

India from Colony to Nation-State: A Re-Reading of India's

Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia, c.1945-1955

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Abstract

Indian independence in August 1947 came through partition and the transfer of power to Congress. India inherited a region destabilised by this partition and an economy in desperate need of reconstruction and development. India also entered into a world fundamentally destabilised by the end of the Second World War, the onset of the Cold War and the re-imposition of European colonial authority in Southeast Asia. Within this context and in an attempt to disassociate India's international approach from that of the Raj, Nehru espoused the two main pillars of India's foreign policy as neutralism and anti-colonialism. However, through the selected case studies and employing archival materials from India, the United Kingdom and the United States, this research challenges the existing monolithic notions of both neutralism and anti-colonialism that dominate studies of India's external affairs. The case studies are as follows: the external implications of the transfer of power, Indonesia's freedom struggle, Indian entry into the Commonwealth and Sterling Area, the Malayan Emergency, the Colombo Plan and Gurkha recruitment. Together they expose and explore several key themes: India's imperial transition and legacy, the Cold War and colonialism/decolonisation in Southeast Asia, external affairs and national identity, and India's nascent relationship with a Communist China. Also, and fundamentally important, was India's need for economic development and how this affected its policies in South and Southeast Asia, for example development as the answer to Communism, and its relationship with the UK, its empire and the Commonwealth. This thesis provides a nuanced analysis of the first years of Indian independence that fills silences in the existing narrative and historiography that emphasise an idealistic and morally governed foreign policy. Through the following examination it is possible to recast India as a key Cold War player in South and Southeast Asia that balanced its national interest with the need to publically adhere to its espoused foreign policy principles.

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Select Abbreviations:

INC – Indian National Congress

GOI – Government of India

NAI – National Archives of India

MoEA – Ministry of External Affairs

IOR – India Office Records

CRO – Commonwealth Relations Office

FO – Foreign Office

CO – Colonial Office

UN – United Nations

NMML – Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

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Dedicated to Joyce and Jacqueline.

India from Colony to Nation-State: A Re-Reading of India's Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia, c.1945-1955

1) Introduction

India achieved independence in August 1947 after 200 years of British domination ended with partition and the transfer of power to the Congress Party. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, inherited the colonial administrative structure, the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and a two-thirds proportion of the Indian Army. However, India also inherited a region destabilised by partition and conflict over a disputed Kashmir and an economy in desperate need of repair and development. Moreover, India entered a world fundamentally destabilised by the end of the Second World War, the onset of the Cold War conflict and the re-imposition of European colonial authority in Southeast Asia.¹ Within this international system India positioned itself on the world stage as a new and potentially influential country. India, as a new state, with no established foreign policy (as this had been handled by the British) had to formulate and define its basic foreign policy principles *ex nihilo*. The new state, however, could not completely escape the confines of its geography and the legacy of British regional policy.² India had myriad hurdles to overcome in the first years of independence and its domestic needs largely defined its responses to international events.

This thesis, therefore, explores how Indian policy evolved and how it was

¹ Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London, 2005), this is one of the most incisive and comprehensive introductory accounts of the political and social aspects of the war in South and Southeast Asia. Bayly and Harper manage to weave multiple individual stories into a meta-narrative that provides an overview of the region in the 1940s and 1950s. For an account with an emphasis on the United States (hereafter US) and the end of the Pacific war see Ronald H. Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia* (New York, 2008) and for an account that says nothing new but provides a concise overview see, Jost Dülffer, 'The Impact of World War II on Decolonization', in M. Frey, R.W. Pruessen and T.T. Yong (eds), *The Transformation of Southeast Asia: International Perspectives of Decolonisation* (New York, 2003), pp. 23-34.

² For example India stepped in to the role that the British had played in Nepal as Lord Curzon's buffer policy also served the needs to protecting the territory of the independent state.

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applied in practice in light of both global and domestic developments. The chosen case studies analyse India's external affairs in relation to parts of Southeast Asia in the context of the early Cold War and decolonisation. In this way, it is possible to chart India's integral role in the Asian Cold War that has until now largely only been addressed in order to chart the roots of the Bandung Conference and the formal declaration of the Non-Alignment movement. Furthermore, the thesis addresses how Nehru and his government presented foreign policy to the Indian public and to what extent Indian foreign policy was constrained by public expectations, and, importantly, to what extent domestic political imperatives influenced foreign policy. The case studies enable an examination of episodes in India's foreign policy that have either been neglected in the existing literature, or are in need of re-evaluation and as such can contribute to our overall understanding of India's foreign policy. Southeast Asia is the geographical focus of this thesis, but this is not an area or regional history and does not purport to cover the whole of Southeast Asia.

In September 1946, Nehru, as head of the Interim Government, announced the embryonic underpinning features of India's foreign policy when he broadcast to the population that 'we propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which had led in the past to two world wars and which may lead to disasters on an even vaster scale.'³ Moreover, Nehru announced that an opposition to colonialism and the protection of Indians abroad would be two of India's aims and guiding principles. Nehru hoped to achieve these goals not through military strength, but through the use of diplomacy based on India's moral, non-violent characteristics, which he claimed derived from the teachings of Buddha and were most recently personified in M.K. Gandhi.⁴ This announcement has consequently informed all accounts of Indian foreign policy, and it is in the effort to execute these foreign policy aims that this thesis is concerned. The importance of these first years of independence need to be stressed to expose the nuances of India's foreign policy. However, the aim of the work is not to attempt to re-define neutralism/non-alignment, as much ink has already been spilled in the

³ G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London, 1966), p. 116.

⁴ See the article, published under the auspices of the Government of India (hereafter G.O.I.) by Vijayalakshmi Pandit for a succinct examination of these historical influences, 'India's Foreign Policy', *Foreign Affairs* 34 (1955/56), pp. 432-40.

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pursuit of this, but rather to examine how a professed neutralism actually operated in the cases examined. Bandung is often cited as the apogee, the defining moment of India's international achievements for its part in the emergence of the Third World and the birth of the non-aligned movement, and although its myths are now being challenged, this thesis looks at the nuances in India's foreign policy.⁵ Rather than seeking to chart the path to Bandung, or having Bandung's shadow projected back, this research focuses on the context of India's relations in the first years after independence.

With the two key basic features of India's foreign policy of non-alignment or neutralism and anti-colonialism noted, it is necessary to take account of the determinants that informed and exerted an influence over Nehru's foreign policy. At independence India was a country that had been ravaged by the economic impact of the Second World War, and was struggling to recover from crippling inflation and acute shortages.⁶ Furthermore, India was predominantly agrarian, with only some 2% of the total workforce employed in factories in 1947.⁷ Moreover, to compound the difficulty of a small industrial base, in 1947 just two products, jute and cotton, represented over 30% of the total industrial output.⁸

The Indian population, 381 million in 1947, despite periodic shocks from famine and disease, continued to grow at a pace described by Dietmar Rothermund as a parabolic ascent, which strained already limited agricultural production.⁹ At independence the G.O.I. faced the immediate task of controlling price inflation and providing sufficient food for its ever-growing population. India had recent and bitter experiences with food shortages: as chaos swept through Asia in 1942-1943, the

⁵ For a prime example of the orthodox handling of Bandung see, Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World A New Press People's History* (New York and London, 2007). For a most perspicacious examination of Bandung see the 1966 work by the journalist G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London, 1966).

⁶ See the War Cabinet's Report of the Committee on Indian Financial Questions, WP (44) 398, 19/7/1944, CAB 66/52/48.

⁷ B.R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970, Volume 3 The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 95. For studies of India's Economy in the twentieth century see, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Second edn, London, 2002), Dietmar Rothermund, *An Economic History of India: From Pre-Colonial times to 1997* (Second edn, London, 1993).

⁸ Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*, p. 95.

⁹ Production was largely limited by a combination of lack of irrigation, lack of machinery and the relatively small size of most holdings. Rothermund, *An Economic History of India*, p. 173.

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supplies of rice to India dried up and as India was dependent on imports of rice there were acute shortages resulting in the Bengal famine.¹⁰ This experience reinforced the need to increase domestic production of rice, but in the short term it was crucial that rice supplies from elsewhere in Asia continued, which dictated that international, and at the least, regional stability was essential. With the threat of inadequate food supplies from Southeast Asia, the G.O.I. was faced with heavy expenditures for food from other areas, which often involved large amounts of scarce hard currency.¹¹

The industrial development of India was a key aim of Indian nationalists, who blamed the British for deliberately retarding industrial growth and draining India's wealth during the years of the Raj.¹² According to Nehru, the key proponent of planning, India's crushing poverty would be best solved by a commitment to democratic social transformation as the integral part of India's economic strategy.¹³ Development, for Nehru, was the key to freeing the people from the grip of poverty and communalism and was an integral part of the creation of a modern nation-state in the place of colonial India.¹⁴ As parts of Southeast Asia were in the throes of unrest, moreover, India was subject to uprisings under Communist Party of India

¹⁰ It is not necessary to enter into the Failure Exchange Entitlement (FEE) -Food Availability Decline (FAD) debate here, but it is clear that decline in rice imports from Japanese occupied Asia contributed to FEE, see Sen for his groundbreaking argument that the famine was not the result of an over-all shortage of food grains, Amartya K. Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford, 1981), p. 63. For debate on the issues see Omkar Goswami, 'The Bengal Famine of 1943: Re-Examining the Data', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27 (1990), p. 445-63, Paul R. Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal: The Famine of 1943-44* (New York, 1982), M. Mufakharul Islam, 'The Great Bengal Famine and the Question of FAD Yet again', *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (2007) and Sugata Bose, 'Starvation Amidst Plenty: The Making of Famine in Bengal, Honan and Tonkin, 1942-1945', *Modern Asian Studies* 24 (1990), p. 699-727.

¹¹ See Nehru's letter of 7/1/1949 on the dollar situation and food imports in G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949* (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 258-259. In response to this dual problem the G.O.I. reinvigorated a 'Grow More Food Campaign' in 1949. Nehru reported to his Chief Minister in March 1949 that the Government had resolved to eliminate the food deficit within two years, letter 9/3/1949 in *ibid.*, p. 300.

¹² See Rothermund, *An Economic History of India*, pp. 132-133. Accusations of conscience economic retardation and wealth draining perpetrated by the British formed some of the first and most sustained attacks against colonialism in India, see Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule* (London, 1901) and R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India in the Victorian Age* (London, 1906).

¹³ Nehru in Interview with R.K. Karanjia, *The Mind of Mr. Nehru: An Interview*, cited in Francine R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947-1977: The Gradual Revolution* (Guilford, 1978), p. 3.

¹⁴ For accounts of the origins and debates on development in India see, Benjamin Zachariah, *Developing India: An Intellectual and Social History, c.1930-50* (New Delhi, 2005); Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947-1977* (Guilford, 1978); Medha Kudaisya, "'A Mighty Adventure'" Institutionalising the Idea of Planning in Post-Colonial India, 1947-60', *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (2009), pp. 939-78 and Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1860-1970*.

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(CPI) leadership which were believed to be on orders from Moscow.¹⁵ What needs to be ascertained is to what extent, if any, these events had an effect on Nehru's opinions of the Malayan Emergency and developments elsewhere in Southeast Asia and in China. In essence, we need to chart the impact that domestic developments had on external affairs and vice versa.

The fruits of industrial development would also free India from dependence on capital goods and manufactured goods imports, but to achieve this measure of self-sufficiency it was necessary, in the short term, to import large quantities of capital goods and technical assistance. This largely dictated that India remain within the Sterling Area (a trading bloc based on completing transactions in sterling) in order to secure the import of sufficient capital goods and releases of dollars from the Area dollar pool. The existing literature has begun to address the question of the importance of economic development to Indian foreign policy; however, few authors go any further than stating that India required development aid, as a basic determinant, and linking this fact to their arguments on non-alignment, the so-called suckling two cows argument.¹⁶ This research tackles this suckling argument by asserting that in the years under discussion, especially the 1940s, India only had one cow to suckle from, the West, and it was through employing the fear of India and Southeast Asia falling prey to and not joining the Soviet camp that India attempted to extract economic assistance from the United Kingdom (hereafter UK) in particular, but also the US. Underpinning all of India's foreign policy ventures was the need for both domestic and international peace and stability for economic recovery and growth as envisaged in Nehruvian developmental planning. India's struggle to control inflation, moreover, sharpened Nehru's aversion to the economic impacts of war. Nehru later elucidated his fear in reference to American production for the

¹⁵ For Nehru's thoughts that Moscow used Calcutta to direct the Communist Party of India see, letter dated 7/11/1948 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 8* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 301.

¹⁶ The suckling argument was first made by Michal Kalecki, see, 'Observations on Social and Economic aspects of "Intermediate Regimes"', in Jerzy Osiatynski (ed.), *Collected Works of Michal Kalecki: Volume V: Developing Economies* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 6-12. A. Appadorai, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy* (New York, 1981); Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959); Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (Yale, 2003); Werner Levi, 'India Debates Foreign Policy', *Far Eastern Survey* 20 (1951), pp. 49-52; K.R. Narayanan, 'Foreign Policy', in Jag Mohan (ed.), *Twenty-Five Years of Indian Independence* (New Delhi, 1973), pp. 74-86 and Lawrence K. Rosinger, 'India in World Politics', *Far Eastern Survey* 18 (1949), pp. 229-33.

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Korean War that 'Inflationary tendencies will be more and more marked all over the world. The US will buy up raw materials in all parts of the world and pay heavily for it. Thus prices will go up and will affect India too.'¹⁷ Nehru continued this theme in explicitly linking the issues of rearmament, inflation and development goods, and argued that 'In the economic sphere this [rearmament] means very heavy armament expenditure and all raw materials necessary for it will be sucked into the war machine. This will result in much higher prices and inflation. It will also result in capital goods not being available to us or to countries similarly situated.'¹⁸

An Indian commitment to anti-colonialism was one of the clearest examples of impact of the historical legacy of colonialism on its foreign policy, and is first seen in the actions taken against Dutch colonialism in Indonesia.¹⁹ Anti-colonialism co-existed with Nehru's belief that Asian nationalisms could be the answer to Communist subversion, and emphasised the importance of nationalism as a key defence against subversion.²⁰ But Nehru himself recognised the interwoven nature of Communism and colonialism when, in guidelines for a meeting of the United Nations (hereafter UN) General Assembly, he asserted that 'The Communist movements and revolts in South East Asia are so tied up with the movements for independence that it is difficult to separate them.'²¹

Anti-colonialism and an aversion racism, two of the idealistic pillars of Indian foreign policy, were, as Maxwell argues, born from India's recent history, but the continuation of these messages also served to continue the Congress message in the post-independence period.²² The recent history and cultural heritage provided a base to external affairs in so much as the foreign policy of any country has to be acceptable to the general populace and the political elite. Therefore, it has to be

¹⁷ G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 2, 1950-1952* (New Delhi, 1985), dated 31/12/1950, pp. 302-3.

¹⁸ Letter dated 1/2/1951 in *ibid.*, p.321, and Nehru reiterates his point again on the 21/4/1951, pp. 376-77 and again on the 18/2/1952, p. 568.

¹⁹ The definition of colonial power becomes more ambiguous with the Soviet domination over Eastern Europe that Nehru refused to define as imperial since the countries had their own seats at the UN.

²⁰ Anita Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56* (London, 1993), p. 65.

²¹ Nehru, 12/9/1948, cited in Gopal (ed.), S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 7* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 611.

²² Neville Maxwell, 'Reconsiderations, Jawaharlal Nehru: Of Pride and Principle', *Foreign Affairs* 52 (1974), p. 633.

based at least in some part on the alleged norms and accepted values of the country.²³ Domestic imperatives and experiences link to the issue of what impact the project of nation-building had on India's foreign affairs, and to what degree there was an attempt to unite the country and to help create a sense of nationhood behind external affairs when the rallying call of the freedom movement was no longer applicable, and thus to a certain extent the espousal of these aims of neutralism and anti-colonialism served a rhetorical purpose. The Congress Party was the dominant political force within India, but it faced opposition from the CPI and from the socialists that had broken away from Congress. Both of these bodies mounted severe criticism of Nehru, both in the press and in the Constituent Assembly; moreover, Nehru also faced questions from within his own Congress Party.²⁴

The G.O.I. was anxious to disassociate independent India's foreign policy from that of the Raj at the same time as maintaining the central tenets of the Congress platform.²⁵ Authority in a newly independent state derives partly from the leaders' role in the independence struggle, and in Nehru's case this was only amplified with the death of Gandhi in January 1948 and then Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1950.²⁶ Any infringement or suspicion of infringement of Indian sovereignty was unacceptable to the populace or the elite as a whole, and thus Nehru had to be overly cautious in his relations with outside powers lest there be an opportunity for accusations of impinged independence in foreign affairs.²⁷ This is a contributory reason why in the press and in subsequent academic literature moral methods, neutralism and anti-colonialism are emphasised at the expense of calculations of power politics.

The reality and responsibility of power and India's dire economic situation

²³ Nehru acknowledged as much in his guidelines to the Indian Delegation at the UN, see 'Basic Principles: Guidelines for Upcoming UN General Assembly, 12/9/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN*, Volume 7, pp. 609-610.

²⁴ For the period 1946-1950, the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly provide a narrative for this debate and criticism.

²⁵ Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London, 2004), p. 157.

²⁶ See Paul R. Brass, 'Patel, Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai (1875/6-1950)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35403>, accessed 2 March 2010].

²⁷ In this thesis public opinion is gauged through newspaper reports, through questions at public meetings, through how the G.O.I. attempted to inform opinion with details of speeches and is crucially taken from the G.O.I.'s own appreciations of public opinion.

did much to moderate Nehru's and the G.O.I.'s approach to international affairs, as did Southeast Asia's chaotic post-war political situation leading to apprehension over Communist victory in China. Nehru balanced the demands placed on him by an expectant party and population to continue the Congress platform and policies abroad with the realities of power. Nehru was a firm believer in the virtues of anti-colonialism, but he was also a realistic operator on the international stage, and he had to play by the existing rules to try to get things done. Exporting the message of anti-colonialism abroad was also a way to reinforce Congress' domestic position, as exporting its normative values to the outside world demonstrated a certain sense of continuity from the pre- to the post-colonial periods, and as the UK's High Commissioner, Archibald Nye described Nehru as the 'external architect of New India.'²⁸

The Case Studies

First, a few words are necessary on the scope of the project to delineate what the project is and what it is not pretending to be. India rarely makes an appearance in general historical studies of the Cold War in Southeast Asia for example in the recently-released *Oxford History of Southeast Asia in World History*, or the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*.²⁹ Moreover, the most notable recent addition to global Cold War studies, Odd Arne Westad's, *The Global Cold War* pays scant attention to India.³⁰ This research addresses this absence by presenting India as a key participant in the Cold War in Asia. This is not a narrative history of decolonisation in Southeast Asia, but contributes to its understanding by examining India's role in various episodes. Nor is this work intended to be a bilateral history of the Indo-British relationship, although it does contribute to the existing historiography which is dominated by attempts to chart the decline of the relationship.³¹ The emphasis on

²⁸ Archibald Nye to CRO, Despatch No. 41, Ref. P/243, 9/9/1949, DO 142/479.

²⁹ Craig A. Lockard, *Southeast Asia in World History* (Oxford, 2009); Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume 1, Origins* (Cambridge, 2010).

³⁰ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World and the Makings of our Times* (Cambridge, 2005).

³¹ The Indo-British connection was above all else a symbiotic one, in which each side attempted to secure the most from the other, and the most definite expression of this was the Commonwealth. The majority of the existing literature exists in an attempt to chart the decline of the Indo-British connection in economic terms with little reference to the wider relationship. Michael Lipton and John Fern produced an extensive piece of research, but the work is focussed on the period from 1960

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Britain arises from the dual fact that Britain was the pre-eminent power in the region in the period under discussion and was also India's closest international relationship. Through an examination of these case studies, much is revealed about the exercise of Indian foreign policy in its first years of freedom in a region that has previously been neglected by the existing historiography.

The first case study analyses foreign affairs in the context of the transfer of power, and the extent to which the ability to practise its own foreign policy was seen by the political elite and public as an integral part of independence and not simply as a symbol of it. Nehru and Congress fought to keep the international identity of British India as opposed to both India and Pakistan seceding from the Raj and so neither one having an existing international identity, even as the new state tried to distance itself from the imperialism of its predecessor whose international identity it claimed. The chapter also examines how India's lack of a foreign service, a colonial legacy, strengthened Nehru's personal control of foreign policy and how it increased the importance of personal contacts in the conduct of international relations.

Rather than being a simple case of India supporting Asian nationalism, the next case study, the Indonesian nationalist movement for independence from the

onwards, as the authors explained, 'we are trying to explain the delayed but rapid erosion of what less than twenty years ago seemed a strong, stable and peacefully decolonised relationship', see *The Erosion of a Relationship: India and Britain since 1960* (London, 1975), p. 1, and for a very similar argument also see Michael Lipton, 'Neither Partnership nor Dependence: Pre-Decolonisation, Inertia, Diversification and Para-Protectionism in Indo-British Relations since 1947', in W.H Morris-Jones and G Fischer (eds), *Decolonisation and After: The British and French Experience* (London, 1980), pp. 158-192. In a similar vein, focussing on the economic components of the relationship, B.R. Tomlinson produced a short chapter on post-1947 Indo-British trade relations and the weakening of economic complementarities, see 'Imperial Power and Foreign Trade: Britain and India, 1900-1970', in Peter Mathias and John Davis (eds), *The Nature of Industrialisation, Volume V, International Trade and British Economic Growth from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 146-162. This argument is extremely similar to that made by B.R. Tomlinson in, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947: The Economics Of Decolonisation in India* (London, 1979). Debo Prasad Barooah, again focussed more on the detailing of facts and figures than on the implications for the relationship in practice, is the most comprehensive work from the subcontinent, *Indo-British Relations, 1950-1960* (New Delhi, 1977). The work of Baudsev Chatterji is in part the counterbalance in asserting that, 'On the eve of the Second World War...India remained an important asset on the economic balance sheets of British Imperialism', see *Trade, Tariffs and Empire: Lancashire and British Policy in India 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1992), p. 474. For further accounts of the Indo-British relationship see, A.K. Banerji, *India and Britain, 1947-68: The Evolution of Post-Colonial Relations* (Calcutta, 1977); M. Lipton, 'Growing Mountain, Shrinking Mouse? Indian Poverty and British Bilateral Aid', *Modern Asian Studies* 30 (1996), pp. 481-522; Shri Ram Sharma, *India's Foreign Policy: The British Interpretations, 1947-57* (Gwalior, 1961) and Maurice Zinkin and Taya Zinkin, *Britain and India: Requiem for Empire* (London, 1964).

Netherlands, makes it possible to examine Nehru and India on the domestic and international stages bridging both pre- and post-independence. This chapter firmly places Indonesia within India's own transfer of power, linking to the previous chapter, and explores the attitudes and actions of India regarding an independence movement. Moreover, the research examines the methods by which Nehru conducted relations with Britain and the US, and the pressure Nehru exerted upon them to bring the conflicts to an end through demonstrating how Nehru sought to set himself up as the voice of Asia when in dialogue with the UK and the US.

The Malayan Emergency, the subject of the third chapter, and the first time that primary archival material from the Indian government has been employed, is an investigation of Indian attitudes towards a British colony, and towards a specifically Communist-directed anti-colonial rebellion in a country that was home to approximately 600,000 Indians.³² More importantly, Malaya supported the dollar earnings of the Sterling Area through its rubber and tin exports to the US, which, as India was a member of the Sterling Area, affected its very economic survival and development, a fact that was only reinforced by India's wartime accumulated sterling balances.³³ The balances not only provided a means to cover India's balance of payments deficits, but also served as a pool of development capital; however, from

³² The Secretary of State for the Colonies quoted the total population as approximately 5,800,000, with 2,200,000 as Malays, 2,600,000 as Chinese and 600,000 as Indians, figures in CP (48) 171, 1/7/1948, CAB 129/28. The 1931 census gave the following figures, total population: 5,849,000, comprised of 44.4% Malays (2,596,956), 39.2% Chinese (2,292,808), 14.3% Indians (836,407) and 2.1% (122,829) others, cited in A.J. Stockwell, 'British Imperial Policy and Decolonisation in Malaya, 1942-52', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13 (1984), pp. 68-87. Ton That Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960: A Study of India's Foreign Policy towards the South East Asian Countries in the Period 1947-1960* (Geneva, 1963), p. 227.

³³ The balances are looked at in more detail in the Commonwealth chapter. The sterling balances, built up by India for services and men during the war and amounted to £710m in March 1944, at the end of 1944 some £1004m and £1160 million by 1945. The £710m figure represents the result of work done by the War Cabinet Committee on the Indian Financial Question, WP (44) 398, 19/7/1944, CAB 66/52/48. The £1004 figure was calculated by Lord John Maynard Keynes in May 1945, cited in Overseas Financial Policy in Stage III, WP (45) 301, CAB 66/65/51. The £1160m amount was the figure for the end of the war agreed between Indian representatives and the Treasury in August 1947, cited in Chancellor's Memorandum CP (47) 213, dated 5/8/1947, CAB 129/20 and CM (47) 70 Conclusions, 7/8/1947, CAB 128/10. For accounts of the accumulation of the balances see, J. Fforde, *The Bank of England and Public Policy, 1941-58* (Cambridge, 1992), R.S Sayers, *Financial Policy, 1939-45: History of the Second World War* (London, 1956) and Benjamin Zachariah, 'Imperial Economic Policy for India, 1942-44: Confusion and Readjustment', in B. Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times, India, 1940-44* (Mumbai, 1998), pp. 185-213. For the basic details and workings of the dollar pool within the Sterling Area see, Kenneth M. Wright, 'Dollar Pool in the Sterling Area, 1939-1952', *The American Economic Review* 44 (1954), p. 559-76.

14 August 1947 the releases were determined by several sets of negotiations with Britain.³⁴

The existing literature addresses Malaya insofar as it states that Nehru was less severe towards the British than towards Dutch and French actions in the region. There are two aspects emphasised within this, one which asserts that Nehru did not view the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) as a legitimate nationalist party.³⁵ The other strand argues that criticism was restrained as Britain was the colonial power and because India was a member of the Commonwealth from 1949. Michael Brecher argues that Indian membership of the Commonwealth resulted in more restrained criticism of British colonial policies; S.N. Misra asserts that the Commonwealth link negatively affected India's positive goals; whilst A.K. Banerji argues that it was because Britain treated her colonies humanely and that India was a member of the Commonwealth that saved her from a scolding; moreover, Sushil Chandra Singh argues that Nehru was far more interested in criticising the actions of other European powers because of the Commonwealth link.³⁶ This existing body of work fails to develop the hypothesis that it proposes, but this thesis investigates why Nehru referred to the Malayan Communists as bandits and terrorists, India's perception of what was happening in Malaya, and how it affected India's material interests through regional security and the Sterling Area.³⁷ This research argues that both Malaya and

³⁴ There has been only one serious attempt to examine the negotiations, B.R. Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12 (1985), pp. 142-62, but this fails to take the analysis beyond 1949 and also fails to account for the Colombo Plan.

³⁵ S.N. Misra, *India: The Cold War Years* (1994), p. 171 and D.R. SarDesai, 'India and South-East Asia', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), p. 83. Also see Anita Inder Singh who writes that despite its anti-colonialism, India described the Malaysians as terrorists and bandits, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 49.

³⁶ Banerji, *India and Britain, 1947-68: The Evolution of Post-Colonial Relations* (Calcutta, 1977), p. 261; Brecher, *Nehru*, p. 581; Misra, *India: The Cold War Years*, p. 221 and Sushil Chandra Singh, 'America, India and the Commonwealth', in Verinder Grover (ed.), *International Relations and Foreign Policy in India, Volume 5, Great Britain, Commonwealth and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 307-308. M.S. Rajan also discusses claims that there was "Undue Influence" on Indian foreign policy, 'India and the Commonwealth', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 12 (1966), p. 230. David Goldsworthy examines Indian criticism in the context of anti-colonialism directed at the British Empire from all quarters but focusing on the mid-1950s and beyond, see 'Britain and the International Critics of British Colonialism, 1951-56', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 29 (1991), pp.1-24. For an overview also see Zinkin and Zinkin, *Britain and India: Requiem for Empire*.

³⁷ Philip Deery, 'The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (2003), pp. 213-47, has attempted to map the changing definitions and representations

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Indian entry of the Commonwealth should however be seen as part of the same process as opposed to Indian moderation being a causal result of Commonwealth membership. However, the execution of Indians in Malaya was considered neither acceptable nor humane either by the G.O.I. or by the Indian press and public opinion.³⁸

The next two case studies are closely connected and demonstrate that in certain cases Indian foreign policy was above all else driven in the background by material considerations and to a certain extent the sterling balances: Indian entry into the Commonwealth and involvement in the Colombo Plan of 1950 for economic development in South and Southeast Asia. Several works address why Britain wished to retain India in the Commonwealth,³⁹ but few ask why India, after two years of Dominion Status from 1947, remained within the Commonwealth⁴⁰ and the majority of accounts from the Indian subcontinent fail to employ British sources and rely on statements from Nehru, both public and in the Lok Sabha as their main source base.⁴¹ Membership, negotiated in April-May 1949, was a key tenet of Indian foreign policy, partly dictated by the economic, military and diplomatic exigencies of being a newly independent state. This research demonstrates that to understand India's actions, Commonwealth membership has to be placed within its international

according to the British Government, but no research has been done on the international definition of the Emergency.

³⁸ For an example see the following articles in *The Statesman* 'Indian Hanged in Malaya Under Emergency Regulations', 5/5/1949 and 'Ganapathay Issue Protest Delivered', 7/5/1949, cited in 12-R+I/1949, MoEA, R+I Branch, Ministry of External Affairs (MoEA), NAI.

³⁹ With the Indian Independence Act 1947, both India and Pakistan came into being as Dominions until such a time as their national constitutions had been formulated by their Constituent Assemblies, and for India this was January 1950. For works which explore British motivations for seeking India to remain within the Commonwealth see, Anita Inder Singh, 'Imperial Defence and the Transfer of Power in India, 1946-1947', *International History Review* 4 (1982), pp. 571-83; 'Decolonisation in India: The Statement of 20 February 1947', *International History Review* 6 (1984), pp. 191-99; 'Economic Consequences of India's Position in the Commonwealth: The Official British Thinking 1949', *Indo-British Review* 11 (1984), 106-11; 'Keeping India in the Commonwealth: British Political and Military Aims, 1947-49', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985), pp. 469-81; *The Limits of British Influence*; R.J Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1987); *Endgames of Empire* (London, 1988), and Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49'.

⁴⁰ Michael Brecher, 'India's Decision to Remain in the Commonwealth', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 12 (1974), pp. 62-91.

⁴¹ Zubeda K. Khan, *International Politics and India's Foreign Policy Under Nehru* (2000) and S.R Mehrota, 'India and the Commonwealth', in B.R. Nanda (ed), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), pp. 24-41.

context. The thesis also examines how membership was presented to a sceptical political elite and population.

The scholarship on the Colombo Plan is largely the product of historians of foreign policy, overwhelmingly British foreign policy.⁴² As such there is a lack of scholarship examining both India's role in the formulation of the plan and India's rationale for participating in the plan; moreover, the existing scholarship fails to adequately examine the impact of the sterling balances on the development of Indian and British policy in South and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, there is little in the literature that suggests that British plans were actually driven by its involvement with India; whereas this research demonstrates Indian agency in the formulation of the Colombo Plan.

The final case study again bridges the gap from pre- to post-independence in its analysis of Gurkha recruitment, its importance for India, Nepal and Britain in the context of accusations of betraying India's anti-colonial roots and the spectre of China across the border. There is very little existing historiography on the Gurkhas outside the confines of military history, but this research demonstrates their domestic importance for Nepal, and how through debate about their continued recruitment Nehru was able to simultaneously satisfy the competing claims of Nepal, Britain and Indian public opinion.

Historiographical Overview

The detailed historiography of each case study is discussed in turn within the relevant chapters, but what is necessary here is an examination of the broad lines, the defining contours, of the general literature on India's foreign policy. The existing accounts of Indian policy are largely determined by the source materials available which are examined below. Moreover, there is a lack of critical debates in the historiography, but one of the few examples is the highly-politicised case of the China War.

⁴² There is one work which examines India's role, but even this is dominated by its analysis of British foreign policy, see, Philip J. Charrier, 'Britain, India and the Genesis of the Colombo Plan, 1945-51', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995.

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The literature is largely centred on the discussion of the concept of non-alignment, resulting in a poverty of analysis of other aspects of India's foreign policy, especially the nuances of anti-colonialism. Broadly speaking the general literature on Indian foreign policy can be divided into three groups: those that argue that India's foreign policy was based on a realistic calculation of India's position and the international environment; those that argue that India's foreign policy was realistic but also based to a certain degree on idealistic assumptions and principles based mainly on India's past experience as a colony; and lastly those that argue that India's foreign affairs were directed by principles and ideals alone.

E. Malcolm Hause, in 1960, entered the debate over the key determinants in Indian foreign policy by arguing that Indian foreign policy was based on the principles of Panchsila. The five principles are listed as mutual respect for each other's territory and sovereignty, mutual non-intervention in internal affairs, equality of mutual benefit, mutual non-aggression and peaceful co-existence.⁴³ These in turn were based on the 'deep-rooted historical traditions and memories which are embodied in a philosophical and spiritual nonmaterialism.'⁴⁴ Significantly, Hause fails to acknowledge that material factors played any significant role in the formulation of India's policy, and instead relies on a reading of India's past to explain the present. Hause, bordering on the hagiographical, as much writing on Indian foreign policy does, continues that, 'these concepts not only gave Nehru the courage to stand alone, and the feeling of security when he does stand alone, but they virtually give him no other choice that to chart an independent course in world affairs.'⁴⁵ The only concession that Hause makes to material determinants is that he argues that 'to avoid the charge of showing favouritism to either the East or the West, Nehru has extended his political policy of nonalignment to the economic sphere, thus allowing himself freedom to accept assistance of all kinds, anywhere, if the terms are acceptable.'⁴⁶ Hause, therefore, suggests that the material calculation was simply an afterthought in the formulation of Nehru's foreign policy. Not only does Hause fail to

⁴³ E. Malcolm Hause, 'India: Noncommitted and Nonaligned', *The Western Political Quarterly* 13 (1960), p. 70.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

test his hypothesis, but, following the bulk of literature, he employs a limited source base and fails to utilise government archives.

Similarly, A.P. Rana, in 1969, attempted to explain India's adherence to non-alignment as a security policy by tracing its intellectual and idealistic roots. The paper focuses on the influence of Gandhi on policy formation and argues that 'Gandhi's influence on India's international relations was pervasive and can best be ascribed to a kind of diffusion of the elements of his personality through Nehru's psyche.'⁴⁷ The Gandhian approach, argues Rana, with the ideal of non-violence and non-coercion, made Nehru recoil from power politics that defined the existing system and its resulting conflicts. For Rana internationalism, in the form of non-alignment, was the result of this influence on Nehru; moreover, he argues that the national interests were identified with an international society of states.⁴⁸ In addition, Rana removes non-alignment from its Cold War context and argues that the policy had an identifiable identity before the emergence of the conflict.

B.R. Nanda has released several works on Indian foreign policy and in 1990 argued that the two planks of Indian foreign policy, the liberation of colonies and the promotion of peace, resulted from a hatred of colonialism and war, and thus historical circumstances in a similar fashion to Narayanan in 1973.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Nanda argued that the ability of India to pursue an independent course in its external relations and to spurn the advantages of association with the West was due to Nehru's 'clear eyed appreciation of the post-war situation in its historical context.'⁵⁰ Nanda explicitly argues that Nehru did not take India into non-alignment based on calculations of national interest in securing materials and aid, and he argues that 'In

⁴⁷ A.P. Rana, 'The Intellectual Dimensions of India's Non-Alignment', *Journal of Asian Studies* 28 (1969), p. 299.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-03.

⁴⁹ B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), p. 2. An interesting point to note here is that this edited volume was published under the auspices of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and it is improbable that any work of a critical tone would find its way into the volume. Narayanan, 'Foreign Policy', in Mohan (ed.), *Twenty-Five Years of Indian Independence*, pp. 74-86.

⁵⁰ Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy*, p. 5.

1947-49 when India unfurled the banner of non-alignment it seemed neither the best way of ensuring her national security nor of obtaining economic aid.’⁵¹

Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru’s sister, elaborated the idealistic aspects, both roots and aims, of Indian foreign policy by arguing that neutrality was an approach to peace that was not new, but that was based on ‘her traditional outlook, both philosophical and historical.’⁵² Tracing these roots back some 2600 years to Gautama Buddha and the emperor Asoka some 2300 years ago, Pandit sets up a tradition of peaceful conduct and positions Gandhi as the modern interpreter of these traditional approaches.⁵³ In this way Pandit overtly links foreign policy with the teachings of Gandhi, linking to the work of Rana, and exposing the wishes of the Indian Government to link their foreign policy to the legacy of Gandhi.

Making the case for a largely pragmatic and realistic foreign policy, Werner Levi described Nehru as a realist who knew that the primary aim of foreign policy was the survival of the state.⁵⁴ Lawrence K. Rosinger, in a similar approach to both A. Appadorai and Michael Brecher,⁵⁵ also highlighted this theme of independence in foreign affairs, but Rosinger takes account of the fact that Nehru argued that foreign policy was ultimately the outcome of economic policy and that until the economy had developed properly then the general course abroad would tend to be vague and groping.⁵⁶ This line of thought has been somewhat neglected in more recent accounts, but it raises the crucial point that India’s policy was developing in these early years. Rosinger further argues that the factors determining India’s foreign policy were in large part decided by the conditions under which India became independent; these include strong remaining ties with Britain, a geographical separation from the USSR and a level of dependence on the US.⁵⁷ This combination allowed Indian leaders time to make up their minds on foreign policy; time that was

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵² Pandit, ‘India’s Foreign Policy’, p. 433. Also see, David Taylor’s, ‘Pandit, Vijayalakshmi (1900–1990)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47741>, accessed 4 June 2012].

⁵³ Pandit, ‘India’s Foreign Policy’, pp. 433-34.

⁵⁴ Levi, ‘India Debates Foreign Policy’, 49-52.

⁵⁵ Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* and A. Appadorai, ‘India’s Foreign Policy’, *International Affairs* 25 (1949), pp. 37-46.

⁵⁶ Rosinger, ‘India in World Politics’, *Far Eastern Survey* 18 (1949), p. 229.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

anxiously sought to allow India to repair its economy. Furthermore, Rosinger asserts that taking an independent stance may well have increased India's bargaining power abroad for foreign assistance.

Prior to Levi, Appadorai surveyed Indian foreign policy as it stood in 1948 based on public statements and newspaper reports. Appadorai identified the key tenets of Indian foreign policy as follows: keeping away from power blocs; working with others for international co-operation and goodwill; upholding the principles of self-determination for subjugated peoples, especially Asians; fostering good relations with its neighbours and maintaining that the presence of Europeans in Asia was an insult.⁵⁸ The vast majority of accounts of Indian foreign policy are based on this combination of aims.⁵⁹ Appadorai continued to ask if maintaining this kind of independent foreign policy was possible, which he argued is only answerable by seeking a three-fold analysis of the Indian National Congress, the complexity of present day problems and looking at the economic and military position of India.⁶⁰ What follows is a comprehensive, if somewhat short, analysis that allowed Appadorai to interpret the three main considerations of India's foreign policy: whole hearted co-operation with the UN, non-alignment and upholding the weak and oppressed nations.⁶¹ Appadorai maintains that India was so keen on international co-operation and collective security because of its belief that settling disputes by war was unjust, and because peace was essential for internal reconstruction, which he argues 'illustrates...the blend of two factors which govern India's foreign policy-enlightened self-interest guided by justice.'⁶² With regards to subject peoples, Appadorai is less forthcoming with his analysis and argues that India's own recent history determined this stance. Although Appadorai's analysis is brief, it identifies the themes in Indian foreign policy that frame the subsequent literature.

One of the most cogent accounts emphasising both the material determinants of Indian foreign policy and the idealistic and moral aspects is Brecher's 1959

⁵⁸ Appadorai, 'India's Foreign Policy', p. 37.

⁵⁹ Sankar N. Maitra, in 1967, lists the four pillars as, anti-colonialism, non-alignment, peaceful co-existence and the renunciation of force in the settlement of disputes in 'A New Look at Foreign Policy', *Economic and Political Weekly* 2 (1967), p. 793.

⁶⁰ Appadorai, 'India's Foreign Policy', p. 38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

biography of Nehru in which he argues that 'Indian views on international affairs may be traced to many sources, some traditional, others contemporary.'⁶³ The experiences of colonialism and racialism played an important part in moulding attitudes, as did the proximity of two powerful Communist neighbours in the form of Russia and China.⁶⁴ But for Brecher, the key to India's foreign policy was the need for economic development, which determined that aid was required from all available sources and suggested that global peace was essential. In conclusion, he wrote that 'Indeed, all other factors which shape India's world-view are subordinate to this consideration.'⁶⁵

India's world-view in turn shaped her foreign policy, which Brecher argued consisted of the following pillars: anti-colonialism, anti-racism, non-alignment, a recognition of Asia's importance, mediation in international tensions and a third force of non-aligned nations.⁶⁶ Brecher and Appadorai represent the middle ground between interpretations that favour an idealistic or a realistic foreign policy, a position to which many adhere with varying degrees of emphasis on the balance of idealistic and material or realistic factors.⁶⁷ Both of these accounts also demonstrate the use of the main source materials for accounts on Indian foreign policy: newspaper articles, public statements and broadcasts and parliamentary debates. This work adds to this existing historiography by examining the interplay between the espoused guiding principles of Indian foreign policy and the somewhat differing reality of Indian actions in certain cases.

The main themes of Indian policy, argues Judith M. Brown, were beginning to crystallise by the end of 1948; she highlights that the policy would be an independent one, it would pursue world peace, it would also combat racism and imperialism, but it would also work for a revival of Asia.⁶⁸ Brown concurs with

⁶³ Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959), p. 212.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁶⁷ See the later book by Appadorai, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy*. Also see, B. M. Jain also follows this path when he argues that non-alignment, as the foundation of India's foreign policy, was defined and articulated by Nehru on the premise of bi-polarity in his own ideological and philosophical manner in order to safeguard national defence and security and to promote development, B.M. Jain, *Global Power: India's Foreign Policy 1947-2006* (Plymouth, 2008).

⁶⁸ Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (Yale, 2003), p. 245.

Brecher in that geography heavily influenced India's policy outlook: she needed to build bridges with both Pakistan and China; it was at the centre of Asia and thus involved the US and Britain. Brown argues that non-alignment was not neutrality at all, but it was a stance that left India free to judge issues on their merits and in relation to India's interests.⁶⁹ These interests, somewhat inadequately analysed in the biography, reinforced a policy of pragmatic responses to foreign issues and a stance of non-alignment, and in Brown's view Indian foreign policy was an intertwining of idealism, pragmatism and self-interest: this thesis charts this intertwining.⁷⁰

K.R. Narayanan maintains that the foreign policy devised by Nehru was the result of historical circumstances.⁷¹ Echoing Appadorai in 1948, Narayanan asserts that foreign policy was not defined by idealism or internationalism, nor was it defined by the pursuit of national interests, but it was defined by the continuous endeavour to reconcile and bring into line with each other these two sets of considerations.⁷² Following Narayan, but moving closer to an analysis based solely on the idealistic aspects, on this key issue of idealism versus realism P.N. Masaldan argues that:

He [Nehru] was conscious of the duty of every national leader and government to protect the country's national interest. But Nehru's broad outlook, his wide perspective, and his sense not only of history but also of future developments in the world, made him usually interpret the national interest in a manner that did not conflict with his high principles of internationalism and humanism.⁷³

Though Masaldan fails to present a detailed picture of what he takes to be the national interest, his argument suggests little tension existed between achieving the national interest and maintaining certain principles, whereas this thesis explores tensions between the two. Masaldan's analysis has to be questioned, however, when he slips into the realms of hagiography writing that criticisms of Nehru 'do not

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁷¹ Narayanan, 'Foreign Policy', in Mohan (ed.), *Twenty-Five Years of Indian Independence*, p. 74.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ P.N. Masaldan, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Foreign Policy: Determinants, Principles and Conduct* (Nagpur, 1977), p. 8.

detract much from the greatness of Nehru's ideas and the magnificence of his principles.'⁷⁴

The main lines of argument have changed little from the first accounts of India's foreign policy emerged in the form of contemporary commentary in the late 1940s. As late as 2009, Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi argued that 'India's policymakers chose, quite deliberately, to ignore systemic constraints and decided to pursue an explicitly ideational foreign policy with mostly disastrous consequences.'⁷⁵ The recent *Routledge Handbook on South Asian Politics* follows similar lines of argument: 'more geographically cohesive, less traumatised by partition, and less hamstrung by its own internal security concerns, India's political leaders were able to initially articulate a foreign policy premised less on survival than on an ideological commitment to internationalism, nonalignment, and an active solidarity with colonial peoples.'⁷⁶ What these accounts assume is a mythical freedom that the G.O.I. was able to formulate its policies within a vacuum, as opposed to in reaction to both its domestic needs and the state of international affairs, as this research demonstrates.

Indian foreign policy found its roots in the legacy of colonialism and the idealistic concepts formed by the leaders of India, and, although these factors influenced Nehru and the G.O.I., the defence of India and the furtherance of the national interest were the paramount determinants in India's foreign affairs. Nehru's own thoughts on the construction of foreign policy can be summarised as such: 'A policy must be in keeping with the traditional background and temper of the country. It should be idealistic...and...realistic. If it is not idealistic, it becomes one of sheer opportunism; if it is not realistic, then it is likely to be adventurist and wholly ineffective.'⁷⁷ Nehru was an idealist, yes, but also a realist who with the moderation of responsibility on assuming independence placed India's material interests at the core of his diplomacy, though he never let the core guiding principles of Indian

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ S. Ganguly and M.S. Pardesi, 'Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy', *India Review* 8 (2009), p. 4.

⁷⁶ Vernon Hewitt, 'International Politics of South Asia', in Paul Brass (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Politics: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal* (London, 2010), p. 407.

⁷⁷ *Congress Bulletin*, No. 5, June-July 1954, p. 246 cited in Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, p. 217.

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foreign policy be forgotten. Through the examination of the selected case studies this thesis provides in-depth studies to fill in some of the silences in India's foreign policy and as such contributes to the existing general history of Indian foreign policy.

Sources

The absence of government archival materials in much of the existing historiography encourages a following of the line propagated by the G.O.I. in its first years of power. This work is not an attempt to deify the governmental archive above any other source material, but rather to integrate the valuable information in foreign repositories with that available in Indian archives. The source base for the vast majority of accounts on Indian foreign policy from the subcontinent consists of a narrow range of materials from public statements by Nehru and other senior politicians, parliamentary debates, newspaper reports and more recently edited volumes of collected documents and has fundamentally affected the existing historiography.⁷⁸ Few examples better serve to illustrate the propensity for relying on public statements, particularly Nehru's, as a record of Indian foreign policy than the following preface to a collection of Nehru's speeches published by the Indian Ministry of Information:

This volume was designed to meet the need for finding in one place the main lines of India's foreign policy. No better method could be adopted than to present it in the words of the one who was the country's principal spokesman.⁷⁹

Public statements and speeches, most often transmitted via the radio and through newspapers, formed and still form the basic evidence for the study of India's foreign policy, and continue to inform the very basic understanding of India's foreign policy and its study. This reliance, however, obfuscates many of the nuances of India's foreign affairs, and there is little acknowledgement of the domestic audience,

⁷⁸ For examples of collected see, S Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru: Second Series* (New Delhi); G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964* (New Delhi) and Prabha Chopra (ed.), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel* (New Delhi).

⁷⁹ Preface to *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi, 1961). This collection was published whilst Nehru was still in office by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

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or in fact the foreign audiences, for which public statements were produced. Thus, what is needed is an account of Indian foreign policy that integrates this acceptance of public statements more as rhetoric with an analysis of why these public statements were produced and their domestic significance in the legitimisation of Congress and the Indian state.

Debates from the Constituent Assembly, 1946-1950, and thereafter from the Lok Sabha, provide a way of assessing the political dialogue of the disagreements and criticisms of Nehru's foreign policy.⁸⁰ These aforementioned materials are valuable in the sense that they reveal what was not being said in parliament and public as much as they communicate what was said, but less so for constructing a comprehensive narrative. This can be remedied, however, by the *Far Eastern Survey* and *Pacific Affairs* which both provide an excellent and invaluable collection of contemporary analyses of the events in South and Southeast Asia. *The Statesman* (Calcutta) also offers an excellent contemporary analysis of events.

The *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (SWJN)* provide us with a limited record of Nehru's correspondence; there are two problems, however, with this resource apart from the fact that it is very heavily edited having been published under auspices of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), the guardians of Nehru's papers. First, there is a heavy emphasis on domestic affairs, and secondly the volumes consist only of outgoing correspondence, and are thus devoid of the context of the discourse in which the communications were produced. Despite footnotes that seek to provide parts of the missing side of the conversation, the reader has no reference to the tone, purpose, details of previous letters and has to rely on a reading of Nehru's response.⁸¹ This problem can be overcome, to a certain degree, by employing foreign archives to fill in the silences.

A problem with the existing historiography is the fact that the majority of researchers rely on what these statements say at face value, and fail to interrogate

⁸⁰ The Lok Sabha was the Lower House of the Indian Parliament and succeeded the Constituent Assembly after the inauguration of the Republic in January 1950.

⁸¹ R.J. Moore also notes this deficiency of the collection, 'It is a limitation of the Gandhi and Nehru collections that they do not include inwards correspondence', 'The Transfer of Power: An Historiographical Survey', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 9 (1986), p. 84.

their sources. Public statements, and Nehru's in particular, are often taken as true reflections of policy and intentions, so are parliamentary debates and statements. Moreover, there is little account taken of the audience, but as Ton That Thien suggests, we should be concerned with 'India's deeds rather than with her words.'⁸² Further light is shed by the British High Commissioner warning London that many of Nehru's speeches were delivered extempore, more akin to thinking aloud than a detailed exposition of India's direction in world affairs, and that Whitehall should not place too much emphasis on such statements.⁸³

The reason for this reliance on certain materials is the relative inaccessibility of Indian government archives. The Ministry of External Affairs (MoEA) retains possession of the bulk of its records from 1947, there is no effective 30 year rule and the 2005 Right to Information Act further tightened the restrictions over the release of materials.⁸⁴ Without any systematic transfer of materials, there is, as Zins and Boquerat argue, 'a veil of secrecy in India that other major democratic countries lifted long ago.'⁸⁵ This secrecy, which only applies to the post-1947 period, is further compounded by the fact that Nehru's own papers, both as Prime Minister and as Minister of external affairs, remain the possession of the Gandhi family under lock and key at NMML in New Delhi.⁸⁶ Nehru's descendants rarely grant access to the post-1947 papers and in most cases access is granted for official publications only, further reinforcing the reliance on the *SWJN*.

⁸² Although Thien fails to fully follow his own advice, see Ton That Thien, *India and South East Asia*, p. 5.

⁸³ Nye to CRO, Despatch No. 18, Ref. 9/243, 6/5/1949, DO 142/479.

⁸⁴ Cited in article by Claude Arpi and Subroto Roy, 'Transparency & History: India's Archives must be Opened to World Standards' at <http://independentindian.com/2009/01/01/indias-archives-must-be-opened-to-world-standards/>, last accessed 12/01/2010. On the perilous state of India's archive see three recent articles on the *New York Times* blog, India Ink: Notes on the World's Largest Democracy, <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/21/repairing-the-damage-at-indias-national-archives/#more-27531>; <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/20/in-india-history-literally-rots-away/> and <http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/22/indias-archives-how-did-things-get-this-bad/>, last accessed 22/3/2012.

⁸⁵ Max-Jean Zins and Gilles Boquerat, 'Introduction', in Max-Jean Zins and Gilles Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives* (New Delhi 2004), p. 7.

⁸⁶ Similarly, the papers of V.K. Krishna Menon are under the care of the NMML and the only way to access the post-1947 material is with the direct permission of the Indian Prime Minister and personal experience has proven that attempting to gain access to post 1947 materials from the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library is near impossible.

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Few historians acknowledge or address this absence, make comment or explore the implications of relying on public statements for the study of Indian foreign policy. One of the few historians to acknowledge actively the difficulty of accessing Indian government sources is Robert J. McMahon in his examination of the US wheat loan to India in 1951.⁸⁷ In response to this limited access to materials, the foreign archive becomes a most useful repository of documents with which to examine Indian foreign policy, a process that Zins and Boquerat describe as using the foreign diplomatic archive as a mirror.⁸⁸ This approach is in itself replete with questions of reliability, but it does allow the researcher an additional source of documentary evidence. However, as Zins and Boquerat argue, foreign archives cannot be taken as a direct reflection of India's external policy since this would lead to a one dimensioned image of reality.⁸⁹ It is with this problem in mind that one must approach the use of foreign diplomatic sources. However many continue to rely on public statements without fully interrogating such sources; for example, Dennis Merrill wrote that 'Indian Government restrictions limited access to official files and manuscript collections for the years after 1946, but published government reports were made readily available.'⁹⁰ Merrill fails to ask why the Government reports were published in the first instance, and fundamentally takes them at face value rather than interrogating their production and purpose.

This thesis employs various materials from India, Britain and the US. Despite the restrictions noted above, the MoEA have released some records to the National Archives of India (NAI) and they represent an invaluable source of primary documents. Little has been released on the issue of the Commonwealth decision, the Colombo Plan, or Indonesia, but there is some information on the Malayan Emergency.⁹¹ These are utilised in conjunction with material from newspapers,

⁸⁷ R.J. McMahon notes that 'Present security restrictions on Indian government documents preclude a full examination of India's decision-making process', in 'Food as a Diplomatic Weapon: The India Wheat Loan of 1951', *Pacific Historical Review* 56 (1987), p. 50.

⁸⁸ See Zins and Boquerat, 'Introduction', in Zins and Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Archives* (New Delhi, 2004).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ Dennis Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India's Economic Development, 1947-1963* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990), p. xiii.

⁹¹ Many requests for files from the NAI catalogue, which is in itself only a partial record of the aggregate materials, are returned with the ubiquitous acronym N.T. 'not transferred', and are still held by the Ministry of External Affairs which refused to release them. Here follows a sample of some of

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public statements and edited series of documents including the *Letters to Chief Ministers* series and the *SWJN*. Nehru's letters to the Chief Ministers provides a narrative of events constructed by Nehru at fortnightly intervals.⁹² These letters not only provide another source with which to build an understanding of Nehru's view, but they also reveals how important he considered international affairs to be in the new Indian state by his assiduous reporting of international events and India's responses to Provincial Governments that had no role in foreign affairs.⁹³

From the UK, the materials available at the National Archives in Kew are used extensively, and in particular files from the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO). The files of the High Commission in New Delhi are used to provide a record of official communications between Britain and India, but also informal communications in the form of personal conversations and meetings. In addition, I have made several successful requests under the Freedom of Information Act, although certain files remain closed as they contain information pertaining to the ongoing situation over Kashmir, and have utilised newly-released files on the Gurkhas.⁹⁴ This research, moreover, augments the departmental records with the private papers of, amongst others Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and Stafford Cripps. By integrating public statement sources and edited collections, reading them with a

the files that I attempted to view: Indonesian Affairs, 114-F.E.A, Vol.II, 1946; Asian Conference on Indonesia, File No. 14 (2)-BII, 1949; Malaya Emergency Regulations: Death Sentence of Shri Sambasivam, 67 (5)-M(M)1949; Recognition of Bao Dai Government, 817-IANZ, 1949; Communism in Malaya, 7(M)SEA/SS(S), 1955; Commonwealth Conference of Foreign Ministers at Colombo, 12/1-XPP, 1950; South East Asia- Communism Spread of in South East Asia, 19(50)-BCI (C), 1949; Report about Gurkha Soldiers in Malaya, 16(3)-N.E.F, 1949 and Files on the Sterling Balances, 33-(93)-U.K. As these files were not consulted they have not been listed in the bibliography.

⁹² The focus of these letters was supposed to be domestic affairs, but foreign affairs often took precedence over domestic issues. The letters provide some real insights in to how Nehru considered India's place in the world, see the chapter W.H. Morris-Jones, 'Shaping the Post-Imperial State: Nehru's Letters to Chief Ministers', in Michael Twaddle (ed.), *Imperialism, the State and the Third World* (London, 1992), pp. 220-241.

