits.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The literature on non-alignment often conflated these two positions, e.g., Richard L. Park, 'India's Foreign Policy' in the long-standard foreign policy textbook edited by Roy Macridis (1976). By the 1970s, the 'legacy of decolonisation' largely dropped away, and the Cold War became the primary explanatory context for international developments.

Compare for instance, Heimsath and Mansingh's exemplary study of Indian foreign policy (1971) with Park's essay cited above. In the important study of the Cold War in Asia edited by Nagai Yonosuke and Akira Iriye (1977), only one chapter (by George Kahin) considers the mutual effects of decolonisation and the Cold War in explaining foreign policy behaviour of Asian states. See also Stargardt (1989: 561–595).

2. Krishna Menon would, perhaps not surprisingly, tell Michael Brecher that the idea of non-alignment came simultaneously to him and to Nehru (Brecher, 1968: 3).

3. His over-reliance on materialist analysis leads the otherwise astute Achin Vanaik to dismiss the important of national sovereignty concerns as 'important if mundane' (Vanaik, 1990: 234).

4. See Robert Young (2001) for mention of some of the other important non-state precursors to the Asian Relations Conference. An important but rarely discussed conference includes the Japanese-sponsored 'Greater East Asia Conference' of November 1943, attended by representatives of Thailand, Manchukuo (Japanese Manchuria), Philippines, Burma, the Nanking government in China, and Subhas Chandra Bose, representing Free India.

5. As early as six months after Bandung, Nehru and others had to restrain Kotelawala from trying to get the UAR (Egypt) to agree to host the next Asian–African conference. Few were ready for another conference that quickly. Through the late 1950s, suggestions were repeatedly raised about holding another conference, especially by Indonesia and, especially as the Sino-Soviet split deepened, China (India, 1955).

6. As the Indian Foreign Ministry put it, disingenuously, 'There is a certain amount of propaganda to the effect that our proposal regarding the Soviet Union and Malaysia was intended to wreck the Preparatory Conference and to prevent the main conference being held. This, of course, is absolutely groundless. We are very much interested in the success of the Second Afro-Asian Conference, and it is for this reason that we feel that important countries like Malaysia and the Soviet Union should not be excluded. In fact, participation by the Soviet Union is likely to add to the success of the conference' (Bandung Collection, 1964: 2).

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