⁹³ Also see Dennis Kux, who discusses the importance of the letters for building an understanding of Nehru's thinking, but fails to address the significance of the practice of sending foreign affairs updates to his Chief Ministers, 'America Meets India: Jawaharlal through the Eyes of US Officials', in Max-Jean Zins and Gilles Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 33.

⁹⁴ In a letter of 22 May 2009 the Foreign Office reported that they had made redactions to certain files under Section 23 of the FOI Act 2000 i.e. information supplied by, or relating to, bodies dealing with security matters. Furthermore, certain files will remain closed for a further period of time, and some files will remain closed indefinitely under Section 27(1) of the FOI Act 2000.

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critical eye, alongside materials from the NAI and foreign archives, this thesis demonstrates aspects of India's foreign policies that have until now been overlooked.

As can be seen from the above introduction, previous studies of India's early foreign policy, whilst providing erudite studies of certain topics, have failed to fully explore Indian external affairs in the early years of the Cold War in relation to Southeast Asia and nationalist movements, the Indo-British relationship, or the impact of material and domestic factors, including popular opinion, on the formulation and execution of Indian policy. Through re-examining the early years of India's independence, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of India's foreign policy. Southeast Asia in the context of this study is taken to include everything east of Burma and south of Thailand.⁹⁵ Each case study is now taken in turn, each with its own introduction and conclusion and followed by an overall conclusion.

⁹⁵ For purposes of clarification Southeast Asia is written as here apart from within the context of direct quotations if they differ from this method.

2) The Transfer of Power in India: Inheriting the Raj, c.1945-1948

There are various heated debates on what the Empire bequeathed to its colonies, but one that was of indisputable value to India was the international identity of the Raj. This chapter, therefore, examines the realm of foreign affairs in the process of India's transfer of power, which also provides the contextual framework for a nuanced exposition of India's first foray onto the world stage as an independent nation, and the subject of the next chapter, Indonesia's freedom struggle. This is not an attempt to comprehensively survey India's transfer of power, but rather to elucidate those aspects which had a bearing on the formulation and exercise of India's foreign policy, which have been neglected in the existing historiography.¹ On the contrary, one of the central points of this chapter is to introduce foreign relations during the Interim Government, and to demonstrate how closely linked to sovereignty and independence the exercise of an independent foreign policy was in Congress and Nehru's mind, and the legacy that this provided for future developments.

India's transfer of power produced myriad problems and hurdles to overcome in the administration of both domestic and foreign affairs, and in the establishment or inheritance of the international identity of the two new states created from the Raj. Nehru and the Interim Government pursued building a foreign service and inheriting the international identity of the Raj so that at British departure, India would be able to continue building links with other nations and retain membership of the UN that in turn served to legitimise Congress' position as inheritor state to the British.² The literature on the transfer of power can also benefit from this examination of both the inheritance of the Raj's international personality and Indonesia as it exposes

¹ The academic concentration on the domestic effects of the transfer of power, dominated by the chaos following partition, has obfuscated the international dimensions of the transfer of power, and there is therefore real scope for further research on the external transfer of power. For the two most informative, if somewhat aged, reviews of the literature on the transfer of power see, R. J. Moore, 'The Transfer of Power: An Historiographical Survey', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 9 (1986), pp. 83-95 and H.V. Brasted and C. Bridge, 'The Transfer of Power in South Asia: An Historiographical Review', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 17 (1994), pp. 93-114.

² This examination is not one of the strict history of succession or secession in international law, but rather of the political motives behind Nehru's and Jinnah's approaches.

something of the dynamic in operation between the Government of India (hereafter G.O.I.) and Congress before the Interim Government and then between the Interim Government and the British Government thereafter.

Succession or secession: 'Hindustan' as the international heir of British India

From 1918 to the close of the Second World War, India possessed a fledgling international persona, firmly controlled by the Viceroy and Secretary of State for India to serve the complementary needs of British foreign policy.³ Wartime exigencies, however, necessitated an Indian Agent-General in Washington and Chungking to liaise on wartime issues, and two Indians, both former members of the Viceroy's Executive Council rather than the Indian Political Service (IPS), held these posts.⁴ Moreover, a US Commissioner was appointed in Delhi as well as limited Dominion representation.⁵ This fledgling international personality belonged to British India and was controlled by Britain, but it did ensure that there was a very small number of Indians with experience in the field of external affairs. The war also expanded the scope of Indian interests from being 'circumscribed' to the Indian Ocean, Middle East and Central Asia to include Southeast Asia, the Far East and also the US and Africa, a process that was strengthened at independence as India took

³ India was invited to the Imperial War Conference in 1917; was a signatory of the League of Nations and had a delegation; was a member of the International Labour Organisation and had sent an official delegation to the San Francisco conference in 1945. For more examples see T.T. Poulou, 'India as an Anomalous International Person (1919-1947)', *British Yearbook of International Law* 44 (1970), pp. 204-205. For India and the League of Nations see, T.A. Keenleyside, 'The Indian Nationalist Movement and the League of Nations: Prologue to the United Nations', *India Quarterly* 39 (1983), pp. 281-98.

⁴ Chungking was the Nationalist capital in China and Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan was sent there as India's representative whilst Sir G.S. Bajpai was sent to Washington. Khan subsequently became Foreign Minister of Pakistan, for basic details but little analysis see Terence Creagh Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London, 1971), p. 258.

⁵ J.L. Kember, 'India in the British Commonwealth: The Problem of Diplomatic Representation, 1917-1947', PhD thesis, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1976, p. 139. Australia and India, for example, exchanged High Commissioners in early 1944; responsibility for handling relations was awarded, after debate, to the Department for Indians Overseas which was restyled the Department of Commonwealth Relations. Wavell reported to Amery that, 'So far it has been preoccupied mainly with the grievances of Indians in the Dominions, but in future will have to take a much wider view', Wavell to Amery, 23/3/1944, Doc. 438 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume IV: The Bengal Famine and the New Viceroyalty, 15 June 1943-31 August 1944* (London, 1973), p. 83.

charge of her foreign affairs.⁶

As independence approached in the summer of 1947, partition agreed upon and planning in train, the international repercussions of the decision to divide British India came to the fore.⁷ Nehru forcefully argued to the departing British that 'Hindustan' was the successor state to the international personality of the Raj and should take on all extant international obligations: foreign treaties, recognitions and diplomatic missions.⁸ Nehru employed the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 as his main defence, citing that throughout the negotiations for the transfer of power the only way he was prepared to accept the creation of Pakistan was on the basis of groups of Provinces seceding from India.⁹ Conversely, Jinnah put forward the case that both Hindustan and Pakistan would be completely new states, thus both succeeding rather than just Hindustan's succession. Jinnah emphasised that both states should be seen as independent and equal in every way. This forms an integral part of Jinnah's efforts of 'keeping Indian geography and politics on separate but parallel tracks', in doing so his aim was to contest the Congress' claim to represent all-India and thus inherit the unitary state structure bequeathed by the British colonial state.¹⁰ Whereas for Nehru 'India was continuing in every way the same, and the fact that dissident Provinces were to be allowed to secede must not interrupt the work of the Government of India or its foreign policy.'¹¹

⁶ See 'Conduct of Foreign Affairs Affecting India with an Interim Government in Office', CP (46) 329, 30/8/1946, in CAB 129/12.

⁷ The plan to partition India into two Dominions was agreed on 3 June 1947 by both Congress and the League, the date of British departure was also brought forward by Mountbatten from June 1948 as laid out in Attlee's February statement to August 1947. There is an extensive historiography on the transfer of power, most of it still attempting to trace the origins of partition, but for a general overview see, R.J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire* (London, 1988) and on Attlee's February statement in particular see, Anita Inder Singh, 'Decolonisation in India: The Statement of 20 February 1947', *International History Review* 6 (1984), pp. 191-99.

⁸ First mention of this issue was in a letter from Abell to Turnbull, 5/6/1947 from New Delhi to London, Doc. 76 taken from Mountbatten's Papers, in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume XI: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty announcement and reception of the 3 June plan 31 May-7 July 1947* (London, 1982), p. 144.

⁹ Minutes of 41st Viceroy's Staff Meeting, 10/6/1947, Doc. 126 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume XI*, p. 238.

¹⁰ Also see Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 12-13.

¹¹ Quoted in Viceroy's Personal Report, No. 81, Report of 3rd Meeting of leaders to discuss administrative consequences of partition, 5/6/1947, L/PO/6/123: ff 114-21, IOR.

Nehru's Hindustan approach found support from the British in India and London: as Mountbatten noted to Lord Listowel, Secretary of State for India from April 1947, Jinnah was merely damaging the prospects of Hindustan by objecting to Nehru's view of succession.¹² In asking London for advice on the disadvantages of Jinnah's secessionist idea, Mountbatten opined that it would be easier for Hindustan to inherit all of the international obligations of the Raj.¹³ Furthermore, and telling of the scope of freedom that Nehru had during the Interim Government period, Mountbatten argued that 'all of the diplomatic Representatives of India are nominees of Nehru.'¹⁴ London's favour for Nehru's Hindustan thesis was laced with a modicum of self-interest. The India and Burma Committee received a memorandum by Listowel, which argued that India's overseas representatives were nominees of Nehru, and that 'Hindustan will...take over the machinery of Central Government that is concerned with external relations and will be able to function de facto as the successor Government.'¹⁵ Whereas, if there were two new states then international obligations would lapse and would need to be renegotiated, and as such Britain would not immediately be relieved of its responsibility until treaty positions had been made both politically and practically satisfactory.¹⁶ The British were above all interested in leaving the machinery of government in Indian (Congress) hands to ensure that it had the tools to play its part in the region and the Commonwealth as a democratic, stable nation.¹⁷

Following further entreaties from Mountbatten in support of Nehru's formula, the India Committee deferred to the Viceroy's advice.¹⁸ Such insistence on this matter must be seen within the larger framework of Mountbatten's attempts to leave India as amiable to Britain as possible. Nehru and Mountbatten now pushed London to clarify the position in the drafting of the Independence Bill, arguing that the legislation had to make it as clear as possible which state was the inheritor of

¹² Telegram from Lord Mountbatten to Lord Listowel, 9/6/1947, No. 1358-S, R/3/1/153: f 46, IOR. For biographical details of Listowel see, George Ireland, 'Hare, William Francis, fifth earl of Listowel (1906–1997)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/65196>, accessed 2 Aug 2011].

¹³ Telegram from Lord Mountbatten to Lord Listowel, No. 1358-S, 9/6/1947, R/3/1/153: f 46.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ India and Burma Committee, IB (47) 99, 13/6/1947, L/P&J/10/81: ff 252-4, IOR.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ India was ultimately left in the possession of the representatives and missions abroad.

¹⁸ IB (47) 31, 16/6/1947, L/P&J/10/81: ff 241-50.

British India's international personality.¹⁹ However, as the Foreign Office iterated, it was as much for Britain to formulate the legislation suitably so as to encourage inference of Hindustan as successor as it was for other nations to recognise Hindustan as such, for example in the UN.²⁰ This reasoning did not carry much weight with Congress, which remained insistent that it be made as clear as possible that Hindustan was to all intents and purposes the same internationally legal entity as British India.²¹ The gravity of the disagreement between Jinnah and Nehru was enough to threaten the continuation of the Constituent Assembly, reported Mountbatten, but he was able to mollify Jinnah after assuring the more reasonable Liaquat Ali Khan that the succession of Hindustan would have no impact on the fair division of the financial and capital assets of the Raj.²² Nehru, however, continued insisting to Mountbatten and thus London that 'it should have been made perfectly clear that the international personality of the existing India continues and that India continues to be the parent state exercising all its rights and performing all its obligations under international treaties.'²³ For its part, London had to balance inferring that Hindustan would succeed the Raj with opposition from the Muslim League to any explicit clause in the Independence Bill.²⁴ Listowel reiterated the British position to Mountbatten explaining why London had refused to alter the wording of the Bill despite Congress entreaties. Listowel wrote that it was not for a clause in the Bill to determine the outcome, as much rests on the treatment of the Dominions by international bodies and nations and that the existing provision does give a 'hint' of the 'position as it will in practice be immediately after 15th August.'²⁵ The Independence Bill was left as it stood, the British satisfied that it gave an

¹⁹ Mountbatten to Listowel, No. 1719-S, 3/7/1947, R/3/1/154: ff 22-30, IOR.

²⁰ Listowel to Mountbatten, No. 7893, 19/6/1947, L/P&J/10/81: ff 232-3.

²¹ Congress Comments on Draft Independence Bill, telegram from Mountbatten to Listowel, No 1719-S, 3/7/1947, R/3/1/154: ff 22-30.

²² Telegram from Mountbatten to Listowel, 14/6/1947, Doc. 202 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume XI*, pp. 394-395.

²³ Note from Nehru, telegram from Mountbatten to Listowel, No. 1767-S, 5/7/1947, R/3/1/154: f 84.

²⁴ Telegram from Mountbatten to Listowel, 2/7/1947, Doc. 463 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume XI*, pp. 831-832.

²⁵ Listowel to Mountbatten, 5/7/1947, Doc. 514 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume XI*, p. 907.

inference to other sovereign powers of their opinion as Hindustan as the successor state whilst mollifying Muslim League opposition.²⁶

This succession-secession debate feeds into several larger ones concerning the transfer of power, but it was above all else a symbolic battle for international legitimacy which in turn reinforced Congress as the legitimate heir of domestic authority. Maintaining the international identity, in legal terms, of the British Raj served to validate the new state, anchor it to the past unitary, central authority in the context of partition and also continued the more practical aspects of its pre-existing presence in international affairs and international bodies. Congress had been prepared to sanction partition if it resulted in the maintenance of a strong central apparatus of control, which was essential to quell any provincial regionalism leading to further secession and was also crucial if a programme of economic development was to be effective.²⁷ The failure to prevent the partition of India hardened Nehru's determination to build a strong, unified nation-state without further secessions.²⁸ Inheriting British India's international personality served to reinforce the Congress claim as the successor authority over the central, unitary government of the Raj in the domestic sphere. The inheritance of India's international identity helped to maintain a sense of permanence and continuity in the power, relevance and authority of the centre during the turbulence of partition, which was essential if the newly-created Dominion was to survive in place of the Raj. The possession of the international identity of the undivided India gave the newly-independent nation-state legitimacy for its new politically and territorially contiguous state. In one of the few discussions of the topic, Ayesha Jalal notes 'this minimised the psychological impact

²⁶ The Partition Council reached a similar conclusion on 6 August 1947, but what the Council did was essentially to confirm the decisions already reached by Britain that Nehru's India was the inheritor of the international personality of the Raj. For a brief discussion of this issue, but one that firmly concentrates on international law and thus is devoid of any political/diplomatic analysis, see K.P. Misra, 'Succession of States: Pakistan's Membership in the United Nations', *Canadian Yearbook of International Law* 3 (1965), pp. 283-84. For a somewhat superficial account of the subsequent decisions taken at the UN see Yuri Nasenko, *Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 7. The UN decided that India inherited British India's membership and that Pakistan would have to apply for membership.

²⁷ On the issue of calls for independence in Hindu-Majority provinces and Princely States see, Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 15-16. Jalal fails, however, to explicitly link in the theme of centrally directed development.

²⁸ H. Srikanth and C.J. Thomas make a similar argument in relation to the Naga resistance movement, 'Naga Resistance Movement and the Peace Process in Northeast India', *Peace and Democracy in South Asia* 1 (2005), p. 57.

of partition, allowing the Congress leadership to keep alive the fiction of India's political unity surviving the sub-continental division even after the loss of its geographical integrity had been recognised internationally.'²⁹ To reinforce this, Nehru regularly reported Indian success in the international field to his Chief Ministers in the Provinces, giving them prominence over domestic affairs in many cases despite foreign affairs being a reserved subject for the central government. Nehru maintained this correspondence so that it could serve as a means for the numerous Provinces to associate with the central government in an attempt to bring political legitimacy to the newly-created political unit of India and forestall potentially destructive regionalism.³⁰ Many of these themes are evident in the integration of the Princely States into the Indian Union, and manifest themselves most clearly in the absorption of Hyderabad in 1948. However, there is little discussion of the impact of foreign policy and India's international personality in these processes.³¹

Nehru's idea of succession was not limited to those areas formally part of British India, but also extended to the nominally independent Princely States over which British paramountcy (akin to suzerainty) would lapse with the transfer of power, but would not be transferred to either of the new Dominions.³² Nehru was adamant that no Princely States should be awarded diplomatic status by foreign

²⁹ Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia*, p. 16.

³⁰ For an example of a scholar who employs the letters but fails to ask why they were being written see, Dennis Kux, 'America meets India: Jawaharlal Nehru through the Eyes of US Officials', in Max-Jean Zins and Gilles Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 33.

³¹ The integration, or lack thereof, did of course give rise to one of India's most intractable foreign policy issues, Kashmir. Patel made it abundantly clear to the Princes that for the future of a secure, stable and prosperous India there is no other option than cooperation, 'By common endeavour, we can raise the country to a new greatness while lack of unity will expose us to fresh calamities...[the] alternative to co-operation in the general interests is anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a common ruin.' Patel's Historic Statement on Policy and Programme of State Department, 5/7/1947, in Prabha Chopra (ed.), *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Volume 12, 1st January 1947-31 December 1947* (New Delhi, 1998), pp. 121-122. Patel emphasised to the Princes that 'This is a priceless opportunity in the history of our country. If we work shoulder to shoulder we will reach the country at the top most greatness, but if we do not get united, we will invite new troubles.' Patel in Statement to the rulers of the Princely States, 5/7/1947 in *ibid.*, pp. 122-124.

³² Ronald Hyam gives the figure of 560 Princely States in *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 5 and Ian Copland gives the figure of approximately 600, also see Copland for the most up-to-date and exhaustive account of the Princes in the transfer of power in *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 8.

states, which would undermine his claim for a territorially contiguous India as the successor state.³³ With the lapsing of paramountcy, the Princely States, in essence, were expected to choose to accede to either of the two Dominions, and if diplomatic status was awarded to them this would serve to highlight the fissiparous tendencies of the subcontinent rather than the Indian Union that Nehru envisaged.³⁴ Nehru's feelings on this subject ran high in the last months of the Raj, as he histrionically accused the Political Department of 'operation scuttle'; Nehru wrote to Mountbatten that paramountcy did not lapse, but was inherited by the successor government.³⁵ This was one legacy that the British refused to allow to succeed to Nehru's India, and each Princely State had the right to accede to one of the Dominions with the centre taking responsibility for defence, communications and foreign affairs only.³⁶ In this

³³ Bhagavan makes the interesting argument that 'Nehru saw in the process of Indian consolidation both a microcosm of and a prototype for what he hoped to see transpire on the world stage, that Nehru saw the integration of India in the shadow of the UN, and he linked the process of Indian Unionisation with global, rights-based government – the new India would have to exist in line with what the UN was going to be.' Manu Bhagavan, 'Princely States and the Making of Modern India: Internationalism, Constitutionalism and the Postcolonial Moment', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 46 (2009), p. 430.

³⁴ Sir Aubrey Metcalfe reported to Chatham House that if multiple successor states emerged 'if the fragmentation went further, the position would become even more complicated, and foreign relations would assume a shape found only in the Balkans.' in 'India's Foreign Relations Now and in the Future', *International Affairs* 21 (1945), p. 491. One such example of a Princely state threatening independence was that of the territorially and demographically significant state of Hyderabad under the Nizam, who was the the most senior of the Indian princes, entitled to the coveted 21-gun salute and usually a key supporter of the British. The Nizam had appointed a Trade Commissioner in London who was himself was on his way to Paris to discuss the establishment of diplomatic relations after the lapse of paramountcy. See the article by Copland for details of Hyderabad, 'Lord Mountbatten and the Integration of the Indian States: A Reappraisal', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21 (1993), p. 393. For more on Hyderabad see V.P. Menon, *Integration of the Indian States* (Bombay, 1961); for the Telengana movement see, Barry Pavier, *The Telengana Movement, 1944-1951* (New Delhi, 1981); Simon C. Smith, 'Conflicting Commitments: Britain and the Portuguese Possessions in India, 1847-1961', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* XX (1997), pp. 17-34 and see Taylor C. Sherman, 'The Integration of the Princely State of Hyderabad and the Making of the Postcolonial State in India, 1948-56', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 44 (2007), pp. 489-515 for an article that attempts to demonstrate the impact of Hyderabad on the formation of the Indian state and its formative experience with the inherited colonial state apparatus.

³⁵ Gopal reports that on this occasion, as Mountbatten recalled in an interview with the author that 'In fact, as usual he completely lost control of himself' in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1889-1947, Volume One* (London, 1975), p. 360.

³⁶ V.P. Menon provided this three-subject-transfer solution once Mountbatten's attention had been turned to the problem of the Princes in June/July 1947, see Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 254. There has been relatively little written about the Princely/Indian States as partition claims the lion's share of historical inquiry, but see the article by Ian Copland, 'Lord Mountbatten and the Integration of the Indian States: A Reappraisal'; the above book by Copland; V.P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Bombay, 1961); R.J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Atlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 290-314; Sir Conrad Corfield, 'Some Thoughts on British Policy and the Indian States, 1935-47', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds), *The Partition of India: Policies and*

context the integration of the States can be seen as an act of foreign policy as they were sovereign bodies.

The Princely States were integrated into an Indian Union that needed to claim legitimacy - to create some form of territorially contiguous and recognisable 'India'-part of the identity of this new state is found in the foreign policy ideals espoused, but not always followed by Nehru. The attempt to create and develop a broad foreign policy was very much a part of the larger process of shaping a new India from the legacy of the Raj and needs to be seen within this context. Indonesia, for example, was a rallying point reflecting India's new sovereignty, emphasising the point both to Indians and to the international community at large. Nehru revealed how closely related he considered Indian foreign policy and India's image abroad when during a Constituent Assembly debate he commented that 'external publicity is so intimately aligned with external policy that normally every country has its external publicity organised by its Foreign Office.'³⁷

Nehru sought to control the international identity, and to preserve as much as possible the territorial scope, of the Raj by integrating the Princely states into India. This exercise provides further evidence of the intention to employ India's external identity as a means to integrate diverse states and areas into the Indian Union.³⁸ Foreign policy, or the presentation of India's external persona based on certain principles, was one integral part of the 'Nehruvian' state and served as a means to help unify the amorphous and multifarious state created by the British departure. Congress' commitment to creating a geographically contiguous state led Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to 'absorb' Hyderabad, the largest intransigent state not to have acceded to the Union, in 1948. Nehru and Patel also secured the return of some

Perspectives, 1935-1947 (London, 1970), pp. 527-534; E.W.R. Lumby, 'British Policy Towards the Indian States, 1940-7', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives, 1935-1947* (London, 1970), pp. 95-103 and H.V. Hodson, 'The Role of Lord Mountbatten', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives, 1935-1947* (London, 1970), pp. 117-126.

³⁷ Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 15/3/1948, in *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi, 1961), p. 237.

³⁸ Neville Maxwell makes a similar argument but only applies it to Kashmir: 'the acquisition of Kashmir for India was to Nehru the validation of the pan-Indian or geographical concept of nationalism which he described as "secular" - a concrete refutation of the "two-nation theory" under which Pakistan had come into existence.', 'Jawaharlal Nehru: Of Pride and Principle', *Foreign Affairs* 52 (1974), p. 637.

French *loges* and began to negotiate the return of French and Portuguese settlements in India.³⁹

One further demonstration of the importance of international affairs in the pre-independence period is that of the Asian Relations Conference (ARC), which is in turn used in the construction of the narrative leading to Bandung.⁴⁰ Following his South-East Asian tour, on which Gopal argues the initial suggestion came from Aung San of Burma, Nehru used the Council in March 1946 to promote the idea of an Asian gathering on Indian soil, although he stood down as the chair of conference organising committee.⁴¹ With the formation of the Interim Government and Nehru's installation as member for External Affairs, the Indian Council of World Affairs announced its intention to hold an Inter-Asian Relations conference in Delhi in either February or March of 1947.⁴² Reflecting Jinnah's frustration with succession-secession, *Dawn*, the organ of the Muslim League, denounced the ARC as an ill-conceived attempt on the part of Congress to impose Hindu imperialism over the continent, especially those Muslim nations fighting for freedom from the British.⁴³ For Nehru, the ARC was designed as a demonstration of India's place within the world, and within the region, with the coming of independence, but it was neither an

³⁹ The *loges* were old trading posts and sites of factories of the French East India Company, Nehru unofficially asked Prime Minister George Bidault if they could be ceded as a sign of goodwill to India and as they no longer had any value of strategic significance. Bidault agreed and they were transferred on 6 October 1947, see Gilles Boquerat, 'France's Political Interactions with India through Quai d'Orsay Archives (1947-1972) in Max-Jean Zins and Gilles Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 14. The return of larger French possessions was negotiated between India and France in the 1950s, for a narrative account see, A.J. Dastur, 'India and Foreign Possessions in India', in M.S. Rajan (ed.), *India's Foreign Relations During the Nehru Era: Some Studies* (Bombay and New York, 1976), pp. 166-198. The case of the return of Portuguese enclaves, Goa being the largest, falls well outside the remit of this thesis, but see chapter two in the recent thesis by Paul M. McGarr, 'Anglo-American Relations with South Asia under the Kennedy and Macmillan Governments, 1961-63', PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2008. Also see the article by Smith, 'Conflicting Commitments: Britain and the Portuguese Possessions in India, 1847-1961', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 20 (1997), pp. 17-34.

⁴⁰ For two recent examples see Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World A New Press People's History* (New York and London, 2007) and to a lesser extent Abraham Itty, 'From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947-65', *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 46 (2008), pp. 195-219.

⁴¹ Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Volume One, 1889-1947*, p. 308 and 'Linking the Culture of Nine Nations', reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 14/1/1947, p. 8.

⁴² For overviews see G.H Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London, 1966); David Kimiche, *The Afro-Asia Movement: Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World* (Tel Aviv, 1973) and Tilman Remme, 'Britain, the 1947 Asian Relations Conference, and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia', in A. Gorst, L. Johnman and W. Scott Lucas (eds), *Post-War Britain, 1945-64: Themes and Perspectives* (London, 1989), pp. 109-134.

⁴³ See reports in Despatch No. 36, UKHC New Delhi to Cabinet Office, 25/4/1947, DO 35/2246.

attempt to establish some form of Hindu empire, nor was it to form an anti-colonial platform or bloc. What the conference revealed was Nehru's trepidation and unwillingness, to support without reservation all nationalist movements that requested assistance. The principle of anti-colonialism was not to be applied to situations in reality in all cases. What needs to be recognised about Indian foreign policy in these early years after independence is that it was to a certain extent a process of translating core principles imagined whilst an anti-colonial platform to the realities of international affairs.

Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Chairman of the Organising Committee, sent the official invitations to the various governments. These invitations were then passed to unofficial delegates from relevant organisations with similar remits to the Indian Council of World Affairs. Naidu reported to the governments that 'At the suggestions of many eminent persons in India and outside, the Indian Council of World Affairs, which is a non-political body devoted to the promoting of international understanding and co-operation, has decided to organise an Inter-Asian Relations Conference consisting of representatives from all Asian Countries.'⁴⁴ The aim of the conference was to review the position of Asia in the post-war world, exchange ideas on all-Asia problems and study ways of promoting closer contacts between invited countries.⁴⁵ The ARC was a clarion call for Asian nations and colonies to self-identify themselves as such and to enter into dialogue. The ARC was not a demand for the immediate end of colonialism, it did not adopt damning resolutions, but it was a call for the increasing dialogue, communication and co-operation between Asians.⁴⁶ As Gopal put it 'the broad purpose of the Bandung Conference, in line with the Asian Relations Conference at New Delhi in 1947, should be to reassert the importance of Asia and Africa in the world.'⁴⁷ The ARC certainly achieved its aim, as it influenced US responses to Indonesia by securing more support for Indonesia than would otherwise have been awarded. A memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs (Villard) read in part that the ARC

⁴⁴ Letter from Mrs Sarojini Naidu to Chief Secretary to the Government of Singapore, 12/9/1946, CO 537/ 2092.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Jansen rightly places much emphasis on the fact that the ARC set out at the first meeting, under Nehru's guidance, that no resolutions were to be adopted, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, p. 53.

⁴⁷ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956, Volume Two* (London, 1979), p. 238.

‘clearly indicated desire for greater integration of Asian countries to protect Asian interests against domination by western powers. American indifference or opposition to Indonesian cause will strengthen the move toward Asiatic federation which might be detached or even antagonistic toward the western democracies.’⁴⁸

The ownership of the foreign affairs portfolio served several domestic purposes for Nehru: it enabled him to claim an area of expertise in which he was the unrivalled voice of Congress and by extension India. This also reinforced his position within Congress by providing him with an area over which he had uncontested power in contrast to the power wielded by Patel and his right-wing followers in Congress.⁴⁹ For Nehru, these two episodes of succession and accession were also partly about acquiring all the accoutrements of nationhood. Claiming to be the true successor state to the Raj served to legitimate India as the true heir of the nationalist struggle as opposed to Pakistan, and simultaneously to place Congress at the centre of the new state. However, without the skeleton of an Indian foreign office, there was little utility in inheriting the international personality of the Raj.

The Need to Build a Foreign Service

When Nehru became the member for External Affairs in the Interim Government from September 1946, he took over a portfolio that needed to create and develop the administrative and physical instruments for exercising its duties, which had hitherto been a predominantly British, and largely regional affair.⁵⁰ The Viceroy headed the Department and the IPS (a wing of the Indian Civil Service, ICS), which W. Murray Hogben described as an ‘elite British service’ of roughly 30 per cent ICS

⁴⁸ Villard to Counselor (Bohlen), 29/7/1947, 501.BC/7-2947, *FRUS* Volume 6, 1947, p. 994.

⁴⁹ This point is particularly pertinent when examined in conjunction with arguments like those of S. Corbridge and J. Harriss that Patel had at least much, if not more, authority than Nehru, in *Reinventing India: Liberalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 44.

⁵⁰ For the regional boundaries of colonial foreign affairs see, J. Onley, ‘The Raj Reconsidered: British India’s Informal Empire and Spheres of Influence in Asia and Africa’, *Asian Affairs* 40 (2009), pp. 44-62; W. Murray Hogben, ‘An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianisation of the Indian Political Service’, *Modern Asian Studies* 15 (1981), pp. 751-769 and R.J. Blyth, ‘Britain versus India in the Persian Gulf: The struggle for political control, c.1928-48’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 28 (2000), pp. 90-111. Judith M. Brown also notes the underdevelopment of India’s foreign service in ‘Nehru – the Dilemmas of a Colonial Inheritance’, in J. Düllffer and M. Frey (eds), *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 188.

officers and 70 per cent Indian Army Officers (reflecting the frontier aspect of the Department's role).⁵¹

The Department remained firmly in the hands of British members of the IPS, despite the larger process of Indianisation prescribed by the Lee Commission's recommendations of 50 per cent of annual recruitment for Indians and as Kember notes that 'a greater number of officers of the Department were British than in a department not reserved for the Viceroy.'⁵² Lord Bentinck's aphorism of the early

⁵¹ Hogben, 'An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianisation of the Indian Political Service', p. 752. Sir Olaf Caroe recounts in his unpublished biographical manuscript that each year approximately 5 men chosen to join the IPS: 2 from the ICS and 2-3 from the Indian Army. Caroe also notes that there was no direct recruitment for the IPS, it was strictly by invitation only, 'Five Autobiographical Narratives of Sir Olaf Caroe', MSS EUR.C. 273/1-5, IOR.

⁵² The Commission was charged with examining the superior public services. Also see 'Conduct of Foreign Affairs Affecting India with an Interim Government in Office', CP (46) 329, 30/8/1946, CAB 129/12 by the Foreign Office, which reads in part that the Department 'though increasingly Indianised over the past twenty years, still contains a great majority of British officers.' Indianisation remains a neglected area of study in terms of the operation of the late imperial period; British longer-term planning (if any existed); the Transfer of Power and the institutional inheritance that India was bequeathed. However, for a starting point and for a discussion of the Lee Commission see David C. Potter, 'Manpower Shortage and the End of Colonialism: The Case of the Indian Civil Service', *Modern Asian Studies* 7 (1973), p. 56. Potter's article argues that the British had to withdraw from India after the war due to an insufficient supply of European men on whom they could rely to continue their rule; an insufficiency that developed over the last 30 years of the Raj and independently of the nationalist movement. The argument, however, fails to look closely enough at whether the British could trust those Indian members that it was predominantly composed of by 1945. Also see Kember, 'India in the British Commonwealth: The Problem of Diplomatic Representation, 1917-1947', p. 43 in particular and Hogben, 'An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianisation of the Indian Political Service', p. 756. One of the most concise and informative narratives can be found in *The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930* (London, 1965, first published 1931) by an old ICS member, L.S.S. O'Malley at the start of the 1930s and for the ICS as a whole see Philip Woodruff's two narrative volumes, *The Men Who Ruled India: The Founders* (London, 1953) and *The Men Who Ruled India: The Guardians* (London, 1954), which were also published in an abridged version under the alias Philip Mason, *The Men who Ruled India* (London, 1985). In one of the few accounts that attempt to link the process of Indianisation to the transfer of power see, Peter Robb who argues that manpower shortages meant that informal Indianisation of the ICS as a whole had taken place before the turn of the century, a process that was officially endorsed by the Public Service (Islington) Commission of 1917, which proposed 25 per cent of higher Government posts for Indians, and was further reinforced by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1918 which suggested that one third of senior positions should be given to Indians, Peter Robb, *A History of India* (London, 2002), p. 155 and T.H. Beaglehole, 'From Rulers to Servants: The ICS and the British Demission of Power in India', *Modern Asian Studies* 11 (1977), p. 239. The Lee Commission of 1923 adopted the ratio of 40 per cent European, 40 per cent Indian and 20 per cent from promotions from Provincial service which would provide for roughly 50:50 by 1939. By 1922 there were already simultaneous examinations in London and Delhi. However, neither the Islington Commission, the Lee Commission, nor the 1908 Hobhouse Commission on Decentralisation really touched the Political Service, see Hogben, 'An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianisation of the Indian Political Service', p. 756 and O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930*, chapter 9. There were significant peaks and troughs in European recruitment in the interwar periods. Recruitment was suspended by 1943 and at the start of 1947 there were 510 Indians to 429 Europeans, although these figures provided by Potter fail to reveal the relative seniority or departmental location of ICS members, see David C. Potter, *India's Political*

nineteenth century, therefore, still held true 100 years later when he wrote of the ICS that the Government had 'the iron hand of power on the one side, monopoly and exclusion on the other.'⁵³ Indianisation was slow, inconsistent, rarely met quotas, and the majority of those recruited went to the NWFP, rather than the Indian (Princely) States or farther afield.⁵⁴ As with the defence and finance ministries, the 1935 Government of India Act continued the practice of diarchy in ensuring that foreign affairs remained firmly wedded to British control of central government.⁵⁵ The British Government handled India's wider foreign affairs within the context of empire defence and to ensure a fundamental complementarity between the two.⁵⁶

Administrators From ICS to IAS (New Delhi, 1996), p. 69. For further accounts of the Indianisation of the ICS see, Clive Dewey, 'The Education of a Ruling Caste: The Indian Civil Service in the Era of Competitive Examination', *English Historical Review* 88 (1973), pp. 262-285; Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1993); Benjamin Zachariah, 'Rewriting Imperial Mythologies: The Strange Case of Penderel Moon', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 24 (2001), pp. 53-72 and Arudra Burra, 'The Indian Civil Service and the Nationalist Movement: Neutrality, Politics and Continuity, in *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 48 (2010), pp. 404-432. For an account of the IPS by an old IPS hand see, Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London, 1971). For a contemporary Indian take on events see the political pamphlet, 'The Public Services in India', by Hirday Nath Kunzru published by the Servants of India Society, Allahabad, 1917.

⁵³ Lord Bentinck cited in O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930*, p. 205.

⁵⁴ Indian labourers abroad, of which there were approximately four million, was not in the remit of the department as their needs fell under the scope of the Department of Education, Health and Land where Sir G.S. Bajpai learned the ropes of the ICS. The four million is a 1947 estimate by Hyam in, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968*, p. 8; also see K.P.S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography* (London, 1965), p. 134. The Department of Indians Overseas was created in 1941 and was subsequently restyled the Department for Commonwealth Relations in 1944. For a general account of the Department's work during the Raj see, P.J. Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Ohio, 2005).

⁵⁵ The most insightful and authoritative account of the 1935 Government of India Act is provided by Carl Bridge, who debunks the orthodox myth that power was transferred to India as part of a long-term British blueprint: *Holding India to the Empire: the British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi, 1986). Instead limited power was devolved to the Provincial level whilst retaining the unitary centre firmly in British hands and outside the realms of political discussion. In a similar vein also see P.G. Robb, *The Government of India and Reform: Policies Towards Politics and Constitution, 1916-1927* (London, 1976) and B.R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj* (London, 1976) and also Corbridge and Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* in which it is argued that the 1935 continued the process of steering nationalist politicians and politics away from the centre towards the Provinces, p. 7. The G.O.I. emphasised its continued control in negotiations with the Foreign Office over certain responsibilities in the Persian Gulf, see Blyth, 'Britain versus India in the Persian Gulf: The struggle for political control, c.1928-48', p. 97.

⁵⁶ Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, Foreign Secretary of the G.O.I. in the late 1930s, described the relationship thus, 'His Majesty's Government is the ultimate controlling authority of all relations between India and foreign countries, but in practice the Government of India, as subordinate authority, offers advice and to a certain extent pays the piper', see address given by Sir Aubrey Metcalf on 24 April 1945 in, 'India's Foreign Relations Now and in the Future', *International Affairs* 21 (1945), p. 485. Metcalfe was Caroe's predecessor at the Department of External Affairs and although he was more than able he left little impression on Caroe who described Metcalfe as 'a Carthusian, a good scholar, and the writer

K.P.S. Menon was one of the few Indians to enter the realm of India's external relations before 1939, and was the first Indian assigned to one of the two main sections of the then-called Foreign and Political Department as Deputy Secretary in 1925.⁵⁷ The 'Political' of the Foreign and Political referred to relations with the approximately 560 Princely states in India, and the 'Foreign', to which Menon was allocated, handled external affairs.⁵⁸ It was during his time in X section that Menon 'realised how little the Government of India under British rule was concerned with the world.'⁵⁹

Within the context of war, there had been suggestions from the G.O.I. in 1941-42 and again in 1945 that Indians become more fully involved in foreign affairs. Wavell, his predecessor Lord Linlithgow having been unwilling to countenance such a development, wrote to L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, in the autumn of 1944 reporting that he and Olaf Caroe (Secretary of External Affairs Department) had been discussing the wisdom of employing more Indians in diplomatic posts abroad, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan.⁶⁰ Wavell

of prose English in a most beautiful hand. He was also ambitious. But he lacked the creative urge, and was pre-eminently the staff officer on the civil side who oiled the wheels...It followed that, while nothing much went wrong or rusty in his time, there was nothing very memorable to record.' See 'Five Autobiographical Narratives of Sir Olaf Caroe', MSS EUR.C. 273/1-5, p. 82, IOR. Ernest Bevin reported to Cabinet on the implications of an Interim Government, 'there has, therefore, up to the present, been no difficulty in securing the recognition of the fundamental unity, under His Majesty's Government's control, of British and Indian foreign policy', see 'Conduct of Foreign Affairs Affecting India with an Interim Government in Office', CP (46) 329, 30/8/1946 in CAB 129/12.

⁵⁷ The Foreign and Political Department was renamed the External Affairs Department in 1937. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography*, p. 134; Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia*, p. 31 and Kember, 'India in the British Commonwealth: The Problem of Diplomatic Representation, 1917-1947', p. 47.

⁵⁸ Menon's Foreign section was further divided between F – the NWFP, Afghanistan and Nepal; N – the Near East; and X – the rest of the world.

⁵⁹ Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography*, p. 138. Coen provides the following description of the responsibilities of the service, which 'had three roles: diplomacy in the States, administration on the Frontier, and consular functions in limitrophe countries' in Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule*, p. 260.

⁶⁰ Wavell to Amery, 28/8/1944, Doc. 674 in Mansergh (ed.) with Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume IV*, p. 1230. Also see, Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia*, pp. 31-34. Caroe had in fact received a proposal from one of the few Indians in his service, at the time Deputy Secretary, A.S.B. Shah, who proposed a 50 per cent Indianisation of the External Affairs Department. His idea received the endorsement of Caroe and his Viceroy's Study Group, an informal body of British officials concerned with the future position of Indian in geostrategic and geopolitical terms, Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia*, p. 32. For another example of the literature produced during the war years see 'American Policy in Asia', a memorandum by Guy Wint with a comment by Sir G.S. Bajpai, dated 24/1/1943, L/P&S/12/726, IOR. Guy Wint continued to write on India for the remainder of his life especially in the *Manchester Guardian*. For accounts of L.S. Amery see, Wm.

argued that 'sooner or later India will have to run her own Foreign Service, and it is most desirable that we should gradually build up a cadre of Indian officials with diplomatic training.'⁶¹

The twin issues of Indian personnel and India's overseas representations converged around the figure of G.S. Bajpai, the Indian Agent-General in Washington, who serves as an example of the increasing British awareness of the need for trained Indians in foreign stations.⁶² Lords Halifax (British Ambassador in

Roger Louis, *In the Name of God Go!: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* (New York, 1992); L.S. Amery, John Barnes and David Nicholson, *The Empire and Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries, 1929-1945* (London, 1988) and Deborah Lavin, 'Amery, Leopold Charles Maurice Stennett (1873-1955)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30401>, accessed 4 Aug 2011]. Sir Olaf is an extremely interesting character who on leaving India produced one of the fundamental texts on geo-strategy and the paramountcy of the Middle East, *Wells of Power* (London, 1951). Also see Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia*; Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* (London, 2006); Katherine Prior, 'Caroe, Sir Olaf Kirkpatrick Kruuse (1892-1981)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30901>, accessed 5 Sept 2011] and 'Five Autobiographical Narratives of Sir Olaf Caroe', MSS EUR.C. 273/1-5, IOR.

⁶¹ Wavell to Amery, 28/8/1944, Doc. 674 in Mansergh (ed.) with Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume IV*, p. 1230. Amery was receptive and suggested that an Indian may head up Kabul when current First Secretary left, but the Foreign Office raised objections. See Amery's reply to Wavell, 28/9/1944, Doc. 25 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume V: The Simla Conference, Background and Proceedings, 1 September 1944-28 July 1945* (London, 1974), pp. 50-52.

⁶² The Agent-General was a wartime post to assist in the co-ordination of the war effort. An ICS man of the highest calibre, Bajpai had been appointed to Lord Balfour's team for the Washington Naval Conference in 1922 and in 1941, as Whitehall authorised overseas representation by an Indian, was sent as Agent-General to Washington. See Joint War Cabinet Memorandum by L.S. Amery and A. Eden, WP (44) 221, 24/4/1944, R/30/1/4: FF 56-9, IOR and Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of Partition*, p 115, but he warned the book, written by an ADC to Viceroy Mountbatten is both selective and creative in its source base and borders on fanciful/conspiracy theory territory. Also see Olaf Caroe, 'Bajpai, Sir Girja Shankar (1891-1954)', rev. B.R. Nanda, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30544>, accessed 3 Jan 2010]. Apart from this examination by Caroe there is a palpable lack of literature on G.S. Bajpai, the man who assisted Nehru in the various positions, for example see, R.J. Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1987), p. 201. Also see Bajpai's obituary in *The Times of India*, 'Centre Pays Tribute to Late Mr. Bajpai: Ideal Civilian and Builder of India's Foreign Service', 7/12/1954, p. 7. This absence is especially noticeable in comparison to the scholarly and public interest in V.K. Krishna Menon who is the protagonist in several articles and biographies; for example T.J.S. George's hagiographic, *Krishna Menon: A Biography* (London, 1964) and more recently Paul M. McGarr, "'A Serious Menace to Security": British Intelligence, V.K. Krishna Menon and the Indian High Commission in London, 1947-1952', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 38 (2010), pp. 441-69 and "'India's Rasputin": V.K. Krishna Menon and Anglo-American Misperceptions of Indian Foreign Policy Making, 1947-1964', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 22 (2011), pp. 239-260; also see Katherine Prior, 'Menon, (Vengalil Krishnan) Krishna (1896-1974)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31437>, accessed 27 Feb 2010] and Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World* (Oxford, 1968). Under the auspices of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Suhash Chakravarty has also produced a hagiographical

Washington), Wavell and Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary) argued in concert for the raising of Bajpai's profile in Washington and reasoned that by giving him his own mission independent of the British and Ministerial rank they could take 'steps now to place India on the world stage, at least, as a Dominion with an independent diplomatic voice.'⁶³ In fact, Bajpai had been treated very much like Dominion representatives in Washington.⁶⁴ Advocating their course of action, they reasoned that it was 'better to take the present opportunity to train Indian diplomatists under British guidance...than to be rushed at a later stage.'⁶⁵ Wavell's commitment to improving India's representation abroad, and its twin result of increasing the number of suitably trained diplomats, also found expression in his Simla proposals of June 1945, which were ultimately rejected by Indian nationalists.⁶⁶ The newly-elected Labour Government eventually decided to allow the change after prompting by Ernest Bevin (Foreign Secretary) and Pethick-Lawrence (Secretary of State for India); the US, however, failed to award any changes in status whilst the constitutional position in India was unclear and so the plans failed due to American refusal rather than British intransigence.⁶⁷ Postponement did not dampen Wavell's

account of Krishna Menon's contributions to India, 'V.K. Krishna Menon', *Indian Horizons* 45 (1998), pp. 45-51. Further research is needed is a study examining the role and influence of Bajpai in the larger framework of India's foreign policy, which can only add to our understanding of the dynamic of policy and decision-making under Nehru.

⁶³ 'Indian Minister at Washington' Joint War Cabinet Memorandum by L.S. Amery and A. Eden, WP (44) 221, 24/4/1944, CAB 66/49/21.

⁶⁴ For an example see 'The Prime Minister's Meeting with Dominions Representatives in Washington', WP (43) 430, 5/10/1943, CAB 66/41/30.

⁶⁵ 'Indian Minister at Washington' Joint War Cabinet Memorandum by L.S. Amery and A. Eden, WP (44) 221, 24/4/1944, CAB 66/49/21.

⁶⁶ See Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 5/8/1945, Doc. 4 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI: The Post-War Phase: New Moves by the Labour Government, 1 August 1945-22 March 1946* (London, 1976), p. 27. Part of the British offer to Indian nationalists was to diplomatically upgrade the Washington and Chungking Missions. The proposal in Cabinet, however, had to be postponed to a later date pending Halifax's return to London for consultations, but the significance of the episode derives from the fact that there was an awareness that past actions had resulted in a dearth of suitable men for an Indian foreign corps. See Discussion of WP (44) 221, in WM (44) 74th Conclusions, 9/6/1944, CAB 65/42/32.

⁶⁷ See 'Indian Diplomatic Representation in Washington', Memorandum by Pethick-Lawrence, CP (45) 147, 4/9/1945, CAB 129/1. The Cabinet agreed to the upgrading of both the Washington and the Chungking stations, CM (45) 38th Conclusions, 4/10/1945, CAB 128/1 and see India and Burma Committee Paper, IB (46) 10, 22/1/1946, Doc. 375 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI*, pp. 836-37. It is hard not to come to the conclusion that progress towards this end point would have been swifter if Churchill had not been so anti-Indian: Amery accused Churchill of having a 'Hitler like attitude' to India, see Wavell's diary entry for 7/9/1944, in Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Oxford, 1997), p. 89. For biographical details of Pethick-Lawrence see Brian Harrison, 'Lawrence, Frederick William Pethick-, Baron Pethick-Lawrence (1871-1961)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 43

enthusiasm for developing talent as he appointed a delegation for the San Francisco conference on the UN, and concluded with alacrity that 'I think the experience has been good for them.'⁶⁸

With the inexorable approach of independence, within a context of relative administrative and practical ignorance, and with the process of establishing international representation underway, the task fell on the existing Indians that had gathered experience in the field, and the departing British, to begin to design and construct a foreign service, both in Delhi and in missions throughout the world.⁶⁹ It is difficult, however, to ascertain who most influenced its early development through lack of documentary evidence, but Menon, Krishna Menon and Lord Trevelyan all claim some part.⁷⁰ However, as in the case of a foreign service, this deficiency obscures the fact that much of Nehru's predominance in directing India's foreign police resulted from the absence of a fully developed professional foreign service.

In terms of personnel, the vast majority of British officials left India as power passed to Congress, as did many of the Muslim members of the ICS, and thus to a large degree personnel continuity was broken.⁷¹ British practice and institutional continuity was, however, to remain as Nehru decided on the British system of career diplomats, and an initial three dozen ICS officers were picked to form the core of the new Ministry.⁷² But of these, only Bajpai, Menon and two others had any prior in-

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35491>, accessed 2 Aug 2011] and for Bevin see Lord Bullock's, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-51* (Oxford, 1983).

⁶⁸ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence (now Secretary of State for India), 5/8/1945, Doc. 4 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI*, p. 32.

⁶⁹ Also see Kember, 'India in the British Commonwealth: The Problem of Diplomatic Representation, 1917-1947', p. 71.

⁷⁰ Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography*, p. 274, George, *Krishna Menon: A Biography*, p. 142, and Humphrey Trevelyan, *The India We Left* (London, 1972), p. 243. The very physical administrative demands of the transfer of power in terms of building the missing components of the instruments of states are palpably absent in the current literature.

⁷¹ Trevelyan informs us that Nehru was in fact very accepting of the British that worked under him, and even asked them to stay on. Nehru, Trevelyan reported, harboured no bitterness, see Trevelyan, *The India We Left*, p. 242. For a brief overview of some of the legacies of administrative partition see, Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, pp. 1-29 in particular and also see the various volumes of the *Transfer of Power* series.

⁷² Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography*, p. 274. Manning the foreign service was of such importance to Nehru that Provincial governments were asked to spare suitable men, those with knowledge of foreign languages and countries, in January 1947 and fifteen Emergency Commissioned Officers were immediately enrolled into the new foreign service, reported in US Embassy New Delhi to Washington, Despatch No. 1015, 25/3/1947, 745.00/3-2547, RG 59, NARA. Also see the enclosed article *The Statesman*, 'India to Have Diplomatic Service', 27/9/1946.

depth experience of diplomatic relations, and so it was with the task of organising this new Ministry that much of Menon's time as foreign secretary was spent. The quantity, not the quality of those men available to manage India's foreign affairs, was the issue and not as Bandyopadhyaya's argues that the 'ICS, princely, and Sandhurst generation of men...were not properly qualified...for the appreciation and implementation of the bold and imaginative foreign and defence policies pursued by Nehru.'⁷³

Bajpai's experience was considered invaluable to an independent India, and despite having earned criticism in India for his perceived role in anti-India propaganda in the US during the war and having been a key collaborator with the British by serving on the Viceroy's Executive Council, Nehru invited Bajpai to become the most senior civil servant in the MoEA.⁷⁴ Nehru passed up Menon for the pro-Western Bajpai, as Secretary-General of the MoEA shortly after the transfer of power as his experience, skills as a diplomat and a chronic shortage of trained men trumped past transgressions.⁷⁵ Bajpai was also well-respected in Britain and the US and had a history of personal relationships forged during his years of service; for

⁷³ J. Bandyopadhyaya, *The Making of India's Foreign Policy: Determinants, Institutions, Processes and Personalities* (Revised edn, New Delhi, 1980), p. 319.

⁷⁴ See letter from Nehru to Menon, 12/10/1947, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru Second Series, Volume 4* (New Delhi, 1986), pp. 583-584. Also see the recent article Burra, 'The Indian Civil Service and the Nationalist Movement: Neutrality, Politics and Continuity', pp. 404-432. Trevelyan wrote about Bajpai that he 'earned the respect of British and Americans during his service in Washington. He conducted himself with dignity and honesty tempered by adroitness' for which 'he was abused by his countrymen' see Trevelyan, *The India We Left*, p. 238. Also see Josef Korbel who noted that Bajpai was 'a small man with a shy smile, perfect manners, and ivory-cut hands, with the English of Shakespeare.' Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir* (Princeton, 1954), p. 123.

⁷⁵ Trevelyan, *The India We Left*, pp. 237-243. Trevelyan served with Bajpai in the US during the war and was in Nehru's confidence until after the Transfer of Power. Nehru made Trevelyan pick the title of the head of the Ministry of External Affairs from a selection of three. This example serves as a microcosm of the more general procedure of the INC in power inheriting the framework of the colonial state, through necessity. Prior to the transfer of power, however, Nehru quipped that 'I think it was Voltaire who defined the "Holy Roman Empire" as something which was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. Just as someone else once defined the Indian Civil Service, with which we are unfortunately still afflicted in this country, as neither Indian, nor civil, nor a service.' Cited in letter dated 24/4/1932 in Nehru, *Glimpses of World History: Being Further Letters to his Daughter, Written in Prison, and Containing a Rambling Account of History for Young People* (Second edn, Bombay, 1962), p. 96.

example Alan Campbell-Johnson described him as 'Nehru's accomplished Secretary for External Affairs.'⁷⁶

Sourcing experienced personnel was just one issue that faced India and as can be seen from the debate over succession or secession, it is clear that the British realised that India needed to develop its independent capabilities. As such, Nehru was afforded the latitude to appoint representatives abroad at the time of the Interim Government, a necessity that he was anxious to start.⁷⁷ Menon was the first Indian Ambassador to China in October 1946 and Asaf Ali was appointed as the first Ambassador to the US in February 1947.⁷⁸ Krishna Menon went so far as to make contacts with the USSR and Nehru sought representation by November 1946, despite British consternation.⁷⁹ France established a presence in February 1947, as did the Netherlands.⁸⁰

The physical task of establishing missions abroad was one that required both time and capital outlay, but it was also one that offered the chance to very publicly

⁷⁶ Meeting between Bajpai and Campbell Johnson, 23/2/1948, in Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London, 1985), p. 290. There is, unsurprisingly, no paper trail in the Indian documents to fully corroborate this course of events. It is clear, however, that Bajpai was invariably held in high regard by those that worked with him, and as Philip Woodruff (aka Mason) noted, 'Among the Indians of the ICS were men of the highest calibre. No civil service in the world could hope for abler men than Bajpai, Hydari, Trivdei, H.M. Menon...', see Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India: The Guardians*, p. 300. Bajpai had evidently proven himself to Nehru as a more than able diplomat as Nehru fiercely defended him when questioned by Menon. Nehru commented that, 'He has done his work with very great ability and has loyally carried out the policies we have laid down...Personally I do not know how I could have carried on during the last difficult few months without the help of Bajpai in the Foreign Ministry', see letter from Nehru to Menon, 12/10/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 4*, pp. 583-584. For the opinion that Bajpai was pro-Western see, Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (New York, 1994), p. 44. Loy Henderson noted that 'Bajpai's suggestions and his interest in strengthening India-United Nations compensated to an extent for Nehru's aloofness', Loy Henderson Papers, Box 27, Oral History Interview, by Richard D McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library, June 14 and July 5 1973, Library of Congress, p. 180.

⁷⁷ As an example, in May 1947, the G.O.I. reported that permission had been granted by the King for Missions in US, China, USSR, France, the Netherlands and Siam (Thailand), and they would soon add Nepal to the list, see Mr Harris to Sir A. Lascelles, 19/05/1947, Doc. 484 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume X: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Formulation of a Plan, 22 March-30 May 1947* (London, 1981), p. 895.

⁷⁸ Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of Partition*, p. 257, Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography*, p. 228, and Kember, 'India in the British Commonwealth: The Problem of Diplomatic Representation, 1917-1947', p. 354. For details of the numbers of Indians employed in the External Affairs Department see, Hogben, 'An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianisation of the Indian Political Service', p. 766.

⁷⁹ Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London, 2004), p. 158.

⁸⁰ Boquerat, 'France's Political Interaction with India through the Quai d'Orsay (1947-1972)', in Zins and Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives*, p. 12.

announce India's independent status. The most symbolic example of this was the transformation of India House to the new High Commission in London. Krishna Menon, in an effort to demonstrate India's newly-won independence asked for a reorganisation of India's presence in London. Staffing jumped from 600 to 1,800, a fleet of limousines was acquired and a palatial mansion in Kensington Park Gardens purchased in an effort to symbolise Indian freedom and sovereignty.⁸¹ India, however, had to choose where to spend its limited resources, but by November 1947 India has established or taken over a core of some 19 missions abroad, and by 1952 the number had reached over 40.⁸² Whatever the precise figure, India made a concerted effort to extend its presence overseas in the first years of independence.⁸³

The internal organisation of the MoEA, coupled with the dearth of trained individuals, further reinforced Nehru's dominance over Indian foreign policy.⁸⁴ There was, for example, no dedicated research or planning department. By the beginning of 1951, however, the MoEA had at least identified the need for monthly foreign affairs departmental meetings to:

review the work done in the field of foreign affairs within their Branches and by our Missions, principally on the basis of the periodical reports, special reports and other communications received from our Missions during the month; to discuss the world situation in light of India's foreign

⁸¹ For a description of these changes see George, *Krishna Menon: A Biography*, p. 156.

⁸² For the figures see, Kember, 'India in the British Commonwealth: The Problem of Diplomatic Representation, 1917-1947', p. 70. Warren F. Ilchman puts the number of Missions at 12 in 1947, 'Political Development and Foreign Policy: The Case of India', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 4 (1966), p. 222. *The Statesman* calculated that there were 19 Missions in 1946, 'Strengthening Indian Diplomatic Corps', 29/6/1948, p. 4. Not all of these missions were started *ex nihilo*; for example the Representatives in Malaya and other locations with large Indian populations, for example Mauritius, were upgraded from the non-political role of Agents. Washington would have been upgraded from the Indian Supply Mission, for which Bajpai had been the Agent-General from 1941-1945. A.M. Wainwright claims that by 1950, India had 193 diplomats in 43 countries, 19 of which were Asian and 6 of these were colonies. Figures taken from Appendix to Memorandum by N. Chakravarty, MoEA, 25/9/1950, EA 1(1) 50, 1-12, NAI, cited in *The Inheritance of Empire: Britain, India and the balance of power in Asia, 1938-55* (Westport and London, 1994), p. 124.

⁸³ *The Economist* reported in June 1948 that the plan was to strengthen the number of diplomats to 240 by the end of 1948, and then to 320 by the end of 1949; from then on it was intended to employ some 24 recruits a year, the same as the British Foreign Office, reported 29/6/1948, p. 4.

⁸⁴ The Americans, for example, doubted think that there would be a really functioning Indian Foreign Service until 1949 at the earliest, in part because of the predominant British influence in the department which selected only the right type of Indian and thus contributed to the delays, see US Embassy New Delhi to Washington, Despatch No. 1015, 25/3/1947, 745.00/3-2547, RG 59, NARA.

policy; and general to co-ordinate, as far as possible, all information received in this Ministry on the international situation.⁸⁵

Palpably absent from this exercise in departmental rationalisation, however, was any reference to either utilising information in the formulation and execution of foreign policy, or any reference to the minister, Nehru. Despite these omissions, the first meeting took place the following month and the first item on the agenda was Southeast Asia, thus demonstrating the region's importance for India.⁸⁶ The fact that there was only an embryonic foreign service impacted upon Nehru's position and reinforced his importance within the sphere of external affairs. Without a developed and efficient foreign office the G.O.I. and Congress relied even more on Nehru, as Brecher argued 'in no state does one man dominate foreign policy as does Nehru of India. Indeed, so overwhelming is his influence that India's policy has come to mean in the minds of people everywhere the personal policy of Pandit Nehru.'⁸⁷ Brecher's statement is near to the mark, but there are instances where Nehru was heavily influenced by others, for example the decision to maintain India's position within the Commonwealth.⁸⁸ However, Congress was not, as Michael Edwardes argues, happy to leave Nehru to it. Rather the Constituent Assembly became a space for the discussion of the direction of Indian foreign policy.⁸⁹ Masaldan, whilst discussing the formation of determinants in foreign policy formulation, asserts that 'India's foreign policy, therefore, was in a special sense, Nehru's foreign policy.'⁹⁰ Furthermore, in his panegyric article arguing for fresh thinking on foreign affairs after the death of Nehru, Sankar N. Maitra argued that 'The post-Swaraj era was dominated by

⁸⁵ 'Monthly Foreign Affairs Departmental Meetings', Memorandum by BFHB Tyabji (Joint Secretary) and US Bajpai (Under Secretary), 31/1/1951, No.F.21-9/51-UK, File No.21-9/51-UK, NAI.

⁸⁶ Resume of Main Points Made at the First Monthly Foreign Affairs Departmental Meeting, 22/2/1951, File No. 21-9/51-UK, NAI.

⁸⁷ Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959), p. 564. McGarr suggests that 'It was Nehru, and Nehru alone, who dictated that India would champion the virtues of non-alignment, anti-colonialism, and racial equality', "'India's Rasputin'?: V.K. Krishna Menon and Anglo-American Misperceptions of Indian Foreign Policymaking, 1947-1964', p. 256.

⁸⁸ V.K. Krishna Menon played an integral role in the diplomacy in the decision, a fact that has been neglected in Indian foreign policy accounts. Menon was the first High Commissioner to the UK appointed in July 1947, see Note from Nehru to Attlee, dated 11/7/1947, Doc. 74 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *Transfer of Power, Volume XII: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Princes, Partition and Independence, 8 July-15 August, 1947* (London, 1983), pp. 110-111.

⁸⁹ Michael Edwardes, 'Illusion and Reality in India's Foreign Policy', *International Affairs* 41 (1965), p. 50.

⁹⁰ P.N. Masaldan, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Foreign Policy: Determinants, Principles and Conduct* (Nagpur, 1977), p. 1.

Jawaharlal Nehru, and in no sphere more so than in foreign policy of which he was the planner, architect and engineer.⁹¹ Deepak Lal, in the following month, commented that 'India's foreign policy between 1947 and 1964 was conceived almost entirely by one man – Jawaharlal Nehru.'⁹² Neville Maxwell provides a concise appreciation of Nehru's centrality, arguing that 'Nehru's policies were India's and vice versa', during his time as Prime Minister 'foreign policy, in its conceptualisation, articulation and execution, was his private monopoly', which Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya terms 'monopolistic jurisdiction'.⁹³ This is not to suggest that Nehru operated completely outside the orbit of the rest of the Indian state, especially during the years of Patel's incumbency at the Home Ministry, and public opinion played a crucial role in the presentation of Indian foreign policy.⁹⁴

Keenleyside offers a moderately dissenting voice in his formulation that 'Nehru was more the dominant articulator than the chief architect of India's emerging international identity prior to 1947.'⁹⁵ Whilst this may hold more relevance in the pre-1947 period, post-1947 foreign affairs were primarily Nehru's domain, one that was insulated more than any other from interference from the rest of the Government. Nehru, however, did not operate in a vacuum: he had to take account of

⁹¹ Sankar N Maitra, 'A New Look at Foreign Policy', *Economic and Political Weekly* 2 (1967), p. 793.

⁹² Deepak Lal, 'Indian Foreign Policy, 1947-64', *Economic and Political Weekly* 2 (1967), p. 879.

⁹³ Maxwell, 'Jawaharlal Nehru: Of Pride and Principle', p. 633 and Bandyopadhyaya, *The Making of India's Foreign Policy: Determinants, Institutions, Processes and Personalities*, p. 287.

⁹⁴ One clear example which demonstrates that Nehru had to consider the opinions of the rest of the Cabinet, at least at times, was that of the recognition of China. Patel wrote to Nehru expressing concerns that India was about to recognise China immediately following the end of the UN session, 'my own feeling', he wrote, 'is that we do not stand to gain anything substantial by giving a lead in the matter and that, while recognition must come sooner or later, if we are somewhat late in the company of other, it would be worthwhile delaying a bit.' Patel felt so strongly on the issue that he asked for it to be discussed in Cabinet, which reveals two connected aspects to the conduct of India's foreign policy. It suggests that there was little organised, Cabinet or interdepartmental opportunity for the discussion of foreign affairs, but it also reveals that when deemed necessary Nehru's choices were called into question by his senior colleagues. See letter from Patel to Nehru, 6/12/1949, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973), pp. 86-87. Nehru responds that India's decision is connected to when other Commonwealth countries recognise, and that it should be done before the Colombo Conference, and Nehru attempted to assert his authority over foreign affairs 'If you like, I shall put it up before the Cabinet. But the date depends on so many factors that it will have to be left open. Most members of the Cabinet have hardly followed these intricate conversations and consultations. But as you are interested, I shall of course consult you before taking any action.' Nehru to Patel, 6/12/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, pp. 87-88.

⁹⁵ T.A. Keenleyside, 'The Inception of Indian Foreign Policy: The Non-Nehru Contribution', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 4 (1981), p. 64.

the rest of the G.O.I., and crucially operated in reaction to the rest of the world. One further result of this underdeveloped apparatus of state was Nehru's propensity to depend on personal contacts, especially in Britain, as is demonstrated in the case of Indonesia's transfer of power.

Once independence and thus legal equality with other states is achieved, Warren Ilchman argues, newly-independent states seek political equality, that is, full and equal participation in the 'political organs of the international system.'⁹⁶ In India's case, inheriting the international persona of the Raj assisted in the legitimisation of the new Indian state and its central government and membership of the UN, for example, further reinforced this trend. The UN, in the same vein as the Commonwealth, provided a country like India with the means to attempt to circumvent the paucity of personnel and Indian presence in foreign nations. Through engagement in the UN and the Commonwealth, India was able to communicate with far more states than their scarce network of Missions and personnel would otherwise allow. Despite his irritation at the inability of the UN to settle the Indonesia dispute, Nehru had to continue to engage with it as India was at the time applying for membership of the Security Council.

The cost of establishing India's national presence abroad did not pass without comment and Nehru was forced on several occasions to defend the sums spent by the MoEA. This defence reveals dimensions of his thinking on the importance of foreign affairs as he argued that 'we cannot be an independent nation and not have those foreign relations.'⁹⁷ 'It is not out of vanity', Nehru argued, that India spreads across the globe, 'but in the protection of Indian requirements.'⁹⁸ He continued to contrast India's situation with that of Pakistan asking the Assembly 'Are we going to ask England to look after our foreign interests... Is that the type of independence that we contemplate?'⁹⁹ What is independence? Nehru continued, 'It consists fundamentally and basically of foreign relations. That is the test of independence. All else is local

⁹⁶ Ilchman argues a similar point in 'Political Development and Foreign Policy: The Case of India', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 4 (1966), p. 218.

⁹⁷ Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 8/3/1948, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi, 1961), p. 239.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ In the first years after independence Pakistan was largely reliant of British representatives overseas, see Nehru's Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 8/3/1948 in *ibid.*, p. 240.

autonomy. Once foreign relations go out of your hands into the charge of somebody else, to that extent and in that measure you are not independent.'¹⁰⁰ He finished with the absolute declaration that 'If we are an independent nation we must have foreign relations. In fact we cannot carry on without them.'¹⁰¹ This minor debate over the cost of foreign establishment takes us to the heart of Nehru's emphasis on India's interaction with the wider world. The exercise of foreign relations was not simply an expression of independence, but an integral and substantive aspect of that freedom. Nehru attempted to persuade a doubting Constituent Assembly of this by asking 'What does independence consist of? It consists fundamentally and basically of foreign relations. That is the test of independence.'¹⁰²

By the time of the transfer of power, India was in the process of adapting the framework institutions left by the departing British to the needs of a country that aimed to have contacts with as large a number of nations as possible. This administrative and institutional challenge occurred contemporaneously with India's first major foreign policy venture the ongoing issue of Indonesia's freedom struggle. In pushing to inherit the international personality of the Raj the importance and significance that Nehru and the G.O.I. placed on international affairs is clear. The exercise of foreign relations was for Nehru not only a demonstration of political freedom, but was an integral part of that freedom and served to legitimise Congress as the inheritor state to the Raj. The first demonstration of this was Indian involvement in Indonesia's struggle for independence.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Constituent Assembly of India Debate, 8/3/1949 in S. Gopal, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 10* (New Delhi, 1990), p. 451.

3) “Every Possible Help”: Indonesia¹

Whilst India’s transfer of power continued towards its end point, Indonesia provided Nehru with an opportunity to demonstrate to the wider world and to India itself that India was in control of its own foreign policy, to emphasise Indian sovereignty, and allow India to present its first foray into foreign affairs as remaining faithful to Congress’s anti-colonial roots. The actions also fitted into India’s goal of extending its influence in Southeast Asia and presenting itself as a moral leader of Asia. Indonesia was also juxtaposed against India’s success in negotiations for a transfer of power when, for example, Vijayalakshmi Pandit compared Indian success of a Constituent Assembly with the continuing struggle in Indonesia, Burma and Indo-China.²

Nehru skilfully made the transition from nationalist leader to Prime Minister with the responsibility for the nation’s foreign affairs, and was able to make at once entreaties to the UK and US, asking for assistance whilst publicly denouncing imperialism in Asia and giving little publicity to the extent to which his influence and action rested on the UK and US. Nehru exploited India’s existing bilateral relationships with Britain, and to a certain degree the US, and presented himself as the voice of Asia, based on his position as the Prime Minister of an independent Asian state. In this position he provided the Western powers with portends of the disasters that would come from Dutch actions in Asia and exploited their developing fear of losing Asia to Communism. Nehru’s stance and approach was inherently moderate, there is no doubting his anti-colonialism, but how he pushed his case was moderate, nuanced and tailored to each situation, which was amply demonstrated by proceedings of the Asian Relations Conference (ARC), and the toning down of Indonesian nationalist demands at the Indonesia Conference in New Delhi in January 1949. This chapter is structured to present India’s foreign policy in the context of the Second World War’s legacy in Southeast Asia and Indonesia in particular. It is not a narrative of the Indonesian freedom struggle but rather an exposition of its

¹ ““Every Possible Help” from India’, Reported from New Delhi, 25/7/1947, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 8.

² Constituent Assembly of India Debate, 20/1/1947, Volume 2, last accessed 19/6/2010 on <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates.htm>.

interactions with India's own transfer of power and early foreign affairs.³

As the British prepared to leave India, the foundations of India's international personality and foreign service had been laid. Simultaneously, Nehru took an intense interest in Indonesia as India's first foray into international affairs straddled its identity as colony and nation, and this interest was not confined to the post-independence period. Therefore, it becomes possible to chart India's international transformation from a colony to a nation-state exercising its own foreign policy, and to see the continuities that run over the supposed-caesura of August 1947. This also enables an examination of Nehru's transition from nationalist leader employing rhetoric without too much regard for responsibility, to leader of an independent state where rhetoric was tempered by the responsibilities of power.⁴

The existing literature on India's role in Indonesia is largely limited to general studies of foreign policy based on public speeches and newspaper reporting. Partly as a result of this less than rigorous historical investigation, Indonesia has entered the national memory as India's first stand in the post-war world, an impression that Nehru certainly helped to cultivate. Indonesia is assumed to be a simple case of unreserved support for Asian nationalism versus European colonialism, and as such is often treated in a cursory and meretricious manner, but through this process it is robbed on any other depth and its ability to help analyse India's entry onto the world stage.⁵ Ton That Thien, for example, argues that Indonesia was India's first action on the world stage and simultaneously was its first

³ For introductory narratives see, Bob Moore's contribution (Part Three) in Martin Thomas, Bob Moore and L.J. Butler, *Crises of Empire: Decolonisation and Europe's Imperial States, 1918-1975* (London, 2008), pp. 273-344; Robert J. McMahon, *Colonialism and the Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-1949* (Ithaca, 1981); Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London, 2007); H.A. Poeze, 'The Cold War in Indonesia, 1948', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (2009), pp. 497-517; Martin Thomas, 'Processing Decolonisation: British Strategic Analysis of Conflict in Vietnam and Indonesia, 1945-1950', in C.E. Goscha and C.F. Ostermann (eds), *Connecting Histories: Decolonisation and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962* (Stanford, 2010), pp. 84-120 and also, Marc Frey, 'The Indonesian Revolution and the Fall of the Dutch Empire: Actors, Factors and Strategies', in M. Frey, R.W. Pruessen and T.T. Yong (eds), *The Transformation of Southeast Asia: International Perspectives of Decolonisation* (New York, 2003), pp. 83-104.

⁴ D.R. SarDesai makes a similar point in arguing that entry into the Interim Government had a restraining influence on Nehru, one that was demonstrated by his differing approaches to Indo-China and Indonesia, 'India and South-East Asia', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), p. 80.

⁵ One such cursory treatment is that of Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World* (Oxford, 1968).

example of unreserved support for an Asian freedom movement, but, crucially, he fails to connect the international support for Indonesia with India's domestic transformation from colony to state examined in the previous chapter or to examine Nehru's methods.⁶

A further aspect is added by Tilman Remme, who proposes that Nehru's reaction was one of genuine outrage, but it was also seen as an opportunity to engage in anti-colonial rhetoric and unite the smaller Asian countries behind him.⁷ There are two points of contention with this: first, this denies any connection to the domestic scene and the kudos that Indonesia could bring. Secondly, the anti-colonial rhetoric was rather moderate and nebulous in the way in which it was only ever directed at the Dutch or French, and by and large left the British unscathed. Andrew Roadnight, moreover, argues that India had less complex motives than other countries for supporting the Republic and did so 'based on its own colonial past and the wish of Pandit Nehru...to carve out a world role for independent Asian states.'⁸ It is in an effort to challenge these reductionist assumptions about Indian foreign policy that this chapter takes Indonesia as its subject.

The Aftermath of war and Indian Independence

In August 1945, as the war in the Pacific drew to a close, European colonial powers made preparations to return to those parts of Southeast Asia conquered by the Japanese in late 1941 and 1942, which debunked the myth of Western superiority, and irrevocably shattered the pre-war political and economic dynamic of the region.⁹ The task of re-taking vast swathes of Asia stretching from Burma to Indonesia with a force numbering some 1.3 million men from the British and Indian armies fell to the

⁶ Ton That Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960: A Study of India's Foreign Policy towards the South East Asian Countries in the Period 1947-1960* (Geneva, 1963), p. 98.

⁷ Tilman Remme, *Britain and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia, 1945-49* (London, 1995), p. 12.

⁸ Andrew Roadnight, 'The Greatest Prize in Southeast Asia: United States' Policy Towards Indonesia in the Truman and Eisenhower Years', PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1998, p. 75.

⁹ For an overview see A.J. Stockwell, 'Southeast Asia in War and Peace: The End of European Colonial Empires', in Nicholas Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia, Volume Four: From World War II to the Present* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 1-57. For detailed and well researched narrative accounts of the invasions and occupations in the region see Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London, 2005) and Ronald H. Spector, *In the Ruins of Empire: The Japanese Surrender and the Battle for Postwar Asia* (New York, 2008).

British-led South East Asian Command (SEAC) under the command of Admiral Louis Mountbatten.¹⁰ Indian troops made up the vanguard of the forces pushing the Japanese from the borders of India in 1944 at Imphal, but as the advance into Japanese-occupied territory continued they served as the re-conquering armies for the vanquished European powers.¹¹ This was not what Subhas Chandra Bose had intended for Indian troops with his designs for the Indian National Army (INA) formed from Indian troops captured at Singapore in February 1942.¹² The French and Dutch, themselves emerging from military occupation, had inadequate military strength to take immediate responsibility for their former colonies, and subsequently

¹⁰ Remme, *Britain and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*, p. 38 and see Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London, 2006) for by far the most complete study of the British Empire's and India's contribution to the Second World War. The scale of the Indian Army's contribution to the Burma campaign of South East Asia Command was publicly revealed with the cessation of hostilities: 70 per cent or approximately 700,000 troops came from the subcontinent. This number was in addition to the 210,000 in Europe at the end of hostilities there, and some 450,000 in various capacities in India, see 'Indian Army's Role in Reconquest of Burma', 4/9/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 3. Moreover, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten is an extremely interesting figure in the history of the Second World War and especially in the history Indian Independence, serving as the last Viceroy and the first Governor-General of India. For a fairly comprehensive biography see, Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten the Official Biography* (London, 1985 and Philip Ziegler, 'Mountbatten, Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas, first Earl Mountbatten of Burma (1900-1979)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31480>, accessed 4 Aug 2011]. For a less than favourable account on Mountbatten's tenure as Viceroy see, Stanley Wolpert, *Shameful Flight: The Last Years of the British Empire in India* (Oxford, 2006).

¹¹ Marc Frey notes that 'The Dutch and French depended on British troops in the region', but the British in turn depended on their Indian troops, 'Control, Legitimacy, and the Securing of Interests: European Development Policy in South-East Asia from the Late Colonial Period to the Early 1960s', *Contemporary European History* 12 (2003), p. 398.

¹² 32,000 Indian troops were amongst the 130,000 British subjects captured with the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, see Keith Jeffery, 'The Second World War', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p. 319. The Indian National Army, closely related to the Azad Hind Government of Subhas Chandra Bose, was formed of captured Indian Army troops in occupied Southeast Asia, mainly Singapore, by the Japanese. The aim of which was to assist them in defeating the British and pushing them out of India. The INA did in fact fight in Imphal against the Indian Army. The closest Bose got to establishing a free India was to occupy the Andaman Islands. Bose, a leading Indian nationalist and former president of the Congress, led the INA until his mysterious death in 1945, for a brief biographical note see, Leonard A. Gordon, 'Bose, Subhas Chandra (1897-1945)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47756>, accessed 10 March 2010]. There are several works that deal with the INA, but many are of dubious quality, for excellent accounts see, Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*; Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London, 1999); Stephen P. Cohen, 'Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army', *Pacific Affairs* 36 (1963-1964), pp. 411-429; Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London, 2004); W.F. Kuracina, 'Sentiments and Patriotism: The Indian National Army, General Elections and the Congress's Appropriation of the INA Legacy', *Modern Asian Studies* 44 (2010), pp. 817-856. The best way to follow the narrative of the INA and its aftermath involving the INA trials in Delhi is through the *Transfer of Power* Series of published documents in 12 volumes.

depended on the British to re-impose order. Faced with the alternative of chaos and a power vacuum, SEAC used Indian troops to exercise temporary authority in Indonesia, Indo-China and Malaya. This was not, however, a simple case of British authorities acting as proxy for its European allies. Instead, the British attempted to remove themselves from any political wrangling and maintain order. But this ideal was soon realised as ill-founded as nationalist groups resisted the re-imposition of control.

With the pace of demobilisation in Britain quickening due to the manpower shortage, SEAC was increasingly composed of its Indian contingents, and the British found themselves dependent upon Indian troops and as Chris Bayly and Tim Harper argue ‘the availability or otherwise of the Indian Army to suppress dissidence determined events not just in Burma and Malaya, but even in Indo-China and Indonesia.’¹³ For Anthony Stockwell, ‘when the British eventually reconquered Burma, they did so by virtue of Indian resources as much as their own’, because SEAC, as M.E. Dening, Mountbatten’s chief political advisor, noted at the time was becoming ‘more and more a purely British Indian affair.’¹⁴

The analytical focus of this chapter is firmly on Indonesia, which Sukarno, who took the role of President, proclaimed as the Republic of Indonesia on 17 August 1945 after Japan’s hold on power had slipped away. General MacArthur’s insistence that no landings take place until the official instrument of surrender had been signed resulted in the fledgling Republic taking control of a large part of civilian administration and beginning to establish the trappings of sovereign control in Java. It was into this ambiguous situation over who exercised sovereignty and authority that SEAC began to land troops in late September 1945 to carry out their mission of disarming and repatriating the Japanese; releasing prisoners of war

¹³ For an exposition of the impact of the manpower shortage and the end of Britain’s empire in South Asia see, Hugh Tinker, ‘The Contraction of Empire in Asia, 1945-48: The Military Dimension’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16 (1988), pp. 218-233 and Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 75.

¹⁴ A.J. Stockwell, ‘British Decolonisation: The Record and the Records’, *Contemporary European History* 15 (2006), p. 574 and Stockwell (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire: Series B, Volume 3, Malaya, Part I, The Malayan Union Experiment, 1942-1948* (London, 1995), p. 211. Dening later returned to the Foreign Office in London and was the chief architect of British policy in Southeast Asia culminating in the Colombo Plan of 1950.

(POWs) and internees and all whilst maintaining order.¹⁵ The British and Dutch Governments exchanged notes on 25 August 1945 stipulating that the Netherlands Indies Government would resume as rapidly as practicable full responsibility for the civil administration of the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁶ The situation in Indonesia, however, was far more complex than either party initially realised. As the troops of SEAC re-entered colonial territories they were invariably welcomed not as liberators, but rather as proxies for their absent and vanquished former colonial masters in France and The Netherlands. For his part Sukarno urged cooperation with the forces of SEAC as they landed.¹⁷ However, the task of SEAC was made no easier by rising tensions between released Dutch civil servants, the few Dutch troops in the area and nationalists. In response to the clear situation that the Republic was well-established and in effect governing on the ground, the British attempted to bring the nationalists and the Dutch together for preliminary talks.¹⁸

Mountbatten concentrated his few troops on the key sea ports of Jakarta, Semarang and Surabaya, and it was in Surabaya that the fiercest fighting since the war broke out. As SEAC attempted to enter the city and rescue POWs, the confused situation over authority quickly led to a breakdown of communications and fighting broke out between Brigadier Mallaby's troops and the local pemuda. The 6,000, mostly Indian troops were set upon by some 20,000 local pemuda armed with Japanese weapons and the result was a loss of some 233 officers and men. Mallaby himself was killed attempting to organise a ceasefire, at which point the commander of SEAC forces, General Christison, demanded that all arms be surrendered on pain of bringing his entire forces to bear on the city. By the next morning the British had deployed one and a half divisions to avenge Mallaby. Within the context of continuing to rescue POWs, whilst being attacked by pemuda forces, the leaders of SEAC and London continued to push the Dutch towards reconciliation and were

¹⁵ The first major landing was on 15 September 1945 in Jakarta, the Indian 23rd Division disembarked on 25 September 1945 see Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 169.

¹⁶ Details in note from Lord Halifax to US Secretary of State, No.60 (18/92/46), 856E.00/1-2646, RG 59, NARA. Prior to the British and Indian landings, Mountbatten issued instructions to the Japanese not to hand over power to any 'Javanese faction', meaning nationalists, but this was precipitated not by any desire to pre-emptively deny power to the nationalists rather it was to ensure as smooth a hand over of power as possible, 'Lord Louis' Order to Japs in Java', 27/9/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 1.

¹⁷ 'Proclamation to the People of Indonesia', 1/10/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 1.

¹⁸ Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 174. These talks achieved little as van Mook was limited by his powers.

alarmed at their inability to see the reality of the altered dynamic in the colony. The coming withdrawal of SEAC troops added some urgency to the lack of settlement between the Dutch and the Republic as Archibald Clarke Kerr was sent in as a trouble-shooter.¹⁹

Within this context, Sukarno actively sought Indian participation in Indonesia's struggle. For example on 4 October 1945 it was reported that Bandung (Bandung) Radio in Java had broadcast two messages of thanks, one to Australia and the other to Nehru expressing gratitude for his support.²⁰ Nehru actively used Indonesia to bolster both his position as Congress spokesman on foreign affairs, and to raise his and India's international profile by, for example, accepting Sukarno's invitation to visit Java in October 1945. Nehru responded, via Reuters, that 'If I can be of any service to the cause of Indonesian freedom I shall gladly visit Java in spite of urgent and important work in India.'²¹ The trip, though never realised due to lack of transport and safety fears, was nevertheless demonstrative of Nehru's attempts to build an international profile and the concomitant profile of the most internationally-minded man in the Congress.

The use of Indian troops in Indonesia and vociferous Congress opposition to the practice has to be examined through the context of the INA trials and general disquiet in India following the end of the war, the release of Congress leaders from imprisonment, and the approach of post-war elections. Whilst there is not sufficient space to provide a full and nuanced exposition of the impact of the INA trails on the transfer of power, it is necessary to note that in conjunction with the use of Indian troops in Indonesia it represented a perceived threat to the loyalty of the Indian Army and was a rallying point for nationalist criticism against the British. Equally as pertinent is the fact that the INA prolonged the Indian interest in Southeast Asia sparked by the Second World War.²²

In the week following the surrender of the Japanese army, the issue of the

¹⁹ Later Lord Inverchapel, CM (46) 5, 15/1/1946 Minutes, CAB/195/3.

²⁰ 'Sokarno's Message to Nehru', 4/10/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 3.

²¹ 'Nehru May Visit Java', 9/10/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 7.

²² S.N. Misra argues that the INA was a contributory factor in the growing relationship between India and Southeast Asia, *India: The Cold War Years* (New Delhi, 1994), p. 165.

INA was raised at a reception in Nehru's honour in Murree where he opined that although those misguided men had unfortunately associated themselves with the Japanese, it would be a terrible waste if 'these officers and men and their precious lives were liquidated by way of punishment by the British.'²³ These fears were somewhat allayed when a week later it was announced by the G.O.I. that the rank and file of those that joined the INA would be released, but the leaders and those that perpetrated particularly heinous crimes would still be tried.²⁴ The G.O.I. made pains not to excuse those that joined the INA, but insisted that their circumstances mitigated their crimes. Congress erupted into action organising the legal defence of those still facing prosecution from the ranks of Congress high command, including Nehru.

In conjunction with the INA trials and their appropriation by Congress for political capital, the use of Indian troops in Malaya, Indo-China and Indonesia evoked wide criticism in India amongst Congress leaders and the population at large.²⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the Japanese surrender, as SEAC attempted to carry out its work, Congress expressed its anxiety at the 'attempts being made to maintain the political and economic subjection of Burma, Malaya, Indo-China and Indonesia.' The Congress Working Committee added that 'to continue imperialist domination in these countries under whatever guise would be a repudiation of the professions made by the United Nations in war-time and would sow the seeds of future wars.'²⁶ The presence of SEAC thus caused disquiet at the re-imposition of European empires, and augured further protests from India concerning the role of Indian troops. The British with their Indian troops found themselves trapped in Indonesia, however, until their task of rehabilitation was completed.

Congress politicians, Nehru in particular, warned Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-In-Chief of the Indian Army, that it would be politically impossible to

²³ 'Indians who joined the Japs', 23/8/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 9.

²⁴ 'Indian Soldiers who joined the Enemy', 28/8/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 3.

²⁵ Despite finding its way onto both Congress and League election manifestos Zachariah argues that some senior Congress members admitted that if Congress came to power they too would purge the army of INA men, see Zachariah, *Nehru* (London, 2004), p. 127, and also see, Kuracina, 'Sentiments and Patriotism: The Indian National Army, General Elections and the Congress's Appropriation of the INA Legacy', pp. 817-856.

²⁶ "'Subjection" of South-East Asia', 22/9/1945, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 6.

use Indian troops to put down nationalist rebellions in fraternal countries.²⁷ Two days after British and Indian troops landed in Java, Nehru expressed his disquiet at the use of Indian troops in a press conference in Allahabad, commenting that ‘It is monstrous that our own people and our armed forces should be employed to suppress those for whom we have the fullest sympathy’, and he warned the British that ‘it is likely to lead to grave and far-reaching consequences.’²⁸ Nehru and V.K. Krishna Menon both petitioned London and Mountbatten to cease the practice of employing Indian troops to restore order; Menon wrote to Clement Attlee that:

The role assigned to the Indian army in the present context does not appear to be that of a force fighting either for the defence of their homeland or against Japanese fascism and militarism, but that if an interventionist force to regain dominion for the French, Dutch or other imperialist and occupying powers.²⁹

Indian complaints did not go unnoticed, and the British and Americans were well aware of the implications of using SEAC in anything other than its strict role of rehabilitation, but it was a role that was increasingly difficult to define as SEAC came under attack by various nationalists in Indonesia. Britain was eager not to get embroiled in a Dutch reconquest of Indonesia, and the US demanded that all US Lend-Lease insignia be removed from any equipment in Indonesia.³⁰

Nehru and Congress presented the actions of SEAC as anti-colonial rather than as a necessary legacy of the Japanese surrender, and in this way integrated the current use of Indian troops into the nationalist case against the British. In early October, the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) denounced the use of Indian troops to put down nationalist movements.³¹ Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru echoed Nehru’s vocal indignation but focussed on Indo-China, stating that ‘the Government of India owes it to this country to explain fully why Indian troops were used to

²⁷ Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 90. For biographical details of Auchinleck see, Brian Bond, ‘Auchinleck, Sir Claude John Eyre (1884–1981)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30774>, accessed 2 Aug 2011].

²⁸ ‘Nehru Resents Use of Indian Troops’, 1/10/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 6.

²⁹ Krishna Menon to Clement Attlee, 27/9/1945, Box 11, File 1 – H, Krishna Menon Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. This is one of the few pieces of information gatherable from Menon’s papers as they remained closed to researchers for the period from the end of 1946.

³⁰ US Secretary of State Byrnes asked the British and Dutch to strip all US insignia from its equipment on 24/10/1945, reported 25/10/1945, ‘Lend-Lease War Material’, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 5.

³¹ ‘Nehru Resents Use of Indian Troops’, 1/10/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 6.

suppress the freedom movement in Indo-China and what part they actually paid in this connexion.'³² Furthermore, Nehru delivered a speech at the annual AICC meeting auguring the development of a third world war arguing that 'There is a perilous resemblance between the war of British intervention in Indonesia and the other war of intervention which Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany waged in Spain and which was the prelude to world war two.'³³ He continued 'we have watched British intervention with growing anger, shame and helplessness that Indian troops should thus be used to do Britain's dirty work against our friends who are fighting the same fight as we.'³⁴ Reference to the Dutch, or the French in Indo-China, is palpably absent in this example as the Congress deliberately associated SEAC's actions directly with the British in their attempts to utilise the events as a stick to beat the British with as a part of their own nationalist struggle. In directly relating the two examples of India and Indonesia, Nehru sought to present India's own struggle as part of an international movement and as a threat to peace and stability whilst minimising Indian culpability in the use of its soldiers.

Lord Wavell, Viceroy from 1943, expressed apprehension concerning the domestic difficulties that the use of the Indian Army in Southeast Asia could cause, telling London that 'the situation in French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies will give us some trouble. Indian troops are involved in both places, and we shall be attacked for allowing His Majesty's Government to use them to suppress national movements.'³⁵ Although he appreciated the necessity of disarming the Japanese and rehabilitating POWs, Wavell pressed London to 'disengage the troops, both British and Indian, and leave the business to the French and Dutch.'³⁶ He

³² 'Pandit Kunzru's Protest', 1/10/1945, *The Statesman*, p. 6.

³³ Nehru's Speech at the AICC, 1/1/1946, Reported from Udaipur, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Despatch No. 36, 1/10/1945, L/PO/10/22, IOR. For a recent biographical account of Wavell see, Victoria Schofield, *Wavell: Soldier and Statesman* (London, 2006), for an older account see Ronald Lewin, *The Chief: Biography of Field Marshal Lord Wavell* (London, 1980); also see Bernard Fergusson and Judith M. Brown, 'Wavell, Archibald Percival, first Earl Wavell (1883-1950)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36790>, accessed 4 Aug 2011], and for a somewhat brief examination of Wavell's relationship with Whitehall see Irial Glynn, "'An Untouchable in the presence of Brahmins" Lord Wavell's Disastrous Relationship with Whitehall During His Time as Viceroy to India, 1943-7', *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (2007), pp. 639-663. For Wavell's own edited views see his journal edited by Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Oxford, 1997).

³⁶ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Despatch No. 36, 1/10/1945, L/PO/10/22.

repeated his entreaties, having cabled Mountbatten, arguing that 'Indian troops should be disengaged from what is represented here as the suppression of patriotic risings.'³⁷ Wavell also had to consider the morale of the Indian Army; he wrote to Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, that 'I have just had a letter from the Commander-in-Chief expressing grave concern at the possible effect on the army both of the INA trials and the propaganda about their [Indian Army, not INA] use in Indonesia.'³⁸

These words of warning did not fall on deaf ears in London, but the circumstances in Indonesia, what Pethick-Lawrence referred to as the 'intransigent Indoneses', required not only that the existing Indian troops remained, but that additional troops be sent to Java, and so Wavell was informed that 'there is no alternative to continued use of Indian troops in Java.'³⁹ Despite the pressing needs of SEAC, Wavell saw the situation through the prism of the domestic situation in India, and his response to Pethick-Lawrence read in part:

I think it right to let you know privately that in my opinion loyalty and discipline of the Indian Army may be subjected to severe strain (A) owing to the agitation about the INA, as to whose conduct feelings will be sharply divided, and (B) by demobilisation. I think it most important that we should not add further strain of commitments in Netherlands East Indies or French Indo-China.⁴⁰

Auchinleck echoed Wavell when in a report on the state of the Indian Army in case of nationalist or communal disturbances he warned the Chiefs that 'the situation in India is, therefore, extremely delicate...Our action in Java...is already being represented as European repression of national uprisings of Eastern peoples ... it may have a serious effect upon the loyalty of the Indian Armed Forces.'⁴¹ Wavell added that 'we have from the first been represented by the politicians and the Press

³⁷ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Despatch No. 37, 9/10/1945, L/PO/10/22.

³⁸ Letter from Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 16/11/1945, Doc. 213 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI: The Post-War Phase: New Moves by the Labour Government, 1 August 1945-22 March 1946* (London, 1976), p. 489.

³⁹ Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 16/10/1945, Doc. 145 in *ibid.*, pp. 346-347.

⁴⁰ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 17/10/1945, Doc. 148 in *ibid.*, p. 360.

⁴¹ 'Internal Situation in India: Appreciation by Commander-in-Chief', 1/12/1945, Doc. 256 in *ibid.*, p. 583.

here as supporters of Dutch imperialism', a theme that Nehru continued post-1947.⁴²

Pethick-Lawrence repeated these themes when warning the Cabinet of the possibility of full-scale revolt in India in the closing months of 1945, warning that 'Indian leaders were advocating their views with growing vigour and determination. Indian opinion was disturbed on certain issues, e.g. the situation in Indonesia and the trial of members of the INA.'⁴³ The use of Indian troops, dictated by circumstance rather than choice, limited British responses to the crisis in Indonesia and saw calls for withdrawal fall on stony ground. The gravity of the situation, however, was not lost, as evidenced by the fact that Lord Halifax discussed it with Dean Acheson. He wrote that the continuing Dutch-nationalist stalemate 'has undesirable consequences both on the manpower situation in this country and insofar as Indian troops form a large proportion of the British forces in the Netherlands East Indies on the Indian political situation.'⁴⁴ Therefore, there were two interconnected concerns about the use of Indian troops in Southeast Asia: nationalist, mainly Congress, opposition within the context of a fractious domestic environment at the time of the first post-war election; and the loyalty of a war-strained Indian Army. Wavell concluded that 'from an Indian point of view it continues to be a most embarrassing business and the sooner we are out of it, the better.'⁴⁵

As Central Assembly and Provincial elections in India drew closer and the prospect of an Indian Interim Executive Council loomed the situation threatened to become more than embarrassing. The G.O.I. reminded London of the analogous situation that could occur if a Government at the centre made the withdrawal of troops from Java a test case. 'They would argue that if India was really to become a Dominion in the near future', wrote Wavell, 'it was unthinkable to use Dominion troops against the wishes of the Indian Government.'⁴⁶ The result, Wavell predicted, was either face withdrawal or resignation of an Interim Government, and he even went so far as to argue that withdrawal may be a proviso for forming an Interim

⁴² Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Despatch No. 39, 22/10/1945, L/PO/10/22.

⁴³ India and Burma Committee, I.B (45) 75th Meeting, 19/11/1945, Doc. 217 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI*, p. 501.

⁴⁴ Lord Halifax to US Secretary of State, No. 60 (18/92/46), 26/1/1946, 856E.00/1-2646, RG 59, NARA.

⁴⁵ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Despatch No. 43, 20/11/1949, L/PO/10/22.

⁴⁶ Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Despatch No. 48, 25/12/1945, L/PO/10/22.

Government.⁴⁷ Although this situation did not materialise in the short-term, the issue of Indian troops abroad continued to aggravate nationalist sentiment and the INC in particular exploited the issue for its own gains. Motions of protest against the use of troops were raised in the newly-elected Central Assembly in January 1946 as Congress sought to demonstrate its understanding and establish its credentials in the realm of international affairs.⁴⁸

With Nehru's acceptance of the External Affairs portfolio in September 1946, the more vitriolic attacks on British use of Indian troops ceased, reflecting a reduced number of Indian troops abroad and that Nehru was now himself the figure head of India's foreign affairs.⁴⁹ At his first press conference on assuming office, Nehru expanded on the general guiding principles of India's foreign policy, part of which was establishing contact with the world and drawing closer to her Asian neighbours.⁵⁰ As such, Nehru continued to push for the withdrawal of Indian troops from countries such as Indonesia. With independence on the horizon, it was impolitic for Nehru, in his capacity in the Interim government and as Congress leader, to allow to go unopposed the use of Indian troops against nations that he hoped to form relationships with after independence.⁵¹ This pronouncement was largely an empty gesture as SEAC was already in the process of being wound down, and the British had pre-emptively planned for the recall of Indian troops from foreign operations as

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* For the withdrawal proviso eventuality see, Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, Appreciation of Political Situation, 27/12/1945, Doc. 315 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI*, p. 686, and it was of such concern that Wavell recorded it in his diary, see entry for 22/12/1945 in Moon (ed.), *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 198. Also see Mr Turnbull (Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for India) to Mr Blaker (Principal Private Secretary to the President for the Board of Trade), 7/2/1946, 'Note on the proposed Chronological order of Cabinet Delegation in India', Doc. 408 in Mansergh (ed.) with Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume VI*, pp. 915-916. Congress would have been placed in a contradictory position in demanding freedom from British rule at the same time as Indian troops controlled Southeast Asia and this became an even larger issue as the Interim Government took shape in September 1946 and senior members of Congress found themselves in positions of power from where criticism could be launched against them. See 'Conduct of Foreign Affairs Affecting India with an interim Government in Office', Joint Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Secretary of State for India, CP (46) 329, 30/8/1946 in CAB 129/12.

⁴⁸ Thien also notes that in the Assembly the G.O.I. was berated for allowing troops to be used in foreign countries, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960*, p. 89.

⁴⁹ For example Montgomery reported to the Cabinet in December 1946 that 'it must be assumed that Indian troops could not be used for the suppression of internal disturbances in Burma' cited in Tinker, *The Contraction of Empire in Asia, 1945-48: The Military Dimension*, p. 228.

⁵⁰ 'India's Policy Abroad', Reported from New Delhi, 27/9/1946, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 5.

⁵¹ In fact, India was attacked at the Asian Relations Conference for having allowed Indian troops to be used abroad, see G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London, 1966), pp. 56-57.

Dutch and French troops became available in larger numbers.⁵² The announcement that Indian troops would begin to be withdrawn from Indonesia had been made by Auchinleck on 1 March 1946.⁵³ There remained, however, the paradox of sending messages of sympathy to the Indonesians whilst Indian troops were still stationed there.⁵⁴

In fact, the last British and Indian troops left Indonesia not long after Nehru's press conference as part of the winding down of SEAC and were praised by Dr Sjahrir for their discipline and efficiency. Six months later Defence Minister, Sardar Baldev Singh, requested the return of the few remaining troops in Asia by the end of 1947.⁵⁵ Thus the issue of Indian troops had largely, although not entirely, been neutralised by the time the Interim Government was sworn in, but the larger problem of Indonesia was still an ongoing issue that Nehru took a lively interest in, as did India as a whole.⁵⁶ Rather, Nehru concentrated his attention on the Republic's battle for independence from the Dutch, both for the year that the Interim Government was active and as Foreign and Prime Minister of India after August 1947. Congress and the Interim Government had to face the problems of the transfer of power as the approach of independence inexorably continued. From the above analysis of Indian troops abroad, it is evident that Nehru and Congress' main weapon was to presage the consequences of the continued use of Indian troops abroad, warnings which the British G.O.I. took seriously enough to ensure that measures were in place to return all Indian troops as soon as possible. This auguring of dire consequences did not die with the promised withdrawal of Indian troops, but rather served as one of Nehru's

⁵² Nehru's speech in Constituent Assembly, 28/10/1946, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 3* (New Delhi, 1985), p. 533.

⁵³ 1/3/1946, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 8. The Cabinet had decided that all troops would be withdrawn by November at the very latest, see CM (46) 78th Conclusions, 14/8/1946, CAB 128/6, also see 'Imperial Troops in Southeast Asia: Withdrawal from all Foreign Territories', *The Statesman*, 22/11/1946, p. 1. The number serving overseas in September 1946 was 274,900 according to Tinker in 'The Contraction of Empire in Asia, 1945-48: The Military Dimension', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16 (1988), p. 225.

⁵⁴ Zachariah, *Nehru*, p. 156.

⁵⁵ 'Army's Fine Work Done in Indonesia', Reported from London, *Manchester Guardian*, 30/11/1946, p. 7. See telegram G.O.I., Defence Department to Secretary of State for India, 22/3/1947, Doc. 4 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume X: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Formulation of a Plan, 22 March-30 May 1947* (London, 1981), p. 5.

⁵⁶ Wavell wrote in his diary for 18/9/1946 that 'towards the end [of cabinet meeting] the matter of Indian troops in Indonesia and Burma cropped up, and Nehru became very eloquent and almost aggressive, rather to the embarrassment of some of his colleagues, I think', in Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 351.

key diplomatic devices with the UK and the US over the Indonesian dispute.

However, as British and Indian troops left Indonesia, fighting escalated between the Dutch and Indonesians and continued intermittently until 1949. These intervening years of Dutch-Indonesian internecine warfare continued to provide Nehru with one of his first tests on the international scene. Indonesia provided Nehru with the opportunity to call on the UN to demonstrate its efficacy as the international community's arbitration council.⁵⁷ Indonesia represented for Nehru the first example of putting an international issue before both the Constituent Assembly, and more widely before the nation, which he took a symbol of India's entering the international field.⁵⁸ At a press conference, for example, Nehru made the following statement when asked about Indonesia 'The Government of India are intensely interested in the preservation of peace in the world and in the realisation of freedom by all people who at present lack it' he continued 'in pursuance of this policy they adhered to the UNO and associated themselves with the UNO Charter.'⁵⁹

As independence continued to approach, Nehru considered steps for Indonesian nationalists to take in the face of Dutch obduracy and failed negotiations for a resolution of their disputes. Before the opening of the First Police Action, Nehru had warned Amir Sjarifuddin about the consequences of trusting the Dutch implementation of the Linggadjati Agreement and cautioned that they would try to get hold of the Republic's army and territory. Nehru suggested either international arbitration, appealing to the 'Big Three' to apply pressure on the Dutch as the best course of action, if not the next step was the UN.⁶⁰ Nehru held the Dutch in perpetual suspicion and was still considering the idea of arbitration as the Police Action approached, but was advised by Bajpai that both British and American support needed to be secured before suggesting arbitration.⁶¹ One of Nehru's key approaches throughout this episode was to exploit its connection with the UK and its fledgling bilateral relations with the US, by consistently providing the UK and the US with

⁵⁷ "“Every Possible Help” from India’ from India, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 25/7/1947, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Foreign Policy for India, Constituent Assembly of India Debate, 4/12/1947, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 4* (New Delhi, 1986), p. 595.

⁵⁹ Nehru at Press Conference, reported in *The Statesman*, 2/7/1947, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Letter to Amir Sharifoeddin, 6/7/1947, in S. Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 355.

⁶¹ Note by Nehru, 'An Impartial Tribunal for Indonesia, in *ibid.*, p. 358.

portends of the destructive effect that Dutch intransigence would have on Asia and Asian nationalism. Nehru's main diplomatic tool, therefore, of warning of the consequences of inaction by the UK and the US was designed to both exploit and reinforce his position as leader of the largest independent Asian nation. One of the first examples of this approach was in anticipation of Dutch action amidst talks of a build-up of Dutch armed forces. Krishna Menon, by this time Indian High Commissioner in London, presented Lord Listowel with an exposition of the regional consequences of continued Dutch prevarication that was to set the tone for future Indian communications with both the British and American governments. This message read in part that the 'disturbed state of [an] important segment of South East Asia will be a constant threat to the peace of the whole of that region and economic recovery of the world will be hampered by paralysis of economic recovery in Indonesia.'⁶²

Due to the persistent failure of negotiations between the two parties, the G.O.I. felt that under the terms of the Liggadjati agreement all matters of dispute should be taken to arbitration. 'The G.O.I. are going to suggest this course of action to both the Dutch and the Indonesians', Nehru wrote, but 'they would be glad if...United Kingdom and Government of United States both of whom are conscious of urgent need of restoring stability and peace to Indonesia will lend strong diplomatic support to this proposal.'⁶³ Listowel was again cabled by the Interim Government asking for British intervention in the context of the breakdown of negotiations between the two sides as the Dutch cabinet decided whether or not to take military action and as the Indonesian Premier declared on Radio Jogjakarta that the Dutch were determined to avert the road of peace. The message emphasised to Listowel the wider, regional implications of conflict in Indonesia, by stressing that

⁶² Cable to Krishna Menon, 8/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶³ Cable to Lord Listowel, 8/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 360. In emphasising 'stability' there are strong parallels with the case of Palestine in the UN as evidence by Bajpai's report on a conversation with the Lebanese Consul-General in India, Tariq G. Yafi, where he emphasised that India's interest in Palestine was not derived solely from a moral but also a strategic standpoint, 'We wanted fair treatment for the Arabs also a settlement that would, so far as possible, ensure peace in Palestine, since tranquillity and progress in that region, which constitutes an approach from the Mediterranean to our own shores, is of direct interest to us.' Record of conversation as described by Bajpai, 3/9/1947, File No. 46(1) AWT/47, cited in Rami Ginat, 'India and the Palestine Question: The Emergence of the Asio-Arab Bloc and India's Quest for Hegemony in the Post-Colonial World', *Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2004), p. 206.

'hostilities in Indonesia will be a threat to peace of whole of South East Asia and a hindrance to economic recovery of the world.'⁶⁴ In addition to what India termed their 'strong moral sympathy', emphasis was placed on the more physical dangers to India, arguing that 'Indonesia is a source of food supply whose security and prosperity are of vital importance to India.'⁶⁵ The threat to peace that the ongoing Indonesian situation represented was not the only reason that the G.O.I., both pre- and post-independence, sought a solution to the problem. Indonesia was a key source of foodstuffs for India and in the face of perennial food shortages, and the concomitant expenditure in hard currency in securing alternative sources of food, a swift resolution to the problem was imperative.⁶⁶

First Police Action, July 1947

The Dutch launched their Police Action (Operatie Product) on 20 July 1947 less than one month before India itself reached independence and India greeted the news with immediate public and private condemnation of the Dutch. The violent action ended on 4 August 1947 after a UN resolution called for an end to the fighting and it is India's part in securing an end to these hostilities that this section examines. This was handled not through the Viceroy, but demonstrably by the Interim Government and Nehru on the advice of Bajpai and through Krishna Menon in London. The Interim Government was therefore, in effect, awarded full freedom of movement in this field.

As the Dutch forces attacked, Sutan Sjahrir was travelling to India to seek assistance as the authorised agent of the Republic, and he arrived in Delhi carrying communications from President Sukarno, which for Nehru confirmed that the 'so-

⁶⁴ Cable to Lord Listowel, 18/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 360.

⁶⁵ Rather unhelpfully the *SWJN* give no further details as to the authors of this set of cables to Listowel, but it is assumed that it is the voice of Nehru transmitted through the Department for Commonwealth Relations. Cable to Lord Listowel, 8/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 359.

⁶⁶ The G.O.I. had an agreement with Indonesia, signed in July 1947, for the delivery of some 700,000 tons of paddy to India in exchange for Indian consumer goods, see *ibid.*, p. 368 – footnote 2. In an effort to save precious hard currency the Government really pushed its 'Grow More Food Campaign', for examples see G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949* (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 258-259. The departing British very conscious of the need to secure food and increase food production for the dual purposes of averting famine and saving hard currency as evidence by their efforts in assisting India negotiate food supply agreements and allowing the use of blocked sterling balances for the purchase of tractors, see Delegation Report No. 15, Telegram No. 41, 20/1/1948, E/10466, L/E/9/303, IOR.

called police action by Dutch is an extirpation and long prepared military campaign whose real purpose is to inflict complete military defeat on Republic.⁶⁷ The aim of this, Nehru opined, was to prepare the ground for a political settlement that was entirely favourable to the Dutch.⁶⁸ The bold Dutch actions brought into stark relief the precarious position of the Republic, its ability to defend itself, and the larger issue of the continued spectre of European colonialism, which added urgency to India's response to the crisis.

The Republic actively sought to capitalise on its fledgling relationship with India and personal contacts with Nehru and at a press conference in Delhi, Sjahrir reported that he hoped that India, and Australia, might explore the possibility of giving assistance through negotiation and arbitration.⁶⁹ Sjahrir sought to build on India's previous statements of support and the symbolism and practicality of India's approaching independence and entry onto the world stage as a sovereign nation. The attacks provided Nehru with an opportunity with which to launch India onto the world stage, especially as Sjahrir was present in Delhi and as Indian troops, albeit under British control, were initially linked with events. Nehru replied to Sjahrir's entreaties by offering 'every possible help' and rhetorically asking what would become of the UN Charter if this kind of attack was possible.⁷⁰

Dutch action was a shock, but one that Nehru was partly prepared for as evidenced by his repeated entreaties to the British and Americans. Nehru reported to Krishna Menon that he was continuing to communicate with the UK and the US about the possibility of arbitration and stressing the grave consequences of the conflict.⁷¹ 'We must invoke the UNO', hopefully in conjunction with the UK and the USA', Nehru wrote, but 'if necessary then on our own.'⁷² However, appealing to the

⁶⁷ Cable to VK Krishna Menon, 25/7/1945, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 364.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ "'Every Possible Help' from India' from India, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 25/7/1947, p. 8. Also see the chapter S.E. Crowl, 'Indonesia's Diplomatic Revolution Lining Up for Non-Alignment, 1945-1955, in C.E. Goscha and C.F. Ostermann (eds), *Connecting Histories: Decolonisation and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962* (Stanford, 2010), pp. 238-257, which highlights the Republic's dependence on others for taking up defence of its case.

⁷⁰ "'Every Possible Help' from India', Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 25/7/1947, p. 8.

⁷¹ Cable to Krishna Menon, 22/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 341.

⁷² *Ibid.*

UK, US and eventually the UN was not the only action that Nehru was prepared to take and it was at this point Nehru sought Krishna Menon's counsel regarding the feasibility of stopping Dutch flights over Indian sovereign territory and stopping in Indian territory.⁷³ This would be a very public and symbolic action and would not be taken lightly, but in conjunction with press conferences by Sjahrir it provided publicity for both the Republic and India's role. Furthermore, it served to demonstrate that the Interim Government was in control of Indian territory.

In another highly symbolic moment, Sjahrir made further public statements in attempts to garner support for the Republic in the Constituent Assembly. He warned that the Dutch would never succeed in establishing a new empire in the East. In support of that end, Mr Kripalani, Congress President, assured Sjahrir that the G.O.I. would exert all its influence in the international sphere to assist Indonesia.⁷⁴ The Constituent Assembly thus played host to a very public display of Indian support for Indonesia, and as such the success of India was juxtaposed against the dire situation with which the Republic was faced.

Meanwhile, Sukarno made appeals to the US to stop the fighting and support the British in their offer to mediate.⁷⁵ With little immediate success, however, the

⁷³ *Ibid.* Nehru reported to Rajendra Prasad on the Indo-Chinese conflict that 'As for stopping planes, we do not allow any military planes to go. If any military personnel is carried this must be done secretly and without our knowledge. We cannot stop civil planes without a breach of international law and our agreements.' Rajendra Prasad Papers, 11/1/1948, File No. 14-C/48, NAI. The wider case of the Indo-China is outside the purview of this thesis, but it is necessary to state that Nehru did give the Vietnamese a certain level of moral support. However, India was also hopeful to come to arrangements with the French for the settling of French enclaves in India, in the same letter to Prasad as above, Nehru wrote that 'we fully sympathise with struggle for freedom in Indo-China and we have expressed our public sympathy with Viet-Nam. It is not clear however, how we can help them. We cannot raise the issue at the UNO as we are not members of the Security Council [this did not prevent Indonesia's case being raised]. We have however done our utmost to bring pressure on the French Government...In the UN France has sided with us on important issues. In regard to French possessions in India also their attitude, though somewhat dilatory, is not unfriendly and we hope to arrive at some settlement before very long.' Also see, Gilles Boquerat, 'France's Political Interaction with India through the Quai d'Orsay Archives (1947-1972)', in Max-Jean Zins and Gilles Boquerat (eds), *India in the Mirror of Foreign Diplomatic Archives* (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 11-32. Bajpai reiterated the link between French possessions in India and Nehru's attitude over Indo-China in conversation with Noel-Baker, 'if the French behaved sensibly in India, Nehru might well support them in Indo-China', Record of Conversation, 11/12/1949, F/19390, FO 371/76026.

⁷⁴ 'Indonesian Appeal to India', Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 27/7/1947, p. 6 and also see 'Dr. Shariar Addresses Members of Constituent Assembly' in *The Statesman*, 27/7/1947, p. 1. Jivatram Bhagwandas (aka Acharya) Kripalani later left Congress to form the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party after his defeat in the 1950 Congress Presidential elections.

⁷⁵ 'Appeal to U.S.', Reported from Jakarta, *Manchester Guardian*, 25/7/1947, p. 8.

G.O.I. decided that the most suitable option was to orally present the case to representatives of the British Government. Nehru instructed Menon to call on Bevin and to convey to him that the Dutch attack had come as a 'climactic shock.'⁷⁶ Moreover, Nehru wanted Menon to further emphasise the regional ramifications of the conflict, writing that 'prolongation of the conflict is likely to threaten the peace of the whole of South East Asia and to hamper the economic recovery of world by paralysing economic recovery of Indonesia.'⁷⁷ This repeated line of argument was not simply employed in dealings with the British by playing on their fears of chaos, but rather reflected the material concerns of those in command of Indian foreign policy. Nehru thus asked Menon to communicate India's desire for the UK to suggest a ceasefire and arbitration, failing this then the whole dispute should be submitted to the Security Council for consideration.⁷⁸

Nehru did not immediately take the issue to the UN, but rather sought conciliation through other means, which is revealing in so much as it exposes a level of trepidation on Nehru's part. This delay is explained by understanding that this was Nehru's first foray into international affairs and failure for India in attempting to take the lead without support could have proven disastrous. Indian opprobrium at Dutch obduracy was tempered somewhat by India's limited scope for action and efforts to persuade the UK and US to exert pressure on the Dutch was based on advice from Bajpai and a realisation that India had few cards to play. If India had referred the case to the UN without some indication that it would be supported by the UK at least and her efforts were stymied or ignored then it would have been a far from auspicious start to India's own foreign policy. Any failure in this field would not only have been an embarrassment for India, but also would have undermined Nehru's claim to be the most internationally-minded man in Congress. Nehru thus encouraged and cajoled the UK to take the lead whilst advising in private and warning about the destructive impact of Dutch imperialism in public.

⁷⁶ Cable to Krishna Menon, 22/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 362.

Nehru had asked Listowel to arrange a meeting between Bevin and Krishna Menon, and, in an insight into the lack of India's infrastructure for international affairs, asked Listowel to supply Menon with copies of the previous telegrams. Cable to Lord Listowel, 18/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 361.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Time was of the essence, however, as the Dutch swiftly made significant gains into Republican territory. Menon was thus authorised to inform HMG that if they did take the issue to the Security Council then India ‘would be happy to support any demarches that they may make.’⁷⁹ Only if the British failed to take the issue to the UN did Nehru see India taking the issue to the General Assembly itself. This dependence on the British is indicative of two things: that Nehru sought to exploit Britain’s position as a great power with vast experience in international relations, but it also demonstrated a certain trepidation on Nehru’s part on committing a soon-to-be-free India to such a bold move.⁸⁰

With the wheels set in motion, Nehru subsequently issued a further press statement denouncing Dutch aggression as ‘an astounding thing which the new spirit of Asia will not tolerate.’⁸¹ Nehru continued in vitriolic fashion attacking European colonialism that was in stark contrast to the diplomacy behind the scenes and asserting ‘no European country...has any business to use its army in Asia. Foreign armies functioning on Asian soil are themselves an outrage to Asian sentiment.’⁸² Nehru concluded by publicly attempting to broaden the Indonesian crisis into a test case for proving the mettle of the UN, ‘If other members of the United Nations tolerate this or remain inactive, then the United Nations Organisation ceases to be.’⁸³ Nehru’s strong condemnation demonstrated to the public that India was defending another colonial territory and was in control of its own policies. The statement, and others like it, was also designed to work alongside the quieter, private diplomacy being employed with the UK and US by demonstrating the position of authority and influence that India enjoyed and emphasising the height of Asian indignation aroused by Dutch actions.⁸⁴ Nehru was, in this instance, able to wear two hats, one of an anti-colonial leader and one of the leading diplomat of a potentially powerful and

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁸⁰ A similar approach was also being made through the American Ambassador in India. Krishna Menon was instructed to inform the British of the approaches being made to the US, Cable to Krishna Menon, 22/7/1947, in *ibid.* Grady to Secretary of State, No. 561, 23/7/1947, 856E.00/7-2347, RG 59, NARA.

⁸¹ On Dutch Aggression in Indonesia, 24/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, pp. 363-64.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Remme argues briefly mentions that in private Nehru asked the UK and the US to do all they could to influence the Dutch whilst in public he made it known that he considered Dutch actions an affront to the whole of Asia, *Britain and Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*, p. 93.

influential nation.

Krishna Menon and Nehru remained in regular contact over the course of the next few weeks and in response to Nehru's instructions of 22 July, Menon saw both Bevin and Listowel and concluded that HMG was suitably impressed with the urgency and the gravity of the situation and were taking steps to help end the hostilities.⁸⁵ The UK and US subsequently jointly offered their 'good offices' to the Dutch, who it would appear only for public face said they would give the offer due consideration. In the absence of immediate results, Nehru demonstrated his frustrations with the UK and the US with an argument to Menon that 'no one in India or anywhere in Asia will believe that if Governments of United Kingdom and of USA really desired to bring this conflict to an end, they could not do it immediately without military intervention.'⁸⁶ Nehru's censorious tone and his frustration at inaction was reinforced when placed in comparison to his and India's own limited scope for action. The time for formal offers of mediation, Nehru opined, was over, and the US and UK needed to bring their influence to bear on the Dutch who were economically dependent upon their goodwill.⁸⁷

Nehru began planning for the UN and if the US and UK failed to settle the issue and it went before the Security Council, Krishna Menon was to take the stand for India. Time, however, was of the essence as the Council was due to enter recess on 12 August.⁸⁸ The instructions from Nehru once again reveal a certain predisposition not to immediately take the case to the UN and rather to attempt to induce the UK and the US to take action, largely in the hope of effecting an immediate resolution rather than a more protracted procedure at the UN. Nehru admitted as much to Menon with the speed of Dutch actions destroying Indonesian resistance and the inaction of the UK and US when he wrote that 'personally I must express profound disappointment at slowness with which these two Great Powers have handled a situation of great urgency and grave international importance. Even though appeal to the United Nations may bring no immediate relief to hard-pressed

⁸⁵ Footnote 2, Cable to VK Krishna Menon, 25/7/1945, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 364.

⁸⁶ Cable to VK Krishna Menon, 25/7/1945, in *ibid.*, p. 365.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Also see copy of telegram given to the US Ambassador by Bajpai, Telegram, No. 583, Grady to Secretary of State, 27/7/1947, 856E.00/7-2647, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁸ Cable to Krishna Menon, 26/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 366.

Indonesians, it will rouse moral conscience of the world.’⁸⁹ Frustration with the pace of events and lack of immediate progress dogged Nehru throughout the settlement of the Indonesia question, and as Nehru’s frustration grew so did his anger at the UK and US for their trepidation.

Within the context of Dutch military success, Nehru instructed Menon to inform the British that unless success has been made by them on 29 July then India would submit the issue to the UN under Article 35 of the Charter.⁹⁰ Nehru’s patience with the UK and US had clearly come to an end, but this was also a last minute gambit to push the UK and US to further increase pressure on the Dutch. Nehru gave the UK one last try at the Dutch when they asked to postpone reference to the Security Council for 24 hours.⁹¹ Nehru also began to feel pressure from his domestic audience as he wrote to Menon ‘I have to consider the mounting pressure of public opinion in India and in Asia and can no longer delay approach to the United Nations.’⁹² One such incident of the public sympathy with Indonesia manifested itself on the streets of Calcutta where student demonstrators came to blows with the police as they contravened a public order banning public demonstrations.⁹³

Simultaneously and predominantly as a symbolic gesture emphasising its control of Indian sovereignty and foreign policy and to demonstrate action independent of a multi-lateral approach to the UN, the Interim Government took unilateral action and barred Dutch planes in the form of KLM charter flights and Dutch military flights from using Indian airspace. At a press conference Nehru explained that ‘The mere presence of a colonial regime or foreign troops is an insult and a challenge to Asia endangering peace and preventing economic recovery.’⁹⁴ Although India was not a member of the Security Council, taking the issue there was

⁸⁹ Cable to Krishna Menon, 28/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 367.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ At a meeting on 28 July 1947, Bevin asked Menon for a further 24 hours in which he would make one last attempt with the Dutch. He also reported that he had decided to stop all supplies to the Dutch. See Cable to Krishna Menon, 29/7/1947 in *ibid.*, p. 377.

⁹² Cable to Krishna Menon, 28/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 367.

⁹³ The Reuters report of the incident can be found in the files of the India Office Library, ‘India and Indonesia’ dated 11/1/1949, L/P&S/12/1373, IOR.

⁹⁴ ‘Indian Help to Indonesia’ Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 29/7/1947, p. 5. Cable to Krishna Menon, 28/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN*, Volume 3, p. 367.

preferable to waiting for the General Assembly to meet in six weeks' time.⁹⁵ With India's own independence only a fortnight away, Nehru exercised a sovereign right and on 30 July 1947 India duly submitted its complaint to the UN as did Australia, and with some urgency the Security Council adopted a resolution on 1 August 1947 calling for both sides to halt hostilities, and both sides subsequently accepted US offers of Good Offices.⁹⁶ As planned, Menon was instructed to present India's case to the UN, Sjahrir was also to assist in presenting the case, and in this way India was providing the Republic with an asset that was otherwise denied it because of the absence of sovereignty – the right to take and debate a grievance in the UN. Nehru warned Menon, when approaching the case at the UN, not to appear to favour either the West or Eastern bloc, writing that 'In conformity with our declared policy of nonalignment with either Western or Eastern Bloc I consider it especially important that as our spokesman in the Indonesian case you should avoid all appearance of leaning more for support to one side than to the other.'⁹⁷ The Security Council ultimately called on the Dutch and Indonesians to cease hostilities and settle their differences through arbitration.⁹⁸ Despite the relative success of achieving a UN Resolution, Nehru remained dissatisfied with the Indonesia situation and wrote to Menon that 'I feel that the UK and USA have given indirect encouragement to the Dutch.'⁹⁹ In the weeks immediately preceding independence, therefore, India had already embarked on its first major foray into international affairs. Despite achieving success in securing a ceasefire UN Resolution, by the last quarter of 1948 any hopes of further progress were lost in stalemate.

The Second Police Action, December 1948

In the aftermath of the first police action and with a ceasefire in place, Hatta wrote to Nehru to seek advice as the Dutch operated an informal economic blockade of the Republic. Nehru's advice to Hatta, whilst admonishing the Dutch, warned him to be careful to take on actions that could 'prejudice your position in international

⁹⁵ Cable to Krishna Menon, 31/7/1947, in *ibid.*, p. 380.

⁹⁶ Security Council Resolution 27 (1947), S/459, 1/8/1947, http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions.html.

⁹⁷ Cable to Krishna Menon, 31/7/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 3*, p. 380.

⁹⁸ Security Council Resolution 27 (1947), S/459, 1/8/1947, http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions.html.

⁹⁹ Cable to Krishna Menon, 23/8/1947, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 4*, p. 433.

eyes.¹⁰⁰ Calling on the international community through the UN and through bilateral contacts had proved successful in achieving a first UN resolution and this further reinforced Nehru's strategy of utilising international opinion to the best possible effect.

Indonesia was discussed in its regional context at Nehru's first Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in October 1948 alongside Malaya and Indo-China.¹⁰¹ With an effective stalemate between the Dutch and the Republic continuing, Nehru emphasised the grave consequences that such actions could entail, and reported the following to his Chief Ministers:

I pointed out that the USA and the UK Governments would, to some extent, share in the unpopularity of the Dutch in Asia as it was generally believed that the Dutch would not take any military measures if the USA and the UK wanted to stop them. My arguments had some effect, and I know that both the USA and UK Governments brought considerable pressure to bear on the Dutch to refrain from any such action.¹⁰²

Nehru reflected on India's actions, 'I think it may be said that owing to India's insistence on this issue, Dutch military action did not take place then or up until now'.¹⁰³ Progress, however, was not forthcoming in negotiations between the two parties. Nehru again reflected on actions to date over Indonesia, communicating to his Chief Ministers that India had taken up strong support for the nationalists, and had been in contact with several governments, the UK and US in particular, with the result that 'I think I can say that our action in this matter had produced some results. It may even prevent further Dutch aggression, though we cannot be sure of that'.¹⁰⁴ Nehru's prediction did not hold and as the end of 1948 approached, the Republic, under intense pressure from the Dutch and with little progress on the diplomatic front, sought Nehru's advice on actions to take if the Dutch launched another police action. Nehru neatly summarised his policy of the last two years to Hatta when he wrote that 'I have discussed Indonesian situation repeatedly in London and Paris

¹⁰⁰ Cable to Hatta, 20/9/1948, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 7* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 648.

¹⁰¹ 'The Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference', Note to the Cabinet, 6/11/1948, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 8* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 250.

¹⁰² Nehru to Chief Ministers, 6/12/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 232-233.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 16/11/1948 in *ibid.*, p. 222.

with representatives of various Governments, and pointed out the imminence of Dutch military action and very grave consequences that would follow.’¹⁰⁵ On the success of his efforts Nehru could not claim a resounding success, but he did impress on Hatta that much sympathy was expressed and ‘some action was also taken to impress Dutch’ as to the consequences of their actions.¹⁰⁶ Nehru reiterated this message in communication with Sukarno, where he emphasises that ‘I laid stress on the dangers of the situation there and took a strong line against the Dutch policy’ but in contrast to the admission of doubt of his own efficacy to Hatta he wrote to Sukarno that ‘I know that I produced a great deal of effect on both the UK and the USA.’¹⁰⁷

As the situation in Indonesia deteriorated and as Nehru reported to Bajpai that there were ‘feverish preparations’ for military action by the Dutch, both men continued their efforts with the UK and US.¹⁰⁸ Nehru’s resolve strengthened with each action taken by the obdurate Dutch, to the extent that in November 1948 he was willing to consider giving the Republican Government exile and what other facilities could be granted to the fleeing Government.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the Indonesian crisis Nehru remained moderate in his approach and although he criticised the UN, the UK and the US, he never publicly lost faith in the ultimate objectives of the UN. The moderation in this case was a microcosm of the larger transition that Nehru underwent from nationalist leader to national leader compared to others in Congress that were less well acquainted with international affairs. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, for example, attacked the moribund UN’s delays, accusing it of having done nothing to solve the Indonesian crisis, which the American Embassy report of the speech concluded was fairly representative of wider Congress and national opinion.¹¹⁰ The next day Nehru, somewhat defensive of his own policy, his portfolio as well as his claim to represent India’s foreign identity, rebuffed Patel’s comments claiming full

¹⁰⁵ Cable to Mohammed Hatta, 4/11/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 373.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Letter to A. Sukarno, 24/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 377.

¹⁰⁸ Cable to Bajpai, 7/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 373.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

¹¹⁰ Text of speech in *Hindustan Times*, 2/10/1948, Telegram from New Delhi to Washington, No. 1154, 845.002/10-548, RG 59, NARA.

faith in the UN despite certain decisions (Kashmir) having gone against India.¹¹¹ This action publicly highlighted Nehru's moderation of a more forthright Congress member, one which was the only credible threat to Nehru's position, but it is also demonstrative of Nehru's dilemma of balancing the realities of foreign affairs with public and political opinion.

Nehru continued his earlier line of attack in consummately understanding and exploiting the measure of UK and US fears when he instructed Bajpai to emphasise that the Dutch would never regain full control of Indonesia, that they would be engaged in intense guerrilla warfare and thus their be unable to contribute to any European war. The consequences for Asia would also be grave, Nehru warned that 'large parts of Asia will be violently against Dutch and to some extent against UK and USA for passively supporting Dutch.'¹¹² Nehru personally emphasised this to Attlee, writing that Dutch action would let loose 'such a volume of bitterness and hatred in South East Asia against not only the Netherlands, but also other Western Powers that I shudder to contemplate.'¹¹³ As the Communists in China steadily made progress towards Nanking, and in light of the spread of Communist uprisings, Nehru warned Attlee that 'the situation would give a chance to the Communists...to play a more important role as defenders of Indonesian freedom.'¹¹⁴ Nehru played on British fears as the situation in Southeast Asia deteriorated, demonstrating Indian policy in microcosm on the relationship between stability and national freedom. The need for stability was not limited to Indonesia, but rather to the whole region, as Nehru later wrote in a memorandum that 'The only way to have stability in Indonesia and thereby help stability in South East Asia, is for the Indonesian Republic to be firmly established and to function in a completely independent manner.'¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* From a year before Indonesia makes it to the UN, further evidence of Nehru's belief in the utility of the UN can be found during the attempts to find a solution to the Palestine. In response to Asaf Ali the Indian Ambassador in Washington on the subject of an Asiatic Nations Organisation Nehru responded that 'it should be borne in mind that the Government of India's policy is based on wholehearted support of the United Nations and that the Government of India are strongly opposed to any suggestion tending towards the establishment of a rival organisation.' 'The United Nations: Note', 5/9/1946, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 1* (New Delhi, 1984), p. 440.

¹¹² Cable to Bajpai, 7/11/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 374.

¹¹³ Letter to Attlee, 25/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 378.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Note by Nehru, 28/6/1949 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series*,

Philip Noel-Baker, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, and Nehru were in regular correspondence throughout 1948 and the former warned Nehru at the end of November that the Dutch would not accept a Republican army and would not yield over the supreme command of the Federal Army. Nehru took this as further evidence of Dutch obduracy and as part of a larger scheme to reimpose strict colonial rule over the whole of Indonesia.¹¹⁶ India, Nehru argued, could not advise the Republic to accept Dutch demands and fully realised that this could lead to military action, but even if the Republic ceased to exist then the ‘ideal of Republic will remain and will be fought for to bitter end.’¹¹⁷ It was the Dutch, Nehru told Noel-Baker, and not the Indonesians who should be modifying their stance.¹¹⁸

Despite his earlier admissions of frustration with the lack of action by the UK and the US, Nehru placed emphasis on the ability of the two powers to control the Dutch when he wrote to Sukarno and Hatta not to be misled by Dutch threats as ‘it is not easy for the Dutch to start military action in view of grave warnings by United Kingdom and American Governments who are now most interested in preventing this in view of deteriorating situation in China.’¹¹⁹ This confidence was soon to be destroyed as the Dutch launched a second Police Action, which galvanised the world against the Netherlands and allowed Nehru an opportunity to demonstrate to the international community, and to Indians, India’s emerging foreign policy role.

The Netherlands once again resorted to ‘police action’ at the end of 1948, in an attempt to resolve the problem of the Indonesian Republic and make it bend to Dutch will and ultimately join a Federation of its design on its terms. Nehru was willing to do all he could to assist the Indonesians, but was ever respectful of the UN and international law. In response to requests to allow a government-in-exile to operate from India, Nehru claimed that this would depend on the UN.¹²⁰ Nehru,

Volume 12 (New Delhi, 1991), p. 370.

¹¹⁶ Cable to Noel-Baker, 30/11/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 380.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Cable to A. Sukarno, 29/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 379.

¹²⁰ Cable to Government of Indonesia, 8/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 375. This moderate attitude, arguably softened by the realities of power and responsibility was a far cry from a British worry in the week before independence. Nehru had enquired about the capabilities of the plans to be left to the Indian air force, which Air Marshall Sir Thomas Elmhirst inferred was an attempt by Nehru to calculate the feasibility of sending forces to assist the Republic, see Viceroy’s Personal Report, No. 15, 1/8/1947, 80

however, authorised the sending of a plane to collect key members of the Indonesian cabinet, who were due to arrive by 20 December, and also authorised the lending of small sums of money to the Indonesians, mainly for the maintenance of their representatives in foreign nations largely in an effort to keep up their international profile.¹²¹

In his initial thoughts to Menon, Nehru treated the Dutch with opprobrium; maintained that the aggression would have long-term effects; and was scornful towards the UK and US who he argued had let the situation go this far by not pushing hard enough with the Dutch.¹²² However, in communication with the two powers Nehru laid the blame squarely on Dutch obduracy. Nehru's note to Menon contained a précis to be sent to the UK and the US communicating India's views on the world situation in which he admitted that 'the USA and the UK Governments have strongly advised the Dutch not to take military action, but the Dutch have not been very cooperative in this respect.'¹²³ Once again, the telegram demonstrates Nehru's attempt to emphasise that Indonesia was an open sore, an issue that threatened East-West relations and was an ever-present symbol for the wider anachronistic practice of colonialism.¹²⁴ Nehru continued this line of reasoning in correspondence with long-term friend Stafford Cripps, the same man who had been authorising India's generous sterling balance settlements. In response to Cripps' anxiety over the advance of Communism in Asia, Nehru again lambasted the 'excessively stupid' Dutch within the context of chaotic Southeast Asia.¹²⁵ The Dutch mission in Indonesia, and the French in Indo-China, Nehru argued, is supported by Marshall Aid and with the passive assistance of the UK and the US, but if this policy continues then Southeast Asia will be lost to Communism.¹²⁶ This line

L/PO/6/123. Nehru's careful refusal to take unilateral action against the Dutch mirrored the refusal to assist Ho Chi Minh with transport and passport facilities for a potential force raised in India, see SarDesai, 'India and South-East Asia', in Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, p. 80.

¹²¹ Note on Indonesian situation, 16/11/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 376 and Note to Finance Minister, 18/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 376.

¹²² Letter to Krishna Menon, 19/12/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 272.

¹²³ 'The Asian Situation: A note to the Foreign Secretary', 14/12/1948, in *ibid.*, pp. 329-330. This was later sent in December 1948, see Cable to Indian Envoys in United States and Britain, 15/12/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 381.

¹²⁴ 'The Asian Situation: A note to the Foreign Secretary', 14/12/1948, in *ibid.*, pp. 329-330.

¹²⁵ Letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, December 17-18/12/1948, in *ibid.*, pp. 335-340.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

of argument, that colonialism fostered resentment upon which Communism thrived, was taken up by Nehru time and again in his efforts to end colonialism, and in the short-term achieve a more accommodating imperialism that worked with nationalists.

Indonesia itself was not isolated from the threat of Communism in Southeast Asia, but the forces of the Republic swiftly dispatched a PKI uprising in mid-1948. As Nehru reported to his Chief Ministers, 'the gallant young Republic, fighting for its freedom against the Dutch, was faced by a Communist uprising.'¹²⁷ Their swift action removed the immediate threat of Communism from the Indonesian independence struggle and in doing so gained them a more sympathetic ear from both the UK and the US. B.K. Nehru, in the wake of the Madiun Affair, again emphasised India's fear of Communism and attempted to exploit US fear of its spread as he told Butterworth (State Department) that the uprising had galvanised Indian determination to see swift end to the Dutch-Indonesian dispute.¹²⁸

In the face of Dutch obduracy and the bald aggression of the Second Police Action started the previous day, Nehru addressed the annual AICC in Jaipur on 19 December 1948, where he again argued to his fellow Congress members that this action was only part of the problem of foreign rule in Asia and that 'their action is contrary to all principles of the United Nations Charter.'¹²⁹ The AICC remained, as it had done in the years before Indian independence, a key platform and public event at which to discuss and pronounce on international affairs. As international frustration at the Dutch increased Nehru was better able to situate himself as the voice piece and de facto champion of Indonesian freedom.

In the wake of Dutch military action, Nehru hurriedly wrote to Attlee and once again presented an exposition of how Asia, not just India, viewed the action. Nehru continued with the themes of how damaging the Dutch flouting of its authority had been to the UN; how Dutch actions were equated with imperialism as a

¹²⁷ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 16/11/1948, Parthasarathi (ed.), *Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 221.

¹²⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, B.K. Nehru with Butterworth, 22/9/1948, Box 17, folder 63.2-Indonesia, Records of Office of South Asian Affairs, 1939-53, Lot 54D341, RG 59, NARA.

¹²⁹ Address at Plenary Session of Congress meeting in Jaipur, 19/12/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 383.

whole and threatened relations between the East and West; and with new emphasis how 'since Holland is a member of the Western Union and clearly dependent for its economic and military rehabilitation upon US and, to less extent, UK, it seems inevitable that at least the people of Asia should think that Anglo-American aid is being used by the Dutch to crush the Indonesian Republic.'¹³⁰ The theme of the flouting of UN authority had not been employed at the time of the First Police Action, but now the Dutch acted in direct contravention of the UN Resolution of August 1947, and India had made much noise about its part in the UN Resolution. Throughout the Indonesian crisis, Nehru employed the 'Asian opinion' card time and again both to play on British and American fears of losing Asia to Communism and to strengthen his own position as their main source of information and voice of Asia. 'There will be prolonged and fierce guerrilla warfare in Indonesia', Nehru told Attlee 'Nationalism throughout South East Asia will actively ally itself with Communist and any other element that may be prepared to join the struggle for freedom against colonial imperialism.'¹³¹

As India had to create its own diplomatic service, it had not yet sent its representative to Holland and would not in the foreseeable future, but this did not prevent India floating the idea of expelling the Dutch Ambassador.¹³² This was a symbolic warning to the two Western powers and the significance of an Asian power sending home the representative of a European nation was not lost on either the UK or the US.¹³³ India's communications during the crisis were not confined to the UK and US, but it was also in contact with Burma, Ceylon and Pakistan. In a cable to Burmese Prime Minister Thakin Nu, Nehru reported that the US and Australia had tabled a resolution in the Security Council, which India would support, demanding that troops return to their pre-hostility positions and a Good Offices Committee to

¹³⁰ Cable to C.R. Attlee, 20/12/1948, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 9* (New Delhi, 1990), p. 143.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

¹³² Remme, *Britain and Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*, p. 98.

¹³³ Cable to C.R. Attlee, 20/12/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 9*, p. 144. The *Manchester Guardian* reported that the Indian Ambassador in Washington had informed the State Department that India was considering breaking off diplomatic ties with the Netherlands. 'India's Indonesian Policy: US Urges Caution', Reported from London, *Manchester Guardian*, 6/1/1949, p. 5.

report on conditions.¹³⁴

Attlee responded to Nehru, emphasising British consternation at Dutch intransigence and that the British continued to strive for a settlement. Nehru, however, was dissatisfied with both the UN Resolution and the part taken by the UK in the Security Council, and he passed a note to Krishna Menon to convey to Attlee, in which he argued that the Resolution accepted Dutch aggression by asking for a ceasefire allowing the Dutch to keep hold of their territorial gains.¹³⁵ Nehru's ire was directed at Britain for its failure to support the US-Australian resolution and the memo stated that 'It will be most unfortunate if the impression spreads in Asia that the UK Government is passively supporting the Dutch in Indonesia.'¹³⁶ This was one step too far for the British who took umbrage at Nehru's insinuation of passive support and swiftly informed him of their displeasure, which Nehru immediately explained as a misunderstanding, stating that 'for my part, I am both aware and appreciative of your own and Mr Bevin's personal effort to restrain the Dutch and sincerely hope that these efforts will be continued and will succeed.'¹³⁷ The US, in the meantime, had acted and stopped all Marshall Aid to the Netherlands East Indies on 22 December 1948. As was his modus operandi throughout the Indonesia crisis, Nehru sought to connect the disparate episodes of chaos in Southeast Asia and employ them in his relations with the UK and the US. As such, Nehru wrote to Cripps that 'I should like you to appreciate what all this is leading to in South East Asia...unless the USA and UK come to the decision that colonialism in South East Asia must end, their prestige will go down, and in a moment of real crisis in South East Asia they will have few friends.'¹³⁸ Nehru related Indonesia's treatment with the wider advance of Communism and with Malaya by continuing his letter to Cripps stating that 'I have mentioned all this because it is very relevant in considering the question of the spread of Communism in South East Asia.'¹³⁹ Nehru attempted to exploit his personal relationship with Cripps over the issue of Marshall Aid as he wrote to the Chancellor covering a range of topics, but centred on the lethargy of

¹³⁴ Cable to Thakin Nu, 22/12/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 9*, p. 145.

¹³⁵ Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon, 30/12/1949, in *ibid.*, p. 149.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Cable to C.R. Attlee, 7/1/1949, in *ibid.*, p. 157.

¹³⁸ Letter from Nehru to Cripps, 18/12/1948, CAB 127/134.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

British actions easing the way for Communist advances, which Nehru admitted was making him anxious too.¹⁴⁰ As the US highlighted, however, stopping aid would be taking unilateral action outside the authority of the UN.¹⁴¹

With the Second Police Action underway, Nehru provided a neat précis to his Chief Ministers to keep them informed: India had been energetically lobbying the UK and US since October and warning them in person of the ‘grave danger of the Dutch indulging in military action.’¹⁴² Nehru had not only castigated the Dutch, but had warned the US and the UK that if a Dutch attack went ahead then part of the blame would fall at their feet.¹⁴³ Nehru warned that as the Marshall Plan was supporting the Dutch, it was also supporting the actions in Indonesia, and as such the Western Union would suffer a loss of prestige and ‘Asia would turn away from the Western Union and the policies that the USA and the UK stood for.’¹⁴⁴

Nehru continued to employ all means available to him: pressure on the UK and US, belief in the validity of the UN, moral support for the Republic, and the ‘immediate step that we are taking is to stop KLM flights across India.’¹⁴⁵ Nehru took this action in concert with other nations and asked that Burma deny KLM landing facilities, as India, Ceylon and Pakistan had announced a ban on 24 December 1948.¹⁴⁶ Nehru communicated to the Chief Ministers something he had also made strikingly apparent to the US and UK that ‘It has brought to the fore the whole question of European Imperialism in parts of Asia ... the habit of ignoring Asia still continues. But now with the developments in Indonesia, there has been a rude

¹⁴⁰ Nehru wrote that ‘Why do the Dutch behave in this way? Because they are excessively stupid and lacking in understanding. But that is not enough. They could never act in the way they have done unless they had the active or passive support of the USA and the UK.’ Letter from Nehru to Cripps, 17/12/1948, CAB 127/134.

¹⁴¹ Meeting on 3/1/1949 at the State Department, see Memorandum of Conversation, 3/1/1949, 501.BC Indonesia/1-349, *FRUS* Volume 7, 1949, p. 123.

¹⁴² Nehru to Chief Ministers, 23/12/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 247.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* The Indian Ambassador, Sir Benegal Rama Rau echoed suggestions to stop ERP aid in discussions on 3/1/1949 at the State Department, see Memorandum of Conversation, 3/1/1949, 501.BC Indonesia/1-349, *FRUS* Volume 7, 1949, p. 123. For an excellent text on the ERP within the context of European reconstruction see A.S. Milward, *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-51* (London, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 23/12/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 248.

¹⁴⁶ Remme, *Britain and Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*, p. 98 and cable to Thakin Nu, 22/12/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 9*, p. 146.

shock.’¹⁴⁷

Nehru’s frustration at the Dutch and lack of firm action by the UN was clear when he explained that the UN had failed to grasp the nettle of Dutch aggression in Indonesia.’¹⁴⁸ The Security Council subsequently adjourned until 6 January 1949, with the Dutch effectively having ignored the two resolutions already passed¹⁴⁹ and it was in this atmosphere of frustration that Nehru felt it necessary to begin to organise a conference for interested parties in New Delhi following prompting from Thakin Nu.¹⁵⁰ This conference has become part of the established narrative of Indian foreign policy and is presented as an example of India’s strident and independent anti-colonialism. However, the conference has a far more nuanced significance than as evidence of India’s strident anti-colonialism, beginning with the fact that Nu prompted Nehru to call the conference.

Once again, as with the virulent comments regarding the use of Indian troops in Indonesia, this strong statement came at the time of the All India National Congress annual meeting. Indonesia thus again provided Nehru with a platform with which to exercise his authority in India’s foreign affairs and also be seen to be defending Asia against imperialism in the eyes of his domestic and political audience. Nehru expressed his frustration with the Security Council’s lack of decisive and firm action when he wrote to the Chief Ministers that ‘owing to the delay of the Security Council in dealing with this matter, we decided to convene a conference in New Delhi at ministerial level, of representatives of the Asian countries, plus Egypt and Turkey.’¹⁵¹ This conference was not born out of a desire to create a third bloc, nor to circumvent the UN but rather to demonstrate to the UK and

¹⁴⁷ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 23/12/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 248.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Asian Conference on Indonesia’, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 3/1/1949, p. 8.

¹⁴⁹ UN Security Council, *Resolution 63 (1948) of 24 December 1948*, 24 December 1948, S/RES/63 (1948), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f18530.html> [accessed 13 July 2011] and UN Security Council, *Resolution 64 (1948) of 28 December 1948*, 28 December 1948, S/RES/64 (1948), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f1193c.html> [accessed 13 July 2011]

¹⁵⁰ See American Embassy telegram to Washington, 27/1/1949, 845.002/1-2749, Box 6077, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵¹ Australia and New Zealand also both invited although only willing to send observers. Nehru to Chief Ministers, 1/1/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 256.

US both India's unique position in the Asian world and the disquiet of Asian nations as Nehru wrote to his Chief Ministers that 'In thinking of Asia they now think of India and the line India may or may not take. Thus a great burden of responsibility is cast upon India.'¹⁵² In Nehru's mind, however, this responsibility was not so much by design as by default 'but facts and circumstances are compelling India to play an important role in these developing world events.'¹⁵³

The delegates mainly represented regional and Asian territories, including Australia and New Zealand. The UK, US and other European powers did not receive invitations because, as Nehru explained to Krishna Menon:

had we invited UK as an Asian power, how could we have left out USSR, or France or USA...exclusion of the USSR, USA and France would have brought protests from all three. Even though we might have ignored France, we could not have ignored USSR and USA. Inclusion of last two, along with UK, would have introduced into conference all the distrusts, rivalries and rancours which have paralysed the Security Council.¹⁵⁴

The prospect of a conference raised concern from both the US and UK that Nehru was attempting to circumvent the authority of the UN, and that he was attempting to form some kind of Asian bloc.¹⁵⁵ However, as Gopal notes 'the presence of Australia and New Zealand was sufficient testimony that this was a regional conference and not the first step in the formation of an Asian bloc animated by hostility to the West.'¹⁵⁶ The conference was, rather, an attempt to demonstrate India's regional importance and awareness, and that, as already noted, Nehru presented himself as the voice of Asia whilst domestically demonstrating Indian efforts.

Nehru again employed the fear of Communism in his efforts to achieve his ultimate aims in Southeast Asia, and in this context Indonesia. In an effort to placate US concerns about Nehru's anti-American tone in regard to Indonesia and the calling of the conference, Nehru informed Henderson that if India failed to take the lead in

¹⁵² Nehru to Chief Ministers, 17/1/1949 in *ibid.*, p. 262.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Cable to Krishna Menon, 9/1/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 9*, p. 158. Inviting the UK and the US would have turned the Conference into a mini-Security Council meeting, S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956, Volume Two* (London, 1979), p. 55.

¹⁵⁵ 'No Asian Bloc Says India', Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 9/1/1949, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956, Volume Two*, p. 55.

removing the last vestiges of the European colonial system in Asia then the USSR would do so in a manner that would strengthen Communist influence in the various national movements.¹⁵⁷ In light of presaging a collapse in East-West relations, Nehru was asked by the US to make a public statement emphasising that the conference on Indonesia was not intended to supplant, but complement, the UN in exchange for a US declaration of support for the conference.¹⁵⁸ Not only was Nehru willing to placate the US. But it is also of importance that Nehru, despite his lack of confidence in the UN on this matter, had not yet made it patently clear that the conference was to strengthen, not weaken, the UN. Nehru called the conference at the request of others in the heat of the moment and began to see the potential folly of the decision in that the responsibility for whatever happened at the conference was with India. An MoEA official, therefore, emphasised in press questioning that the point of the conference was to support, not circumvent the Security Council.¹⁵⁹ Bajpai consequently organised a press conference where he and Nehru made efforts to emphasise the conference's complementary not confrontational aim, and asked for the US to hold up their end of the bargain and issue a statement of support for the conference in the spirit of East-West co-operation.¹⁶⁰ Nehru confirmed that he had stressed the co-operative aims of the conference at dinner with Henderson, citing that he hoped it would both relieve concern in the West and frustrate those in India and Asia who wanted to cause an East-West rift.¹⁶¹

In his attempt to maintain the focus of the conference, Nehru intended to 'confine the conference to the Indonesian questions alone.'¹⁶² The conference decided on three aims: to recommend to the Security Council immediate steps the Dutch should be called to take; to recommend further action to be taken in the case that the Dutch failed to comply and finally the setting up of administrative

¹⁵⁷ Record of Conversation between Henderson and Nehru, 7/1/1949, Telegram No. 27 from US Embassy to State Department, 8/1/1949, 890.00/1-849, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵⁸ Henderson in fact provided Nehru with brief guiding notes to include in the statement see conversation between Nehru and Henderson, 7/1/1949, Telegram No. 27, 8/1/1949, 890.00/1-849, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁵⁹ Press Report from US Embassy to State Department, 11/1/1949, 890.00/1-1149, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁶⁰ Bajpai informed the US Embassy that a press conference would be held on 14/1/1949, Donovan to State Department, 13/1/1949, NIACT 51, 890.00/1-1349, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁶¹ Nehru in conversation with Henderson, 14/1/1949, US Embassy to State Department, Telegram No. 8, 890.00/1-1449, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁶² Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 19/1/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 9*, p. 165.

machinery to ensure the co-ordination of action by Asian countries for implementing the decisions of the conference.¹⁶³ The conference got underway by emphatically clarifying that any measures to deal with Dutch aggression should be in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.¹⁶⁴ Nehru argued that the conference ‘is not intended to bypass the Security Council, but to impress upon it the strength of our feeling on this matter.’¹⁶⁵

The conference concluded with recommendations for the Security Council: all leaders to be freed immediately. All pre-December 1948 territory should be returned to the Republic; Interim government should be formed; all Dutch troops should leave Indonesia by a certain date to be decided by the Good Offices Committee; elections to a constituent assembly should be no later than 1 October and that power should be handed over to a United States of Indonesia by 1 January 1950.¹⁶⁶ The first resolution made several suggestions, described by Nehru as feasible, which sought to achieve an immediate ceasefire and lay the foundations for a final settlement of differences. The resolution called for the immediate release of all political prisoners; full freedom to allow the Republic to function and the restoration, before 15 March 1949, of the territory held by the Republic before 18 December 1948. It also called for the establishment of an interim government with full control over defence and external affairs; elections for a constituent assembly; and a transfer of power no later than 1 January 1950. The second resolution sought to establish some form of suitable machinery for consultation with concerned parties to ensure the implementation of measures. The third resolution, as Nehru commented in his closing address, ‘indicated that wider sphere of cooperation which is becoming more and more necessary... We have to explore and that and devise such methods for consultation and cooperation within the framework of the United Nations as are to our common advantage and the advantage of the world.’¹⁶⁷ This was not an attempt

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ “‘End Colonialism in Asia’: General Condemnation of Dutch at Delhi Conference’, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 21/1/1949, p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 17/1/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 263.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Asian Countries Forming New Political Group: Success of Delhi Conference: Holland Urged to Transfer Power to Indonesia this Year’, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 24/1/1949, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷ Concluding speech at the Asian Conference on Indonesia, 23/1/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN*, 89

to create a third bloc, but rather to continue to present an Asian perspective to the Western powers and the UN as Nehru had been attempting throughout the Indonesian crisis. For India, Indonesia represented an international coming of age; it was a chance to externally demonstrate the sovereignty and legitimacy of the new state of India. Nehru wrote that the conference had been ‘a great success which...enhanced the prestige of India all over the world.’¹⁶⁸ The political capital of holding the conference, albeit not a wholly successful conference, was used to deflect domestic criticism of negotiating entry into the Commonwealth in January 1949 as Nehru employed it as evidence for the independence of India’s foreign policy whilst nominally a Dominion.¹⁶⁹

In retrospect, Nehru complained that the Security Council’s January Resolution on Indonesia was inadequate although it followed the Delhi Conference lead on many matters. However, Nehru wrote to Patel on the subject and informed him that ‘one result of our convening it has been to push the Security Council some considerable distance and they are going to propose a resolution which, though not entirely satisfactory from our point of view, still is on the whole favourable to the Indonesians.’¹⁷⁰ How much the Security Council followed Delhi is debatable when the resolutions passed in Delhi were sensible, reasonable and constructive and made it easy for the Security Council to adopt similar approaches.¹⁷¹ The 8-Point memorandum that the Conference produced and submitted to the Security Council was reflected in the eventual UN Resolution: immediate ceasefire; release of political prisoners; holding elections and a transfer of power by 1 January 1950. Two points failed to square with the Security Council’s proposals: that of an immediate total withdrawal and complete freedom on the interim government. Most pertinent for this investigation is that the proposals put forward by the Conference were by and large already extant in both Resolutions 63 and 64 and in US proposals for a third

Volume 9, p. 165.

¹⁶⁸ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 24/1/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 270.

¹⁶⁹ Press Conference of 26 January 1949, New Delhi to Secretary of State in Washington, 28/1/1949, 845.002/1-2749, Box 6077, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁰ Nehru to Patel, 26/1/1949, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973), p. 102.

¹⁷¹ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 3/2/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 273.

resolution.¹⁷² What it is difficult to ascertain is the knowledge that the Conference parties had of the drafting of the third resolution and the extent to which this influenced their own drafting of proposals. When examining US documents it is difficult to detect any consideration of the proposals handed to the President of the Security Council by Nehru on 23 January 1949, when in fact the Resolution had already been drafted. In short, there is scant evidence that the Security Council, and the US in particular, was considering altering draft proposals in light of any decisions made in Delhi. But both the Delhi proposals and the US draft resolution drew heavily on the existing agreements and progress already made in negotiations, and the result was proposals that were similar in aim and tone.¹⁷³

Both the Security Council Resolution and the proposals arrived at by the Delhi Conference were heavily based on the understanding that both disputing parties still held to the Renville Agreement, namely establishment of a United States of Indonesia and a transfer of power. Aside from the matter of ceasefire and delineating lines of control, the bulk of the resolutions were primarily concerned with ensuring the continuation of negotiations and both provided strikingly similar timetables for action. The important point to take from the Security Council resolution was that Nehru was dissatisfied that it failed to go as far as the Delhi Resolution.¹⁷⁴ The Conference resolution itself fell short of the original proposals put forward by the Indonesians, namely the immediate imposition of air and sea restrictions on Dutch traffic to Indonesia; imposition of sanctions by conference countries if the Security Council failed to act; and providing money and supplies to

¹⁷² UN Security Council, *Resolution 63 (1948) of 24 December 1948*, 24 December 1948, S/RES/63 (1948), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f18530.html> [accessed 13 July 2011] and UN Security Council, *Resolution 64 (1948) of 28 December 1948*, 28 December 1948, S/RES/64 (1948), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f1193c.html> [accessed 13 July 2011] and the last resolution UN Security Council, *Resolution 67 (1949) of 28 January 1949*, 28 January 1949, S/RES/67 (1949), available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f242c.html> [accessed 13 July 2011].

¹⁷³ The two American drafts in *FRUS*, neither of which mention the upcoming Conference in Delhi, the *SWJN* also fail to mention the connection between the two sets of proposals as does the UKHC report to the CRO. *SWJN* Volumes 9 and 10, UKHC to CRO, Despatch No. 3, Ref. 08/44, 31/1/1949, F2669, FO 371/76147 and see Jessup, Acting US Representative at the United Nations to the Acting Secretary of State, 17/1/1949, 501.BC Indonesia/1-1749, RG 59, NARA and Jessup to Acting Secretary of State, 18/1/1949, 501.BC Indonesia/1-1849, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷⁴ Namely the Delhi Conference wanted a return to the pre-December 18 boundaries.

the Republic.¹⁷⁵ We need to ask the question of how seriously the concept of sanctions outside of the UN was considered, as Nehru had consistently argued that only the UK and the US had the power to effect a change on the Dutch and that Nehru shied away from taking any actions that could contravene international law. The Delhi Conference was for all intents and purposes, a symbolic talking shop where the delegations could simply demonstrate their ability to discuss. As Anita Inder Singh notes, the resolutions from the Conference bore out Nehru's attitude as 'they were moderate.'¹⁷⁶ The conference was more a forum for venting off steam and working with the Security Council, and its moderation stems largely from Nehru's stewardship. Commenting on reportage on the wider significance of the conference, Nehru stated that there had been a turning point in history 'This fact is well recognised', he wrote, 'by competent observers all over the world. It means new alignments and a new balance of power, if not now, then in the near future.' Despite the fact that Nehru repeatedly denied attempting to create a third bloc 'it is inevitable that as a result of this conference and other causes, the countries of Asia will come closer together and that India will play a leading part in this. This brings India new responsibilities.'¹⁷⁷

In the wake of the conference Krishna Menon and Bevin met in early February 1949 to discuss the implementation of the resolutions, or lack thereof. In response to a demand from Menon for further details on British policy in response to less than speedy actions by the Dutch, and as an attempt to get the Commonwealth as a whole involved, Attlee cabled all Commonwealth Prime Ministers.¹⁷⁸ Attlee saw two objectives, both of which chimed with Nehru's own thoughts: first to achieve a

¹⁷⁵ The last of these was an extremely sensitive issue in international law and Nehru was very wary of getting tangled. See UKHC New Delhi assessment of the Delhi Conference, UKHC to CRO, Despatch No. 3, Ref. 08/44, 31/1/1949, F2669, FO 371/76147.

¹⁷⁶ Anita Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-1956* (London, 1993), p. 60. Inder Singh, however, fails to examine the interaction between India, the US and Britain in this instance and simply claims that the US saw the action of calling the conference as anti-American.

¹⁷⁷ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 3/2/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 274.

¹⁷⁸ Krishna Menon saw Bevin at the former's request to ascertain British thinking in response to tardy Dutch response to the Security Council's Resolution, 3/2/1949, Record of Meeting, dated 4/2/1949 F 2092/1071/2. Bevin consequently writes to Menon to inform him that Attlee cabling all Commonwealth Prime Ministers and keeping them informed of British actions, 16/2/1949, F 2552, FO 371/76147. Attlee sent his telegram on 15/2/1949, having informed the Americans of the lines of British thinking.

lasting settlement for Indonesia and secondly to uphold and strengthen UN authority in regard to this and other disputes.¹⁷⁹ Attlee was also candid in his exposition of the nationalists, who needed to concentrate on the prospect of rule after the Dutch and ensure that they are in a strong enough position to do so. Attlee employed equal candour in explaining the dangers if the Dutch failed to act appropriately: if the Dutch ignored the UN, the UN would have to then impose sanctions and the Dutch could leave the UN. Attlee also highlighted the danger of the nationalists not fully cooperating and hiding behind the UN commission and also that any prolongation of the conflict that weakened the authority of the UN played into Russian hands.¹⁸⁰

Attlee explained to his fellow Commonwealth Prime Ministers that Britain had instructed its Ambassador in the Hague 'to impress on the Dutch the need for speed in announcing their plans and for fulfilment of their programme and of Security Council Resolutions.'¹⁸¹ Attlee also implored that 'In these circumstances...[we] use every channel to impress on the Indonesians the difficulties that lie ahead and that, in the long run, their salvation is in their own hands, however much sympathy and help they may get from friends outside.'¹⁸² This last plea was directed at India in particular. This was a direct reflection of Nehru's policy of encouraging the British to exercise their influence with the Dutch to effect a settlement. Nehru replied to the telegram post haste agreeing with his assessments of the potential dangers, but jumping on Attlee's assessment of the nationalists as an obstacle to the lasting peace so desired.¹⁸³ Nehru was patently not totally satisfied with the substance of the UN Resolution as 'It fell short in several respects of the very moderate resolution adopted by the Delhi Conference', but it had to be respected and worked with.¹⁸⁴

Nehru was increasingly frustrated at the sometimes weak reprimands that the Dutch received from the US and the UK, noting that they 'address occasional

¹⁷⁹ Attlee to Commonwealth Prime Ministers, No. 48, 15/2/1949, DO 35/2860.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Cable from Nehru to Attlee, 18/2/1949, in both S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 10* (New Delhi, 1990), p. 377 and UKHC New Delhi to CRO, No. X335, 18/2/1949, DO 35/2860 and F2629, FO 371/76147.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

homilies to the Netherlands, and for the rest remain acquiescent, or seek to make the Indonesians agree to Dutch terms.’¹⁸⁵ By March 1949, negotiations had slowed considerably and the American diplomat Cochran attempted to keep the talks alive. It was at this time that Nehru received a request from the Dutch Government, asking for Indian assistance in persuading the Republicans to attend the proposed Round Table Talks resulting from Louis Beel’s (Governor-General of Dutch East Indies) February 1949 plans in response to the Security Council.¹⁸⁶ Nehru responded negatively to the request, in light of the fact that he was not satisfied with the substance of the 28 January 1949 resolution and furthermore that he did not view the most recent Dutch entreaties as satisfying the demands of the Security Council. Instead, Nehru cabled to Indian representatives in the Delhi Conference nations and his representative at the UN to further emphasise the need for full implementation of the Security Council’s Resolution.¹⁸⁷

The Security Council, Nehru proposed in concert with Australia, needed to again discuss the stalemate in Indonesia during their May session.¹⁸⁸ Nehru’s ultimate fear was for continued stalemate followed by further Dutch military actions, and he wrote to Bajpai that ‘We cannot possibly remain silent and just wait for the Security Council to be a little more generous.’¹⁸⁹ It was at this point that Nehru raised the possibility of acting upon the second resolution of the Delhi conference and organising an informal meeting of the interested parties that attended the conference in January.¹⁹⁰ With the failure of the two sides to establish an interim Government by 15 March 1949, the UN Commission for Indonesia was instructed to bring the two sides together for a preliminary conference to settle the issues of the return to Jogjakarta, the ceasefire and the release of prisoners. The preliminary Round Table conference opened 15 April 1949 and ultimately led to a successful conclusion resulting in Indonesian independence under the Dutch crown.

As soon as the Dutch showed significant signs of compromise and an end to

¹⁸⁵ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15/6/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 374.

¹⁸⁶ Reported in telegram to Zafrullah Khan, 3/3/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 10*, pp. 378-379.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Note to Bajpai, 31/3/1949, in *ibid.*, p. 383.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Nehru asks Bajpai’s opinion, but no response noted in *SWJN*, Note to Bajpai, 31/3/1949, in *ibid.*

the conflict was in sight, India reacted by softening its tone and stance vis-à-vis The Netherlands. Once the Republic took possession of Jogjakarta, and Round Table talks planned at The Hague, Nehru both removed the ban on KLM flights in place since December 1948 and also sent the Indian Ambassador, Mohan Sinha Mehta to Holland.¹⁹¹ On the conclusion of Round Table talks in The Hague, Mehta, reported that ‘This will be a very important event in the political development of South-East Asia.’¹⁹² Nehru concluded on India’s role in the Indonesian freedom struggle with the rather terse report to his Chief Ministers that the United States of Indonesia was to come into existence in the next fortnight or so.¹⁹³

Conclusions

In conjunction with the previous chapter this chapter has contextualised India’s earliest forays into international relations with its own transfer of power and with Indian domestic history. Moreover, it has provided a more nuanced account of the role India played in the decolonisation of Indonesia focussing on the Police Actions. Once Indian troops had been removed from Indonesia, the key Indian aim was to see a peaceful and acceptable resolution to the dispute between the Dutch and the Republic. Indonesia can also reveal aspects of India’s last months of colonial rule and from the available evidence, it appears *prima facie* that Nehru was given a free hand in the prosecution of India’s nascent foreign policy contrary to Zachariah’s argument that the Interim Government did not have a great deal of power.¹⁹⁴

Nehru supported the Republic for a variety of reasons connected to and directly reflecting the changes in India’s status from colony to nation-state. Furthermore, Indonesia was compared to India’s own success in achieving independence. The cause of Indonesia was widely supported by the majority of the public opinion and Congress, partly because of its link with the use of Indian troops abroad. Indonesia was, above all, a relatively clear cut issue, and one that was widely discussed in the Indian press thanks to the legacy of Indian troops in Southeast Asia

¹⁹¹ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 20/7/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 415.

¹⁹² Letter from Mehta to MoEA, 11/11/1949, File No. 1121-IANZ/49, NAI.

¹⁹³ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15/12/1949 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 503.

¹⁹⁴ Zachariah, *Nehru*, p. 156.

and the INA. Nehru exploited the situation to make a stand and set an example in international affairs (in contrast to the quagmire of Kashmir and Nehru's own Police Action in Hyderabad). Impassioned attacks on the Dutch, bordering on histrionics, demonstrated Nehru's strength of feeling on the issue, feeling that he was able to translate into action thanks to the relatively straightforward nature of the Indonesian freedom struggle. Moreover, it was a chance for India to demonstrate its broad foreign policy principles in action and to distance itself from the legacy of the Raj. The issue was clear cut in the eyes of India: a case of blatant and aggressive European imperialism.

The timing was ideal and allowed Nehru to reinforce his position as the most internationally-minded man in Congress and to assert and demonstrate Indian entry onto the world stage as power was being transferred to the two newly-created Dominions. Supporting Indonesia outwardly demonstrated the continuity of Congress as anti-colonial in the transition from nationalist movement to government. The fact that Indonesia was the largest Muslim country on earth did not pass Nehru by in the context of Pakistan, as he felt a 'special satisfaction at championing the rights of a Muslim people.'¹⁹⁵

Supporting Indonesia's case in the face of violence provided India with a means to attempt to present itself as the moral leader of Asia through its championing of Indonesian freedom. However, as the ARC demonstrates, Nehru did not intend India to be the sole champion of all freedom movements; India could provide moral support for freedom movements, but such staunch opposition to the Dutch would not be the default response to imperialism.¹⁹⁶ The rhetoric of anti-colonialism, it would seem, became moderated in the real world of international affairs. Nehru and India's newly-won international status were exploited by a Republic that struggled to win official international recognition; for example, when India and Australia took the case to the UN. As such, India at times acted as a conduit for the Republic and as a champion of Indonesian nationalism, albeit in a

¹⁹⁵ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 6/12/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, pp. 232-233.

¹⁹⁶ Nehru strove to ensure that the ARC did not establish India as the advocate for all instances of nationalist opposition to colonialism, for example only moral support was offered to Indo-China. For a narrative of the ARC see Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*.

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moderate fashion exploiting the tools at India's disposal. The use of the tools available to an independent state also came with the responsibility of adhering to international law, which Nehru was adamant should be upheld. The threat to peace that the ongoing Indonesian situation represented was not the only reason that the G.O.I., both pre- and post-independence, sought a solution to the problem; Indonesia was a key source of foodstuffs for India. In this respect Indonesia acted as a microcosm of India's Southeast Asia policy of securing stability, in this case through the ending of Dutch rule over Indonesia. In the years that followed Indonesian independence, the relationship with India was one its key bilateral contacts.

Nehru fully utilised the existing contacts that India possessed, in part because of the absence of a more fully developed foreign service. India was also able to exploit its administrative weakness when it refused to send its Ambassador to The Hague until a resolution to the problems had been found. The UN also emerged as a key tool for India, not purely because of Nehru's thoughts on the utility of the UN from a principled angled, but more so because it enabled India to interact with a far larger number of nations than would otherwise be possible. This episode also shows Nehru as somewhat mercurial at times, for one moment he praised the UK and US for their assistance and efforts with the Dutch and the next he lambasted them for passively allowing events to continue. Nehru's policy was manifold and at times stressed both the statesman and nationalist leader identities. Through his communications with the UK and also the US, Nehru attempted to establish himself as the voice of Asia. Nehru used this position as he exploited Western fears of Communism for his own ends. Nehru partly explained his method of emphasising to the US and Britain that Dutch actions, viewed as being taken with their concurrence, were damaging to Western interests in Asia because it was true, but also because he calculated that it would have more effect than a 'pious appeal about help to Indonesia.'¹⁹⁷ Nehru's experiences over Indonesia contributed to India's decision to remain in the Commonwealth and to co-operate with the UK in Southeast Asia.

¹⁹⁷ Note by Nehru, 28/6/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, p. 372.

4) India's Membership of the Commonwealth, 1945-1949

British India gained independence through partition into two Dominions within the Commonwealth as a temporary, politically expedient arrangement, a 'pathway out of deadlock.'¹ Accepted as part of Mountbatten's June 1947 plan, India's Commonwealth status had to be addressed as the Constituent Assembly constructed a constitution for an independent, sovereign republic in light of Congress's expressed desire for Purna Swaraj and the Objectives Resolution passed in January 1947.² India was thus unable to acquiesce to a Crown link, and with the failure of this approach the structure of the traditional Commonwealth had to be changed to accommodate a willing India.

The reasons that India both wanted and needed Commonwealth and Sterling Area membership, and it is often a difficult task to determine the fine distinction between the two, is the key question that the chapter addresses. The negotiations of entry are examined to expose the intricacies of the process, but this is not constitutional history. There is little reward in simply listing the base factors that contributed to India's decision, as this reveals little except the diverse structural components of any decision; what is required is an analysis of how the major factors interacted with each other. The changing domestic and international situation that India faced from independence and the evidence of experience of rule, combined to demonstrate to Nehru and the G.O.I. that its interest would best be served by continuing association with the Commonwealth. These categories of interest can broadly be divided, not in any impermeable way, into: economics that acknowledge the unbreakable link between the domestic and the international, international Asia, international global, defence, Pakistan, Indians abroad and international legitimation. India joined for a combination of these reasons, but this is not what was presented to the wider world, it was presented with India actively pursuing its goals rather than being guided by the force of circumstances. However, this research demonstrate that

¹ W.D. McIntyre, 'The Strange Death of Dominion Status', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27 (1999), p. 196.

² See Balram Singh Pavadya, 'Nehru, The Indian National Congress and India's Membership in the Commonwealth', in V.T. Patil (ed.), *Studies on Nehru* (London, 1987), p. 371 and Anita Inder Singh, 'Keeping India in the Commonwealth: British Political and Military Aims, 1947-49', *Journal of Contemporary History* 20 (1985), p. 469.

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it was a combination of these two pressures: circumstance and national interest, which at times were hard to distinguish between. Key turning points often obscure as much as they seek to reveal, but the Prime Ministers' Meeting in October 1948 signalled Indian intentions to remain within the Commonwealth.

The experience gained in government, both in the national and international fields weighed heavily on Indian appreciations of the value of the Commonwealth link. Initially reluctant to have a link, Nehru's experience in international affairs in particular convinced him of the value of close relationships with members of the Commonwealth, and potential future members in the form of colonies.³ This was only further compounded by the continuing polarisation of the world and Communist intrigues in South and Southeast Asia from early 1948. The experience of Dominion status and pressing structural exigencies helped the growing realisation that India's needs could be best served within the Sterling Area and the Commonwealth. India's sterling balances were instrumental in its decision making. Development has long been viewed as a determinant in Indian foreign affairs, but the effect on policy is another question entirely; it is one thing to say and another to explain and demonstrate the nature of development on India's external affairs. The economic situation in which India found itself was a key desiderata in its foreign policy. As Nehru opined in December 1947, a country's foreign policy is 'ultimately...the outcome of economic policy.'⁴ Development in the years immediately after 1947 until the formulation of the first five-year plan was more about post-war efforts towards reconstruction. The worst deficiencies of wartime deprivation needed rectifying, and at times overshadowed the G.O.I.'s aim of using their resources and sterling balances exclusively to fund capital goods imports.⁵ The sterling balances also meant that Indian development cannot be separated from the wider problem of the British post-war financial settlement. The economies of the two nations, and the

³ In 1947 Nehru had informed Mountbatten that emotionally and psychologically, India could not join the Commonwealth, see W.D. McIntyre, "'A Formula May have to be Found': India, Ireland and the Headship of the Commonwealth', *Round Table* 365 (2002), p. 401.

⁴ J. Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Volume One, September 1946- May 1949* (New Delhi, 1949), p. 202. Published by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

⁵ The G.O.I. wanted to reserve the total of the balances for capital goods imports from the UK and the US, but this was an impossible aim when India's balance of payments needed crucial support. But this is not to say that India did not use the balances to get capital goods. India would have to wait until 1951 and the linking of the balances to Colombo for the balances to serve this purpose alone.

Sterling Area more widely, remained crucially interwoven. One of the key contributions that this chapter makes both to the thesis and to the understanding of India's decision is to actually examine the importance and relevance of the sterling balances and why their existence necessitated Commonwealth membership in a more detailed and nuanced way than hitherto done.⁶ Technically, joining the Commonwealth was not a requisite for remaining within the Sterling Area, and so why India decided to join the club is the question that this chapter answers.

The spread of Communism in Southeast Asia has largely been overlooked by historians looking for India's motivations. It is argued that the insurgencies in Southeast Asia and India's own Communist menace softened some of those Indians opposing a Commonwealth link, and hardened those in favour. India had two intimately linked aims in Southeast Asia, the end of European colonialism and preventing the spread of Communism. The end of European colonialism, through the granting of independence to national states, held the answer to preventing the spread of Communism as far as J.A. Thivy (India's Representative in Malaya) was concerned, and Nehru shared this broad appreciation, arguing that genuine nationalism was the answer to the Communist menace.⁷

The principle of remaining within the Commonwealth and Sterling Area largely decided by the benefits expected. Nehru thus had to square the circle and achieve membership on a basis that would be acceptable to as large a proportion of Indians as possible and consequently this chapter also explores how Commonwealth membership was presented to the Indian public. The decision was presented to the Constituent Assembly and the population as an active choice, one that emphasised the more attractive aspects of membership (protection of Indians abroad, promoting peace), and the loosely defined term 'material benefits'. What the G.O.I. was careful to do was to deny any sense of necessity or economic determinism in membership: India was in because India had made the conscious decision to be in as equal and

⁶ The only such attempt is by B.R. Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12 (1985), pp. 142-62.

⁷ J.A. Thivy to S. Dutt (MoEA), 20/4/1949, in File No. 103-C.J.K/49, NAI. For Nehru see the letter from Nehru to Louis D Gilbert, Editor of Corps Diplomatique (Paris), 29/9/1948, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 7* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 618.

free members. Nehru and the G.O.I. publicly presented the case as one of voluntary membership determined by the benefits that India could gain, and not as a vital necessity in the traumatic international situation and challenging domestic economic scene. This was a politically managed exercise that outwardly emphasised India's sovereignty whilst neglecting to acknowledge the necessity of the decision.

Once it was realised that India's interests lay with the Commonwealth and that India was willing to continue its membership, two linked processes continued: how to find a formula that would secure both India's sovereign republic status, a non-aligned stance and be acceptable to a broad spectrum of public opinion. V.K. Krishna Menon assured Mountbatten in April 1947 that although India would become an independent, sovereign Republic 'some formula' was being sought that would allow a close association between the two nations. But, he continued, 'initiative on Congress's part is impossible; even the semblance of it would lose them their position; it must come in some way from us [UK].'⁸

This chapter contributes to the existing historiography by integrating the decision to join the Commonwealth with Nehru's other moves in Southeast Asia, its economic imperatives and its relationship with Britain, and it also exposes the intimate link between the Commonwealth, the Sterling Area, the Colombo Plan and India's imperative need for development aid. Once again, the structural and international forces crucially limited India's room for manoeuvre, and serve to emphasise the all-too-often forgotten fact that India did not operate in an international vacuum. This research builds on the work of R.J Moore who has produced the most comprehensive analytical narrative of events, but re-examining the narrative account of the constitutional deliberations helps to expose the underlying importance of the link for India and for the other Commonwealth members.⁹ Several works address British motivations for retaining India in the Commonwealth, but few ask why India, after the Purna Swaraj Resolution of 1929 and two years of Dominion Status, decided to remain within the Commonwealth and

⁸ Diary Entry, 18/4/1947, Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission With Mountbatten* (Reprint edn, London, 1985, first published 1951), p. 66.

⁹ R.J. Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1987).

the Sterling Area in April 1949.¹⁰ There is a discernible trend in this historiography that attempts to demonstrate that India joined only to gain benefits. For example, Bimal Prasad notes the benefits, but not the necessity of the decision.¹¹

A further strand of the historiography, echoing the G.O.I. pronouncements at the time, argues that, as B.R. Nanda demonstrates, India's decision took nothing away from independence. Nanda, however, fails to connect the material benefits with the decision.¹² Sarvepalli Gopal too argues that the decision did not limit freedom, and argued that it would promote stability and peace, but does acknowledge that the spectre of Soviet expansion fed into the decision.¹³ Echoing Gopal and Nanda, P.N. Masaldan asserts that membership did not harm independence, but would promote goodwill; however, Masaldan too fails to accept that material determinants contributed.¹⁴

Michael Brecher was the first to document systematically the factors involved in India's decision to remain within the Commonwealth in 1949, and his

¹⁰ Despite Anita Inder Singh's contestation that the motives for India's entry into the Commonwealth have been charted there is still much work to be done. For accounts that analyse British motivations for keeping India in the Commonwealth see, Anita Inder Singh, 'Imperial Defence and the Transfer of Power in India, 1946-1947', *International History Review* 4 (1982), pp. 571-83; 'Decolonisation in India: The Statement of 20 February 1947', *International History Review* 6 (1984), pp. 191-99; 'Economic Consequences of India's Position in the Commonwealth: The Official British Thinking 1949', *Indo-British Review* 11 (1984), pp. 106-11; 'Keeping India in the Commonwealth: British Political and Military Aims, 1947-49'; 'Post-Imperial Attitudes to India: The Military Aspect, 1947-51', *Round Table* 296 (1985), pp. 360-75; *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56* (London, 1993); Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth*; R.J. Moore, *Endgames of Empire* (London, 1988); Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', and Michael Brecher, 'India's Decision to Remain in the Commonwealth', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 12 (1974), pp. 62-91.

¹¹ Bimal Prasad, 'Nehru and the Commonwealth', in Verinder Grover (ed.), *International Relations and Foreign Policy in India, Volume 5, Great Britain, Commonwealth and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 242-259. There are few works from the subcontinent that place a focus on the material or geostrategic factors that influenced Nehru's decision-making process, some that do, but only briefly, include S.R. Mehrotra, 'India and the Commonwealth', in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), pp. 24-41; S.N. Misra, *India: The Cold War Years* (New Delhi, 1994); Balram Singh Pavadya, 'Notes and Memoranda: Mr Nehru, the Indian National Congress and India's Membership in the Commonwealth', *International Studies* 4 (1962), pp. 298-311 and S.C. Gangal, 'India and the Commonwealth', *International Studies* 17 (1978), pp. 709-717.

¹² Introduction in B.R. Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), pp. 6-7.

¹³ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956, Volume Two* (London, 1979), pp. 45-46.

¹⁴ P.N. Masaldan, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Foreign Policy: Determinants, Principles and Conduct* (Nagpur, 1977), p. 16.

perspicacious work remains the key text on the issue.¹⁵ However, Brecher's article lacked a depth of analysis and crucially failed to demonstrate the links between the factors that Brecher identified. Seven components, Brecher argues, were involved in the decision-making process- the emerging pattern of bi-polarity and the onset of the Cold War; two sets of bilateral relationships, one with Britain, the other involving Pakistan; turmoil in south east Asia and the Far East; India's military weaknesses; economic dependence; and the advocacy of opposition political parties. However, what is lacking from Brecher's analysis is a nuanced evaluation of the sterling balances.

Charrier's unpublished PhD thesis goes some way to connect the economic situation of independent India with that of the Commonwealth decision, and the formulation of the Colombo Plan.¹⁶ He argues that material needs favoured Indian acceptance of Commonwealth membership. Similarly, Anita Inder Singh combines strategic and material factors in her reading of Indian motivations for accepting the Commonwealth connection, and highlights that the Commonwealth provided a means of maintaining a non-aligned stance but avoiding isolation, and also that India's economic dependence on the Sterling Area to cover her balance of payments dictated adherence to the Commonwealth.¹⁷ Inder Singh also notes that India calculated that she had a better chance of more generous releases if she remained in the Commonwealth and Sterling Area.¹⁸ However, as is demonstrated through this research, generous releases were not always desired as India feared wasting the balances.

Judith M. Brown echoes Inder Singh, arguing that, amongst other issues, easy access to the sterling balances was a key determinant of India's decision.¹⁹ B.S. Pavadya argues that membership was 'accepted not so much for sentimental reasons, but rather for the tangible advantages believed to accrue from Commonwealth

¹⁵ Brecher, 'India's Decision to Remain in the Commonwealth'.

¹⁶ Philip J. Charrier, 'Britain, India and the Genesis of the Colombo Plan, 1945-51', PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995.

¹⁷ Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 83.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (Yale, 2003), p. 254.

membership, both in the national and international fields.²⁰ Whilst this may be true there is little analytical value unless a more nuanced approach is taken to expose the developing realisation of these benefits. There is an elephant in the corner when discussing the Commonwealth, and its economic counterpart the Sterling Area, which is the question of whether India had any other choice. This chapter builds on the existing historiography by looking at the decision through Indian domestic and international lenses, with a focus on the interaction of the multiple variables that entered the decision-making process.

The majority of accounts from the Indian subcontinent fail to employ British sources and, as access to official Indian sources is variable, rely on statements from Nehru, both public and in the Constituent Assembly, as their main source base.²¹ Nehru's *Selected Works* provides only a very basic narrative and fundamentally fails to reveal any underlying components of the decision. The Commonwealth in particular raises the issue of the absence of Indian policy documents: the question of whether we can assume that India conducted a cost benefit analysis. However, there are very few explicit expositions of India's formulation of the pros and cons.²² What we are able to do, however, is to read much into the way that India conducted itself vis-a-vis the sterling balance negotiations.

Early ideas about Commonwealth Membership

India became increasingly aware of the value of the Commonwealth link and intended to remain in as long as a suitable formula could be found. One crucial point that is under-emphasised is the fact that, as Gordon-Walker argued, 'the link had not

²⁰ Pavadya, 'Nehru, The Indian National Congress and India's Membership in the Commonwealth', in Patil (ed.), *Studies on Nehru*, pp. 377-78. The benefits Pavadya identifies are defence weakness, trade links, exchange reserves, Commonwealth as a force for peace, settlers abroad, and 'may' also have been the Kashmir issue and also the spread of Communism in Southeast Asia, pp. 376-377.

²¹ For example Zubeda K. Khan, *International Politics and India's Foreign Policy Under Nehru* (2000) and Mehrotra, 'India and the Commonwealth', in Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, pp. 24-41.

²² In a rare elucidation of India's motives, V.P. Menon, one of the most powerful civil servants in India, and a key Patel advisor, informed the British High Commissioner that India must stay in the Commonwealth for four keys reasons: keeps trade agreements; continued use of British foreign services in countries India as yet had no presence; growth of Communism disturbing and India wants to be associated with anti-Communist counter-action taken by the Commonwealth including receiving intelligence reports. Record of Conversation between UKHC official and V.P. Menon, undated, DO 133/91.

yet been snapped. There was something that could grow.’²³ Krishna Menon retrospectively echoed Gordon-Walker’s analysis stating membership ‘was mainly because of ... an existing connection.’²⁴ Furthermore, a letter from Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell at the end of the latter’s tour of duty in India reported a conversation between Nehru and Cariappa.²⁵ Cariappa informed Pethick-Lawrence that ‘Nehru ... saw no reason why India should leave the Commonwealth provided His Majesty’s Government did nothing to antagonise India in the meantime.’²⁶ Pavadya argues that Congress was willing to remain within the Commonwealth, and so the problem became not one of Britain persuading India, but of finding an acceptable formula that would allow a republic to enter.²⁷ Whilst there is merit in this argument, it fails to acknowledge that there was opposition to the link from within the Congress Party, from other political parties and from public opinion more widely, and that at times Nehru’s frustration with Britain’s legalistic approach brought to the fore real concerns that a formula could not be found.

Expressing opposition to the link, Sitaramayya Pattabhi (Congress President), argued with A.C.B. Symon (UKHC) in early 1948 that ‘he and his friends were doing everything possible to ensure that India severed her connection with the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth at the earliest possible date.’²⁸ This admission is in direct contrast to Pavadya who argues that because the Constituent Assembly was Congress-dominated, and as Congress was dominated by the right there would little trouble getting the Resolution passed.²⁹ How much the rank and file of Congress were kept informed is difficult to ascertain.³⁰ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel’s correspondence is conspicuously quiet on his take on the Commonwealth

²³ Patrick Gordon-Walker, *The Commonwealth* (London, 1962), p. 137.

²⁴ Menon in 1965 interview with Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon’s View of the World* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 28-29.

²⁵ Cariappa was to become the first head of the Indian Army post-independence.

²⁶ Letter from Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 7/3/1947, L/PO/10/24, IOR.

²⁷ Pavadya, ‘Nehru, The Indian National Congress and India’s Membership in the Commonwealth’, in Patil (ed.), *Studies on Nehru*, p. 371.

²⁸ Minutes of Meeting by A.C.B Symon, 16/4/1948, DO 133/89.

²⁹ Pavadya, ‘Notes and Memoranda: Mr. Nehru, the Indian National Congress and India’s Membership in the Commonwealth’, p. 303.

³⁰ Nehru told Krishna Menon that the Congress Working Committee, the Cabinet and the Congress Party would be kept abreast of the general principles but not of the details, Nehru to Krishna Menon, 11/11/1948 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 8* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 253.

until Nehru's London visit in April 1949.³¹

Immediately following Nehru's October 1948 trip to London the British High Commissioner noted that Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (Governor-General) was 'definitely in favour of India remaining within the Commonwealth', but 'the looser and less formal the ties the better.'³² Despite bad press over Hyderabad and the British attitude towards Kashmir that had done nothing to help the Commonwealth's case, Rajagopalachari thought 'that Nehru might have some difficulty in persuading the Party to remain in the Commonwealth', but 'he did not seem to think that Nehru would be unsuccessful.'³³

The Communist Party of India (CPI) opposed a link, following Moscow's line, as did the Socialists. Jayaprakash Narayan, reaffirmed Socialist opposition as Nehru left for London in October 1948, arguing that it would be a betrayal of Purna Swaraj.³⁴ At the 1949 National Executive, moreover, the Socialist Party reiterated that whilst they would support a real federation of nations 'free from racial discriminations and economic exploitation, [they] cannot be a party to India remaining a part of the British Commonwealth.'³⁵ The attitude of the Socialists was considered by Nehru before his October 1948 trip. V.P. Menon informed Shattock

³¹ Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973); Prabha Chopra (ed.), *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Volume 12, 1st January 1947-31 December 1947* (New Delhi, 1998); *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Volume 13, 1st January 1948-31st December 1949* (New Delhi, 1998) and *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Volume 14, 1st January 1949-31 December 1949* (New Delhi, 1999).

³² UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 3848, 3/11/1948, DO 133/91, Pavadya argues that Rajagopalachari thought link with Britain was desirable and the only other link could be a treaty; this Commonwealth link would be more 'flexible and nobler.' Pavadya, 'Notes and Memoranda: Mr. Nehru, the Indian National Congress and India's Membership in the Commonwealth', p. 303.

³³ UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 3848, 3/11/1948, DO 133/91.

³⁴ Details reported in UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 3549, 8/10/1948, DO 133/91. The US Embassy reported on Narayan's criticism of any Commonwealth link in the run-up to by-elections in United Provinces, and enclosed 'Association with Empire Will Mean Goodbye to Sovereignty', *Indian News Chronicle* 24/6/1948, in Telegram No. 725, US Embassy to State Department, 24/6/1948, 845.00/6-2448, RG 59, NARA. Also see Werner Levi, who argues that the Socialist platform called for withdrawal from the Commonwealth and neutrality in the Cold War, 'India's Political Parties', *Far Eastern Survey* 20 (1951), p. 171 and A.K. Banerji, 'India and the Commonwealth: The Nehru-Menon Legacy that still Survives', *Round Table* 284 (1981), p. 348. T.A. Keenleyside places the political positions on the Commonwealth issue within a longer timeframe, 'Nationalist India and the Issue of Commonwealth Membership', *Journal of Indian History* 60 (1982), pp. 227-250. Whilst examining pre-1945 ideas on the Commonwealth is important, the bulk of analysis has to be located in the post-1945 period in the immediate context of independence.

³⁵ Resolution cited in *The Times of India*, 'India's Ties with Commonwealth', 1/1/1949, p. 3.

(UKHC) that 'Nehru was...apprehensive of the political capital which the Indian socialists might make out of India retaining her connection.'³⁶ The All-India Forward Bloc, reorganised after Subhas Chandra Bose, passed a resolution that India should opt-out of the Commonwealth. The General Secretary maintained that India should remain neutral and should do nothing to antagonise Russia in acquiescing to the policy of the British Commonwealth.³⁷ Domestic opposition to the Commonwealth came from competing political parties as well as some consternation within Congress, and in his presentation of the benefits of the link Nehru explicitly sought to assuage opposition fears.

The concept employed to explain the G.O.I.'s decision to remain is that of India's experience, both nationally and internationally. K.M. Panikkar, himself largely pro-Commonwealth, confirmed this development towards a more favourable view of membership when he told Mountbatten that 'Nehru was now more firmly persuaded of the need for Indo-British understanding.'³⁸ Mountbatten, as Governor-General, provided London with suggestions on the importance of altered 'nomenclature' that would allow Asian countries to remain within the Commonwealth.³⁹ Whilst 'individual Indian leaders are alive to the advantages of the continued Commonwealth connection,' Mountbatten argued, 'their political position has been weakened and the attitude of the Government adversely affected by the policy adopted towards Kashmir.'⁴⁰ However, Mountbatten had 'purposefully avoided discussing the subject, so far, with Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel', although he was under the impression that they were among those most alive to the

³⁶ Telegram from UKHC to CRO, No. 3499, 4/10/1948, DO 133/91.

³⁷ Details reported in UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 3549, 8/10/1948, DO 133/91.

³⁸ K.M. Panikkar in conversation with Mountbatten, 16/1/1948, in Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 269. Soon after this meeting Panikkar left Delhi for China to become the first Indian Ambassador first to Chiang Kai Shek's nationalist government and thereafter to the Communist government. For Panikkar's views on Indo-British connections see, 'The Defence of India and Indo-British Obligations', *International Affairs* 22 (1946), pp. 85-90. Mehrotra concurs that, 'in late 1946 and early 1947 Nehru's thoughts were tending in the direction of maintaining friendly relations with Britain and the Commonwealth', 'India and the Commonwealth', in Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, pp. 30-31.

³⁹ On 25 February 1948, Campbell-Johnson notes that Mountbatten's aide-memoire on the Commonwealth, the nomenclature in particular, was ready to be sent to London, in Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, pp. 290-291.

⁴⁰ Campbell-Johnson, 25/2/1948, *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 291.

advantages of Commonwealth membership.⁴¹ However much certain leaders were aware of the advantages of membership, they had to square the circle by entering in a way that did not alter their constitutional aims or open them to accusations of betraying Purna Swaraj. Information from Delhi demonstrated that at this early stage Krishna Menon was in favour of a link with the UK, and would continue to lobby for an accommodation between the two sides.⁴² The key question to ask is why these first years of Dominion status helped to persuade the G.O.I. that its interests would best be served by remaining within the Commonwealth. Britain attempted to ensure that it did nothing to antagonise India, and to demonstrate the benefits of association to India.

The International Context

Whether or not the Calcutta Youth Conference organised and initiated Communist revolts to start throughout Southeast Asia is a subject of intense historical debate, but to many contemporaries the moment was viewed as the beginning of an orchestrated Communist drive in Southeast Asia.⁴³ With the victories of the Communist Party in China, the elucidation of the Zhdanov thesis and insurrection in Southeast Asia, India grew increasingly eager for stabilisation and increasingly fearful of international isolation. The overall stability of the region was threatened by the spread of Communism; Southeast Asia represented a key area of the world for India, and the spectre of expansionary Communism threatened nascent links- economic, cultural and political- between India and the region. As outlined by Nehru for the Indian Delegation to the UN in September 1948, 'We are most intimately connected with South East Asia and we should therefore develop these

⁴¹ See Mountbatten's Aide-Memoire for Gordon-Walker, 'India and the Commonwealth', 25/2/1948, DO 133/89.

⁴² A.C.B. Symon of the UKHC reported on a conversation with G.S. Bajpai, Symon informed the CRO that Bajpai had told him that 'contrary to what might be supposed, Krishna Menon was now one of the strongest supporters of the British Commonwealth', Symon to CRO, 4/8/1948, P/85, DO 133/91. Also see the letter from UKHC to H.A.F. Rumbold (CRO), 48/P/85 "B", 14/9/1948, PREM 8/1008. Gangal also argues that Krishna Menon was pro-Commonwealth despite his left-leanings, 'India and the Commonwealth', p. 710. Krishna Menon himself retrospectively confirmed his support for the Commonwealth in interview with Michael Brecher, 'I think that it is true that at one time I was the only person who wanted it, the one single person who wanted to keep membership of the Commonwealth', Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*, p. 20.

⁴³ This historiography is examined in the Malayan Emergency chapter.

contacts as much as possible.’⁴⁴ An expansionary Communist threat was, therefore, not welcomed and made it onto a list by V.P. Menon of four key contributory factors to India’s decision.⁴⁵ This list is one of the very few discussions of the range of factors that entered into India’s decision-making process, and as such deserves note.

Communist uprisings from Burma to Malaya had a sobering effect on Nehru’s international view, as did the violence of India’s own Communists, and by early 1949, Nehru described East and Southeast Asia as being in a state of ‘flux’.⁴⁶ This instability, Gordon-Walker argued, had the impact of making India realise ‘that isolation might be dangerous.’⁴⁷ India clearly recognised the dangers of Communism in Southeast Asia. As Nehru told the Indian Cabinet in November 1948, ‘A link with the United Kingdom and other Commonwealth countries is desirable as in these days no country can profitably live in isolation.’⁴⁸ The informal structure of the Commonwealth allowed India to avoid isolation whilst simultaneously upholding formal neutrality. Moreover, Britain was the only major power that had shown an interest in the area and especially in development as an answer to Communism. Vijaylakshmi Pandit informed the Congress Working Committee, discussing the Commonwealth in the run-up to the October 1948 meeting, that she was convinced that friendly relations with the UK had to be maintained: it was impossible for India to go to the Russian camp and the Americans would ‘use dollars and demand too much of a quid pro quo.’⁴⁹ Attlee considered Nehru fully aware of the threat that Communism posed in Southeast Asia, and his Cabinet in late 1948 that Nehru ‘had specifically in mind the Communist threat to South-East Asia.’⁵⁰ But the key issue

⁴⁴ Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, ‘Basic Principles: Guidelines for Upcoming United Nations General Assembly’, dated 12/9/1948, p. 609.

⁴⁵ Record of Conversation between UKHC official and V.P. Menon, undated, DO 133/91.

⁴⁶ Letter dated 1/4/1949 in G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949* (New Delhi, 1985), p. 307.

⁴⁷ Gordon-Walker, *The Commonwealth*, p. 136.

⁴⁸ Nehru’s Report to the Indian Cabinet on his return from the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference, 7/11/1948 cited in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 252. This advice by Nehru is also evident in Warren F. Ilchman’s article who argues that membership of the UN was key for India in terms of the access it provided to the international arena, Political Development and Foreign Policy: The Case of India’, *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 4 (1966), pp. 216-230. Access that this research demonstrates would otherwise be impossible because of its limited resources, both monetarily and in terms of personnel.

⁴⁹ Enclosure to letter from UKHC to H.A.F. Rumbold (CRO), 48/P/85 “B”, 14/9/1948, PREM 8/1008.

⁵⁰ Appendix to CP (48) 309, 15/12/1948, CP (48) 309 ‘Note by the Prime Minister’, 31/12/1948, CAB 129/31.

here was to ensure that entry into the Commonwealth did not appear to compromise either India's neutrality or her sovereignty. In response to a Constituent Assembly speech on 8 March 1948, Symon reported that Nehru 'is learning from experience in two directions: first that it is not possible to steer an altogether clear course between Scylla and Charybdis; and second, that idealism must give way to realism when India's own interests are at stake.'⁵¹ The G.O.I. faced domestic hostility to close association with Britain and its imperial system in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, Nehru had to balance the demands of domestic opinion with the realities and responsibilities of international affairs. Nehru was no longer able to speak freely as he had done as a Congress spokesman, or even as freely as he had done in the Interim Government in 1946-47.

The Commonwealth, Nehru hoped, would help to promote international stability and in the future provide other colonies with a path to follow, as Pavadya argues: 'India, by declaring itself a Republic, severing her allegiance to the Crown, yet opting to remain in the Commonwealth, set a precedent that was availed of by other nations that won independence from British rule.'⁵² Such a precedent presented an alternative trajectory from formal adherence to one or other of the emerging power blocs, and in this way supports an argument that India was interested in an 'area of peace'. Indian succession from the Commonwealth could have serious repercussions and damage both Indian and Commonwealth influence, both in the short term and in the longer term, as other colonies began to win freedom. India in the Commonwealth not only offered legitimacy to the organisation, but also provided India with international legitimacy in terms of its entry onto the world stage and with additional opportunities for political leadership in an Asian context. Aubrey Metcalfe, former Indian Foreign Secretary, assessed the future of Indian foreign relations and argued that outside of the Commonwealth, India 'would suffer from the want of adequate expert diplomatic representation in foreign countries.'⁵³ V.P. Menon, in one of the few elucidations of Indian calculations, echoed this assessment

⁵¹ A.C.B. Symon (UKHC) to Patrick Gordon-Walker, Despatch No. 45, 16/03/1948, DO 133/70.

⁵² Pavadya, 'Notes and Memoranda: Mr. Nehru, the Indian National Congress and India's Membership in the Commonwealth', p. 298.

⁵³ Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, 'India's Foreign Relations Now and in the Future', *International Affairs* 21 (1945), p. 491.

in conversation with the British and referred specifically to Indian access to Commonwealth intelligence reports on Communism.⁵⁴ The Commonwealth, in the same way as UN membership, assisted Indian entry onto the international stage at breakneck speed, which otherwise would have taken many years of pursuing the traditional practice of establishing missions overseas.⁵⁵ The Commonwealth was an additional form of direct contact with leaders and an opportunity to exercise influence beyond the realms of bilateral or UN relations.⁵⁶ The Commonwealth was very much a forum in which India could have a strong voice, and could attempt to use this to influence others in support of its position as on Indonesia. This positive aspect was demonstrated in October 1948 when the London Commonwealth conference was the occasion for wide-ranging and constructive discussion on a range of topics.

Beyond international stability, defence was a key element in India's Commonwealth calculations, not in terms of obligations but of benefits. Baldev Singh, Defence Minister, informed the Congress Working Committee that the only possible defence tie for India was with the UK.⁵⁷ The army was staffed by senior British officers, and the equipment continued to be supplied by British arms companies and the British Government.⁵⁸ Military equipment from Britain was essential for the continued operation and development of the armed forces and especially the growth of the air force and navy. V.P. Menon, moreover, argued that

⁵⁴ Record of Conversation between UKHC official and V.P. Menon, undated, DO 133/91.

⁵⁵ Beth Kreling argues that the Commonwealth 'facilitated her [India's] entry to the international sphere' in 'India and the Commonwealth: A Symbiotic Relationship?', *Round Table* 98 (2009), p. 50.

⁵⁶ Pavadya makes the argument that Nehru saw these events as opportunity for exchange of ideas and experiences, 'Notes and Memoranda: Mr. Nehru, the Indian National Congress and India's Membership in the Commonwealth', p. 308.

⁵⁷ Enclosure to letter from UKHC to H.A.F. Rumbold (CRO), 48/P/85 "B", 14/9/1948, PREM 8/1008.

⁵⁸ For example, the Royal Indian Navy was commanded by one William Edward Parry until 1951, see footnote 3 of S Gupta (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, p. 259. The reputed scientist and inventor P.M.S. Blackett also served as an advisor to Nehru during his time as Prime Minister, see R.S. Anderson, 'Blackett in India: Military Consultant and Scientific Intervenor, 1947-72. Part One', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 53 (1999), pp. 253-273; 'Blackett in India: Military Consultant and Scientific Intervenor, 1947-72. Part Two', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 53 (1999), pp. 345-359 and 'Empire's Setting Sun? Patrick Blackett and Military and Scientific Development of India', *Economic and Political Weekly* 36 (29 September – 5 October 2001), pp. 3703-3720. Also see the biography by M.J. Nye, *Blackett: Physics, War and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and London, 2004). Also see the article by Panikkar, 'The Defence of India and Indo-British Obligations', *International Affairs* 22 (1946), pp. 85-90 who goes as far as to argue that the UK and India needed a joint defence council to co-ordinate the defence of the Indian Ocean.

the Chiefs of Staff made a ‘particularly powerful’ argument that Indian equipment was all British and that India would continue to rely on British advice for years to come.⁵⁹ Adherence to British defence supplies was determined by both the existing structure of the armed forces and India’s sterling balances, and Britain had made it clear that the Commonwealth countries had preference over others in the supply of British arms.⁶⁰ The sale of *HMS Achilles* is one prominent example, which was sold to India and became *HMIS Delhi*. On its arrival Nehru wrote that ‘This is a rather special occasion from the point of view of our Navy and our Armed Forces. It means that our little Navy in a sense grows up.’⁶¹ The central importance of fully-functioning armed forces was reinforced by the first years of independence: Hyderabad, the Telengana uprisings and the conflict with Pakistan. The air force was crucial to the defence of India’s tenuous hold on Kashmir as in times of trouble an air lift might be the only way to move troops and defend Srinagar.⁶² Pakistan and Kashmir’s influence on India’s decision has been addressed by many who have examined the Commonwealth decision, over-emphasised by some, and there is little evidence that it was the defining impact on India’s decision regarding the Commonwealth.

A minor issue, but one that was lauded as demonstrative of the benefits of Commonwealth membership, was the freedom of movement in the UK that Indians, and vice versa, would lose if India were to become a foreign nation.⁶³ Commonwealth membership was also presented by the G.O.I. as a means to help secure the interests of the millions of Indians in the Empire and Commonwealth, for

⁵⁹ Record of Conversation between UKHC official and V.P. Menon, undated, DO 133/91.

⁶⁰ See ‘Military Advantage to India and Pakistan of Remaining in the Commonwealth’, which was part of a set of ‘Talking Points’, that the High Commission in New Delhi requested from London, see letter from the A.V. Alexander to Noel-Baker, 18/6/1948, DO 142/341. Wainwright makes the point that armaments trade helped to rectify the sterling imbalance between the two nations, but fails to say whether the aim was to use defence transfers to rectify the balances, or to use the balances to provide defence stores to India, A.M. Wainwright, *The Inheritance of Empire: Britain, India and the balance of power in Asia, 1938-55* (Westport and London, 1994), p. 143.

⁶¹ The cruiser was purchased by India on 5/7/1948, the same time as sterling balance negotiations, see Nehru to his Chief Ministers, 15/9/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 196.

⁶² Wainwright, *The Inheritance of Empire*, p. 136.

⁶³ ‘The Practical Economic Consequences of India’s Becoming a Foreign State’, Note by the Board of Trade for Working Party of Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/3, 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

example in South Africa.⁶⁴ Had India completely divorced from the Commonwealth, there would have been a direct impact on those of Indian origin abroad as elucidated by the Colonial Office:

The fact that India had become a foreign State would make for disturbed political conditions in the Colonies with Indian communities should any substantial majority of the latter decide to become Indian nationals. Their disenfranchisement [relating to the colony in which they reside] would presumably be complete and [would result in] the creation of large alien blocs without political rights.⁶⁵

This would then have raised the thorny issue of the rights and status of India's broadly-defined migrant population in the Indian domestic sphere, an issue which Nehru sought to avoid. Furthermore, opined the Colonial Office, 'the fact that India had become a foreign state would reduce any restraint which membership of the Commonwealth could have upon Mr. Nehru's anti-colonial policy.'⁶⁶ Despite the protection of Indians abroad being presented as a positive benefit of membership, the treatment of Indians in Malaya was used to attack Nehru and the Commonwealth link as the Resolution passed through the Constituent Assembly. The foregoing factors in India's decision were not as central as the next two, trade and sterling, which in turn relate to the stabilisation of Southeast Asia and in part explain Indian hostility to expansionary Communism.

A large proportion of India's external trade was with the Commonwealth: approximately 45 per cent, and of this, 28 per cent was conducted with the UK, which took 20 per cent of India's total world trade, composed largely of *inter alia* tea, jute and leather.⁶⁷ More than 60 per cent of India's export earnings from tea, leather and unmanufactured tobacco came from Britain.⁶⁸ Approximately 70 per cent of India's exports to Britain were covered by preferences, but most of these were primary products like tea, which India could if needs be find alternative customers

⁶⁴ See Hugh Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950* (London, 1976).

⁶⁵ 'India and the Commonwealth', Memorandum by the Colonial Office for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations (Working Party), GEN 276/4, 17/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁶⁸ D.P. Barooah, *Indo-British Relations, 1950-1960* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 245.

for, suggests Inder Singh.⁶⁹ This argument, however, fails to acknowledge the fact that any trade disruption would be catastrophic for India's balance of payments and, therefore, the standard of living of the average Indian. British goods received reciprocal preferences from India and largely covered items of higher value than Indian products exported to Britain. For example, Britain enjoyed preferences on motor vehicles, chemical preparations, electrical apparatus, parts and bicycles. In light of Indian desire for machinery and finished goods for industrial development, there was little immediate risk of preferences being withdrawn when Britain was the only market capable of serving these needs in exchange for sterling, and in light of India's fear that Britain divert capital goods to alternative markets.⁷⁰ Thus, a key benefit India could lose if she seceded from the Commonwealth was the extant trading benefits in the Indo-British Trade Agreement of 1939 and imperial preferences.⁷¹ V.P. Menon, in demonstration of its importance, cited maintaining existing trade agreements as one of the four key reasons why India wished to stay in the Commonwealth.⁷²

India, furthermore, relied on sea-borne imports for a range of goods carried in the merchant fleet of the Commonwealth (largely UK): oil and lubricants, capital goods and machinery of all kinds, and certain essential raw materials.⁷³ Jute and cotton were mainly produced in Pakistan, and any change in Commonwealth status would inevitably have an impact on this trading relationship. The British Treasury's contribution to the Commonwealth debate starkly laid out the limited scope for Indian action; the costs of leaving the Sterling Area would have been prohibitive for both India and the UK.⁷⁴ The Board of Trade added that it was 'in our interest to try

⁶⁹ Inder Singh, 'Economic Consequences of India's Position in the Commonwealth: The Official British Thinking 1949', pp. 106-11.

⁷⁰ The Cabinet paper predicted that these preferences would gradually disappear, and once industrialisation was underway para-protectionism does come into force, but in these very early years Britain was a crucial supplier, see Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁷¹ Inder Singh notes this also, but fails to directly connect it to the development imperative of the new Indian state, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 39.

⁷² Record of Conversation between UKHC official and V.P. Menon, undated, DO 133/91.

⁷³ Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁷⁴ 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', Memorandum by the Treasury for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/2, 16/2/1949, CAB 115

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to prevent India from going formally foreign, either by keeping her in her present status or, if possible, by arranging some new status which would be proof against most favoured nation claims from third countries.⁷⁵

Indian business was not altogether opposed to the Commonwealth link. A sympathetic article on the subject in the Birla-owned *Eastern Economist* on 23 July 1948 demonstrated that business, as Government, was increasingly alive to the fact that Britain was the best hope for continued imports in the form of releases from the balances.⁷⁶ Of all foreign investment in India, Britain's share was estimated at between £150 million and £600 million, approximately 80 per cent of the total, mostly in private enterprises, which provided some £20 million in invisible income.⁷⁷ On the reverse side, these British investments represented industrial expertise situated in India, which was accepted by the G.O.I. in the 1948 Industrial Policy statement as necessary for India's future development. India also relied on Western countries for trained technicians, again essential for economic development.⁷⁸

Since the war, there had been a persistent deficit on external trade resulting from the import of grain, machinery and equipment for Indian industry, the most developed in the East bar Japan, and consumer goods to counter rampant inflation.⁷⁹

130/45.

⁷⁵ 'The Practical Economic Consequences of India's Becoming a Foreign State', Note by the Board of Trade for Working Party of Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/3, 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

⁷⁶ See letter from Shattock (UKHC) to H.A.F Rumbold (CRO) enclosing the article, undated, DO 133/91.

⁷⁷ In a memo for the sterling balance negotiations of 1948 it was estimated that the maximum value of British investments stood at £600 millions in 1945, 'UK Investments in India and Pakistan', Delegation Brief No. 14, undated, T236/1143. Also see 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', Memorandum by the Treasury for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, 16/2/1949, GEN 276/2, CAB 130/45. Also noted in Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33. The 80 per cent proportion is provided in Barooah, *Indo-British Relations, 1950-1960*, p. 256. For the patterns of British investment in post-1947 India see B.R. Tomlinson, 'Imperial Power and Foreign Trade: Britain and India, 1900-1970', in Peter Mathias and John Davis (eds), *The Nature of Industrialisation Volume V, International Trade and British Economic Growth from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 146-62 and 'Foreign Private Investment in India 1920-1950', *Modern Asian Studies* 12 (1978), pp. 655-677.

⁷⁸ Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* Also see, 'Statement by Mr John J Mcloy, President of the World Bank', 9/5/1949, Enclosure 116

Britain provided vital support in the form of releases from the sterling balances. Much of the deficit was in dollar trade and to fund this hard currency deficit, India drew heavily on central reserves of the Sterling Area, and purchased almost \$100 million from the IMF in 1948-49.⁸⁰ India made attempts to solve this problem, particularly by switching to soft currency suppliers within the Sterling Area, and thereby deepened immediate links and dependency of the area.

As the President of the World Bank reported in spring 1949 'the food situation dominates any approach to the Indian problem' and his words capture the core of the matter as India's precarious balance of payments was so crucial because food shortage was an ever-present threat that had recently manifested itself in its most destructive guise of famine in Bengal.⁸¹ Moreover, at the start of 1948, within the context of the post-war disruption of food production, partition and the dollar shortage, the Finance Minister Shanmukham Chetty publicly stressed the need for self-sufficiency in food and argued that unless India ceased to be dependent on imported foodgrains she could not overcome the economic difficulties of the future.⁸² Nehru reported the severity of the situation to his Chief Ministers in February 1949: prior to the war the food deficit was, on average, 3 per cent, but with

to letter from John Matthai to Patel, 21/5/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973), pp. 74-79.

⁸⁰ 'Statement by Mr John J. Mcloy, President of the World Bank', 9/5/1949, Enclosure to letter from John Matthai to Patel, 21/5/1949, in *ibid.*, pp. 74-79. As part of this note, the President endorsed the loan of somewhat over \$100 million to India for development projects. Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁸¹ 'Statement by Mr John J. Mcloy, President of the World Bank', 9/5/1949, Enclosure to letter from John Matthai to Patel, 21/5/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, pp. 74-79.

⁸² 'India's need for Self-Sufficiency in Food Stressed', 4/1/1948, *The Statesman*, p. 6. Imports were required to avert famine from multiple sources: Australia, Burma, Siam, Argentina, Canada and the US. V.K.R.V Rao also notes the food shortages and inflation, 'India's First Five-Year Plan – A Descriptive Analysis', *Pacific Affairs* 5 (1952), p. 6. *The Statesman* provides a running commentary on the food situation in India. For example the G.O.I. had an agreement with Indonesia, signed in July 1947, for the delivery of some 700,000 tons of paddy to India in exchange for Indian consumer goods, see S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 3* (New Delhi, 1985), p. 368 – footnote 2. In an effort to save precious hard currency the Government really pushed its 'Grow More Food Campaign', for examples see Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, pp. 258-259. The departing British very conscious of the need to secure food and increase food production for the dual purposes of averting famine and saving hard currency as evidence by their efforts in assisting India negotiate food supply agreements and allowing the use of blocked sterling balances for the purchase of tractors, see Telegram No. 41, Delegation Report No. 15, 20/1/1948, E/10466, L/E/9/303.

the loss of Sind and Punjab that had risen to between 6 and 7 per cent, which was further compounded by a bad harvest resulting in a deficit closer to 10 per cent of total requirements.⁸³ This demand translated, from April-December 1948, into a call of \$75m out of a total deficit of \$93m.⁸⁴ Whilst it did not dominate negotiations for sterling releases, the food situation played heavily on the minds of India's delegations.⁸⁵ Any decline in the living standards of Indians would be disastrous for the Congress government, especially in the context of the nascent Cold War in Asia, and as Inder Singh notes, the post-war economic and political situation in India was fertile soil for Communism.⁸⁶

Reducing dollar expenditure on food would also release a commensurate amount of dollars to be spent on other imports, namely capital goods, but the inflation problem was further exacerbated by the shortage of foodstuffs, as Rao noted in 1952 'there has been no possibility of dealing with the inflation in the absence of a substantial increase in the domestic production and procurement of foodgrains.'⁸⁷ In March 1949, one month before the Commonwealth PM's meeting, Delhi pledged to eliminate the food deficit within two years, but food remained the key issue to be remedied when the First Five-Year Plan was formulated from April 1950.⁸⁸ What can we conclude about India's decision making from this basic economic and financial information what can we conclude about? This is in part

⁸³ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15/2/1949, in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 293. Also see Rao, who comments that, 'Imports of food had reached new and startling levels after the end of the war, the country's basic food position having been worsened by Partition', 'India's First Five-Year Plan – A Descriptive Analysis', p. 6.

⁸⁴ During 1948, imports reached 2.8m tones of grains involving expenditure of Rs. 130 crores. Importing large amounts of food had wider economic effects as Nehru explained to his Chief Ministers, 'Another aspect of the economic situation, and a most vital aspect is the lack of dollars, which we need so much. This is creating a serious situation. This lack of dollars is chiefly due to food imports.' Nehru to Chief Ministers, 7/1/1949, in *ibid.*, pp. 258-259.

⁸⁵ See article, 'The Threat of Indian Famine: Little Hope of Immediate Relief', Reported from New Delhi, 7/8/1947, *Manchester Guardian*, p. 8.

⁸⁶ Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 48. But Inder Singh does fail to acknowledge the extent to which Nehru was a committed anti-Communist. The British were also acutely aware of the dangers of India falling to Communism, for example see the memorandum submitted to the Commonwealth Economic Development Committee (Also Far Eastern (O) Committee Working Party on Economic Development) entitled 'Economic Development in India and Pakistan', which exposes British fears of India's economic weakness translating to increase in support for Communism, CED (49) 5, 28/7/1949, CAB 134/96

⁸⁷ Rao, 'India's First Five-Year Plan – A Descriptive Analysis', p. 10.

⁸⁸ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 9/3/1949, in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 300.

illuminated through looking at the sterling balance negotiations that took place in the years before the April 1949 decision was made.

The British came to the conclusion that 'India's trade is conducted in sterling, and it does not seem likely that she would wish to leave the Sterling Area unless she were impelled to do so by such a degree of political hostility to the Commonwealth as would induce her to ignore the possible financial consequences.'⁸⁹ Reinforcing the British impression when speaking to the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta at the close of 1946, Nehru opined that the relationship with Britain could not be cut off suddenly and would remain 'unless the break came in such a way as to poison the future.'⁹⁰ Thus, India's financial health was clearly dependent at times upon the Sterling Area and releases from the balances, which had a deep and fundamental impact on its appreciation of the Commonwealth link and therefore deserves attention.⁹¹

The Accumulation of the Sterling Balances and Release Negotiations: A Shared Interest in Stability

'The very size of these sterling debts is itself a protection. The old saying holds. Owe your banker £1,000 and you are at his mercy; owe him £1,000,000 and the position is reversed.'⁹² John Maynard Keynes' insight provides a starting point with which to consider the sterling balances in the context of the value of the Commonwealth link, Indo-British relations, and the importance of the Sterling Area and Malaya to India post-1947.⁹³ From 1947-1949 the balances served to

⁸⁹ Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁹⁰ Speech delivered on 16/12/1946, reported in *The Statesman*, 17/12/1946, p. 1.

⁹¹ B.N. Ganguli provides a neat précis of some of the key patterns of Indian trade in the first years of independence and reaffirms the importance of the Sterling Area and the benefits that India accrued from membership, 'India and the Commonwealth: Economic Relations', in Verinder Grover (ed.), *International Relations and Foreign Policy in India, Volume 5, Great Britain, Commonwealth and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 378-398.

⁹² Lord Keynes, 'Overseas Financial Policy in Stage III', WP (45) 301, 15/5/1945, CAB 66/65/51.

⁹³ There is scant literature on the history of the sterling balances that takes the international politics of the issue as its primary focus of investigation. The existing economic literature on the balances can be broadly divided in to two classes: works which provide a narrative account, for example L.S. Pressnell, *External Economic Policy Since the War, Volume One, The Post-War Financial Settlement* (London, 1986); Benjamin Zachariah, 'Imperial Economic Policy for India, 1942-44: Confusion and Readjustment', in B. Pati (ed.), *Turbulent Times, India, 1940-44* (Mumbai, 1998), pp. 185-213; B. Dhar, *The Sterling Balances of India* (Calcutta, 1956); H.A. Shannon, 'The Sterling Balances of the

demonstrate the value of the Commonwealth link to India, and can also be used to examine the interplay of the economic and political balance of power between India and Britain.⁹⁴ Keynes struck at the heart of the matter with his prescient words: at independence India had a joint stake in the stability of the Sterling Area, the empire and the Commonwealth, and depended on the willingness of London to release crucial funds from the balances. India was not, however, as powerless as at first seems, and exploited the knowledge that for political reasons Britain wanted India in the Commonwealth to extract economic concessions from an erstwhile unwilling Treasury. The sterling balances, accumulated during the Second World War and amounting to £1160 million by 1945, represented one of the most important aspects of the post-independence Indo-British relationship and signalled the reversal of the debtor-creditor position, one of the pillars of the Raj.⁹⁵ Moreover, the balances

Sterling Area, 1939-49', *The Economic Journal* 60(1950), pp. 531-51; and B.R. Shenoy, *The Sterling Assets of the Reserve Bank of India* (New Delhi, 1996). The second group concentrates on the impact of the accumulation and release of the balances on the British economy post-1945 within the wider debate over the impact of sterling on Britain's relative decline; for two examples see, A. Shonfield, *British Economic Policy since the War* (London, 1958) and J.M. Livingstone, *Britain in the World Economy* (London, 1966). In a similar vein, for arguments taking the line that Britain had to continue to invest freely in the Sterling Area to prevent a run on the balances see, S. Strange, *Sterling and British Policy: A Political of an International Currency in Decline* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 191-2 and Shonfield, *British Economic Policy since the War* (London, 1958), p. 108. There are few accounts that focus on the international diplomacy surrounding the release of the balances: J. Fforde, *The Bank of England and Public Policy, 1941-58* (Cambridge, 1992) focuses on the role of the Bank of England; Aditya Mukherjee, 'Indo-British Finance: The Controversy over India's Sterling Balances, 1939-1947', *Studies in History* 6 (1990), pp. 229-51 focuses on the domestic Indian sphere; and Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', who attempts to chart the sets of negotiations undertaken by India and the UK, also see Catherine Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s* (London, 1994).

⁹⁴ Tomlinson notes that 'the sterling balances did not make the problem of Indo-British financial relations any easier to resolve, nor did it determine exactly where the balance of power in the forthcoming negotiations would lie', however he fails to continue to examine the delicate nexus of interests, both political and economic, that make the case of the sterling balances so revealing in the study of the post-colonial relationship, Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', p. 143.

⁹⁵ In 1944 the figure was £1000m figure and represented the work done by the War Cabinet Committee on the Indian Financial Question, WP (44) 398, 19/7/1944, CAB 66/52/48. The £1160m amount was the figure for the end of the war agreed between Indian representatives and the Treasury on August 1947, cited in the Chancellor's memorandum CP (47) 213, 5/8/1947, CAB 129/20 and CM (47) 70 Conclusions, 7/8/1947, CAB 128/10. On debt as pillar of Raj see, B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947: The Economics of Decolonisation in India* (London, 1979) and P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (Second edn, London, 2002) who base their analysis of India very heavily on the work of Tomlinson and note that 'When as a result of the war, the financial and monetary imperatives which had long underpinned the imperial mission were removed, the imperial presence quickly followed', p. 564. The figure, Tomlinson estimates, represented some 20 per cent of Britain's gross national product in 1947, see *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947*, p. 140. India also built sterling balances in the First World War and these were expended in exchange interventions to defend the rupee, see, G. Balachandran, 'Reappraisal: Finance

formed independent India's foreign exchange reserves, crucially supported the balance of payments in the first years of independence and served as a vital source of development capital.⁹⁶

The Defence Expenditure Plan 1940 set out that His Majesty's Government would pay for 'measures taken in India for India's local defence, and a share of measures "taken jointly in the interests of Indian Defence and of H.M.G."'”⁹⁷ Additionally, India produced vast quantities of essential supplies for both the military in India and domestic markets in Britain, which manifested itself in a large balance of payments surplus as British wartime exports to India declined.⁹⁸ This surplus was initially used to repatriate India's sterling debts held in London, but by the outbreak of war in the Far East, the pre-war debts had been almost entirely repatriated just at the point when war expenditure in that field was set to increase dramatically.⁹⁹ From this point on, Treasury gilts were deposited in the Bank of

and Politics in Late Colonial India, 1917-1947', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 19 (1996), p. 100.

⁹⁶ See Liquat Ali Khan's 1946-1947 Budget speech in which he said that the balances were 'the entire reserve of foreign exchange which this country will have at its disposal in the years to come for purchases of capital equipment required for our development programme and for meeting any unfavourable balance of payments', text in *The Times of India* 10/5/1947. Sterling as a percentage of India's foreign exchange reserves: 1950: 73; 1951: 69; 1952: 69; 1953: 97; 1954: 97; 1955: 98; 1956: 56; 1957: 44; 1958: 33 in Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s*, p. 30.

⁹⁷ This was otherwise known as the War Financial Settlement of April 1940. Chancellor Kingsley Wood, Cabinet Memorandum: Indian Sterling Balances, WP (42) 325, 30/7/1942, L/F/7/2861, IOR and CAB 66/27/5. The Chatfield Review of 1938 had recommended that Britain pay for the use of Indian formations overseas in addition to the mechanisation and modernisation of the Indian Army, see *Report of the Expert Committee on the Defence of India, 1938-39* – cited in Hugh Tinker, 'The Contraction of Empire in Asia, 1945-48: The Military Dimension', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16 (1988), p. 232.

⁹⁸ For some basic information on the material and economic contribution of the colonies to the British war effort see the recently released book by David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London, 2011). For a brief précis of the accumulation of the balances from the Indian press see 'India's Sterling Balances: Origins and Progress of Accumulation', in *The Times of India*, 21/1/1947, accessed via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 8/12/2011.

⁹⁹ War Cabinet Committee on Indian Financial Questions calculated that there was some £298 million of sterling debt in 1940, 'Report of the Committee on Indian Financial Questions', WP (44) 398, 19/7/1944, L/F/7/2861. Kingsley Wood reports that all but £50 million of the debt had been repatriated, Indian Sterling Balances, WP (42)325, 30/7/1942, L/F/7/2861 and CAB 66/27/5. The upper limit of £357 million is a 1937 calculation provided by the RBI which states that by 1946 £323 million of debt had been repatriated see S.L.N Simha, *The Reserve Bank of India, Volume 1, 1935-51* (Bombay, 1970, Reprint 2005), p. 37; the Official History of the RBI notes that, 'the vast acquisition of sterling by the country during the war provided an opportunity for the repatriation of its sterling debt', Simha, *The Reserve Bank of India, Volume 1, 1935-51*, p. 377 and see Chapter 13 in particular. Published for the Reserve Bank with the Editorial Committee, C.D. Deshmukh, J.J. Anjaria, R.G.

England in the account of the Reserve Bank of India.¹⁰⁰ The Chancellor, Kingsley Wood, supported by Churchill, consequently argued in Cabinet for a readjustment of the payment arrangements in July 1942, stating that ‘from now onwards India is likely to increase her sterling balances...we are likely to become heavily indebted to India.’¹⁰¹ The erosion of Britain’s foreign capital and the accumulation of debts to India caused considerable consternation in London. The Cabinet heeded the advice of Leo Amery, and Linlithgow, the Viceroy, who both argued against the Treasury and Churchill’s idea of a revision of the settlement at that point, citing the disastrous potential political ramifications in India.¹⁰² Churchill, however, remained opposed to

Saraiya, and B. Datta.

¹⁰⁰ Cabinet Memorandum: Indian Sterling Balances, WP (42) 325, 30/7/1942, L/F/7/2861 and CAB 66/27/5. For a contemporary précis of these events see *India’s Sterling Balances: A Report Prepared for the Indian Affairs Group of the Fabian Society*, by A.C. Gilpin with a foreword by G.D.H. Cole (London, 1946). The Reserve Bank of India had only been established in 1935, see R. Mathur, ‘The Delay in the Formation of the Reserve Bank of India: The India Office Perspective’, *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 25 (1988), pp. 133-169. The Reserve Bank was established simultaneously with the Government of India Act, see Balachandran, ‘Reappraisal: Finance and Politics in Late Colonial India, 1917-1947’, and also see Simha, *The Reserve Bank of India, Volume 1, 1935-51*.

¹⁰¹ ‘Cabinet Memorandum: Indian Sterling Balances’, WP (42) 325, 30/7/1942, L/F/7/2861 and CAB 66/27/5. Churchill’s approach, described later by Amery, was the folly of ‘when driving to catch the train for life or death, to lean through the window and tell the taximan that you do not mean to pay the fare at the station because you have a moral counter-claim against him.’ Amery to Linlithgow, 28/7/1943, L/PO/325, IOR.

¹⁰² Amery was at this time the Secretary of State for India in the wartime coalition. Sir Jeremy Raisman, Finance Member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council, wrote to Viceroy Linlithgow spoke of the ‘enormous political dangers’ of any revision, 30/7/1942, Doc. 373, in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume II : “Quit India”, 10 April – 21 September 1942* (London, 1971), p. 503. Also see the letter from Linlithgow to Amery, which also highlights the negative political implications that any change to the April 1940 settlement would have on moderate Indian opinion, 31/7/1942, Doc. 379, in Mansergh (ed.) with Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume II*, p. 510. Amery argued with the War Cabinet that, ‘the realities of the Indian situation...make revision impracticable’ and that any attempt to alter the settlement would ‘jeopardise...co-operation in the manufacture of munitions and other war supplies’, Memorandum WP (42) 328, 1/8/1942, L/F/7/2861. In sum, Amery put forward the widely held case in the G.O.I. and the India Office that for Indian domestic political reasons there could be no readjustment of the financial arrangement; moreover, in stark economic terms India was already economically overheating and inflation was on the increase due to the vastly increased rupee note issues. Kingsley Wood made the case that the circumstances of April 1940 no longer reflected the situation: namely, Japanese entry to the war and the agreements between the United Nations which aimed to leave no ally in debt to another. The war had caused a distortion of the normal flow of goods between the two countries, Wood argued, and put forward that the G.O.I. consider Britain’s wider effort in the defence of India in light of the ‘wider conception of India’s partnership in the general war effort’, 16/9/1942, WM (42) 125 Conclusions, CAB 65/27/41. In light of Amery’s Memorandum and Raisman’s inputs, the Cabinet generally agreed with Amery and Raisman on 6/8/1942 that the political risks in India were far too great to risk any changes, but in the absence of Churchill the decision was postponed, see War Cabinet Conclusions, WM (42) 105 Conclusions, CAB 65/27/21. When the Cabinet met again to discuss the issue, it was agreed not to push for a renegotiation of the settlement at that point. The Chancellor did, however, reiterate that because of the changed circumstance of the war, the right remained to discuss an ‘adjustment’ at a later stage, 16/9/1942, WM (42) 125 Conclusions, CAB 65/27/41. The Chancellor

the April 1940 settlement and the idea that Britain had paid for the defence of India only at the war's end to be told to clear out and still owe India a vast sum of money.¹⁰³ India's balances remained under discussion for the rest of the war; further memoranda were submitted to Cabinet and a Standing Committee on the Indian Financial Question was established, which raised the fear in India that the debts would be rescaled or cancelled at the war's end.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, with the failed attempts of the Indian delegation to get the question of the balances included at Bretton Woods, it was clear that the issue would have to be settled bilaterally.¹⁰⁵

A constant theme throughout the debates over the accumulation of sterling was an attempt by Amery and the G.O.I. to disarm Treasury criticism by emphasising that the balances could be controlled and released at Britain's discretion, and that they could bring benefits to the British economy in terms of

attempted to hide behind the rhetoric of equal burden and contribution that the Lend Lease agreements between the United Nations espoused. After further wrangling with Amery, the Viceroy was informed of the Cabinet decision not to press the matter immediately but reserving the right to discuss the issue at a later date, see WM (42) 129 Conclusions, 24/9/1942. The telegram sent to the Viceroy see WP (42) 422 written by Churchill with amendments agreed by the Cabinet at WM (42) 129 Conclusions, 24/9/1942. The telegram concluded that, 'His Majesty's Government do not suggest that a new Settlement should be negotiated at the present juncture with the Government of India. A further review and eventual adjustment of financial relations between the United Kingdom and India will assuredly be required in the light and in the framework both of the general financial settlement between the Allied Nations and of the vital importance for all concerned of the speedy restoration of the maximum volume of world trade.'

¹⁰³ Amery paraphrased Churchill and reported the outburst to Linlithgow, letter 16/9/1942, Doc. 753, in Mansergh (ed.) with Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume II*. Churchill wrote to Linlithgow a week later arguing along the same lines, 24/9/1942, L/PO/325.

¹⁰⁴ Churchill harboured ideas about putting a counter-claim to India well until the 1950s, see WM (43) 106 Conclusions, 27/7/1943, CAB 65/35/16. Also see memorandum by Amery, WP (44) 368, CAB 66/51/18. In London a Standing Committee on Indian Financial Questions was established to study the problem of inflation in India and the growing indebtedness of the United Kingdom to India, see CAB 91/5 for the details, Committee established 4/8/1943, WM (43) 111 Conclusions, CAB 66/52/48 and see note by E.E. Bridges, 'Committee on Indian Financial Questions', WP (43) 367, August 1943, CAB 66/40/17. The Committee included the Chancellor, Indian Secretary, and the President of the Board of Trade amongst others, and submitted its report on 19/7/1944, WP (44) 398, CAB 66/52/48. For an interesting article on the attitudes of Indian capitalists see, Mukherjee, 'Indo-British Finance: The Controversy over India's Sterling Balances, 1939-1947'. Mukherjee, however, neither defines who these 'Indian capitalists' are nor their relationship with either the INC as an anti-colonial platform or as the first independent G.O.I.

¹⁰⁵ Mukherjee, 'Indo-British Finance: The Controversy over India's Sterling Balances, 1939-1947', p. 242. A recent transcript of the Bretton Woods conference, the first to ever come to light, may well shed light on the role, aims and tactics of the Indian delegation in 1944, for the report announcing the discovery of the transcript in the US Treasury Library see:

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jeremywarner/100015182/bretton-woods-uncovered-a-scoop-of-sorts/>, accessed 24/2/2012. There remains, however, a real lack of research into India's role in the establishment of the post-war settlement.

secured markets.¹⁰⁶ On the political side, Amery argued that the balances may have been ‘the best guarantee of continued economic relations with India...and a real help in keeping India within the British Commonwealth.’¹⁰⁷ At the war’s end, the issue of the balances had to be resolved against the backdrop of the transfer of power and in the wider context of the post-war financial settlement and the UK’s and India’s parlous economic condition.¹⁰⁸ As Amery noted, ‘the real problem...will not be how to find the money with which to discharge a debt, but how to make sure that the spending of that money by its recipients after the war shall not damage our financial structure or frustrate our efforts to balance our trade by excessive immediate calls upon us for goods and services without an equivalent return in essential imports.’¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Raisman gave the Cabinet several options to allay their fears over the strain sterling could have on a weakened post-war economy. Raisman suggested three options: a reconstruction fund to import capital and consumer goods into India as per an agreed plan. Secondly, he mentioned the capitalisation of India’s sterling pension liabilities. Lastly, Raisman highlight that a large amount of sterling would be needed as a currency backing, see WM (42) 105 Conclusions, CAB 65/27/21. In his defence of the April 1940 settlement, Amery attempted to placate the Treasury, ‘the Government of India are prepared to meet the difficulties which the Chancellor’s Memorandum [WP (42) 325, 30/7/1942, CAB 66/27/5] foresees by the orderly liquidation of any amounts outstanding: for instance, by means of a development and reconstruction fund, which would in fact by tantamount to guaranteeing to United Kingdom manufacturers a long-term market for capital goods.’ See Amery’s Memorandum to the Cabinet in Response to Kingsley Wood, WP (42) 328, 1/8/1942, L/F/7/2861 and CAB 66/27/8. Looking to the future, Amery and Cripps were keenly aware of the future benefits that the balances could bring to the British economy again see Amery WP (42) 328, 1/8/1942, L/F/7/2861 and CAB 66/27/8 and Amery again makes the point that accumulated sterling will mean orders for British manufacturers in a letter to Kingsley Wood, ‘In fact, the more I think of it, the more it seems to me that the Indian accumulated sterling balance, whatever it is, is more likely to prove a blessing than a danger’, Doc. 457, 7/8/1942, in Mansergh (ed.) with Lumby, *Transfer of Power, Volume II*. Also see Cripps during the war, ‘Note by the Lord Privy Seal with drafts and notes’, which argued that the balances represented a fund for Indian development, 2/9/1942, L/E/8/2527, IOR. Furthermore, it was argued that, when discussing possible Indian actions regarding the treatment of British business and capital outflows following independence, Pethick-Lawrence revealed one use for the sterling balances to Wavell. Pethick-Lawrence wrote that, ‘It is true that the Government of India may have to impose control even on movements into sterling, and I gather that this was recognised in the recent sterling balances talks. But it is also true that they are so dependent on our goodwill in the matter of releases from the sterling balances (their prospective balance of payments, apart from such use of the sterling balances as we can permit, being heavily in deficit) that we shall not be without means, if required, to influence them in the direction of fair treatment for our own people’, letter from Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 14/3/1947, L/PO/10/24, IOR.

¹⁰⁷ Amery to Wavell, 28/7/1943, Doc. 63 in Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, Volume IV: The Bengal Famine and the New Viceroyalty, 15 June 1943-31 August 1944* (London, 1973).

¹⁰⁸ For one of the most concise précis of the UK’s economic situation in the autumn of 1945 see Lord Keynes’ ‘Financial Dunkirk’ paper, CP (45) 112, 14/8/1945, CAB 129/1. Also see WP (45) 301, 15/5/1945, CAB 66/65/51. See Pressnell, *External Economic Policy Since the War: Volume 1, The Post-War Financial Settlement* which is part of the official history of the Second World War series and provides a masterful overview of the challenges that faced Britain and also see, R.S. Sayers, *Financial Policy, 1939-45: History of the Second World War* (London, 1956).

¹⁰⁹ L.S. Amery, ‘The Sterling Problem’, WP (44) 368, 3/7/1944, CAB 66/52/18.

There was, however, neither a readjustment of the 1940 settlement, nor a counter-claim made against India as the political ramifications of such a move, especially of jeopardising Indian entry into the Commonwealth, militated against attempting to reduce the debt. The fear of such a move did not, however, soften in India and remained ever-present in dealings over the balances after independence.

Wartime expenditure had an immediate and pernicious effect on India through shortages and rampant inflation causing severe hardships, and as such the exploitative nature of the accumulation of the balances (India had no say in its declaration of war) added a moral dimension to the settlement of the balances.¹¹⁰ The balances entered Indian nationalists' central lexicon of British exploitation alongside the drain theory, and thus added to the need for the post-colonial government to secure generous releases of the money so painfully earned during the war years.¹¹¹ For India, the balances were not a war debt, nor a contribution under the banner of lend-lease, but an extracted duty levied on an impoverished country to pay for a war declared by Britain without their consent. Moreover, the sum was serviced at a very low rate of interest.¹¹² To make the goods and services available to the UK, argued the leading industrialist G.D. Birla, India underwent 'self-denial verging on starvation...there were millions who died of famine.'¹¹³

The post-war release of the funds was by a series of negotiated agreements with the British, and the release over a long period of time, due to British penury, rather than in the form of a lump sum, necessitated a continued Indian interest in the

¹¹⁰ See Dietmar Rothermund, *An Economic History of India: From Pre-Colonial times to 1997* (Second edn, London, 1993), pp. 115-127; Andrew J. Grajdanzev, 'India's Wartime Economic Difficulties', *Pacific Affairs* 16 (1943), pp. 189-205 and Rao, 'India's First Five-Year Plan – A Descriptive Analysis', pp. 3-23. Despite the 1935 Act increasing Indians say in the administration of India, and the professed aims of the British Government going back to the Montagu Declaration of 1917 for increasing the association of Indians in every branch of Government and the eventual self-governing institutions with a view to the realisation of responsible government in India as a part of the British Empire, the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow unilaterally declared war for India in support of the British without consulting Indian nationalists. As a response the Congress-run Provincial government, which represented the majority of Provinces, resigned in protest.

¹¹¹ For the drain theory see, Ajit K. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Economic Thought* (London, 1993) chapter 6 and see Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule* (London, 1901).

¹¹² The debt was serviced at $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent as opposed to market rates of between $2\frac{1}{2}$ -3 per cent. As B.M. Birla wrote to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, India lost out on these interests payments, Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers, 1/6/1942, cited in Mukherjee, 'Indo-British Finance: The Controversy over India's Sterling Balances, 1939-1947', p. 233.

¹¹³ G.D. Birla, *Indian Currency in Retrospect* (Allahabad, 1944), p. 21, cited in *ibid.*, p. 232.

stability of the Sterling Area. Moreover, the prospect of unilateral cancellation was both politically fraught with danger and could have fundamentally undermined confidence in sterling.¹¹⁴ However, Michael Lipton and John Firn's assertion that the situation was 'resolved after the election of the labour Government in 1945, and an agreement was quickly reached – to release the sterling balances in instalments', fails to consider the interaction of the political and economic factors that resulted in hard bargaining between the two sides.¹¹⁵ B.R. Tomlinson also fails to fully address the political utility of the sterling balances.¹¹⁶ This research serves to re-orientate the analysis of sterling away from Tomlinson's 1985 article which is taken as the seminal text on the balances and addresses the Anglo-centric focus of treatment of the sterling balances.¹¹⁷

One key aspect neglected in the existing historiography is that India was deeply concerned about the swift run down of the balances, concluding that if a high rate of releases continued there would be little left to fund the first of India's future development plans. As John Matthai, the Finance Minister, explained 'if we expend our capital resources at the pace at which we have been expending them, easily and quite probably the sterling balances will get exhausted before we knew where we were.'¹¹⁸ In 1950, Matthai 'made it clear that there can be no question of any scaling down of these balances and they must be fully available for restoring the health to our economy.'¹¹⁹ The All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution in September 1945 opposing the scaling down of the balances and stressing the reserves would be used for development.¹²⁰ Public announcements that India wanted reasonable drawings was at once both economically sound, and served as a rhetorical device to defend from public criticism of lower than expected releases.

¹¹⁴ See Fforde, *The Bank of England and Public Policy, 1941-58*, p. 89.

¹¹⁵ M. Lipton and J. Firn, *The Erosion of a Relationship: India and Britain since 1960* (London, 1975), p. 35. Barooah also fails to acknowledge or analyse the political component of the balances and argues that both the British and Indian Governments deserve credit for settlement of balances: the former for not repudiating and the latter for being flexible in light of Britain's financial difficulties, *Indo-British Relations, 1950-1960*, p. 232.

¹¹⁶ Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', pp. 142-62.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* For example Cain and Hopkins base much of their analysis on Tomlinson's arguments, see, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*.

¹¹⁸ *The Statesman*, 13/8/1949, press cutting found in L/E/9/332, IOR.

¹¹⁹ John Matthai, G.O.I. Press Release No.1438 from New Delhi, 28/4/1950, DO 142/229.

¹²⁰ See US Consulate to the State Department, 1/10/1945, 845.51/10-145, RG 59, NARA.

The likelihood of India remaining within the Sterling Area, at the least, is illuminated through looking at the sterling balance negotiations that took place in the years before the April 1949 decision was made. Membership of the Sterling Area did not automatically entail full Commonwealth membership, or vice versa, but entry was needed if India was to have a voice in deciding Area policy through the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meetings.¹²¹ Moreover, if India was in the Commonwealth then this politicised its membership of the Sterling Area, making it more difficult to treat economic questions on solely economic grounds.

India was in a difficult economic position post-war and post-partition and needed the benefits of the Sterling Area, the chances of India voluntarily opting to leave the area were low and in this way, in reclaiming its debts, India depended upon the colonial empire for its sustenance. There are two factors that have to be kept in mind in reference to the settlement of the sterling balances, and the first was to achieve equilibrium in dollar trade. The key, according to British thinking, was to restore the pre-war patterns of trade with the Far East: Malaya's earnings in particular cancelled out deficits within the Sterling Area as a whole.¹²² India's demands have to be seen in this context of the dollar convertibility crisis, which lasted from 15 July to 20 August 1947.¹²³ Despite the need to earn dollars, Britain accepted the need for capital exports to India and on this point Tomlinson is vague.¹²⁴ London explicitly informed high commissioners around the world in December 1947 that they intended to 'as far as we can...assist both Dominions in their plans for economic development.'¹²⁵ With the explicit aim of stabilising India

¹²¹ For example Canada was not officially a member of the Sterling Area.

¹²² It was not the inability of Europe to produce goods argued the British, the problem was the lack of dollars through the failure of the Far East to balance out the deficit in the pre-war fashion. C.S.S. Newton, 'The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan', *Economic History Review* 37 (1984), pp. 396, 407; 'Britain, the Sterling Area and European Integration, 1945-50', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13 (1985), p. 167; 'Britain, the Dollar Shortage, and European Integration, 1945-1950', PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1981 and Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society 1939-1945* (London, 1977), p. 355, also see Milward's masterful *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-51* (London, 2003).

¹²³ During which time the American loan had to be drawn upon three times, dollar drain was in excess of \$868 million, and was all but extinguished by the end of 1947, see Newton, 'The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan', p. 400 and 'Britain, the Sterling Area and European Integration, 1945-50'.

¹²⁴ Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49'.

¹²⁵ CRO to Dominion High Commissioners, India No. 21, 23/12/1947, DO 133/89.

through industrial development and building her military capability, the conclusion was reached that Britain should 'do all we can to provide capital goods.'¹²⁶ The second factor to consider is that in Article 10 of the American loan agreement of 1945, the UK agreed to negotiate to 'adjust' the sterling balances with the consent of the holders.

The First Interim Settlement, 1947

As the time of the transfer of power approached, access to the sterling balances had to be negotiated between Britain and India.¹²⁷ Mountbatten forwarded Nehru's request that any agreement take into account the projected balance of payments deficit (£40 million, largely for food imports) and stressed the function of such a move in building a positive relationship and the need to 'increase the goodwill that we are all working so hard to build up.'¹²⁸ Goodwill, as Nehru had previously told the British, was essential if India was to remain in the Commonwealth.¹²⁹ In the context of the economic trauma of war, partition and the domestic political situation in India, the Chancellor Hugh Dalton authorised £35 million, and only £15 million was expected to be needed for dollar purchases.¹³⁰ The Indian delegation had asked for £48.5 million, but this was deemed to be excessive by London in light of their economic situation, and Nehru had only asked for £40 million in his entreaties.¹³¹ Listowel spoke in India's favour highlighting the need for food, and a reasonable release so as not to jeopardise India's future membership of the Commonwealth.¹³² Despite the dire debacle of the convertibility crisis, India successfully secured generous releases of dollars and sterling to last until the next set of negotiations in January 1948.¹³³ *The Statesman's* key argument in their editorial was that 'this

¹²⁶ 'S.E Asia: Policy Regarding India and Pakistan', note by the CRO prepared in the first half of 1948, 17/3/1948, DO 142/343.

¹²⁷ Hitherto India had free access to the balances and could convert them to dollars; however, shipping and goods shortages hampered any large scale purchases, but India had placed large orders with British industry.

¹²⁸ Letter from Mountbatten to Listowel, 15/7/1947, L/F/7/2870, IOR.

¹²⁹ Pethick-Lawrence to Wavell, 7/3/1947, L/PO/10/24.

¹³⁰ 'Indian Sterling Balances', Memorandum by the Chancellor, CP (47) 213, 5/8/1947, CAB 129/20.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² CM (47) 70 Conclusions, 7/8/1947, CAB 128/10.

¹³³ The total sum of the balances was placed into two accounts: No. 1 was where the balance transfer would reside for current payments and No. 2 where the remainder of the balances would stay locked away.

agreement will assure India's essential food imports.'¹³⁴ In light of Article 10 of the American loan agreement, however, the British Government refused to relinquish their right to readjust the balances and no agreement was made between the two sides as to the total sum of the balances without cancellations or adjustment.¹³⁵

Following the agreement, Shanmukham Chetty took the opportunity to spell out India's plans for the balances and raised the issue in his 1947 interim budget speech following partition.¹³⁶ 'Rapid depletion' of sterling, Chetty told the Assembly, 'caused some anxiety to the Government.'¹³⁷ Chetty bemoaned the import of 'unessential' and 'luxury' goods as frittering away resources and thereby reducing 'pro tanto the capacity of this country to finance capital and developmental expenditure abroad.'¹³⁸ The aim of the Government, Chetty continued, was to finance day-to-day expenditure through earnings from exports: 'we should draw upon these accumulated reserves, broadly speaking, only for the purpose of purchasing capital goods.'¹³⁹ This aim, however, was difficult to realise in the economic context where the balances were used to support the balance of payments. Chetty announced a more restrictive import policy, and it was this policy that the British successfully won exemptions from during subsequent balance negotiations.

January/February 1948: The 'Difficult Wicket',¹⁴⁰

Following the convertibility crisis, the Sterling Area became a discriminatory bloc once more with dollar-pooling and rationing re-introduced.¹⁴¹ Within this

¹³⁴ 'Britain's Sterling Agreement with India', 14/7/1949, *The Statesman*, p. 1.

¹³⁵ 'Indian Sterling Balances, Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, CP (47) 213, 5/8/1947, CAB 129/20. Article 10 committed the UK to 'adjust' the sterling balances with the consent of the holders. The convertibility crisis has been covered many times, for a concise examination see Newton, 'The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan'.

¹³⁶ Chetty was also an old ICS hand and had served on the Indian Delegation to Bretton Woods in 1944, and was yet another of the British-trained professionals that took office along with Congress. Part of the explanation, it can be argued, for the concentration of attention on the centrality of Nehru and other Congress leaders in successfully governing India is that if not then British-trained ICS men would share some of the praise.

¹³⁷ Chetty's Budget Speech, 26/11/1947, indiabudget.nic.in/bspeech/bs194748.pdf, last accessed 14/7/2010.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Stafford Cripps on to Raisman towards the end of the negotiations, 'I am very glad to see from your telegram...that you are making good progress despite the difficult wicket', Telegram No. 499, 11/2/1948, L/E/9/303.

¹⁴¹ Newton 'The Sterling Crisis of 1947 and the British Response to the Marshall Plan', p. 401.

context, India and Britain met to discuss the balances for the first time since India's independence; however, despite a relatively healthy sterling surplus by the beginning of 1948, India had overspent her \$60 million 1947 limit by approximately \$90 million.¹⁴² In this context, Jeremy Raisman led the British delegation in Delhi to negotiate releases of sterling and, more importantly, dollars.¹⁴³ The Indian aim at these talks was to secure reasonable releases of dollars for the upcoming six month period to support their balance of payments.¹⁴⁴ The British aim was to secure as small a release of dollars as possible commensurate with maintaining friendly political relations, and maintaining trade links and safeguarding British economic interests in India. The British were caught between several competing priorities: dire financial, in particular dollar, position; the need to maintain close political ties with India, through the Commonwealth, and the need to preserve trading links with 'a country which is usually our largest single market.'¹⁴⁵

Narahari Rao, Indian delegation leader, sought to assuage British fears of Indian profligacy and to maintain releases by informing the British that the Indian cabinet 'are most anxious to maintain the agreement in its existing form, particularly as regards the formal convertibility of releases and the steady utilisation of the balances.'¹⁴⁶ In doing so, Rao exposed the long-term importance of the balances for the Indian state. At the same time, Rao attempted to present a responsible Indian attitude to the dollar issue as he claimed that India was now as ready to share the burden of limiting dollars as the rest of the Sterling Area.¹⁴⁷ The admission of anxiety by the Indian delegation also exposed their fear of the cancellation or scaling

¹⁴² Delegation Telegram No. 15, to CRO, No. 141, 20/1/1948, L/E/9/303. Sterling had been freely convertible into dollars from July 1947, before the British Government accepted defeated and ended free convertibility, and as such dollar rationing introduced.

¹⁴³ Sir Jeremy Raisman had served in India for many years and was the Member for finance on the Viceroy's Executive Council during the war, he also was the first Vice President of the Viceroy's Executive Council. For a brief biography of Raisman see, Anand Chandavarkar, 'Sir (Abraham) Jeremy Raisman, Finance Member, Government of India (1939-1945): Portrait of an Unsung Statesman Extraordinaire', *Economic and Political Weekly* 36 (2001), pp. 2641-2655. For the context as seen by the Treasury see an unsent telegram from Cripps to Nehru, No.96, 11/1/1948, E10320/48, L/E/9/303. The telegram was never sent after intervention from the CRO and High Commissioner claiming the telegram would have been counter-productive in the extreme, UKHC to London, No. 70, 12/1/1948, E10355/48, L/E/9/303.

¹⁴⁴ Financial Delegation Telegram No. 12 to CRO, No. 125, 19/1/1948, E10458, L/E/9/303.

¹⁴⁵ CRO to Chancellor, No. 264, 26/1/1948 and CRO Note to Attlee, 26/1/1948, L/E/9/303.

¹⁴⁶ Financial Delegation Telegram No. 12 to CRO, No. 125, 19/1/1948, E10458, L/E/9/303.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

down of the balances as had been floated during the war, which was an ever present aspect of the negotiations.¹⁴⁸ The convertibility crisis made the British initially intransigent on the issue of a generous release of dollars on the basis of the severe shortage in the dollar pool: 'the basic fact is that we are not (repeat not) in a position to afford continuance of drawings by India upon reserves of sterling area to finance her dollar deficit.'¹⁴⁹

The negotiations reached a point of breakdown with the potential outcome of having to put India out of the Sterling Area. Raisman reminded London that if too harsh a treatment was insisted upon then 'India's succession from the Sterling Area would be bound to have its influence on the question of her continued status as a member of the Commonwealth.'¹⁵⁰ Symon supported Raisman's assessment, reporting that he found 'it hard to believe that the amount of hard currency which is at stake...can weigh seriously in the balance against the harm to our political and economic interests which would result from a break with India.'¹⁵¹ As India threatened to leave the Sterling Area and despite its earlier assertions, the Treasury was persuaded to act generously by the potential political fall-out of punishing India. Stringent dollars releases, it was argued by the delegation and the CRO, could jeopardise future Indian entry into the Commonwealth.¹⁵² The CRO argued that if India was to leave, or be pushed out of the Sterling Area, then it 'would receive a strong push towards quitting the Commonwealth.'¹⁵³ This connection between the Sterling Area and the Commonwealth was at the heart of the importance of the sterling balances. India, too, was banking on the political value of its continued Commonwealth membership outweighing the cost of its hard currency requirements, and they were ultimately correct in their assumption as under the pressure of

¹⁴⁸ The US attitude on sterling balances did not assuage Indian fears as *The Statesman* reported that in February 1948 the Congress Select Committee on Foreign Aid demanded that a Commonwealth and Sterling Area conference be called to scale down the balances, 'Sterling Balance Releases', 11/5/1948, p. 1.

¹⁴⁹ Outward telegram to Raisman, Delegation No. 11, 22/1/1948, L/E/9/303.

¹⁵⁰ Raisman to London (CRO), No. 173, 23/1/1948, EG/10527/48, L/E/9/303.

¹⁵¹ Symon to Carter (CRO), No. 269, 2/2/1948, L/E/9/303. The CRO echoed the information coming from Delhi, it prepared a paper for Cripps in which it stated that, 'A breakdown of negotiations would damage our political relations with India and might result in her leaving the Commonwealth', in brief for the Chancellor from the CRO, 30/1/1948, L/E/9/303.

¹⁵² CRO Note to Attlee, 26/1/1948, L/E/9/303.

¹⁵³ 'Note on India and Pakistan's Sterling Balances', prepared by Turnbull (CRO) for the Chancellor and sent to Attlee, 26/1/1948, L/E/9/303.

circumstances London eventually agreed to generous dollar releases for India for a six month period. London, however, managed to secure concessions from India. First, India was to cover half of its own dollar deficit by drawing on the IMF; India agreed to join the Sterling Area Statistical Committee to monitor her balance of payments, and most importantly the releases of sterling were made in light of the fact that India endeavoured to relax import restrictions. This relaxation sought to ensure that more British consumer and other goods in ready supply could enter India outside of its restrictive import licensing scheme, which also had the effect of absorbing purchasing power with consumer goods helping to ease inflation in India.¹⁵⁴ This potentially politically sensitive undertaking was taken as a gentleman's agreement, with no official mention of it in public, and it was not included in the terms of the agreement primarily to protect the G.O.I. and the agreement from becoming a point of criticism, and to lessen the impression of Indian weakness.¹⁵⁵ Indian dependence on British capital good supplies was determined by the large store of sterling and the dearth of dollars, and one further aspect exposed by the Indian delegation, and one that ran throughout each subsequent negotiation, was the grave concern lest Britain divert capital exports to other (dollar earning) markets.¹⁵⁶

Indian public opinion followed the balances negotiations and Rao argued that the stringent dollar allowances had to be accompanied by a more generous release of sterling for presentation purposes.¹⁵⁷ Britain's High Commissioner echoed this sentiment reporting that Chetty had concerns that they would be unable to defend small releases of dollars in the Constituent Assembly.¹⁵⁸ India also began to engage with its responsibility to ensure the viability of the Sterling Area, as demonstrated

¹⁵⁴ ON (AG) 20, 8/4/1948, T236/1142. Increasing consumer good exports was a key aim for the British, see EPC (47) 23, 1/12/1948, L/E/9/303 and Raisman to London, Delegation No. 51, Telegram No. 344, 12/2/1948, L/E/9/307, IOR. The British saw this relaxation as a way of securing long-term commercial relations with India, EPC (47) 23, 1/12/1947, L/E/9/303. The OGL scheme was really a hangover from wartime control of India's economy but remained and formed a central tool in the so-called 'licence Raj'.

¹⁵⁵ Government of India Press, *Sterling Balances: A Record of Discussions held with the Representatives of the United Kingdom Government and Connected Discussions*, Presented to the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) by Finance Minister, 9 August 1948 (New Delhi, 1948).

¹⁵⁶ Telegram No. 227, 29/1/1948, E/10611/48, L/E/9/303. The British High Commission in Delhi also reported these Indian fears, 'that ERP, Western Union and the search for hard currencies may result in depriving India of a large measure of United Kingdom assistance in the way of capital goods', see Despatch No. 115, Ref. 48/P/85, UKHC to CRO, 30/7/1948, DO 133/89.

¹⁵⁷ Raisman to London, Delegation No. 12, Telegram No. 125, 19/1/1948, L/E/9/303.

¹⁵⁸ UKHC to CRO, Delegation No. 38, Telegram No. 265, 2/2/1948, L/E/9/303.

through its expressed willingness to conserve dollars and joining the Sterling Area Statistical Committee. Furthermore, for all the heated exchanges, India at no time left the Sterling Area, reflecting its dependence on access to the benefits of sterling and the balances. Although India did threaten to leave, there is no way of ascertaining the intent behind these threats, rather it is argued that the threats were a key bargaining technique. India's access to the sterling balances and convertible dollars ensured its import programme for the next six months. In sum, India received its allowance and remained in the Sterling Area.

The issue of the balances on Commonwealth membership was a key determinant in the financial decision, but Britain also got concessions in terms of relaxation of import licences. Both sides moderated their initial positions: India's financial needs were to an extent met by Britain, not on financial grounds, but out of the need to avoid a break with India. India bargained its way to a generous settlement, and both sides accepted that the alternative of leaving the Sterling Area was not an option.

In the summer of 1948, India and Britain once again met with the specific aim of settling a new agreement for the sterling balances. To place the financial situation into context, India's balance of payments in sterling was approaching equilibrium,¹⁵⁹ and the Treasury calculated that India had approximately £87 million credit in her No. 1 sterling balance account and could afford to import all that she needed from her current earnings for the rest of the year.¹⁶⁰ India went to London with the aim of securing a three year agreement to ensure stability in her import policy, a healthy dollar ration and continued capital goods exports until 1951. India's opening gambit to the British goes some way to reveal her dependence on the balances: India proposed a shopping list of approximately £800 million, mainly capital goods, over three years.¹⁶¹ This represented the bulk of its remaining sterling balances, but was an opening bargaining offer rather than a final demand and the

¹⁵⁹ E.P.C (48) 44, 'Cabinet, Financial negotiations with India and Pakistan', Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1/6/1948, T 236/1143.

¹⁶⁰ O.N.(48) 223 (revise), 'Cabinet ONC, Negotiations with India and Pakistan on Sterling Balances', Report by Working Party, 27/5/1948, T 236/1143.

¹⁶¹ 'Notes on the Indian and Pakistan Negotiations, June-July 1948', Undated, and Appendix A – Timetable of Negotiations to preceding item, DO 142/222.

Indian delegation then suggested £250 million, half to be convertible, over the course of three years.¹⁶² India remained firmly wedded to the idea of a three year agreement, preferring lower releases for the stability of a settlement to support her import programme.¹⁶³ Britain was initially unwilling to acquiesce to Indian demands. However, to avert a breakdown Cripps stepped in to discuss the matter with Chetty, and after some hard bargaining a compromise agreement was reached.¹⁶⁴ India settled for lower releases, but achieved a three year settlement with a verbal British commitment to keep capital goods exports at approximately £35 million a year. This addressed Indian fears expressed in January, and Britain informally agreed to further help in the third year if necessary and if the supply of capital goods in the UK had increased. The British provided higher releases over more than their guide timeframe of one year, but ensured Indian adherence to the Sterling Area and avoided political storms. The final agreement was agreed by Cripps and Chetty on 24 June 1948.¹⁶⁵

As for hard currency, £15 million for dollars was released from the central reserves and the remainder of the deficit was again to be met by drawings from the IMF.¹⁶⁶ This quota was annual and so had to be renegotiated in a year's time: spring 1949. As in February 1948, India verbally agreed to further relax import restrictions to allow entry to British goods in ample supply.¹⁶⁷ The connection between releases and import restrictions was again kept informal so as to avoid the misconception in public that the British had extorted concessions from India in return for balance releases. Despite at the time having surplus sterling, India achieved its three year settlement with releases in the second and third years and a healthy dollar ration, but its demands were moderated by no additional releases in the first year. The British achieved no immediate releases, but had to acquiesce to India's demands for a three

¹⁶² 'Notes on the Indian and Pakistan Negotiations, June-July 1948', Undated, DO 142/222.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* *The Statesman* also reported that Chetty had made it clear that no piecemeal releases acceptable, and that would like a two to three year settlement, 'Talks on Sterling Balances Open', 8/6/1948, p. 1.

¹⁶⁴ See CRO to UKHC, No. 1898, 25/6/1948, DO 142/222.

¹⁶⁵ 'Notes on the Indian and Pakistan Negotiations, June-July 1948', Undated, DO 142/222.

¹⁶⁶ See letter from Cripps to Chetty 9/7/1948, in G.O.I. Press, *Sterling Balances: A Record of Discussions held with the Representatives of the United Kingdom Government and Connected Discussions*, Presented to the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) by Finance Minister, 9 August 1948, pp. 40-41 and 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', Memorandum by the Treasury for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/2, 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

¹⁶⁷ CRO to UKHC, No. 1898, 25/6/1948, DO 142/222.

year deal.¹⁶⁸ These terms were based on the immediate political need for a token release and longer term estimates of India's financial requirements.¹⁶⁹

Indian public opinion had to be considered as the Indian delegation would be open to criticism if they returned to Delhi with seemingly meagre releases. The eventual 1948 agreement was in any case widely criticised in India.¹⁷⁰ The sterling balances were an emotive issue in India, and as Zachariah notes there was much resentment that Britain was unable to fully satisfy Indian demands for capital goods, or dollars.¹⁷¹ There was, however, an appreciation of British difficulties by the G.O.I. as opposed to public perceptions of rough treatment from the UK.¹⁷² The Indian delegation, therefore, faced the task of securing sufficiently generous releases to satisfy Indian public opinion, against which had to be balanced the increasing Indian concern that the balances were being drawn down at too high a rate.¹⁷³

The immediate political nature of the agreement is further revealed in letters between Cripps and Nehru who opined that 'We appreciate the spirit in which these negotiations have been carried on and I trust that this will result in promoting further good-will between India and England. There is a fund of good-will and the Mountbatten's, as I wrote to you, have added greatly to it.'¹⁷⁴ The balances represented more than simply a transfer of funds and came to be both a core component of the residual post-colonial relationship and a key factor in India's

¹⁶⁸ Following the main sterling agreement, the two sides settled amount to be paid by India for military stores and installations taken over by the G.O.I., and cleared up minor adjustments regarding the wartime defence arrangements. In addition India agreed to purchase annuities from the UK for out of which pensions to those previously in the ICS would be paid. The total of these adjustments was approximately £250 million, see letter from Cripps to Chetty, 9/7/1948, Chetty's reply, 9/7/1948 and Cripps to Chetty 9/7/1948 in G.O.I. Press, *Sterling Balances: A Record of Discussions held with the Representatives of the United Kingdom Government and Connected Discussions*, Presented to the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) by Finance Minister, 9 August 1948, pp. 44-48.

¹⁶⁹ 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', Memorandum by the Treasury for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/2, 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

¹⁷⁰ Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London, 2004), p. 163.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁷² In a despatch to London the UKHC informed the CRO that on the whole the agreement was well received and there was a growing appreciation of British difficulties by some, Despatch No. 115, Ref. 48/P/85, 30/7/1948, DO 133/89.

¹⁷³ This was noted by the British, 'Notes on the Indian and Pakistan Negotiations, June-July 1948', Undated, DO 142/222.

¹⁷⁴ Nehru to Cripps, No. 931-PM, 3/7/1948, CAB 127/143 and also see, Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, pp. 429-430.

decision to remain within both the Sterling Area and Commonwealth. As Nehru told Mountbatten, an agreement would lead to better understanding between the two countries 'while lack of agreement would have had the opposite result.'¹⁷⁵ It was not simply the bare economic facts that influenced Indian actions, but the realisation that productive negotiation and discussion could take place and result with a favourable outcome. From the British point of view 'looked at in the broadest way the sterling balances are clearly one of the major factors likely to influence our relations with India.'¹⁷⁶ The handling of the sterling balances demonstrated the benefits of association with the Sterling Area, and through this the Commonwealth, at a time when India's membership was under examination.

The Indian Cabinet accepted the proposals, and was eager to confirm that further advances may be necessary in the third year as an informal and friendly understanding between the two governments, dependent upon the circumstances in the third year.¹⁷⁷ Nehru thus reminded Cripps that 'you may in fact be able to do more in the way of capital goods. We hope that if these difficulties appear in the third year, as they well might, your Government will be able to help us with further advances.'¹⁷⁸ Cripps assuaged Nehru's anxiety: 'I hope that what I arranged with Chetty will deal with the point that you raise. That was its intention.'¹⁷⁹ Nehru was aware that certain parts of the agreement were likely to be criticised and noted that 'indeed we were not happy in regard to some parts.'¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Nehru accepted the agreement as reasonable for 'there has been no scaling down', the ever-present Indian fear, and 'we shall get adequate releases in the course of the next three years for our projects.'¹⁸¹

What can again be ascertained from the negotiations is India's dependence on the sterling balances, its membership of the Sterling Area, and also India's

¹⁷⁵ Nehru to Mountbatten, 3/7/1948, in *ibid.*, pp. 185-186.

¹⁷⁶ 'Notes on the Indian and Pakistan Negotiations, June-July 1948', Undated, DO 142/222.

¹⁷⁷ Nehru to Cripps, No. 931-PM, 3/7/1948, CAB 127/143 and also see, Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, pp. 429-430.

¹⁷⁸ Nehru to Cripps, No. 931-PM, 3/7/1948, CAB 127/143.

¹⁷⁹ Cripps to Nehru, 10/7/1948, CAB 127/143. Nehru consequently told his Chief Ministers that 'we have come to an understanding that in the third year, if necessary, further advances can be made to us.' Letter to Chief Ministers, 15/7/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, p. 336.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

determination to utilise the balances for development purposes even before the first five-year plan had been formulated. Furthermore, it demonstrated London's willingness to avert political breakdown at the expense of financial prudence, and by agreeing to a three year time frame the issue of the balances was, albeit temporarily, settled so that it held less potential for criticism as India continued to consider its future status within the Commonwealth. Nehru was fully aware that the UK was eager to retain India in the Commonwealth and exploited this knowledge in seeking favourable sterling balance releases. Cripps provided the Commons with a statement on the balances, which serves as a suitable précis: 'negotiations, though naturally difficult owing to the pressing needs of both countries, were conducted in a spirit of mutual co-operation and understanding, which...augurs well for the future relationship between our countries.'¹⁸²

April/May 1949: Indian Overspend and Reward

Despite the three year agreement, a serious deterioration in India's financial position, in both sterling and dollars, necessitated further assistance from Britain in the form of additional releases. Unlike any other set of negotiations, however, India's membership of the Commonwealth had been agreed in April 1949, and was to be ratified mid-May by the Constituent Assembly. The upcoming negotiations were briefly mentioned during the Constituent Assembly debate on the Resolution when Shri H.V. Kamath hoped that 'the Financial delegation...will be able to prevail-upon the UK Government to follow a more honest policy with regard to our sterling balances.'¹⁸³

India's continued membership of the Commonwealth resulted in favourable financial treatment as they received all of the assistance needed to rectify their sterling overspend of some £90 million as opposed to agreed limit of £40 million.¹⁸⁴ By May 1949 even the Treasury conceded that 'from the political point of view we

¹⁸² Cripps presenting balances Agreement to the House of Commons, speech found in MS SC-17, 3, 15/7/1948, Special Collections, Private Papers: Private papers of Sir Stafford Cripps: MSS Stafford Cripps, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

¹⁸³ Shri H.V. Kamath's response to Nehru's introduction of the Commonwealth Resolution in Constituent Assembly of India Debate, 16/5/1949, Volume VIII, last accessed 19/6/2010, <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates/htm>.

¹⁸⁴ See telegram from CRO to UKHC, No. 1397, 30/4/01949, E.12627, L/E/9/332.

have to take into consideration the necessity of showing sympathetic consideration to Indian needs, in view of her continued membership of the Commonwealth' and it also recognised India's importance as a stabilising element in Southeast Asia.¹⁸⁵ In discussing the Indian overspend, the British Overseas Negotiating Committee (ONC) agreed that 'India, unlike such Commonwealth countries as Australia...thought more of privileges than of the responsibilities of being in the SA' but 'as we wished to keep her in the Commonwealth, we could not threaten to exclude her from the sterling area'.¹⁸⁶ In other words they used the sterling balances to demonstrate the key benefits of Commonwealth membership. The balances served to encourage Indian entry into the Commonwealth and then served as a means to demonstrate the benefits of association.

The British agreed to cover India's sterling overspend, caused partly by a relaxation of import licences pushed for by Britain in 1948, and to keep India's working balance at £30 million whatever the cost during a so-called tapering-off period to avoid economic dislocation. They also agreed to release £50 million in each of the next two years.¹⁸⁷ As a quid pro quo, however, India agreed exemptions from a re-tightening of the import licences for certain goods, which enabled Britain to continue with their export target to India of £120 million per annum.¹⁸⁸ India had also overspent its dollar allocation by 50 per cent, which Britain waived rather than asking for reimbursement.¹⁸⁹

In addition, part of India's decision rested on the fact that full membership of the Commonwealth, rather than just the Sterling Area, had the benefit of giving India a voice in deciding Sterling Area economic policies. The Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meetings, where policy was formed, was only open to members of the

¹⁸⁵ Memorandum by the Treasury, ON (49)199, 7/6/1949, L/E/9/332.

¹⁸⁶ ONC (49) 9/6/1949 – meeting on the above Note, L/E/9/332.

¹⁸⁷ India Financial negotiations, E/13735/49, 1949, 'Indian Import Policy: Note by Board of Trade', Undated, L/E/9/332. Also see letter from President of Board of Trade to High Commissioner for India, 1/8/1949, see House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk/home.do> accessed 12/12/2011.

¹⁸⁸ 'India Financial negotiations', E/13735/49, 1949, 'Indian Import Policy: Note by Board of Trade', Undated, L/E/9/332.

¹⁸⁹ See Tomlinson, 'Indo-British Relations in the Post-Colonial Era: The Sterling Balances Negotiations, 1947-49', p. 152; P.S. Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement, 1914-1964* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 306-307 and Simha, *The Reserve Bank of India, Volume 1, 1935-51*, p. 626.

Commonwealth. Cripps, for example, described the 1949 Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Conference as a 'Commonwealth conference and not a sterling area conference.'¹⁹⁰ In this way India gained representation at the highest table, and satisfied demands of its equality with other members of the Commonwealth.

India had to further demonstrate that it could act in the best interests of sterling rather than India alone in light of the continued drain of dollars. The British approach was to use the offers of cuts by other Commonwealth countries at the Finance Ministers' Meeting in July 1949 to 'make it morally incumbent on India to agree to similar cuts.'¹⁹¹ Following the British example, the Commonwealth pledged to cut dollar expenditure by 25 per cent from the 1948 figure.¹⁹² India also agreed to limit dollar expenditure in line with these efforts, and demonstrated its willingness to co-operate as a fully independent sovereign nation in the Commonwealth. India's co-operation struck Cripps, and despite their dollar overspend of \$84 million, he vetoed the idea of any formal dollar quota and instead awarded India full access to the Empire Dollar Pool.¹⁹³ Despite the overspend India not only gained full access to the dollar pool but Britain also let the overspend pass without calls for a reimbursement. The Reserve Bank of India estimated that India was allowed to draw \$140-150 million as opposed to only \$60 million the previous year, which reduced India's need for IMF funding.¹⁹⁴ Cripps argued that as India agreed to cut dollars, along with the rest of the Commonwealth, to impose a dollar ration would be unacceptable.¹⁹⁵ Cripps' decision was, however, based on its political rather than economic rationale as he noted that it 'seemed likely that this decision would improve our relations with India.'¹⁹⁶ India was now a fully integrated member of the Sterling Area, a full member of the Commonwealth and contributed to measures to strengthen sterling. The future of India's sterling balances from this point on became closely linked to the Colombo Plan of 1950 for the economic development of South and Southeast Asia.

¹⁹⁰ 'The Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Conference', EPC (49) 79, 9/7/1949, CAB 134/222.

¹⁹¹ Minutes of UK Officials Meeting, 29/6/1949, L/E/9/332.

¹⁹² See 'Meeting of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers', Memorandum by the President of the Board of Trade, CP (49) 160, 21/7/1949, CAB 129/36.

¹⁹³ ONC (49) 60th Meeting, 28/7/1949, L/E/9/332.

¹⁹⁴ Simha, *The Reserve Bank of India, Volume 1, 1935-51*, p. 627.

¹⁹⁵ Cripps, ONC (49) 60th Meeting, 28/7/1949, L/E/9/332.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

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Through this examination it is possible to see India not simply as a powerless dependent of Britain, but as a proactive state that utilised its political significance to advance its material requirements whilst simultaneously acknowledging that adherence to the Sterling Area and through it the Commonwealth was of vital importance to India's economic stability. The balance negotiations demonstrated to India that as a member of both the Sterling Area and the Commonwealth it would receive financial and economic support. Persistent overspend and reward showed India that even though it was unable to balance its payments there was a clearly politically driven aspect to sterling releases. Britain treated India generously, though not too generously, and economic decisions at every stage of the negotiation process were influenced to a large degree by the need to keep India in the Commonwealth and this was not lost on India.

Balance releases enabled India to begin its plans for economic development without seeking considerable assistance from either of the two superpowers. On a more basic level, the release of sterling covered crucial imports of food, raw materials and capital goods. Charrier notes that 'the degree of Indian dependence upon the sterling balances is evident from the fact that in 1948/1949, 79% of the central government's balance of payments deficit with all countries (£165 million) was financed by releases by the sterling balances.'¹⁹⁷ This analysis is too reductionist, however, as it was not simply about covering balance of payments, but also controlling inflation and the proportion of capital goods refers to the development imperative. The crucial aspect was dollars and a continual stream of capital goods from Britain. Furthermore, at the time of the summer 1948 agreement India had a surplus in her external trade. India's membership of the Commonwealth was not simply a case of India attempting to secure more generous releases, as Inder Singh and Brown argue, because India was concerned about the balance run down. India wanted the capital goods that, thanks to the dollar shortage, only British industry could provide, and deduced that she would have more chance of getting a sustainable level of capital goods if an active and equal member of the Sterling Area and Commonwealth. In view of the improbability of India agreeing to any form of

¹⁹⁷ Charrier, 'Britain, India and the Genesis of the Colombo Plan, 1945-51', p. 265. Figures from Annex to Sterling Balances, August 1950 in FO 371/82963.

commercial treaty with the UK, the sterling balances also worked as a means of assuring British assets in India were treated with due respect, and increased the likelihood of Indian membership of the Commonwealth, thus preserving trading benefits.

India had already made it clear in January 1948 that leaving the Sterling Area was not a favoured action, although it had made vague threats, and so required some form of political assurance against possible reprisals from Britain if overspend reoccurred. Membership of the Commonwealth would politicise any actions taken regarding the Sterling Area.¹⁹⁸ Britain was the 'lender of last resort' for India – and exercised this role several times and India had to ensure that Britain remained willing to support its balance of payments when necessary. To that end, India did attempt to moderate her spending and attempt to act as a responsible member of Sterling Area. Despite feeling that she had not been treated as generously as she would have liked in January 1948, India remained within the Sterling Area, a decision moderated by the increasing realisation of India's economic dependence on sterling.¹⁹⁹

India's membership of the Sterling Area determined her financial relations, and strictly speaking Commonwealth membership did not determine financial benefits.²⁰⁰ However, the Sterling Area was in essence the financial and economic manifestation of the political Commonwealth. The Sterling Area on its own could have served the fundamental financial needs of India, but would do so without providing any political influence or clout in Area decision-making. India acknowledged that as a full member of both the Commonwealth and the Sterling Area it would be in a better position to influence issues of national interest. By

¹⁹⁸ See Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

¹⁹⁹ 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', Memorandum by the Treasury for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/2, 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

²⁰⁰ A Treasury paper for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations phrased the situation thus, 'It is India's membership of the Sterling Area rather than her membership of the Commonwealth which largely determines our financial relations with her and her departure from the Commonwealth, as distinct from her departure from the Sterling Area, would have no immediate direct effect', see GEN. 276/2, 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

joining the Commonwealth India gained a seat at the top table, both in terms of general political policy and in economic management. Commonwealth membership was in essence conflated with that of the Sterling Area; the economics and politics could not be simply separated. Moreover, if India joined the Commonwealth it would be harder to eject her from the Sterling Area if the need arose for fear of precipitating her departure from the Commonwealth.

India's interest in the integral stability of sterling, moreover, needs to be emphasised more fully than historians have previously acknowledged. Without markets and customers, India's membership of the Sterling Area would bring her no benefits, in much the same way, as if India had nowhere to spend her balances then they too would bring little bonus. The Sterling Area physically had to be defended, and the value of Sterling also had to be defended, both of which India realised after the transfer of power. Britain was fundamentally as generous with balances as commensurate with financial stability and ensuring a positive trade relationship, much of which was based on the political need to keep India within the Commonwealth and the Sterling Area and to emphasise that India's endowment fundamentally rested on the success of the rest of the Sterling Area and Commonwealth.²⁰¹ India received preferential treatment because of her political value, her potential influence in Southeast Asia and her position as Britain's largest single market. It is the interplay between these two sides that is the core of this section and it serves to place the Commonwealth decision within a longer time frame than is commonly applied.

However, Attlee's message to Parliament in light of the worsening economic situation in the UK at the end of October 1949 once again raised the fear of some form of readjustment of the balances and also explicitly links the balances with stability for the first time:

Undoubtedly this is a strain on us. It is obviously quite impossible that we should pay off these sterling balances. At the same time, to close down right away on them would be to ignore all their wants. We have very great interests in trying to preserve peace and stability, especially in Southeast Asia... We shall have to be far tighter in the future... as was said by my Rt.

²⁰¹ In particular Malaya.

Hon. and Learned Friend [Cripps] in Washington there must come a settlement of all these things.²⁰²

This settlement in many ways came together in the form of the Colombo Plan. Whilst India's releases were not formally tied to the Plan, India saw this as the best opportunity to secure continued funding over a long period without risk of British cancellation and as a contribution to stemming the tide of Communism in South and Southeast Asia. The final balance agreement that regularised payments for six years from 1951 was ultimately linked to the Colombo Plan.

Having explored the material factors behind India's willingness to remain in the Sterling Area, it is necessary to examine the negotiations for Indian entry into the Commonwealth as a Republic. This is not, however, an intricate constitutional history of India's entry into the Commonwealth. The key issue was not the principle of membership as this was largely decided by the factors discussed above, but the terms on which India joined, and in shifting focus to this aspect of the case study it is possible to reinforce the argument that India was far more concerned with membership, and this in turn reinforces the arguments based on India's joining out of a combination of necessity and active pursuit of its national interests.

Attlee initiated contact with Nehru in March 1948 'in order to start a discussion as to the future relationship of India and the Commonwealth.'²⁰³ Emphasising that the Commonwealth was 'in effect the Commonwealth of British and Asiatic nations', Attlee conceded that 'it may well be that the title should be changed, but it is my hope that the reality will remain.'²⁰⁴ His purpose was to ascertain if 'there is any real objection to the continuance of India in the British Commonwealth owing to the common allegiance to the Crown.'²⁰⁵ Nehru's response was nebulous and claimed that there were strong views and so he was 'not attempting an answer at this stage.'²⁰⁶ The overall tone of Nehru's letter indicated hope for India remaining in based partly on British policy toward India and the

²⁰² Telegram No. 3135 from CRO to UKHC containing copy of Attlee's speech to the House of Commons, 27/10/1949, L/E/9/356, IOR.

²⁰³ Note from Attlee to Cripps, 9/3/1948, PREM 8/820.

²⁰⁴ Attlee to Nehru, 11/3/1948, PREM 8/820.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Nehru to Attlee, 18/4/1948, PREM 8/820.

Mountbattens' charm. Nehru ended that 'I shall not say much more at this stage except to repeat the hope that India and England will be closely associated to their mutual advantage. In a world full of conflict and difficulty this is even more necessary that in might have been at any other time.'²⁰⁷ Attlee reinforced the message of his last communication, highlighting the flexibility of the Commonwealth and his belief that in these matters 'informal exchange of view between Prime Ministers is useful. Once these matters get into the hands of the constitutional lawyers on either side, there is a danger of rigid positions being taken up.'²⁰⁸

As the scheduled October 1948 meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers approached, the Congress Working Committee decided that the Indian Cabinet was the only body to come to the final decision.²⁰⁹ At the October 1948 meeting, Nehru was expected to sound out opinion in London and then return to report to Congress and the Cabinet.²¹⁰ On his return to India Nehru was keen to stress that no decisions or undertakings had been made, and that the Constituent Assembly would have the final say in the matter.²¹¹ Nehru attempted to calm any rank and file Congress fears that India's independence was at threat by assuring them that the Objectives Resolution still held and India would become a sovereign republic.²¹² After Congress had formally given their consent, the negotiations entered Nehru's remit of control, but that does not mean that he was not mindful of his actions. There was some hesitation and suspicion among Congress members, Nehru told Krishna Menon, but he thought that it would not be too difficult to get membership through.²¹³ The Congress Working Committee, Congress Party and Cabinet were kept abreast of the general principles, but as Nehru told Krishna Menon, he would not go into details.²¹⁴

No commitments had been made at the October Conference, but Ten Points

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ Attlee to Nehru, 14/5/1948, PREM 8/820.

²⁰⁹ UKHC to CRO, Reporting Conversation with V.P. Menon, No. 3233, 14/9/1948, RPEM 8/1008.

²¹⁰ UKHC to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, No. 3537, 7/10/1948, PREM 8/1008.

²¹¹ Text of Speech in telegram from UKCH to CRO, EMPAX 804, 13/11/1948, DO 133/91.

²¹² Nehru reporting to Congress Party Members in the Constituent Assembly, 7/11/1948, taken from the *National Herald* cited in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 252.

²¹³ Nehru to Krishna Menon, 11/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 253. Rajagopalachari also suggested this to the High Commissioner, UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 3848, 3/11/1948, DO 133/91.

²¹⁴ Nehru to Krishna Menon, 11/11/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 253.

were drafted by senior Labour members and Nehru, and these points represented a starting point for setting out terms for India's continued membership of the Commonwealth. They were also written before the Jaipur Session of the All India Congress Committee formally agreed to a connection. However, on further inspection the draft Ten Points contained insufficient links between the Commonwealth, Crown and India to justify in international law the substance of the Commonwealth link.²¹⁵ Lord Jowitt, like Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, was anxious to avoid any sense that the Commonwealth was throwing India out, but the Ten Points, he was advised, were not legally sufficient.²¹⁶

Norman Brook,²¹⁷ British Cabinet Secretary, advised that the only other options to provide a stronger India-Commonwealth link would be either to accept that the King has some jurisdiction in respect of India's external affairs, or that the King was Head of the Commonwealth.²¹⁸ Nehru was informed that his Ten Points were insufficient on 16 November 1948, that Britain was investigating the position and that India should do the same.²¹⁹ Nehru responded to the UK High Commissioner that he had drawn up the Points with Cripps, and that the latter had opined that whilst there may be some legal difficulty it was important that technicalities not be allowed to override broader political considerations.²²⁰ Attlee had the same attitude, as expressed when he wrote to Nehru in March 1948,²²¹ but as the High Commissioner responded 'the legal objections put forward were not mere technicalities but matters of substance.'²²² Pursuing Commonwealth membership on the basis of the Ten Points would have left the terms of admission, and thus the

²¹⁵ See Extract from Minute to the Prime Minister from Normanbrook, CP (48) 254, undated, PREM 8/1008. For the Ten Points see enclosure to letter from Krishna Menon to Attlee, 29/10/1948, PREM 8/1008.

²¹⁶ See Hector Mackenzie, 'An Old Dominion and the New Commonwealth: Canadian Policy on the Question of India's Membership, 1947-49', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 27 (1999), p. 90.

²¹⁷ For biographical information on Normanbrook see, Kevin Theakston, 'Brook, Norman Craven, Baron Normanbrook (1902-1967)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32089>, accessed 12 Jan 2012].

²¹⁸ See Extract from Minute to the Prime Minister from Normanbrook, CP (48) 254, undated, PREM 8/1008.

²¹⁹ Telegram to Nehru, No. 3109, 20/11/1948, and the UKHC handed note from Attlee to Nehru, reported from UKHC, No. 4017, 19/11/1948, PREM 8/1008.

²²⁰ UKHC to CRO, No. 4017, 19/11/1948, PREM 8/1008.

²²¹ Attlee to Nehru, 14/5/1948, PREM 8/820.

²²² UKHC to CRO, No. 4017, 19/11/1948, PREM 8/1008.

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substance of links, open to attack from foreign nations challenging the validity of Commonwealth economic links. As Attlee again reiterated to Nehru in delivering the news of the Ten Points:

Our objective here remains...exactly as it was. We want India to remain within the Commonwealth, and we believe in the light of the talks that you and I and other Ministers have had in London, that India herself shares that view provided an acceptable basis can be found.²²³

Various proposals were made after the rejection of the Ten Points; for example, the possibility of diplomats receiving their credentials in the name of the King was even raised in earlier conversations with Bajpai, who thought that it was a possibility.²²⁴ The Crown link was expressed in this way when Commonwealth Ministers met in Paris on 17 November 1948.²²⁵ Bajpai communicated the substance of the conversation to Nehru:

We have been thinking in terms of Commonwealth citizenship as link of association among Commonwealth countries...It is not suggested that India should not be sovereign republic or that Head of State should be other than President elected according to the provisions of Indian constitution. What is suggested is that as symbol of Commonwealth association authority to appoint Heads of Missions abroad should derive from the King. This could be achieved by permanent delegation by King to President of Indian Republic of power to appoint Heads of Missions.²²⁶

Following this telegram and the rejection of his Ten Points, and facing continued opposition from the Congress Parliamentary Party not to jeopardise Indian sovereignty, Nehru wrote to Krishna Menon:

The very point the United Kingdom wishes to emphasise for legal or sentimental reasons is objected to here. Most people are prepared to accept the common citizenship idea plus a declaration that we are in the Commonwealth. If you go beyond this, there is difficulty...Our people want to make it perfectly clear that they are making a new start and that, as the Constitution will itself declare, sovereignty resides in the people and in

²²³ Attlee to Nehru, No. 3109, 20/11/1948, PREM 8/1008.

²²⁴ Record of Conversation between the Secretary of State and G.S. Bajpai, 13/10/1948, PREM 8/1008. Moore notes that Bajpai denied any knowledge that Nehru ever intended to retain a link through the King in the external field, *Making the New Commonwealth*, p. 149.

²²⁵ Annex "B", 'India's Relations with the Commonwealth', Note by the Prime Minister, CP (48) 286, 28/12/1948, CAB 129/31.

²²⁶ Text of telegram sent from Bajpai to Nehru, 17/11/1948 in Appendix to Annex "B", 'India's Relations with the Commonwealth', Note by the Prime Minister, CP (48) 286, 28/12/1948, CAB 129/31.

no one else in any shape or form.²²⁷

The rejection was unexpected as Nehru had written to Krishna Menon, informing him that he was discussing membership with the Congress, Cabinet and Congress Working Party, and if the response from all three was favourable, Nehru reasoned, then he could inform Attlee.²²⁸ Despite Cabinet opposition to the substance of the Ten Points, Nehru followed with an Eight Point plan, and emphasised that the issue was political and not legal.²²⁹ However, these points were quickly rejected as again providing an inadequate basis to the relationship, and through the points it was clear that no substantial link to the Crown would be accepted.²³⁰ Despite this legalistic wrangling, the All-India Congress Committee Jaipur Session, December 1948, endorsed the prospect of India remaining within the Commonwealth, if it could be achieved without compromising India's sovereign republic aims.²³¹

Krishna Menon was charged with communicating Nehru's distress at the rejection of his revised Eight Points to the British, writing that 'on the Commonwealth situation his [Nehru's] feeling is that he has been under a misapprehension as to the basic agreements and desires.'²³² Furthermore, he felt 'left "high and dry" after he had dealt with his side with the greatest risk and difficulty.'²³³ Nehru further elucidated the points made by Krishna Menon in the following days, writing to Cripps that 'I have met several kinds of opinion and I have gone dead against the current of opinion in India. Yet I have persisted because I thought this was the right course.'²³⁴ Nehru also wrote to Patel that 'I do not think

²²⁷ Nehru to Menon, 28/11/1948, cited in S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956, Volume Two* (London, 1979), pp. 49-50.

²²⁸ Letter from Nehru to Krishna Menon, 11/11/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 8*, p. 253.

²²⁹ Letter from Nehru to Krishna Menon, 16/11/1948, in *ibid.*, p. 255. Letter from Krishna Menon to Attlee, 11/12/1948, PREM 8/1008 and Nehru to Attlee, 11/12/1948, PREM 8/1008, copy of Eight Points also found in Annex A, to 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth', Note by the Prime Minister, 31/12/1948, CP (48) 309, CAB 129/31.

²³⁰ Attlee to Nehru, No. 3322, 16/12/1948, PREM 8/1008.

²³¹ 18/12/1948, Mackenzie, 'An Old Dominion and the New Commonwealth: Canadian Policy on the Question of India's Membership, 1947-49', p. 92 and Mehrotra, 'India and the Commonwealth', in Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years*, p. 33.

²³² Letter from Krishna Menon to Cripps, 23/12/1948, CAB 127/143.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Letter from Nehru to Cripps, 17/18/12/1948, CAB 127/143. There is also a letter dated 17/12/1948 in CAB 127/143 which contains much the same argument as the slightly later letter, Menon uses the plural 'letters' when communicating to Cripps that he had received communications from Nehru, and it is relatively clear that both letters were sent with Krishna Menon's letter of a 23/12/1948, which Moore fails to recognise in *Making the New Commonwealth*, p. 153.

there is the least chance of our going further than what we said in London. To that we are prepared to stick still, in spite of some opposition in our country.'²³⁵ Cripps responded to Nehru assuring him that 'we are studying this closely with Krishna and are determined to find a solution that is satisfactory to all of us – if that be humanly possible – and we must make it possible.'²³⁶

Crucially, however, Krishna Menon emphasised that there could be no prospect of a two-tier Commonwealth; India would either be fully in or completely out of the Commonwealth.²³⁷ Already facing criticism for its advocacy of membership, any hint of subordinate status or that India was entering an agreement on anything but an equal footing would have further fuelled criticism. Nehru remained under pressure throughout this process to ensure that the conditions of India's membership would be acceptable to Congress; for this more than any other case was the meeting of India's external and domestic spheres.

Stalemate continued after the rejection of Nehru's Eight Points until Gordon-Walker came up with the seeds of a possible settlement, based in part on earlier suggestions by Mackenzie King and Amery.²³⁸ He suggested that 'we must start again from the fact that India wants to be in the Commonwealth and all its other members want to accept her into membership.'²³⁹ 'Could we not base ourselves on a Commonwealth relationship resting upon the will and intent of all its members', he argued 'this would give us a real link to start from.'²⁴⁰ Similar ideas also came into Cripps' orbit through George Blaker, an old ICS hand, who argued that the link, which was extant, was the 'fundamental community of outlook...and a desire on the

²³⁵ Letter from Nehru to Patel, 12/1/1949 enclosing letter to Menon dated 12/1/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, pp. 1-2.

²³⁶ Cripps to Nehru, 7/1/1949, CAB 127/143. Nehru somewhat laconically replied, 'I am anxious to settle the Commonwealth issue as soon as possible ... I do not think that a legalistic approach to this problem is going to solve anything.' Nehru to Cripps, 17/1/1949, CAB 127/143.

²³⁷ Note of a Meeting at No. 10, Downing Street on 22nd December between the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Krishna Menon and Mr. Gordon-Walker, PREM 8/1008, and reported in C.R. (49) 1, 7/1/1949, PREM 8/1008.

²³⁸ See Moore, *Making the New Commonwealth*, p. 162.

²³⁹ 'The Link with India', 31/12/1948, Annex C to 'India's Relations with the Commonwealth', Note by the Secretary of the Cabinet, CR (49) 1, 3/1/1949, PREM 8/1008.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

part of all the Dominions, to remain in the Commonwealth.’²⁴¹ Could the King not be both King of certain Dominions and the President of the Commonwealth separately asked Blaker.²⁴² Gordon-Walker set the ball rolling by meeting with a receptive Krishna Menon in January 1949.²⁴³

By early 1949 the British had rejected the notion of a two-tier Commonwealth, with India unable and unwilling to accept a Crown link and with Commonwealth citizenry an insufficient link, common history and common will to remain associated became cardinal facts of the relationship.²⁴⁴ As such, the existence of the Commonwealth as an entity would depend on de facto international recognition, and had to stand up to the scrutiny of those who would wish to legally challenge the association and its economic policies. With the publication of India’s constitution due in July and time running out, ministers were dispatched early in 1949 to prepare for a Commonwealth Prime Minister’s Meeting in April 1949 to attempt to settle the matter through dedicated talks.²⁴⁵ The results of these diplomatic missions demonstrated an almost complete preference for India within rather than India outside the Commonwealth, which resulted in the final abandonment of a Crown link for India.²⁴⁶

Nehru’s frustration with Britain’s past legalistic approach was betrayed in a letter to Patel as he wrote that ‘the result is likely to be an inconclusive conference.’²⁴⁷ It was the strength of the links and the benefits that Nehru expected

²⁴¹ ‘India and the Commonwealth’, Note by George Blaker, 5/1/1949, sent to Cripps and forwarded to Attlee, 6/1/1949, PREM 8/1008.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ Précis of meeting with Krishna Menon on 4/1/1949, dated 5/1/1949, PREM 8/1008.

²⁴⁴ Mackenzie, ‘An Old Dominion and the New Commonwealth: Canadian Policy on the Question of India’s Membership, 1947-49’, p. 93 and C.R (49) 1, 7/1/1949, PREM 8/1008.

²⁴⁵ Details of this in India’s Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Note by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33, Annex “A” and “B” were to be shared with the Commonwealth PMs of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, but not India. Annex “C”, discussed below, contains the details of the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations (Working Party) on the political and economic implications of India’s membership of the Commonwealth based on three potentials: full member of Commonwealth without link to the Crown, India as foreign state with strong treaty links to the Commonwealth, last that India becomes a foreign state with no treaty relationship.

²⁴⁶ Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to the Prime Minister, No. 42/49, 20/4/1949 ‘India’s Foreign Policy and her Relation to the Commonwealth’, DO 121/23.

²⁴⁷ Letter from Nehru to Patel, 14/3/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel’s Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, pp. 2-3.

to accrue that pushed him to seek a compromise solution that satisfied India and satisfied the Commonwealth. At the Conference, Nehru maintained contact with Patel and far from bemoaning the overly legalistic British approach Nehru communicated the increasing flexibility of the British as opposed to some of the other Dominions on the issue of the Head of the Commonwealth. Through mutual discussion the participants agreed on India's membership to be legally clarified through declarations of intent. Nehru sought to remove the independent phrase 'Head of Commonwealth' from any declaration and agreement, which he argued the British would have agreed.²⁴⁸ India's final entry to the Commonwealth as a republic was made possible by Indian acquiescence to the recognition the King as the symbol of the free association of Commonwealth members.²⁴⁹

Patel fully endorsed Nehru and his team's efforts in London and confirmed that India's intention to become a fully sovereign republic had not been betrayed, writing to Nehru that 'by recognition of the King as Head of Commonwealth as a symbol of free association of its members we do not derogate from that status.'²⁵⁰ Patel did, however, raise the concern of the other Dominions issuing a joint statement, emphasising their common unity through the Crown, on the basis that it could give rise to the impression that India was an 'inferior class' of member.²⁵¹ On the final draft of the Declaration Patel congratulated Nehru, confirming his view that 'our membership will be full and equal...our objective has been achieved and our position as Indian Republic fully safeguarded', and this is how he presented it to the Indian public in a press conference prior to Nehru's return.²⁵² The Commonwealth was expanded and the Crown as the only link of association was broken as India joined the Commonwealth as a Republic.

²⁴⁸ Cable from Nehru to Patel, 23/4/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, pp. 12-13.

²⁴⁹ For a longer term view of the idea of the King as Head of the Commonwealth see the article by McIntyre, "'A Formula May have to be Found" Ireland, India and the Headship of the Commonwealth'.

²⁵⁰ Patel to Nehru, 23/4/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, p. 15.

²⁵¹ Patel to Krishna Menon for Nehru, 23/4/1949, in *ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁵² Patel to Nehru, 27/4/1949, in *ibid.*, p. 23. See *The Statesman*, 'Commonwealth Decision "Momentous"', 29/4/1949, p. 1. For the full declaration to the press see letter from Nehru to Patel, 26/4/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems*, p. 21.

The April meeting was in itself revealing for what can be gleaned from the closing conversations of the assembled leaders, and highlighted that Nehru was acutely aware and anxious about the chaotic situation in Southeast Asia. Nehru told the other leaders that Commonwealth 'co-operation would be determined, not by any formal commitments accepted in advance, but by their friendly and understanding approach to common problems.'²⁵³ Using the example of China, Nehru continued to argue not for mutual assistance in the face of aggression, but rather 'policy must be so directed as to appeal to the great masses of people throughout Asia who were not committed to any particular ideology but were in a state of unrest due to the dissatisfaction with their conditions in life.'²⁵⁴ Nehru explained that 'the problem for Commonwealth countries was how to combine a policy for preventing war with preparations adequate to ensure that, if war came, they were ready to meet it. It would be disastrous if, by concentrating on the second object, they frustrated the first.'²⁵⁵ This, Nehru continued, was why he deprecated the notion of power blocs that led people to think in terms of war. Rather, the Commonwealth 'must develop, and pursue, a positive policy for preventing war. And in Asia must take the form of removing the condition which encouraged the growth of communism.'²⁵⁶ This line of thinking not only directly correlates with the advice provided by Nehru on the Malayan Emergency, but was the central philosophy behind the Colombo Plan.

Nehru laid down the gauntlet in the many ways at the Prime Ministers' Meeting, and utilising the ongoing Indonesian crisis, argued that 'it was vitally important that the democratic countries should do nothing at this stage which might cause those people to look elsewhere for inspiration and assistance.'²⁵⁷ Nehru evidently had an effect on his fellow Prime Ministers, as Chiefly:

agreed with Pandit Nehru that the primary object of Commonwealth policy should be to create, in countries exposed to communist influence, social conditions in which it would be impossible for communism to flourish. It was by these methods that the advance of communism must be checked. In Asia certainly, and possibly in other countries also, military strength was

²⁵³ PMM (49) 6, Meeting of the Prime Ministers, 27/4/1949, CAB 133/89.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

not an effective weapon against communist encroachment.²⁵⁸

Nehru joined the Commonwealth, as can be seen from the above entreaties to fellow Prime Ministers, to advance Indian national interests through the stabilisation of the international arena. This was not so much a case of the Commonwealth moderating India's stance on colonialism in Southeast Asia, but rather of India forwarding its own policy to the rest of the Commonwealth. Membership of the Commonwealth did not equate to a moderation of Indian policy regarding Malaya, as is argued elsewhere, as India already possessed a Malayan policy that changed little until Malaya became independent. Michael Brecher argues that Indian membership of the Commonwealth resulted in more restrained criticism of British colonial policies; S.N. Misra asserts that the Commonwealth link negatively affected India's positive goals whilst A.K. Banerji argues that it was because Britain treated her colonies humanely and India was a member of the Commonwealth that saved her from a scolding.²⁵⁹ What this research proposes is that India was actually far more influential in the shaping of Commonwealth and British policy in Southeast Asia than hitherto acknowledged. Nehru was in fact in the forefront of fighting the spread of Communism; the aim was to increase the standard of living for the average Asian as a precursor to improved political freedom, and this dual approach served to promote the cause of anti-colonialism, albeit slowly and through its effectiveness as an anti-Communist measure. Nehru's advice on Malaya was a microcosm of the larger vision of an Asia free from Communism and advancing towards political freedom and Commonwealth membership enabled him to contribute to Commonwealth discussions on the topic. On a far more mercantile note, Southeast Asia was an area of increasing exports for India, and a population with higher living

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ Banerji, *India and Britain, 1947-68: The Evolution of Post-Colonial Relations*, p. 261; Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959), p. 581; Misra, *India: The Cold War Years*, p. 221; Charrier, 'Britain, India and the Genesis of the Colombo Plan, 1945-51', pp. 342-343; Sushil Chandra Singh, 'America, India and the Commonwealth', in Verinder Grover (ed.), *International Relations and Foreign Policy in India, Volume 5, Great Britain, Commonwealth and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 307-308. M.S. Rajan discusses claims of "Undue Influence" arising from India's connection with the Commonwealth, 'India and the Commonwealth', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 12 (1966), p. 230. Maurice Zinkin and Taya Zinkin, *Britain and India: Requiem for Empire* (London, 1964) have an interesting take on the issue of anti-colonialism making the case the Nehru had a singularly important impact on the direction of British policies as a result of his educating the British people.

standards would be able to afford more India wares to support India's economy.²⁶⁰

In the public domain the freedom of India's choice was emphatically reiterated throughout the Commonwealth debate; there was some discussion of the positive advantages and benefits, but little mention of the economic or financial necessities of the link and Nehru was eager to dispel rumours of 'secret talks'.²⁶¹ Nehru went so far as to tell the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Calcutta that India was in an economically strong position.²⁶² On his return from London, Nehru was careful to present the benefits of membership rather than the factors which made it necessary; for example, he emphasised that 'economically we are as independent as independent nations can be.'²⁶³ These comments echoed those made a few days earlier when Nehru told a press conference that the Commonwealth will 'co-operate in building up...industry.'²⁶⁴ Nehru focussed on what the Commonwealth added, not took away, he focussed on the benefits rather than the necessity of the decision, was silent on the issue of the sterling balances, and was conspicuously quiet on the spread of Communism in Asia.

It was clear to me that whatever the advantages might be of any association with the Commonwealth or with any other group, no single advantage, however great, could be purchased by a single iota of our pledges being given up, because no country can make progress by playing fast and loose with the principles which it has declared.²⁶⁵

Nehru made this declaration to the Constituent Assembly on 16 May 1949 as he presented the Commonwealth Resolution. The existing structure of the Commonwealth, Nehru argued, with allegiance to the King as the central

²⁶⁰ B.N. Ganguli notes that India had to increase exports in an attempt to balance here trade, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century* (Bombay, 1956), p. 45.

²⁶¹ For rebuttal of 'secret talks' see *The Statesman*, 'Nehru Defends London Agreement', 4/5/1949, p. 1.

²⁶² Speech to the Associated Chambers of Commerce, Calcutta, 16/12/1946, *The Statesman*, 17/12/1946, p. 3.

²⁶³ Nehru's opening speech to the Constituent Assembly, 16/5/1949, Volume VIII, last accessed 19/6/2010 on <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates/htm>.

²⁶⁴ Nehru to Press Conference, 11/5/1949, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 11* (New Delhi, 1991), p. 308-315 also see 'Benefits to India from the Commonwealth: Pandit Nehru Explains New Relationship', 12/5/1949 in *The Times of India*, p. 6 and 'Nehru Defends London Agreement', 11/5/1949, *The Statesman*, p. 1.

²⁶⁵ Nehru's opening speech to the Constituent Assembly, 16/5/1949, Volume VIII, last accessed 19/6/2010 on <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates/htm>.

organisational concept, was mutually exclusive with the expressed intentions of India to become a sovereign republic. The speech focused on dispelling the fears of members of the Assembly, namely that India would be surrendering some of its hard-won sovereignty or autonomy to the Commonwealth.

In the days before the Assembly debate, Nehru used the tactic of branding critics, largely the Socialists, as reactionaries and of being trapped in a groove.²⁶⁶ In doing so Nehru attempted to disarm his opponents through employing the rhetoric of the national interest, but this did not silence critics. The breadth of criticism caused Nehru to write to Cripps that ‘there has been some fierce criticism from our socialist friends and others which has distressed me.’²⁶⁷ With Nehru and Patel behind the Resolution there was little chance of rejection, but objections and amendments were nonetheless raised by Assembly members. With Patel sitting silently, Nehru presented the Resolution and gave members two choices based on the fact that it was an international agreement and so not open to revision: accept or reject.²⁶⁸ Emphasising the choice between either acceptance or rejection was part of an effort to base the vote on Nehru’s personal prestige and influence, which echoed his opening words: ‘Nevertheless when I went, I carried this great responsibility and I felt the burden of it. I had able colleagues to advise me, but I was the sole representative of India and in a sense that future of India for the moment was in my keeping.’²⁶⁹ There was fierce criticism and amendments were raised, even though, as H.V. Kamath (Forward Bloc) told the Assembly, they had been faced with a ‘fait accompli’.²⁷⁰ Damodar Swarup Seth, moreover, accused Nehru of having ‘acted beyond his authority’ and that he should have ‘made the Declaration he gave at the London Conference after the Constituent Assembly had formally accepted it...thereby he virtually agreed to keep India a member of the Commonwealth.’²⁷¹ Contrary to Pavadya’s assertion, not all members of the Assembly supported the

²⁶⁶ ‘Benefits to India from the Commonwealth: Pandit Nehru Explains New Relationship’, 12/5/1949 in *The Times of India*, p. 6.

²⁶⁷ Nehru to Cripps, 8/5/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 11*, p. 304.

²⁶⁸ The UKHC reported that Patel remained silent throughout the debate, Appendix 1 to Telegram No. 20, Nye to CRO, 15/6/1949, CAB 21/1824.

²⁶⁹ Nehru’s opening speech to the Constituent Assembly, 16/5/1949, Volume VIII, last accessed 19/6/2010 on <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates/htm>.

²⁷⁰ Shri H.V. Kamath, Constituent Assembly of India Debate, Response to Nehru, 16/5/1949 in *ibid*.

²⁷¹ Shri Damodar Swarup Seth, Constituent Assembly of India Debate, Response to Nehru, 16/5/1949 in *ibid*.

decision and remained uneasy about formalising India's relationship with its incorrigible old colonial master and the imperialistic Commonwealth, particularly in light of the situation in Malaya:

I feel that British imperialism goes its own way and it will not be deflected no matter what we do to try to cajole it or to win it over. It has its own purpose. I am surprised that our Prime Minister, who is respected all over the world for his idealism sometimes forgets these simple things.²⁷²

Shibban Lal Saksena continued that 'the execution of Ganapathy and the refusal to commute the death sentence on Sambasivan in Malaya in spite of the representations of the Indian Government clearly show that India cannot derive any advantage from the membership of the Commonwealth and that Britain and other members of the Commonwealth cannot give up their Imperialist and racial policies.'²⁷³ Association with British imperialism was also subsumed by larger accusations of joining the Anglo-American bloc: 'By joining the Commonwealth', Shibban Lal Saksena responded, 'we are joining the third world war on the Anglo-American side against Russia. That is why I am so strongly opposed to this motion.'²⁷⁴

Further calls were made to reject, or amend, the motion based on several key themes: that it called into question India's sovereignty; that it implied obligations that fundamentally altered India's neutral stance in the world and that could propel India into the Western bloc and thus war; and that the Commonwealth was unrelentingly racist and imperialistic in outlook. Shibban Lal Saksena's motion for amendment, which sought to defer the decision until after the Constitution had been written and new elections based on a universal franchise had taken place, was defeated comfortably, but not without exposing Nehru's decision to a severe mauling.²⁷⁵ There was fierce opposition to the Commonwealth move, but its necessity was accepted by Congress high command, and the decision was pushed

²⁷² Shibban Lal Saksena, Response to Nehru, 16/5/1949 in *ibid*.

²⁷³ *Ibid*. The Malayan Emergency and the cases of both Ganapathy and Sambasivam, two Indians involved in Malaya, are examined in the next chapter.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁷⁵ See *ibid*. *The Times of India* reported that Saksena's motion amendment was defeated, 'Demand for Division Fails', 17/5/1949, p. 9; 'Constituent Assembly Ratifies Commonwealth Agreement', 17/5/1949, *The Times of India*, p. 1; and 'India ratifies London Declaration', 18/5/1949, *The Statesman*, p. 1.

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through using the personal prestige and influence of Nehru. Some two week's later the All-India Congress Committee met at Dehra Dun and approved by 'a very large majority' the Commonwealth decision.²⁷⁶

Conclusions

Nehru and the G.O.I. remained under pressure until April/May 1949 in their efforts to find an acceptable formula by which India could enter the Commonwealth, and it is was by no means clear at the end of 1948 that this would be possible. The continued efforts of both sides reflected the importance of the link. Once again, the G.O.I. engaged in deft political window-dressing in order to join the Commonwealth on its own terms, gain benefits from membership and present to the world that its foreign policy principles remained unaltered. What the G.O.I. failed to mention was the combination of factors that pressed India into pursuing membership. This work has avoided assigning reward to any one architect of the new Commonwealth as no one individual determined the course of events, or made Commonwealth membership possible. Rather it was a process that involved several countries in continual debate.

This chapter contributes to the existing historiography through its analysis of the sterling balances and demonstrates how the balances were involved in the process of India's position within both the Sterling Area and the Commonwealth. The balances were not mentioned, or lauded, as a benefit in order to avoid criticism. Britain used the sterling balance negotiations to demonstrate to India the benefits of association despite a parlous economic situation. India recognised and exploited the political side of the balances, but also recognised that their economic situation left no other choice but adherence and compounded their fear of cancellation.

The public rhetoric espoused by the G.O.I. was based on the benefits, not necessity, of the decision; this was independence added to and not taken away. There

²⁷⁶ Nehru to his Chief Ministers, 3/6/1949, in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, pp. 354-367 and also in Gopal, *SWJN, Volume II*, p. 280. The UKHC reported that the Resolution was passed by 227 votes to 6, OPDOM No. 21, for the Period 19/5/1949 to 26/5/1949, DO 133/91.

was quite strong opposition to India's continuing association with the UK, and much of the public rhetoric employed was designed to disarm criticisms of Indian membership. India's sovereignty was sacrosanct – public opinion would allow nothing that even remotely resembled continued domination or monarchical connection with the UK. The entire performance of arranging India's entry had to be done with all of the participants as equals.

India immediately set about actively using the Commonwealth as a forum to push for action against the root causes of Communism in Asia. As argued throughout the thesis, this was composed of two parts: raising living standards through development and national freedom through decolonisation, which for Nehru were essential components of the same solution. What is harder to detect is the extent to which Nehru exploited the menace of international Communism to secure both development funds for itself and Asia and for furthering its aim of the dissolution of European empires. Nehru certainly feared the advance of Communism and took steps to counter it, but his answer to the threat neatly pushed two of his key objectives of economic development and national freedom.

Indian membership of the Commonwealth softened to a certain extent Indian anti-colonial attacks on the UK, but the connection is deeper than it at first seems and was not a simple causal relationship. Membership did not mean instant quiet, and India failed to criticise British actions in Southeast Asia for pre-existing reasons of national interest, which in turn help to explain what she hoped to get from the Commonwealth. Membership of the Commonwealth did not automatically translate into a softening of India's position. Rather, any softening and membership of the Commonwealth should be seen as part of the same process of a moderation in Nehru's appreciation of India's position in light of the volatility of the world situation.

India did not join for basic economic needs alone, as these could on a basic level be served by remaining in the Sterling Area, but rather because the Commonwealth served other needs too: namely as a forum for discussion on international affairs, and by providing safety from international isolation. India's financial and economic problems dictated that she had a shared interest in the

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strength of sterling, and more widely the system of Commonwealth co-operation that supported and regulated the Sterling Area. Indian moves towards this stance were demonstrated by the Sterling Balance agreement of summer 1948, and their increasing willingness to cut their dollar deficit.²⁷⁷ Access to the goods exchanged for the commensurate writing down of India's sterling balances helped to ease the shortage of goods caused by war and partition, and in turn helped to dampen rampant post-war inflationary tendencies.²⁷⁸ Entry was thus determined by a combination of pressing concerns which precipitated an association with the Commonwealth. India joined both out of the necessity of its colonial legacy and out of a desire to further its own national interests, both economically and through influencing Commonwealth economic and international policies.

²⁷⁷ See 'The Financial Consequences of a Change in India's Constitutional Position', Memorandum by the Treasury for the Official Committee on Commonwealth Relations, GEN 276/2, 16/2/1949, CAB 130/45.

²⁷⁸ W.F. Rivers argues that shortages not only caused by the war but by the division of the country, 'The Position of Foreign Business in India Today', *Pacific Affairs* 28 (1955), p. 26.

5) Indian Foreign Policy, the Malayan Emergency and Regional Stability

As South East Asia Command attempted to stabilise the region from Burma to Singapore at the close of Pacific War, both the Dutch and French took steps to recover their colonial possessions in Southeast Asia. For these actions, the Dutch and French governments earned themselves a severe censuring from Nehru, both as leader of the Interim Government from September 1946 and as Prime Minister. India, therefore, emerged on the world stage in the months before independence in a mood of defiant anti-colonialism. Throughout 1947 and the first half of 1948, colonial tensions in South and Southeast Asia, aggravated by the increasing polarisation of the Cold War, exploded into a series of Communist-inspired uprisings and rebellions along the great crescent from Burma to Malaya and Singapore.¹ These uprisings posed myriad questions for India's nascent foreign policy, especially the Malayan Emergency.

The swift Japanese advance into Burma and the Indian border regions in the Second World War sharply reminded India that, as a part of the great arc from Calcutta to Indonesia through Singapore, Malaya represented a key strategic point for the defence of its North-Eastern borders.² With the decolonisation of India, Malaya became by far the most economically valuable and strategically important British colony East of Suez. Through its triangular trade relationship, Malaya sold its rubber and tin to the US in exchange for dollars, which contributed to the reserves of the Sterling Area dollar pool from which India drew its foreign exchange reserves. With dollars so scarce in the immediate post-war period, Britain was committed to doing all that it could to return to imperial control of Malaya in order to ensure the

¹ See Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper's *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (London, 2007), which can be read in conjunction with, Timothy Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya* (Cambridge, 1999) and also see A.J. Stockwell, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in South-East Asia', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV, The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 465-79. For an incisive and concise analysis of the Second World War in Asia see, Christopher Bayly and Timothy Harper, *Forgotten Armies: Britain's Asian Empire and the War with Japan* (London, 2005).

² See Tilman Remme, *Britain and Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1945-49* (London, 1995), p. 97.

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viability of the Sterling Area.³ Malaya, however, erupted into an anti-colonial uprising organised by the Chinese-dominated Malayan Communist Party (MCP), and by the summer of 1948 'Malaya slipped inexorably into armed conflict between the forces of the state and the supporters of the MCP.'⁴ Britain reacted swiftly to the threat and deployed over 40,000 troops to combat the MCP whilst simultaneously crafting a security state underpinned by emergency regulations of sweeping power.⁵

Britain initially feared that their actions in Malaya would earn them a scolding like the French and Dutch, but the G.O.I. was surprisingly taciturn in its reactions to the Emergency. Contrary to British fears, Nehru was reticent as it became increasingly clear to him that Malaya had to be held as it was part of a wider regional phenomenon, and took the opportunity to advise Britain on how to remedy the situation through improving the living and working standards of the average man. This advice was not confined to Malaya alone, but represented part of Nehru's solution to the advance of Communism in Asia: remove the grievances on which it fed.

The G.O.I. came to view the situation as a manifestation of the larger regional phenomenon of the advance of Communism made all the more real by the continuing victories of the Chinese Communist Party. India's reaction was further determined by its own legacies of colonialism in the form a large Indian population in Malaya and India's reliance on the Sterling Area. The nature of the threat influenced India's reaction as the spectre of Communism threatened not only Malaya but the immediate and future stability of a democratic Southeast Asia. The G.O.I.'s reaction to the Emergency was thus influenced by several interconnected factors, the combination of which demonstrates the complex interaction of material and ideological policy determinants in Indian foreign policy decision-making.

The economics of the Sterling Area and Indian development dictated that a

³Andrew J. Rotter, 'The Triangular Route to Vietnam: The United States, Great Britain and South East Asia 1945-50', *International History Review* 6 (1984), p. 55-57.

⁴Peter Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism: British Policy towards Southeast Asia, 1945-65: Global Conflict and Security since 1945* (London, 2009), p. 42.

⁵By 1950, the British has allocated 50,000 British Army and Gurkha troops to the fight the MCP, see Philip Deery, 'Malaya, 1948: Britain's Asian Cold War?' *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9 (2007), p. 31. For details of British troop deployments during the Emergency see, Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in Southeast Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941-1968* (Richmond, 2001).

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stable Malaya that continued to provide the lion's share of dollars to the shared pool was not only a priority, but a necessity for Indian economic recovery and development. Malaya, moreover, lay at a strategically vital junction of the Straits of Malacca, 'one of the world's greatest arteries of oceanic trade that separates the Indian Ocean from the South China Sea.'⁶ Malaya also flanked the vitally important harbour of Singapore, which was the centre of British power in Southeast Asia.

The overall stability of the region was threatened by the spread of Communism. Southeast Asia represented a key area of the world for India, and the spectre of expansionary Communism threatened the nascent links - economic, cultural and political - between India and the region. As outlined by Nehru for the Indian Delegation to the UN General Assembly in September 1948 'we [India] are most intimately connected with South East Asia and we should therefore develop these contacts as much as possible.'⁷

The continued advance of the Chinese Communist Party in China also had an impact on the G.O.I. appreciation of both the Malayan Emergency and its place within the larger machinations of Communism in Southeast Asia as Nehru's at times vehement anti-colonialism was tempered by his fear of a Southeast Asia dominated by Communism. Dissecting the origins of the Malayan Emergency is outside the scope of this thesis, but importantly at the time India viewed it as part of the general progress of Communism across Asia. Historiographical debate continues on the origins of the crisis, but what is clear is that within the context of other uprisings in Asia, and with the victories of the Communists Party in China, it was considered by India and Britain as all the more important to prevent Communist control of Malaya and the surrounding areas.⁸ As it looked increasingly likely that the Communists

⁶ Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, p. 8 and also see Michael Leifer, *International Straits of the World: Malacca, Singapore and Indonesia* (Alphen aan den Rijn, 1978).

⁷ 'Basic Principles: Guidelines for Upcoming United Nations General Assembly', 12/9/1948 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 7* (New Delhi, 1988), p. 609.

⁸ There are three articles that concisely discuss the development of the historiography of the Malayan Emergency, see Deery, 'Malaya, 1948: Britain's Asian Cold War?'; Karl Hack, "'Iron Claws on Malaya": The Historiography of the Malayan Emergency', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30 (1999), pp. 99-125 and 'The Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (2009), pp. 471-96. The 'Communist Plot' or orthodox line follows that at the Calcutta Conference in February 1948 in Calcutta, the Communist Party of Soviet Russia transmitted orders to the MCP, amongst others, to take up arms. For examples see Ian Morrison, 'The Communist Uprising in Malaya', *Far Eastern Survey* 17 (1948), pp. 281-28; Virginia Thompson and Richard Aldoff, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1950); Victor Purcell, *Malaya: Communist or* 161

would win, Nehru wrote that ‘as China is in a state of disintegration, there is little threat to its neighbours for some time to come, but what is likely to happen is that Communist Parties in other countries will be greatly encouraged.’⁹ Malaya, with over two million Chinese was an obvious example. India’s China policy was not, as argued by some, based on a naïve assumption that the Communist giant posed no threat, but that the best way to counter that threat was through engagement and inclusion in international and regional affairs.¹⁰ An expansionist Communist threat was not welcomed and the only immediate alternative to British control was Chinese

Free? (Stanford, 1954); M.R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India: A Short History* (New York, 1954); Harry Miller, *The Communist Menace in Malaya* (New York, 1955) and J.H. Brimmell, *Malayan Communist Party: A Short History* (Singapore, 1956); Frank Trager, *Marxism in Southeast Asia: A Study of Four Countries* (Stanford, 1965); Richard L. Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York, 1966) and more recently see, Robert Jackson, *The Malayan Emergency: The Commonwealth’s War 1948-1966* (London, 1991). This orthodox view was progressively challenged as early as 1958 by Ruth T. McVey, *The Calcutta Conference and the Southeast Asian Uprisings* (Ithaca, 1958) who emphasises that Malaya was already unstable before Calcutta and that Calcutta was only a part of a gradual dissemination of the change in the international communist line. Anthony Short continued to question the orthodoxy by questioning how far the MCP planned revolt and how far British repression drove events, see *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-60* (London, 1975). As Hack argues in a review of Deery’s ‘Malaya, 1948: Britain’s Asian Cold War?’, by the 1980s to 1990s authors such as Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960* (Singapore, 1989) and A.J. Stockwell, “‘A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow government in Malaya’? The Origins of the Malayan Emergency’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 21 (1993), pp. 66-88 favoured complex and multi-causal explanations based on British actions, MCP actions and international events, see H-Diplo Review Article, ‘Karl Hack on Philip Deery’, <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/Hack-Deery.pdf>, p. 3. For Harper, the impetus came from pressure on the MCP’s main support, rural Chinese as violence flared on the forest fringe where the state was trying to push them off of ecologically valuable or Malay-reserved lands. In Harper’s view both the MCP and the government were responding to pressures from below, see Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, pp. 94-148. Deery argues a similar line to Harper in that action in Malaya was a conjunction between international trends and domestic pressures, see ‘Malaya, 1948: Britain’s Asian Cold War?’, p. 48. Also see the recent special issue of the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* from October 2009: Geoff Wade, ‘The Beginnings of a “Cold War” in Southeast Asia: British and Australian Perceptions’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (2009), pp. 543-565; Karl Hack and Geoff Wade, ‘The Origins of the Southeast Asian Cold War’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (2009), pp. 441-448; Karl Hack, ‘The Origins of the Asian Cold War: Malaya 1948’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (2009), pp. 471-496 and crucially in terms of the directions issues by the Soviet Union at the Calcutta Conference see Larisa Efimova, ‘Did the Soviet Union Instruct Southeast Asian Communists to Revolt? New Russian Evidence on the Calcutta Youth Conference of February 1948’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 40 (2009), pp. 449-469.

⁹ G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949* (New Delhi, 1985), Letter 39, 17/1/1949, p. 261.

¹⁰ For an account that follows the line of Nehru’s failure to view China as a threat based on the subsequent war between the two nations see the recent article by Sameer Suryakant Patil, ‘India’s China Policy in the 1950s: Threat Perceptions and Balances’, *South Asian Survey* 14 (2007), pp. 283-301. Neville Maxwell’s *India’s China War* (London, 1972) is a must read account that debunks that myth that India was the victim of unprovoked Chinese aggression. Hsiao-Ting Lin, Boundary, Sovereignty, and Imagination: Reconsidering the Frontier Disputes between British India and Republican China, 1914-47’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32 (2004), pp. 25-47. Also see chapters on Colombo and on Gurkhas for more on India’s reaction to Communist victory in China.

domination of Malaya.

In addition, Malaya was home to approximately 500,000 Indians, few of whom had Malayan citizenship.¹¹ It is partly through examining the experiences of two of these men, Ganapathy and Sambasivam, and the furore they caused in India, that this chapter sheds light of India's foreign policy. These two men exposed the tensions in India's policies in Southeast Asia and the extent to which the G.O.I listened to public opinion. A direct result of late nineteenth-century imperialism, these Indians contributed a large proportion of day/wage labourers on rubber plantations.¹² Overseas Indians were a constant reminder of India's colonial past and large numbers of Indians overseas was at odds with Nehru's efforts to create an Indian state bounded by the territory India inherited from the Raj. This issue was also one that a large number of Indians in India could immediately identify with and the treatment of Indians abroad was one of the clearest manifestations of the ills of imperialism. The treatment of Indians in Malaya as a part of the Emergency further heightened attention to the conditions of Indians abroad. The continuance of egregious working conditions and the treatment of Indians in British colonial repressions was equated by many in both the press and the opposition as a betrayal of the independence struggle.¹³ The communal dimension of Malaya provides an additional reason why Nehru was willing to afford the British time in Malaya. Nehru's own domestic experience, as he attempted to forge an Indian national identity, influenced his appreciation of Malaya and the need to forge a Malay nationality from the disparate identities of the Malays, Chinese and Indians. As the Monthly Foreign Affairs Departmental Meeting minutes noted 'it does not appear as if a solution of the Malayan problem would be obtained by accelerating the pace of

¹¹ The Secretary of State for the Colonies stated the total population as approximately 5,800,000, with 2,200,000 as Malays, 2,600,000 as Chinese and 600,000 as Indians, figures in CP (48) 171, 1/7/1948, in CAB 129/28. The 1931 census gave the following figures, total population: 5,849,000, comprised of 44.4% Malays (2,596,956), 39.2% Chinese (2,292,808), 14.3% Indians (836,407) and 2.1% (122,829) others, cited in A.J. Stockwell, 'British Imperial Policy and Decolonisation in Malaya, 1942-52', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 13 (1984), pp. 68-87. For very similar figures see Ton That Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960: A Study of India's Foreign Policy towards the South East Asian Countries in the Period 1947-1960* (Geneva, 1963), p. 227. G.O.I. put the number of Indians in Malaya at 691,431 out of a total of 5,888,587 in mid-1954, Monthly Report for period from 16/7/1954-15/8/1954, MR-8/55, File No. 39-R&I/55, NAI.

¹² Tin mines were largely a Chinese concern.

¹³ Opposition in this case does not refer to any official Parliamentary opposition as the Constituent Assembly served as a parliament until 1951 and was overwhelmingly composed of Congress members.

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self-government as the racial conflicts involved are very far-reaching in their character.¹⁴

The issue of India's anti-colonial credentials was further complicated by the ambiguity of the struggle in Malaya: the MCP was a Communist party fighting for national freedom from a colonial occupier. In a wider regional framework, India had two intimately linked aims in Southeast Asia, the end of European colonialism and preventing the spread of Communism, both of which aimed to provide stability in the region. The end of European colonialism, through the granting of independence to national states, held the answer to preventing the spread of Communism as far as J.A. Thivy, the Indian Representative in Malaya, was concerned.¹⁵ Nehru shared this broad appreciation and argued that nationalism, genuine nationalism, was the answer to the Communist menace.¹⁶

Malaya fell somewhere between the lines of this argument: a colonial territory under Communist assault, but the only power capable of maintaining order and establishing a national state was a colonial power. For Nehru the choice was clear: allow Britain to restore law and order in Malaya whilst simultaneously progressing the territory towards self-government, in part through economic development. This approach remained the preferred Indian position until at least 1956 when in his annual report on the UK the Indian High Commissioner reported positively that: 'In Malaya British forces are achieving gratifying success in ridding the jungles of the terrorist bands. But simultaneously, significant steps were also taken towards responsible self-government.'¹⁷ Nehru's approach of helping the British stabilise Malaya and then decolonising chimed well with Britain's own developing policy for the region, based in part on India's input, which involved a gradual transfer of power to responsible, independent successor states who would then maintain collaboration with the West.¹⁸

¹⁴ Resume of the Third Monthly Foreign Affairs Departmental Meeting, 26/4/1951, File No. 21-9/51-UK, NAI.

¹⁵ J.A. Thivy to S. Dutt (MoEA), 20/4/1949, in File No. 103-C.J.K/49, NAI.

¹⁶ For an example see the letter from Nehru to Louis D Gilbert, Editor of Corps Diplomatique (Paris), 29/9/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, p. 618.

¹⁷ Annual Political Report from High Commissioner of India, London, D1515-UK/56, 4/4/1956, File No. 14-14/56-UK, NAI.

¹⁸ Bevin explained it thus 'Since the end of the war, the policy of His Majesty's Government in South

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In order to satisfy a number of competing claims on its foreign policy, the G.O.I. followed a policy of 'keeping quiet' both to avoid any embarrassment to itself from a doubting public and to Britain in its efforts to quell the MCP and secure stability in Southeast Asia more widely. With its policy decided, India kept quiet and avoided drawing attention to an ambiguous situation. However, with the arrest of two men of Indian origin, Ganapathy and Sambasivam, in Malaya in 1948/1949, an incredulous Constituent Assembly, press, political opponents and public forced the issue of Malaya into the political limelight as the attention of India was also focussed on Nehru's negotiation of Indian membership into the Commonwealth. Through the cases of these two men it is possible to further examine the exercise of Indian foreign policy.

There is, however, little in the current historiography of Indian foreign policy on the Malayan Emergency; many of the accounts that do examine the Emergency do so in passing and as part of a general sweep of the countries where the influence of Communism was making itself felt. For example, the Indian Council of World Affairs 1950's series on India's neighbours fails to devote any time to the Emergency.¹⁹ The case of Malaya, however, reveals many intricacies in the Indian world view that make for a more nuanced and more finely grained picture of Indian foreign policy in the early post-independence years. There are two broad strands of thought within the existing literature on India's reaction to Malaya: one asserts that Nehru did not view the MCP as a legitimate nationalist party, for example works by S.N. Misra and D.R. SarDesai.²⁰ The second strand proposes that criticism was restrained due to the fact that Britain was the colonial power and India a Commonwealth member. Brecher argues that Indian membership of the Commonwealth resulted in more restrained criticism of British colonial policies and

and South-East Asia has been to encourage the legitimate aspirations of the that area for independence...That the policy has been the right one there can be no doubt, and our support of nationalism in South and South-East Asia provides the best possible counter to Communist subversion and penetration', 'Review of the International Situation in Asia in the Light of the Korean Conflict', CP (50) 200, 30/8/1950, CAB 129/41.

¹⁹ Nedyam Raghavan, *India and Malaya: A Study* (Bombay, 1954). Raghavan was not only former President of the Central Indian Association in Malaya, but the book was commissioned by the Indian Council of World Affairs and was part of the *India and Her Neighbours* series.

²⁰ S.N Misra, *India: The Cold War Years* (New Delhi, 1994), p. 171 and D.R. SarDesai, 'India and South-East Asia', in B.R Nanda (ed.), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Nehru Years* (New Delhi and London, 1990), p. 83. Also see Anita Inder Singh who writes that despite its anti-colonialism, India described the Malaysians as terrorists and bandits, Anita Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56* (London, 1993), p. 49.

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Banerji suggests that it was the humane treatment of her colonies and India's membership of the Commonwealth that saved Britain from censure.²¹ This chapter demonstrates that both these strands help explain Indian policy and that, as argued in the previous chapter, Commonwealth membership and India's Malaya policy were both part of a realisation of the danger of militant Communism rather than Nehru's restraint resulting from India's Commonwealth membership.

Two works of note that deserve attention are those of Ton That Thien and Hugh Tinker. Thien's 1963 chapter on Malaya is a most perceptive account; however, there was little use of primary source materials and the work suffers for this absence.²² Moreover, the major weakness of Thien's work is that he argues that Nehru paid little heed to public opinion, which fails to acknowledge the impact that a broad definition of public opinion did have on the G.O.I.²³ Tinker's work is more concerned with the changing fate of those Indians abroad rather than an exposition of Indian foreign relations, but nevertheless offers one of the few sustained pieces of research into Indians in Malaya.²⁴ Tinker's research, however, does not take into account the context of the Cold War, or India's foreign policy. This research redresses the problems with the existing literature which fails to pay adequate attention to the Emergency in its own right, and in exploring the implications for both India's actions in Southeast Asia more widely and the Indo-British relationship.

This chapter employs primary source materials from both the G.O.I., the first time that such sources have been used, and from various governmental departments in the UK to examine the initial Indian reactions to the Malayan Emergency; how the G.O.I. perceived the Malayan Emergency in terms of colonialism and Communist expansion; how India's interests came under threat; and how the government dealt with Indians involved in the Emergency in response to public outcries. This work

²¹ A.K. Banerji, *India and Britain, 1947-68: The Evolution of Post-Colonial Relations* (Calcutta, 1977), p. 261; Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (London, 1959), p. 581 and Misra, *India: The Cold War Years* (New Delhi, 1994), p. 221. In the wake of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, M.S. Rajan analysed the varying calls for India to leave the Commonwealth during which he noted that critics 'believe that India has been "soft" on British colonial policies and actions in the past- in Malaya, Kenya, British Guiana and Cyprus', 'India and the Commonwealth', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 12 (1966), p. 230.

²² Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960*.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

²⁴ Hugh Tinker, *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950* (London, 1976).

will also further understanding of the place of Malaya within the international scene of Southeast Asia and the Cold War.

First of all, the chapter provides some context on the connections between India and Malaya, both because they are vitally important and because they have been so rarely documented elsewhere. The analysis will then move to examine the initial reactions of the G.O.I. and how these fit into the rhetoric of India's foreign policy. The chapter will continue to examine the cases of two prominent Indians in Malaya and their treatment under the Emergency Regulations and assess the relationship between G.O.I. actions and Indian public opinion.

India's Economic Interests in Malaya: The Sterling Balances

Despite the relative modesty of the size of the Indian population and the fact that the majority of Indians in Malaya undertook unskilled plantation labour, India's economic interests in Malaya were considerable and were a direct legacy of British imperialism. Moreover, with the coming of independence, India sought to strengthen both political and economic ties with Southeast Asia.²⁵ The chettiers (chettiyars) of southern India that had made their living in Malaya had substantial holdings; it was estimated that Indians owned some 150,000 acres of rubber plantations valued at some 450,000 Straits dollars; paddy fields valued at some 5,000,000 dollars; land worth some 30,000,000 dollars in addition to shares and securities worth some 200lakhs. All in all the sum invested by this one section of the population was estimated at 15.5 crores of rupees.²⁶ As Attlee told the Cabinet when discussing India's interests in the Commonwealth, 'Indians...have substantial interests in

²⁵ Remme, *Britain and Regional Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 1945-49*, p. 97.

²⁶ Telegram No. 1/30 from Singapore to Delhi, 22/2/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI. Also see the following table ownership of Rubber Estates in Malaya, 1931-1957, from Nicholas J. White, *Business, Government and the End of Empire: Malaya, 1942-1957* (Oxford, 1996), p. 299.

Year	% of Total Rubber Estates			% of Total Estate Acreage		
	European	Chinese	Indians and others	European	Chinese	Indians and others
1931	42.4	42.4	15.2	75.9	16.9	7.2
1947	39.2	41.1	19.7	74.5	17.1	8.4
1953	28.7	50.0	21.3	69.6	22.8	7.6
1957	24.1	52.9	23.0	65.7	24.5	9.8

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British colonial territories...There are large Indian communities in...Malaya' in addition 'large trading interests are also carried on by Indian citizens who are not domiciled there.'²⁷ Remittances from Malaya also benefitted India's economy to the tune of 10 million rupees annually (approximately \$2.3 million).²⁸ India's trade with Malaya was on the increase, reaching 15,804,113 Straits dollars in January 1950 whilst Indian imports stood at only 5,293,795 straits dollars, which made Malaya an important market for an expanding Indian export trade. By early 1950, India was the largest supplier of textile goods to Malaya and the third largest supplier of goods of all types.²⁹

The Southeast Asian region as a whole was an integral and dynamic part of the pre-war global trading network, and it was imperative that this position was restored with the cessation of hostilities in 1945. The area produced a vast array of commodities for international markets, and Singapore facilitated a huge entrepot trade. Food, in the form of rice, was the foremost essential commodity that the area produced and exported, excluding Malaya which was a net importer. Without this supply, the entire region of South and Southeast Asia faced food shortages and eventually famine, which was a real prospect immediately following the cessation of the war.³⁰ A bewildering array of essential commodities for export also came from the region: copra, coconut oil, sugar, teakwood, coffee, quinine, oil, tin, iron ore and bauxite.³¹ The British Foreign Office added jute, wolfram, chrome and, of vital importance, 'virtually all of the tea in the world comes from Asia.'³² The increasing oil production in Borneo and Sarawak, moreover, promised to save precious dollars

²⁷ Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

²⁸ See Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960*, p. 227 and B.N. Ganguli, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century* (Bombay, 1956), pp. 73-74.

²⁹ Report 16/2/1950-15/3/1950, Ref. No. 1-3/50-PS, 22/3/1950, File No. 55-R&I/50, NAI. Also see the work by Ganguli, which is remains one of few texts to examine India's economic relations with the Far East throughout the period under question, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century* (Bombay, 1956).

³⁰ For details of the food crisis in the region see, Nicholas Tarling, "'Some Rather Nebulous Capacity': Lord Killearn's Appointment in Southeast Asia", *Modern Asian Studies* 20 (1986), pp. 559-600.

³¹ Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960*, p. 22.

³² PUSC Paper (32) Final, 28/7/1949, F17397/G, in FO 371/76030. This Foreign Office paper from the Permanent Under Secretary's Committee formed the foundation of British policies in South and Southeast Asia and can be found in 'The United Kingdom in Southeast Asia and the Far East', Memorandum by Ernest Bevin, CP (49) 207, 18/10/1949, CAB 129/37.

for the Sterling Area.³³ Malaya's real value, however, was its position within the Sterling Area.

The key to both Indian and British economic interests in Southeast Asia was Malaya's position as a net dollar earner in the Sterling Area from its exports of natural rubber and tin. These two products were strategically valuable, but their true importance comes from their place within the triangular trade pattern that supported the dollar earnings of the Sterling Area. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, India remained a key member of the Sterling Area after independence, partly to retain access to the sterling balances, and reaffirmed this position by its membership of the Commonwealth.

As part of the pre-war triangular trade, Malaya took British manufactured goods and services, on which it ran a considerable balance of payments deficit. Malaya, however, sold its rubber and tin production to the US, and, since its import needs had been satisfied by Britain, took her trade surplus payment in dollars.³⁴ These dollars then serviced the Malayan deficit with Britain and ultimately contributed to the balancing of the overall Sterling Area dollar deficit.³⁵ Britain estimated that in 1948 the US imported 371.1 million tons of rubber, comprising some 52% of their consumption.³⁶ The US bought more from Malaya than from any other country apart from Canada, but Malaya figured 39th as a destination for American exports.³⁷ In 1928 this arrangement manifested itself in the following figures: US imports from Malaya reached \$208 million, US exports to Malaya represented a paltry \$16 million, which resulted in a surplus of some \$192 million.³⁸

With the acute post-war dollar shortage, the importance of a healthy triangular trade was second to none in the eyes of the British Government, which

³³ PUSC Paper (32) Final, 28/7/1949, F17397/G, in FO 371/76030.

³⁴ Ganguli, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century*, p. 8.

³⁵ For more details of this trade relationship and its implications for American involvement in Southeast Asia see, Andrew J. Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London, 1989), p. 55 and 'The Triangular Route to Vietnam: The United States, Great Britain and South East Asia 1945-50'.

³⁶ See F5704, Paper prepared by the Economic Intelligence Department, FO 371/76049, undated.

³⁷ Rotter, *The Path to Vietnam* (London, 1989), p. 56.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56. The US itself estimated that its average pre-war trade with Malaya composed of \$135 million of imports against only \$4.6 million of exports, see US Trade with the Far East, 1934-'36 average, Note to Mr Penfield, State Department, 1/5/1947, 711.90/5-147, RG 59, NARA.

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lavished millions of pounds on restarting production after war-time neglect by the Japanese. As the Colonial Secretary, Creech Jones, argued, Malaya was 'by far the most important source of dollars in the Colonial Empire and it would gravely worsen the whole dollar balance of the sterling area if there were serious interference with Malayan exports.'³⁹ The Ministry of External Affairs (MoEA) and Nehru were alive to the economic importance of Malaya when the monthly Foreign Affairs Departmental Meeting minuted that 'The dollar earning capacity of Malaya has not been reduced on account of the disturbances ... Hence Malaya remains an important dollar earner for the UK and it is not likely that the British Government will easily give up its position both on strategic and prestige grounds as well as for economic reasons.'⁴⁰

India, in most of the years under discussion, ran a deficit on its balance of payments, and as a member of the Sterling Area drew on the shared dollar pool and gold reserves to settle her accounts. As Ganguli notes the tin and rubber trade contributed to the 'easing of the dollar crisis and the stability of the sterling area.'⁴¹ He fails, however, to make the connection with India's sterling balances, and in doing so fails to fully appreciate that the maintenance of the Sterling Area reserves and thus the strength of sterling by Malaya, and other members of the colonial empire, was a key Indian interest. India's balance of payments difficulties were, in essence, covered by the earnings of the colonial empire. Furthermore, as India held some £1100 millions of sterling balances, blocked in London, the entire foreign exchange reserve of the country was at stake.

The sterling balances and India's membership of the Sterling Area tied India to Britain in a symbiotic relationship, in which the interests of one fundamentally affected the interests of the other.⁴² This symbiosis had a fundamental impact on

³⁹ Arthur Creech Jones, 'The Situation in Malaya', CP (48) 171, 1/7/1948, CAB 129/28.

⁴⁰ Resume of Main Points Made at the Third Monthly Foreign Affairs Departmental Meeting, 6/4/1951, in File No. 21-9/51-UK, NAI.

⁴¹ Ganguli, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century*, p. 75 Thien addresses this connection, but only in a passing reference, Thien, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960*, p. 224.

⁴² A memorandum submitted to the Cabinet for consideration regarding Indian entry into the Commonwealth in March 1949 noted that India, 'has, in fact, a major interest in maintaining the value of sterling and in preserving her access to sterling markets since it is in the form of goods purchased for sterling that she will ultimately spend her sterling balances.' Annex "C", 'India's Future Relations with the Commonwealth, Implications for Commonwealth Countries', Memorandum by the Prime
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India's reaction to the Emergency, to membership of the Commonwealth, and to the Colombo Plan of 1950. India, therefore, had a vested interest in the resumption of Malayan production and trade. The Emergency from June 1948 threatened the health of the sterling area with its first objective of 'the maximum industrial unrest and disruption of economic life.'⁴³ One further imperial legacy affected the G.O.I.'s reaction to the Emergency, that of Malaya's Indian population.

Migration during the Raj left Malaya home to a large Indian population representing approximately 10 per cent of the total population of Malaya. The Indian labour influx began in earnest under British rule in the last half of the nineteenth century with the development of Malaya's plantation industries, and as Nedyam Raghavan argues 'English planters opened up the country with Indian labour.'⁴⁴ Although wages were on average higher than those in India, working conditions caused concern in the G.O.I.⁴⁵ Indians, however, not only cleared the land, but also contributed to the development of the infrastructure that supported Malaya's economic growth.

With the growth of the Indian community came the need for an official Representative for the Indian community. One of the first tasks facing Nehru's government in its exercise of foreign relations was the problem of presence and personnel in foreign territories.⁴⁶ In certain cases the G.O.I. had been allowed to

Minister, CP (49) 58, 14/3/1949, CAB 129/33.

⁴³ Malcolm MacDonald, Commissioner General Southeast Asia, CP (48) 171, 1/7/1948, CAB 129/28.

⁴⁴ Raghavan, *India and Malaya: A Study*, p. 61. Raghavan is echoed by Satyanarayana who notes that the 'growth and distribution of the South Indian population in Malaya were closely related to the expansion of sugar, rubber, and oil palm plantations', see Adapa Satyanarayana, "'Birds of Passage" Migration of South Indian Labourers to Southeast Asia', *Critical Asian Studies* 34 (2002), p. 93. After 1870 the number of people emigrating from Southern India greatly increased, especially after 1883 when the British administration turned to the peasantry of South India to meet the needs of the plantations and to balance the rise in the Chinese population. The 'Rubber Rush' at the turn of the twentieth century increased the demand for unskilled, wage labourers and attracted capitalists seeking profits. For other aspects see, R. Shlomowitz and L. Brennan, 'Mortality and Indian Labour in Malaya, 1877-1933', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 29 (1992), pp. 57-75; Amarjit Kaur, 'Tappers and Weeders: South Indian Plantation Workers in Peninsular Malaysia, 1880-1970', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 21 (1998), pp. 73-102 and the thesis by Marie-Carine Lall, 'India's Relationship with Non-Resident Indians, 1947-1996: A Missed Opportunity?', PhD thesis, LSE, 1999. Ganguli also provides some contextualisation in, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century*, pp. 70-71. Also see Hua Wu Yin, *Class and Communalism in Malaysia: Politics in a Dependent Capitalist State* (London, 1983).

⁴⁵ Working conditions continued to be an issue in the post-war period and represented one of the key means by which Nehru argued the Communists were able to exploit colonial territories.

⁴⁶ See Chapter One. For the early period of readjustment see E. Judith Adams, 'Commonwealth Collaboration in Foreign Affairs, 1939-1947: The British Perspective', PhD thesis, University of 171

station representatives in colonies or nations with large Indian populations.⁴⁷ Malaya was one such example, where under Section 7 of the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 an Indian Agent was appointed whose main duty was to monitor the working conditions of Indian labour.

With the Japanese invasion of Malaya in 1941 the position lapsed until late 1945 when S.K. Chettur (ICS) was appointed to the post.⁴⁸ Despite the upgrade to Representative, the job description remained 'to establish close liaison with Malayan Government in all matters affecting Indian interests and Indians of all classes, to work for promotion of better and more harmonious relations between the two countries and to constitute normal channel of communications between the Government of India and the Governments in Malaya.'⁴⁹ Chettur was not long for the post, however, and Nehru appointed John Aloysius Thivy as India's new Representative.⁵⁰ Thivy had made his living as a lawyer in the interwar years, having trained in London and had been a member of the Indian Independence League.⁵¹ During the war years, Thivy played a key role in the INA and sat as a member of Netaji's Azad Hind Government. In the immediate post-war he attended the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 as a member of the Malaya delegation, having been the Founding President of the Malayan Indian Congress from 1946-47.⁵² Thivy was, therefore, viewed as a friend of the Indian population in Malaya and an opponent of colonialism, and he was regarded without too much scepticism by the British authorities in Malaya.⁵³ As a result of the large Indian population at the coming of Indian independence there was already a direct representative of India in place in Malaya.

Leeds, 1981.

⁴⁷ Ceylon, East Africa and Mauritius for example.

⁴⁸ Accompanying the new incumbent was a re-styling and promotion from Agent to Representative, as the government explained, 'with the many new problems arising out of conditions created by the war and in view of the importance which India's relations with Malaya have acquired we now propose to upgrade post to that of "Representative", see G.O.I. to the Secretary of State for India, Telegram No. 9705, 22/11/1945, DO 35/3090.

⁴⁹ G.O.I. to the Secretary of State for India, Telegram No. 9705, 22/11/1945, DO 35/3090.

⁵⁰ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal*, p. 308.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 292. As with most of the diplomats that India relied upon in the early years of independence, there is little written on Thivy.

⁵² For Thivy's performance at the ARC and his suggestion for an 'Area of Peace', denying airspace and port facilities to Europeans involved in colonial wars see, G.H Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London, 1966), p. 57.

⁵³ Malcolm MacDonald spoke well of Thivy according to Nye, see telegram to the CRO from the UKHC Delhi, No. 2092, 1/7/1949, DO 142/404.

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Nehru's independence day message to Indian communities overseas was at variance with the later policy on Indians abroad as manifested in Malaya. Nehru told them that:

On this day of liberation the motherland sends her affectionate greetings to her children abroad. She calls them to her service and to the service of freedom wherever they might be. Every Indian abroad is a representative of India and must ever remember that he has the honour of his country in his keeping.⁵⁴

Nehru continued that 'None of India's children, wherever they be, may submit to anything which is against national self-respect or against the cause of freedom. They must preserve their own freedom at all costs and respect the freedom of others.'⁵⁵ Nehru later provided a more nuanced response to questions in the Constituent Assembly demanding greater action on behalf of Indians overseas. He argued that 'This House gets mixed up. It wants to treat them as Indians and, with the same breath, it wants complete franchise for them in the countries where they are living. Of course, the two things do not go together.'⁵⁶ The G.O.I. attempted to use Malaya as a means with which to educate Indians, both in India and abroad, about the lengths that they could and were willing to go to in defence of overseas Indians.

Nehru's potential influence on Indians abroad was a cause of concern for the British. As the British Military Administration (BMA) began the task of rebuilding Malaya, Nehru as the leader-in-waiting of the Congress Party, and as its leading authority on international relations, travelled to Singapore and Malaya in March 1946 to provide succour for the demoralised Indian community on one of his first forays in a semi-official position⁵⁷ What his visit reveals is the BMA's apprehension over the possible political influence of Nehru, the INC and thus the soon to be independent G.O.I., on Malayan politics.⁵⁸ This apprehension continued to haunt the

⁵⁴ 'Nehru's Message to Indians Overseas', 15/8/1947, *The Statesman*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ 15/4/1948, cited in A. Appadorai, 'India's Foreign Policy', *International Affairs* 25 (1949), p. 43.

⁵⁷ Tinker, *Separate and Unequal* also WO 203/6259. Congress also sent a medical mission, Harper, *The End of Empire and the Making of Malaya*, p. 68.

⁵⁸ See WO 203/6259. The BMA initially sought to refuse Nehru permission for his visit as the Governor of Burma had done, but permission was granted after an intervention by Mountbatten that ordered all restrictions on Nehru's movements be lifted, see Note for COS, Ref. 171/CA 'Proposed Visit of Nehru to Malaya' 22/1/1946 and extracts from Minutes of Supreme Allied Commander's 321st Meeting, 22/2/1946. An apprehensive BMA issued instructions to keep Indian troops busy at the time of public meetings addressed by Nehru so that they would not be present in any great numbers.

British as Malaya slipped into rebellion.

The Declaration of the Emergency

From before the beginning of the Emergency in June 1948, the opinions of the G.O.I. and the potential political influence that it could command in Asia was a key factor in British attempts to deal with its colonial possession. In the face of increasing MCP disturbances throughout the early months of 1948, which the Government in Malaya considered as part of a general Communist drive into Southeast Asia, the authorities attempted to devise mechanisms to effectively deal with those troublemakers outside the existing control orders already in place.⁵⁹ These attempts centred on extending the Banishment Ordinance to use on the entire population, which had previously been vetoed for fear of political repercussions in India.⁶⁰ The British Colonial Office argued that on account of their existing immunity, British Indians had increasingly become prominent as leaders of disturbances and the accompanied threats of violence.⁶¹ After initial reluctance, the Colonial Secretary authorised the use of banishment powers on British subjects and those who did not belong in Malaya.⁶² With the decision to extend the ordinance made, it was argued that it would be wise to inform the G.O.I. of the intention to issue banishment powers in Malaya, both out of the need to inform the Indians of

The rationale behind this move was determined by the need to maintain the morale and loyalty of significant numbers of Indian Army troops (mainly from the famous 7th Indian Division) remaining in Malaya as the backbone of BMA forces, see telegram from General Messervy (Malaya Command) to General Browning (SEAC), No. O.2002, 15/3/1946. The BMA need not have worried about Nehru stirring up the troops as Nehru realised that these same troops would form the army of independent India and therefore wanted to maintain their loyalty the G.O.I., in short there is little to be gained from causing upheaval in an army that is about to become one of the key resources of Nehru's Government. This attitude can be seen from Nehru's reactions to the RIAF and Royal Indian Navy Mutinies in 1946. The BMA and the G.O.I. both expressed particular concern about any public processions involving ex-INA members on the basis of communal harmony as both the Chinese and Malays resented the INA's involvement with the Japanese, see Signal from Browning to Lane, 12/4/1946, No. TOO:121211Z. An ex-INA Guard of Honour to meet Nehru was suggested by the local Indian community, but the idea was shot down both by the BMA, the G.O.I. and Nehru himself, see Signal from Lane to Browning, 14/3/1946, Rear 195. Nehru informed the Indian organising committee that he wished to avoid processions as they wasted time and prevented him from meeting individuals, he also agreed not to lay a wreath at the INA memorial on Mountbatten's request, see Extract from 288th Staff Meeting 16/3/1946. Also see S. Gopal, who paints Nehru as far less willing to acquiesce to British conditions, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Volume One, 1889-1947* (London, 1975), pp. 308-311.

⁵⁹ See Stockwell, "A widespread and long-concocted plot to overthrow government in Malaya"? The Origins of the Malayan Emergency'.

⁶⁰ Telegram to UKHC, Pol.8654/48, No. 1872, 21/6/1948, DO 142/404.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Letter from J.B. Williams to J.P. Gibson, 15/6/1948, DO 142/404.

any possible returnees to their shores, but also because:

It is of course recognised that to make a communication to the Government of India at this stage might well produce the customary reaction of protests against our treatment of Indians, and that this might be an embarrassment before use is made of the banishment powers; on the other hand there will presumably be protests sooner or later if the powers are used and it might well be of use to anticipate them with a reasoned explanation of our policy.⁶³

The Colonial Secretary's initial hesitation was based on the likelihood of Indian contestations, but as J.B Williams of the CO recorded, 'we feel that in the form in which the use of the law has been authorised...no possible grounds have been given for objection by the Government of India.'⁶⁴ The greatest effort was made by the British authorities to ensure that everything was done to reduce the G.O.I.'s opposition to these repressive measures. The High Commissioner in Delhi was informed of the decision and instructed to pass the decision on to the Indian authorities:

It is expected that a number of Indians will be among those to be deported. Should the Government of India raise the matter with you you will be able to emphasise that the Ordinance is not directed against Indians as such, that it does not apply to Indians who are Federal Citizens, and that deported Indians will almost certainly be Communists or criminal types who are tools of Communism.⁶⁵

The British further argued that the 'case for vigorous action against Communist disturbances should be appreciated by the Government of India...in view of action taken by them against Communists.'⁶⁶ The violent and disruptive methods of Communists in India had so shocked Nehru that he considered 'the Communists, with all their idealistic element that is no doubt part of Communism, have become bitter enemies of society and order in India and have practically become terrorists.'⁶⁷ In response Nehru took firm actions against this threat to Indian

⁶³ Letter from J.P. Gibson to J.B. Williams (Colonial Office), Pol.8654/48, 28/6/1948, DO 142/404.

⁶⁴ Letter from Williams to Gibson, 15/6/1948, DO 142/404.

⁶⁵ Telegram to UKHC Delhi, Pol.8654/48, No.1872, 21/6/1948, DO 142/404.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 2/2/1950, in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 2, 1950-1952*, p. 12. Nehru also commented that, 'We talk of the Communists in India and Burma, but it must be remembered that we are hardly dealing with the economic doctrine of Communism. We are dealing with active revolts, and what is more, rather brutal and bloody revolts, where individual killing is indulged in.' Nehru to Chief Ministers, dated 9/3/1949, in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1 1947-1949*, 175

stability and the British, therefore, hoped that this stance on his domestic Communists would soften Nehru's opposition to such repressive measures in a British colony with a large Indian population.⁶⁸ British fear of opposition, however, manifested itself in other ways as 'Counter measures in Malaya, though accepted understandingly in official quarters, gave the Press an opportunity for another tilt at British Imperialism.'⁶⁹ In the process of extending the framework of the repressive measures to quell the Communist rebellion, the British had already conceded the importance of the views and opinions of the G.O.I. in policy production in Southeast Asia. So let us turn to examine the initial reactions of Nehru to the declaration of the Emergency in June 1948.

Indian Reactions to the Emergency

Integral to any examination of India's reactions to Malaya are Nehru's developing thoughts on the relationship between colonialism and Communism in Southeast Asia. As he argued, 'if colonialism continues anywhere in South-East Asia, the natural result will be a growth of Communism.'⁷⁰ The insidious economic effects of colonialism such as those in Malaya, Nehru argued to the British, provided the grievances that the appeal of Communism exploited. Nehru, moreover, was well

p. 304.

⁶⁸ J.E Williams, 'The Colombo Conference and the Communist Insurgency in South and South-East Asia', *International Relations* 4 (1972), p. 94. The comprehensive repression of Communists in India exposes that the independent G.O.I. exploited the institutional legacy of repressive colonialism in India. Moreover, this repressive facet of the Indian state did not go unnoticed by Krishna Menon. When on a mission to 'see and learn as much as it was possible of the principles and methods of the British Secret Service' at the invitation of the British largely on the issue of combatting Communists, T.G Sanjevi (Indian Police, Director of Central Intelligence Bureau), was attacked by Krishna Menon for persecuting Communists in India. Menon accused the Ministry of Home Affairs, through Sanjevi of 'barbarous and inhuman' actions against the Communists and that 'the Government of India was now acting exactly as the British Government of India had acted against Congress.' See the letter from Patel to Nehru, 6/1/1949, enclosing Sanjevi's reports of his January 1949 mission to London in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973), pp. 25-29. The G.O.I. also took the anti-guerrilla lessons developed and honed in Malaya and applied them in the domestic context of dealing with the Naga rebels in Assam. Employing the principles of the Brigg's Plan, B.N. Mullik noted, 'Following the plans adopted in Malaya to cut off the rebels from the civilian population, it was planned to group the village.s. In Mullik's opinion this grouping not only solved the Naga problem, but had also 'killed the Communists in Malaya.' Mullik was made Deputy Director in the Intelligence Bureau and was placed in charge of Internal Intelligence, in B.N. Mullik, *My Years with Nehru, 1948-1964* (Bombay, 1972), pp. 313&325.

⁶⁹ Monthly Appreciation No. 6, June 1948, from the British High Commission Delhi to Noel-Baker, DO 133/70.

⁷⁰ Letter dated 16/11/1948 in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 220.

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aware of the complexities, interconnectedness and confusion of the developing situation when he wrote that 'the Communist movements and revolts in South East Asia are so tied up with the movements for independence that it is difficult to separate them.'⁷¹ This relationship between colonialism and Communism in Asia informed the G.O.I.'s understandings of the roots of the Malayan Emergency. One of Nehru's first communications with Krishna Menon in London after the Emergency was declared revealed his desire to use the situation to push for an improvement in the conditions of Indians in Malaya.⁷² Rather than focussing on the international ramifications, Nehru concentrated on the reasons why Communism was able to command support. He identified the deleterious working conditions of Indians in particular as one of the key reasons why the Communist movement was attracting support in Malaya, despite also emphasising that Indians were keeping away from the troubles.

In explaining the labour situation in Malaya to his Chief Ministers, Nehru wrote that 'in Malaya, the situation is unsatisfactory from the Indian point of view. Indian labour there has not had a square deal at any time and, even in the recent disturbances there, they have suffered, although they have taken very little part. We have alerted the attention of the United Kingdom Colonial Office to this matter.'⁷³ The situation in Malaya was, for Nehru, a microcosm of the larger state of Asia and explained the appeal of Communism to the mass of Asians. He wrote to Cripps that 'it is obvious that a movement of this kind could not have lasted long if it had only the Communists behind it. There has been serious labour discontent and a longstanding demand for improvement in labour conditions...Hence the Communists function with a great deal of sympathy of others.'⁷⁴ A month later Nehru reiterated his comments: 'the positive side of approaching a problem there, that is to say the betterment of political and economic conditions has not been emphasised.'⁷⁵ Nehru continued to push this theme to the British, both in their actions in Malaya and in its conceptualisation of the regional answer to Communist

⁷¹ Unlike the case of Indonesia, see 'Basic Principles: Guidelines for Upcoming UN General Assembly Meeting', 12/9/1948 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, p. 609.

⁷² Telegram from Nehru to Menon, 24/7/1948 in *ibid.*, pp. 651-654.

⁷³ 3/2/1949, Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 276.

⁷⁴ Letter from Nehru to Cripps, 18/12/1948, CAB 127/134.

⁷⁵ Letter from Nehru to Cripps, No. 44-P.M., 17/1/1949, CAB 127/134.

advances.⁷⁶

As the British declared the Emergency, Nehru told Krishna Menon that he was 'not prepared to condemn any violent revolution in favour of political or economic freedom.'⁷⁷ Nehru was reticent over the validity and aims of the MCP struggle, but as 1948 turned to 1949 and Southeast Asia remained in chaos, he strongly denounced their violent and terroristic methods in the strongest terms as 'something we Indians disliked intensely.'⁷⁸ The abhorrence of violence, in part based on his continuing domestic Communist troubles, militated against any sympathies that Nehru may have had for the wider political aims of the MCP. The G.O.I. came down in favour of supporting British actions in Malaya as Nehru made it clear that his government had 'no sympathy with terrorists, whether Chinese or Indian, and recognise that the first responsibility of HMG is [to] restore law and order and ensure their maintenance.'⁷⁹

As the man on the scene, Thivy reported in *The Statesman* in July 1948 that he suspected the Chinese-dominated terrorists in Malaya were directly under Chinese control and were part of the Communist plot to topple the so-called capitalistic regime.⁸⁰ In doing so, Thivy firmly placed the situation within the regional effort by Communists to topple the existing regimes in Southeast Asia, but stopped short of condemnation as did the G.O.I.. The MoEA judged 'it would be true to state that the fortunes of the Malayan Communists were inextricably wound up with the progress of international Communism.'⁸¹ The report continued that 'morale got a big boost when Communist forces triumphed in China in the fall of 1949'. Had the nationalist regime continued, 'it is doubtful whether the Malayan Communists would have been able to continue for any length of time. They would have had little support from the

⁷⁶ Nehru, however, had little faith in the Colonial Office as an efficient body, in an extract from *India News*, on the topic of Indians abroad, Nehru commented that, 'Many of their difficulties continue and they are likely to continue. I am sorry to say that we do not get much help from the British Colonial Office. Not only do we not get much help, but the delays of the British Colonial Office are, indeed, a revelation.' *India News*, 11/3/1948, enclosed in DO 35/2247.

⁷⁷ Letter from Nehru to Krishna Menon, 4/8/1948, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN*, Volume 7, p. 656.

⁷⁸ *The Times* (London) 19/6/1950.

⁷⁹ Telegram from Nehru to Krishna Menon, 24/7/1948 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN*, Volume 7, pp. 651-654.

⁸⁰ 'Indians in Malaya not yet Affected by Communist Marauders', *The Statesman*, 19/7/1948.

⁸¹ Report from the Indian Representative in Malaya, Political Report for 1952, Part One – Federation of Malaya, Chapter II – Emergency Situation, 3(44)- R&I/53, R&I Branch, Annual Reports, MoEA, NAI.

Chinese population in Malaya.’⁸² A MoEA paper prepared in 1957 on the nature of Communism in Indonesia provides further evidence of the assessment made by India regarding the Emergency. K. Gopalachari (Deputy Director) wrote that ‘Unlike in Malaya and Thailand where Communism came through local Chinese and is, therefore, suspect, in Indonesia it is an off-shoot and parasite of nationalist parties.’⁸³

Bajpai, betraying the Indian fear of the domination of Southeast Asia by an expansive Communist China, commented in 1950 that without proper preparation, the Malays could come under the control of the Chinese immigrants.⁸⁴ In the context of the Communist victory in China, stressing communal co-operation was aimed at reducing the likelihood of any insidious external Chinese influence being able to exploit the internal situation and exert an influence on Malayan politics. At the same time this approach offered the best hope of treatment for the Indian population.⁸⁵

In one of the first communications between the two governments on the Emergency, Bajpai made it clear to Terence Shone⁸⁶ that the first priority in Malaya was the restoration of law and order.⁸⁷ In a similar vein to Thivy, Bajpai laid the blame for the troubles on the Chinese and sought to excuse the involvement of any Indians by claiming that they had been led astray by the Communist Chinese.⁸⁸ In response to these initial Indian reactions and discussions with Bajpai, the High Commissioner informed London that ‘While there have been warnings against infringing the rights of Indians on the pretext of political expediency, the arrests of Indians have not been seriously criticised and Mr. Thivy, who has been called to

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Note on Communism in Indonesia, by K. Gopalachari, Deputy Director MoEA Historical Division, 30/9/1957, File No. 1950 – 20-38/50-M(M) – Ministry of External Affairs Notes, NAI.

⁸⁴ Memorandum of Comments by Sir Girja Bajpai with Regard to a Draft of Memorandum Prepared by Loy W. Henderson, American Ambassador to India, Entitled ‘Certain Aspects of the Foreign Policy of India’, 7/2/1950, in communication from Henderson to State Department, 9/2/1950, 691.00/2-950, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁵ Communal harmony was the mantra of Nehru’s visit for other examples see Nehru’s Press Conference in Singapore, 17/6/1950, reported in the *National Herald* 18/6/1950 and his Address at Public Meeting, 18/6/1950, reported in the *National Herald* 19/6/1950, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 14, Part II* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 401-405.

⁸⁶ Mid-1948 seems to be the point at which they swapped over until that point Nye was Governor in Madras. *The Manchester Guardian* reported on 17 June 1948 that Sir Terence was joining Sir Alexander Cadogan at the UN, p. 4.

⁸⁷ UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 2092, 1/7/1948, DO 142/404.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

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Delhi for consultations, was non-committal on the subject.’⁸⁹ Reinforcing the opinions of Thivy and Nehru, the British High Commissioner noted that ‘it was evident that Bajpai thought that there was a plan to create a Communist diversion in the Far East.’⁹⁰ British fears over the Indian reaction to Malaya failed to materialise as India privately expressed concern over the expansion of Communism, but held back from condemning international Communism in public until 1949.

In letters to his Chief Ministers, Nehru communicated some of his initial thoughts on Malaya: ‘In Malaya there has also been a serious rebellion but in view of the superior striking power of the British Government there, this revolt is likely to be suppressed.’⁹¹ Nehru further expanded on his first opinions when a fortnight later he wrote that in Malaya:

the strength of the rebellion is evidenced by the fact that more and more armed forces are being needed to suppress it. It has been said by the British authorities that it will take a long time to liquidate this rebellion. Although the rebellion may be Communist inspired, it could not have assumed such large proportions unless there was a great deal of discontent and economic distress. It is strange that while every effort is being made to suppress the rebellion by force, little attention is being paid to the economic aspect.⁹²

Malaya was employed as an opportunity to press upon the British the need for improvement in the standards of living of the vast populations of South and Southeast Asia, the so-called ‘economic aspect.’ The MoEA responded to Thivy that ‘you are probably aware that the Prime Minister has already impressed upon the United Kingdom authorities the need for an enlightened and liberal policy in the treatment of colonial territories and he might at suitable opportunity impress upon them again the desirability of a more liberal attitude in the treatment of Malayan problems.’⁹³ Nehru offered the British government advice on how best to deal with the situation; for example William Strang (incoming Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office) discussed Malaya with Nehru on his fact-finding tour in early 1949, when the latter suggested that it was the economic condition of the people that

⁸⁹ Opdom Report No.55, 9-16th July 1948, No. 2335, 17/7/1948, DO 142/404.

⁹⁰ UKHC to CRO, Telegram No. 8090, 1/7/1948, DO 142/404.

⁹¹ Letter of 16/8/1948, in Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 1, 1947-1949*, p. 174.

⁹² Letter of 1/9/1948, in *ibid.*, pp. 193-4.

⁹³ Secret – Do. No. F.47-3/49-SIM(M) Correspondence to Thivy from C.S. Jha Joint Secretary at the MoEA, File No. 103-C.J.K/49, NAI.

allowed the MCP to take support from the population.⁹⁴ Nehru also wrote to Stafford Cripps in January 1949 that ‘about Malaya I do not for a moment doubt the bona fides of the British Government’s policy, these are the difficulties they have to face.’⁹⁵

Nehru highlighted the Communist, in particular the Chinese, nature of the insurgency in their dealings with the British whilst emphasising the reasons for their success as a means to apply pressure on the British to pursue a more enlightened policy. The G.O.I. was tacitly in support of British actions against an insurgency that was considered to be part of a wider Communist plot, although was less willing to assert this in public and its condemnation of Malayan Communists would come in 1949. Nehru rightly stated that the majority of rebellion leaders were Chinese, although his assessment that no Indian leader was known to have joined the ‘rebels’ was to later prove false.⁹⁶ Nehru continued to make the case that if conditions improved then the great mass of labour could be weaned from the subversive elements. Krishna Menon, however, directly equated Nehru’s eagerness to advise the British with assisting them to maintain imperialism in Asia.⁹⁷ Nehru went so far as to suggest sending Thivy to London for talks with the Colonial Office. Krishna Menon was, however, concerned about how offering advice and keeping quiet might look when he and Menon discussed being ‘cast in the role of an ally of imperialism.’⁹⁸ There was a delicate situation in play, and Nehru was tacitly in support of British efforts to quell what was essentially, albeit Communist inspired, a colonial rebellion. But this did not mean that Nehru was going to come out in support of the British in public as this would have been unacceptable to the Indian public and would have destroyed Indian claims, however rhetorical they may have been, to a principled and fair foreign policy.

A range of terminology was employed when discussing Malaya. Care must be taken, however, in ascribing too much emphasis to variations in nomenclature, as Deery attempts to do with the British authorities, as there is little evidence of any

⁹⁴ Sir William Strang’s Tour in South-East Asia and the Far East, CP (49) 67, 17/3/1949, CAB/129/33. Also see Strang’s autobiography, *Home And Abroad* (London, 1956), Chapter VIII, pp. 239-250.

⁹⁵ Letter from Nehru to Cripps, 17/1/1949, No. 44-P.M., CAB 127/134.

⁹⁶ Telegram from Nehru to Menon, 24/7/1948 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 7*, pp. 651-654.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 653.

⁹⁸ Telegram 26/7/1948 cited in footnote No. 2 in *ibid.*, p. 655.

clearly defined design or official terminology for use by the G.O.I.⁹⁹ In public, the G.O.I. initially generally followed the British line of focussing on MCP methods and described it as a band of terrorists, bandits and dacoits. However, the term Communist was not totally absent from discussions, but was usually found in conjunction with terrorist, bandit or dacoit. In doing so the G.O.I. hoped to downplay the colonial and the Communist aspect of the MCP, and emphasised their violent methods.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the G.O.I. adopted the rhetoric of the colonial state not only in reference to Malaya, but also for its own Communists and in an attempt to strip all political legitimacy from their actions. However, in private, the G.O.I. largely employed the term Communists in conversations with Britain, and also in internal communication.¹⁰¹

Not all in India, however, agreed with the Government's appraisal; *Blitz*, a leftist weekly, denounced the use of Gurkha troops in Malaya to suppress what it called an Asian freedom movement.¹⁰² India was party to the 1947 Tripartite Agreement alongside Britain and Nepal, governing the recruitment of Gurkhas, and as such *Blitz* called on the government to put pressure on Nepal to cease recruitment and for the Indian Government to refuse transit rights.¹⁰³ According to the Communist Party of India (CPI), and in line with the Moscow position, Malaya was yet another example of Indian complicity with the Western powers and further evidence of India's Anglo-American directed foreign policy. A pamphlet of the CPI's 1949 Conference complained that 'The Government of India has not opposed the colonial wars that are being waged by the imperialists in Malaya, Vietnam, Philippines and Burma...Nehru denounced the Malayan patriots as bandits and

⁹⁹ Philip Deery, 'The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34 (2003), pp. 213-47. Perhaps with access to more of the MoEA archive then some firmer conclusions could be drawn.

¹⁰⁰ Very little work has of yet been done on the international marketing or public relations of the Emergency, but for some attempts from a British perspective see, Deery, 'The Terminology of Terrorism: Malaya, 1948-52'; Richard Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (London, 2001) and A.J. Stockwell, 'The United States and Britain's Decolonisation of Malaya, 1942-57', in D. Ryan and V. Pungong (eds), *The United States and Decolonisation: Power and Freedom* (London, 2000), pp. 188-206.

¹⁰¹ For an illustrative example see, Telegram No. 29123 from Singapore to Delhi, 14/2/1949, which describes the MCP as Communists, see File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹⁰² *Blitz* cited in Opdom Report No.55, 9-16th July 1948, No. 2335, 17/7/1948, DO 142/404.

¹⁰³ Opdom Report No.55, 9-16th July 1948, No. 2335, 17/7/1948, DO 142/404. The story of the Gurkhas is examined further in the thesis.

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terrorists and thus helped the British enslavers of the Malayan people.’¹⁰⁴

As counter-insurgency operations developed, it became all the clearer that the Emergency was going to affect the lives of Indians in Malaya, and within a year of the declaration two prominent Indians faced the death penalty for subversive activities in Malaya. The MoEA took an interest in the individual cases of Indians being arrested under the Emergency Regulations. For example in the fortnightly reports from Singapore, the numbers of Indians effected was a key theme.¹⁰⁵

Indian support for the British came in the form of reticence and advice and ultimately raised the question of India’s anti-colonial credentials in the face of a sustained Communist insurgency against a colonial power. Intimately linked to this point was the political hue of the MCP and its connections with a wider Communist plot in Asia. The Chinese in Malaya represented the majority of the insurgents involved in the Emergency, but the Indian community also participated in the trade union movement, and often in senior positions. Two individuals in particular, Ganapathy and Sambasivam, found themselves at the sharp end of Malaya’s repressive powers when arrested by the authorities under suspicion of terrorist activities. As the news of the arrests broke in India, it threw into stark relief the Government’s stance on Malaya in both the Constituent Assembly and India more widely.

Ganapathy, a 24 year old Tamil (32 according to the British), was the ex-President of the Pan-Malayan Federation of Trade Unions and remained a prominent figure in the trade union movement. Ganapathy also had a wider political career and was, like Thivy, an INA man and had also served as a member of the Malayan Delegation to the Asian Relations Conference in 1947.¹⁰⁶ Ganapathy was arrested on 1 March 1949, found guilty of carrying a fire arm, and sentenced to death in Selangor on 15 March 1949 in contravention of the Emergency Regulations, not technically for being a Communist. Similarly, Sambasivam, a clerk in the Labour

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Taufiq Ahmad Nizami, *The Communist Party and India’s Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1971), p. 87.

¹⁰⁵ Telegram No. 29123 from Delhi to Singapore, 11/2/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹⁰⁶ See Note/Letter by O.H Morris of the Colonial Office, 5/5/1949 No. 52849/64, PREM 8/967 and Telegram from Singapore to Delhi, 16/3/1949, No. 1/37, No.3478, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI and Telegram from Singapore to Delhi, 22/3/1949 No. 1/42, No. 3717, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

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Union, was arrested in September 1948, and tried in the Supreme Court on 2-3 March 1949 for unlawfully carrying a fire arm. The public and parliamentary reactions in India to these incidents are in stark contrast to the private diplomacy between India and Britain. Through examining the cases of Ganapathy and Sambasivam it is demonstrated that in public India was able to play the part that was expected of it in defending the two Indians involved, but at the same time the issue never threatened Indian acceptance that the measures in Malaya were necessary to avoid chaos and secure regional stability.

However, Ganapathy, was not the first Indian to suffer as a result of the Emergency Regulations despite G.O.I. assertions to that Indians kept away from the trouble.¹⁰⁷ A steady flow of banishees returned to India from Malaya throughout the Emergency and several other Indians were either shot or hanged, but none produced the same reaction as Ganapathy and Sambasivam.¹⁰⁸ To account for the severity of the reactions it is necessary to turn to the wider context of India negotiating entry into the Commonwealth and the deterioration of the international situation.

The basic facts of this case were not at issue when Thivy made representations to the Malayan Government, but the severity and finality of the punishment and the lack of consultation with the G.O.I., which felt slighted and on the back foot from the outset, made it harder for the Government to publicly manage the situation. Krishna Menon, in his capacity as High Commissioner, made it known in London that the G.O.I. was thoroughly displeased with this kind of offhand treatment by another sovereign nation.¹⁰⁹ Initial representations, however, met with little immediate success, partly due to communication issues involved in the network of authorities involved¹¹⁰ but more importantly because the British government had no prerogative of mercy which was in hands of the Sultan of Selangor under the

¹⁰⁷ For example see Thivy's report in *The Times of India*, "Indians not siding with Terrorists": Malaya Unrest', 23/5/1949, p. 7 and 'Hanging of Indian in Malaya: Delhi Protest to UK Govt.', and 'Dr. B.V. Keskar's Views', 7/5/1949, *The Times of India*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Thivy to Gundeveia, 9/5/1949, Ref. No. 645A/49, File No. 46-12/48-C.S.II Part II, NAI and also see the annual report from Malaya, 30/12/1952, File No. 3(42)-R&I/52, NAI.

¹⁰⁹ 26/3/1949 Menon made representations in London, Note by O.H. Morris, 5/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

¹¹⁰ A problem of imperial territories is that multiple authorities involved in these types of situations. For example the Indians communicated with the CRO, who then communicated with the CO, at the same time the Attlee was also approached as was the British High Commissioner in India. An additional layer of communication came from the Indian Representative in Malaya talking directly to the Malayan authorities, who then in turn had to look to both London, the Commissioner General for Southeast Asia and the Sultans of the states in Malaya.

Federation Constitution.¹¹¹ Britain, moreover, did not wish to give the Indians the impression that in a case such as Ganapathy's, policy could be altered to meet the demands of Indian 'public opinion'.¹¹²

When Bajpai reported to Krishna Menon that Ganapathy had been executed on 4 May 1949,¹¹³ he complained that there should have been a stay of execution until they had been informed of the reasons why the British supported the decision of the local authorities, or explained why they failed to interfere.¹¹⁴ The British High Commissioner in Delhi took the brunt of Indian representations, but in conversation with both Bajpai and Keskar (Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs) the complaints centred not on the methods of colonial control or the fact that Britain was engaged in large scale colonial warfare, but again on the fact that the Indians felt that they had been treated in an off-hand manner.¹¹⁵ Part of the Indian frustration stemmed from the claim that had the government been informed in advance of the execution, there would have been less cause for complaint as the G.O.I. would have been able to practise some political window-dressing and could have saved face in the press and in public.¹¹⁶ Whatever the intricacies of the situation in Malaya, Indian public opinion and political opponents, both from the left and right and from within Congress, seized the opportunity to accuse Nehru of complicity with British imperialism and betraying the anti-colonial roots of Indian nationalism.

The situation, however, had wider ramifications as at the time Nehru had just concluded discussions over India's future within the Commonwealth at a Prime Ministers' Meeting in London. Bajpai elucidated the ramifications of the incident to Krishna Menon writing that an 'Execution, immediately following success of London's Premier's Conference, is most (repeat most) embarrassing for us as it exposes us to charge of continuing association with Commonwealth which is

¹¹¹ The Federal Constitution replaced the defunct Union experiment in 1948. For a thorough analysis of the position of the Sultans during decolonisation see, Simon C. Smith, *British Relations with the Malay Rulers from Decentralisation to Malayan Independence, 1930-1957* (Oxford, 1995).

¹¹² CRO to UKHC, No. 1530, 11/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

¹¹³ Ganapathy's execution was reported on the front page of *The Statesman* 'Indian Executed in Malaya', 5/5/1949, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ Telegram from Bajpai to Menon, No. 24232, 5/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹¹⁵ Telegram from UKHC to CRO, X880, 12/5/1949, PREM 8/967 and also found in DO 142/405 and see 'Malaya Execution Condemned', *The Statesman*, 6/5/1949, p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Telegram from UKHC to CRO, X880, 12/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

unrelentingly imperialistic in outlook and action.’¹¹⁷ Before the G.O.I. was mauled too heavily in the press and by the Constituent Assembly, attention turned to the case of another Indian in Malaya, Sambasivam.

Sambasivam was arrested in September 1948 and tried in the Supreme Court on 2-3 March 1949 for unlawfully carrying a fire arm. Two Assessors found him not guilty, but the judge disagreed and ordered a re-trial for 22 March 1949 and this time he was found guilty.¹¹⁸ The next stage came with the Court of Appeal on 28 April 1949, where all three judges decided that there was no reason why the death sentence should not be carried out and he was due to be executed on 16 May 1949, the same day that Nehru was presenting the Commonwealth Resolution to the Constituent Assembly. The primary aim of the G.O.I., therefore, was to secure either a stay of execution or to have the charges against Sambasivam withdrawn.

As Nehru discussed India’s entry into the Commonwealth in London, Thivy reported to Delhi on 30 April 1949 that the Federation Court of Appeal had upheld the death sentence.¹¹⁹ When the Indian authorities learned of this development, the representations made to the British and Malayan authorities were far more vigorous than those previously delivered. Krishna Menon met Lord Listowel (Colonial Office), on 6 May 1949 to make their feelings perfectly clear. He later reported to Bajpai that ‘representations have been as vigorous as they can be consistent with good manners.’¹²⁰ Menon again made representations to Listowel on 7 and 9 May 1949, and pointed out the unfortunate timing so soon after the Prime Ministers’ Conference, and highlighted the ammunition that this gave to the opponents of Nehru’s policies.¹²¹ The G.O.I., swiftly and with alacrity, impressed ‘upon HMG that another execution closely following that of...Ganapathy may have the worst possible reaction on Indian opinion and may result in disastrous political consequences.’¹²²

¹¹⁷ Telegram from Bajpai to Menon, No. 24232, 5/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹¹⁸ The Official Details of the case only reached the CRO from the CO in the second week of May, Telegram from Malaya (Gurney) for CO, No. 553, 11/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

¹¹⁹ Telegram from Singapore to Delhi, No. 1/57, 30/4/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹²⁰ Telegram from Menon to Bajpai, No. 6693, 8/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹²¹ ‘Death Sentences on Indians in the Federation of Malaya for Carrying Arms’, Note for the Prime Minister, PREM 8/967, undated.

¹²² Monthly Summary for the Month Ending May 1949, d.no.4404-Pt/49, NAI.

The gravity of the situation was not lost on the British as Listowel reported his conversation with Krishna Menon to Philip Noel-Baker (Commonwealth Secretary), writing that the 'High Commissioner concluded by saying that it was most unfortunate that this should have happened just after the Prime Ministers' Conference and that it would be an embarrassment to Nehru on his return.'¹²³ Listowel went quite some way in understanding the Indian position when he further wrote to Noel-Baker that Krishna Menon's 'real object was to do something that would maintain the prestige of his government and make it easier for criticism in India to be answered.'¹²⁴ The G.O.I. attempted to manage a situation that was causing considerable embarrassment at the time of one of the most significant policy decisions of post-independence India: membership of the Commonwealth.

In a further attempt to make their representations heard, Bajpai saw Nye in Delhi and warned him that another execution so soon after that of Ganapathy and on the eve of Nehru's broadcast on the Commonwealth would be 'disastrous'.¹²⁵ Following this portent, Bajpai continued to elucidate that his primary concern was 'if this second man was executed at such a time when his Prime Minister was explaining to the country the advantages which flow from the Commonwealth association it would have a singularly unfortunate political effect and would present the critics of the Prime Minister with a very effective weapon with which to attack him.'¹²⁶

Krishna Menon again saw Attlee in London, who had promised to do everything within the limits of propriety to help solve India's dilemma; Creech Jones promised much the same, and the increased efforts by the British reflects the wider importance of the Commonwealth issue.¹²⁷ At this point, Britain took a more active role than previously and Henry Gurney, High Commissioner in Malaya, was told to inform the Sultan of the situation and suggest the exercise of mercy.¹²⁸ As the date of the expected execution and the Constituent Assembly debate approached, Bajpai saw

¹²³ Note from Listowel to Noel-Baker, 6/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Telegram from Delhi to Indian HC London, No. 24238, 9/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹²⁶ Telegram from UKHC Delhi to CRO, No. X850, 9/5/1949, PREM 8/967 and DO 142/405.

¹²⁷ Telegram from Indian HC London to Delhi, No.6757, 10/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹²⁸ Gurney reported to London on 11/5/1949, Telegram No. 553, that he had advised the Sultan of Indian representations and reported that the execution will not take place before 16/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

Nye on Nehru's behalf. Nye then cabled London to reiterate 'that Sambasivam should be executed on the very day on which Prime Minister is going to present to Constituent Assembly for its approval the recent London declaration about India's relationship with the Commonwealth makes matters all the more unfortunate.'¹²⁹ As with Ganapathy, the British could not unilaterally interfere as they had their hands tied by the Federal Constitution. However, having attempted to sell the Commonwealth to a sceptical political elite and wary public partly on the grounds that membership would allow for better protection of Indians abroad, Nehru was placed in a very difficult situation. He now faced the task of answering his critics over the Commonwealth policy in the context of one dead Indian and another sentenced to death. Nehru's considerable disquiet at the timing of the situation in Malaya was amply demonstrated when he asked Thivy to reason with Gurney that the execution 'should be deferred in view of the effect it might have on [the] current political situation in India.'¹³⁰

London's earlier prompting of the High Commissioner in Malaya bore fruit as Thivy met with Gurney, and reported that he received Gurney's assurance that even if the Sultan denied the appeal, 'he [Gurney] would delay the carrying out of the sentence until the critical stage in the current session of the Constituent Assembly is passed.'¹³¹ When the Sultan ultimately denied the request, the concession of staying the execution was granted, as was a petition of leave to appeal to the Privy Council in London, the Empire's ultimate judicial body.¹³² The British had informed Thivy and Krishna Menon that the Privy Council was a possibility, rather than see Sambasivam executed at such a sensitive time.¹³³ The G.O.I. seized upon the opportunity and absorbed the cost of the legal action in London, but informed Thivy in Malaya that 'too much publicity should NOT be given to our share in appeal since, in the event of failure of appeal, it may only exacerbate opinion in India and, in Malaya, whatever result of appeal ... We shall, of course, continue to give appeal

¹²⁹ Telegram from UKHC New Delhi to CRO, No. X895, 14/5/1949, PREM 8/967 and DO 142/405.

¹³⁰ Meeting dated 14/5/1949, Telegram from Gurney (Malaya) to CRO, No. 573, 15/5/1949.

¹³¹ Monthly Summary for the Month Ending May 1949, d.no.4404-Pt/49, File No. 12(155)-Pt/49, NAI.

¹³² Gurney reported to Thivy that he execution would not take place before the 4/6/1949, keeping his word about postponing the execution until the crucial stage in the Constituent Assembly had passed, Thivy to New Delhi, Telegram No. 1/72, 28/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹³³ Reported in a telegram from Thivy to Delhi, No. 1/72, 28/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI. Also see Telegram from CRO to UKHC New Delhi, No. 1775, 31/5/1949, DO 142/405.

our backing quietly but effectively.’¹³⁴ The G.O.I. was also anxious lest its interference in this case backfire into hostility towards Indians in Malaya, and threaten to destabilise communal relations, but also to forestall requests for assistance from Indians across the globe. By the middle of July, Sambasivam was granted an appeal by the Privy Council, and eventually acquitted, but was rearrested as soon as he was released in 1950.¹³⁵ These case studies are not about the individual men, Ganapathy and Sambasivam, but are concerned with the wider ramifications at a sensitive time in India as Nehru negotiated the future composition of India’s relations with the Commonwealth in the face of a doubting political elite and public. The cases of Ganapathy and Sambasivam, in conjunction with the negotiation of Indian entry into the Commonwealth, focussed attention on the G.O.I.’s policy on Malaya. As Nehru explained to Cripps, the situation in Malaya only further added to criticism of Commonwealth entry and ‘it is put forward as an argument for our not continuing in the Commonwealth.’¹³⁶

In a rare public discussion of Malaya, Nehru directly tackled the Ganapathy-Sambasivam issue in his press conference to the nation on the topic of the Commonwealth in May 1949. In an attempt to neutralise opposition and disassociate Malaya from both the Cold War and the ‘freedom struggle’ and to lay the blame on the Malayan Government rather than Britain, he noted that the cases had ‘nothing to do with the cause of peace and war... the local government in Malaya...acted with extreme folly.’¹³⁷ Nehru attempted to disassociate the actions of the Malayan Government from Britain, and in doing so to neutralise criticism levelled against the G.O.I.’s decision to join the Commonwealth.¹³⁸ Keskar also partook in the attempts to lay the blame for the death of Ganapathy at the feet of the Malayan authorities rather than targeting London.¹³⁹ India largely followed Britain’s own line of argument that Malaya had control of its own legal system and thus British

¹³⁴ Telegram from Delhi to Singapore, No. 29945, 4/6/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI. Also see telegram from Thivy to Gundevia, No.1/72, 25/5/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49, NAI.

¹³⁵ Telegram from Indian High Commissioner in London to New Delhi, No. 8691, 26/7/1949, File No. 12(3)-R&I/49 and Weekly Notes for the Cabinet for the Week Ending 15/4/1950, D.908-R&I/50, NAI.

¹³⁶ Nehru to Cripps, 8/5/1949, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume II* (New Delhi, 1991), p. 305.

¹³⁷ Nehru’s Press Conference to the Nation, 10/5/1949, in *ibid.*, p. 315.

¹³⁸ Nehru’s Press Conference to the Nation, 10/5/1949, in *ibid.*, pp. 308-326.

¹³⁹ ‘Dr. B.V. Keskar’s Views’, 7/5/1949, *The Times of India*, p. 1.

jurisdiction had no authority, and in doing so attempted to isolate Malaya from Britain and the Commonwealth. At the close of 1949, Keskar further argued to an audience of students that India could not take up the extreme position of asking the colonial rulers to leave, but without passing any moral judgement on the character of the colonial administration, he could most emphatically reiterate that the exploited people of Malaya had India's full moral sympathy.¹⁴⁰

The Commonwealth Resolution drafted at the London Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting in April 1949 had to be ratified by the Constituent Assembly, and it was during this debate that doubts were aired over India's position regarding the nature of the relationship with an imperial power, which had been specifically focussed through the recent events in Malaya. Nehru himself opened the proceedings: 'We join the Commonwealth obviously because we think it is beneficial to us and to certain causes in the world that we wish to advance.'¹⁴¹ It is in opposition to these claims about the benefits – namely protection of Indians abroad and being better able to influence the process of decolonisation that the criticisms came from the somewhat incredulous members, and not just from the left wing, of the Constituent Assembly.

Replying to Nehru, Maulana Hasrat Mohani (Muslim League) challenged the resolution, arguing that ratifying it 'is not only a betrayal of the independence of India, but it is a betrayal of all the efforts of all Asiatic countries who are struggling to gain their independence.'¹⁴² In this view, Mohani was echoed by Shri H.V. Kamath who asked: 'how far are we (India) committed to the maintenance of the status quo of the Commonwealth generally, and particularly in Malaya, in South-East Asia...Colonialism is rampant; imperialism is rampant...Are we subscribing to this?'¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Speech on 9/11/1949 and answers responding to questions asked by students in the University Senate Hall, reported in Despatch No.1005, 23/11/1949 from US Embassy New Delhi to Washington, 745.00/11-2349, RG 59, NARA. Details of the speech also reported in the *Hindustan Times*, 12/11/1949 and enclosed with the text of the speech above.

¹⁴¹ Nehru's opening speech to the Constituent Assembly, 16/5/1949, Volume VIII, last accessed 19/6/2010 on <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates/htm>.

¹⁴² Response to Nehru in *ibid*.

¹⁴³ Shri H.V. Kamath's response in *ibid*.

One further example from a vocal foreign affairs critic within Congress demonstrates the underlying opposition to Nehru's moves. Shibbanlal Saksena argued that:

If Britain had washed its hands of Imperialism and Colonialism in Asia, then certainly she could tell the Malayan people to set up their own Government and withdraw as they did from India but they do not say so. They say "We are sticking on in Malaya"...The development in South East Asia is a portentous development and so long as the UK Government is a party to all these that are going on-and the UK is a brother member of the Commonwealth, and whatever UK may say that the Malayan government may decide what they like, UK cannot wash its hands clean of blood of Ganapathy who was executed a few days ago and of another Indian who is perhaps being executed today. The UK, through its Colonial Office, is responsible for what is going on in Malaya. Can we say with our hand on our heart that so long as UK Government follows such policy in Malaya...that we freely and willingly continue to be members of the Commonwealth, because this declaration does not lay down any conditions whatever for our continuance as members of the Commonwealth?¹⁴⁴

Saksena pleaded for India to stick to its principles, doubting Nehru's claims about the benefits of membership. Saksena concluded that 'I come to it and that is that we have agreed to freely co-operate in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress. Very fine words but fine words butter no parsnips.'¹⁴⁵ The focus on Malaya reveals deep tensions in the Assembly but despite the assaults against the Commonwealth policy, the resolution was eventually passed. These criticisms appropriated Malaya as a focal point, and raised what was perceived by many as being a betrayal of India's anti-colonial principles. The fact that the MCP was a Communist organisation was little mentioned. The issue of Malaya was presented as an example of the continuance of an insidious British imperialism that India was doing little to criticise and was, in fact, preparing to endorse with its membership of the Commonwealth.

Despite the fact that the immediate and heated criticism over Malaya cooled somewhat with the passing of the Commonwealth Resolution in mid-May 1949, the G.O.I. still expected flak from opponents and the wider spectre of public opinion over the continuing story of Sambasivam. This was amply demonstrated, for example, when Bajpai reported to the British that the G.O.I. would follow up the possibility of Sambasivam applying for leave to petition the Privy Council in the

¹⁴⁴ Shibban Lal Saksena, Response to Nehru in *ibid*.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

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main with the Malayan authorities and in London ‘to avoid [a] situation in which High Commissioner might be in difficulties with Indian Press.’¹⁴⁶

At Dehra Dun, where Congress was to endorse the Commonwealth decision, Nehru again mentioned Malaya: Sambasivam was now the target of G.O.I. efforts. Nehru gave a clear appreciation of the situation, in part to demonstrate the limited options available to India, but also as a form of education to India that it was not possible to defend the rights of all Indian emigrants across the globe and thus dampen expectations for action in any future cases. Emphasising the rule of law and legal constraints, Nehru told Congress that the ‘Malayan Government has certain laws equally applicable to all the inhabitants of Malaya...the Government of India cannot tell the Malayan Government that Indians arrested under the same regulations should not be treated just like the others.’¹⁴⁷ The G.O.I. aimed to reduce expectations of intervention in cases where Indians abroad turned to India for assistance. Nehru continued to advise that Indians abroad look to their adoptive countries as home at the opening of parliament in January 1950.¹⁴⁸ Keskar echoed Nehru during a speech at Patna where he strongly criticised those who advocated Indian intervention employing a hypothetical question and asking how Indians would feel if the British press insisted that the British Government intervene to save the life of an Englishman sentenced to death by an Indian court.¹⁴⁹

With the experience of the Ganapathy and Sambasivam cases, Nehru attempted to reduce the expectations of Indians both abroad and in India in regards to the G.O.I.’s ability and willingness to protect overseas Indians by emphasising that ‘Indians in Malaya must be loyal to the land they live in and it integrate themselves with other communities.’¹⁵⁰ This entreaty also served to reinforce Nehru’s other belief that without communal co-operation and harmony there would be little progress in Malaya’s transition to nationhood. Thivy stressed this point to the

¹⁴⁶ Telegram from UKHC to CRO, No. 1012, 31/5/1949, Do 142/405.

¹⁴⁷ Nehru’s Speech at AICC Dehra Dun, 21/5/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 11*, p. 346.

¹⁴⁸ Text of statement in UKHC to London, Telegram No. 374, 1/2/1950, DO 142/479.

¹⁴⁹ Speech on 9/11/1949 and answers responding to questions asked by students in the University Senate Hall, reported in Despatch No.1005, 23/11/1949 from US Embassy New Delhi to Washington, 745.00/11-2349, RG 59, NARA. Details of the speech also reported in the *Hindustan Times*, 12/11/1949.

¹⁵⁰ Nehru’s speech in Singapore at the laying of the foundation stone of the Indian Association, 17/6/1950, reported in the *National Herald* in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 14, Part II*, p. 401. Nehru visited Singapore from 17-18 June 1950.

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Ministry of External Affairs, arguing that racial equality and communal harmony would help remove fear and would allow the Chinese to settle down to nice, quiet lives rather than turning to Communist China.¹⁵¹

Conclusions

The most instructive and revealing way to discuss Indian reactions to the Malayan Emergency is to pose the question: why did Nehru and the G.O.I. 'keep quiet' when over Indonesia and Indo-China they railed against imperialism? Fundamentally, the case of Malaya demonstrates an Indian negotiation of interests, principles and public pressures. First and foremost, Malayan stability was intricately linked to the overall health of the Sterling Area and this represented the most obvious link to Indian material interests in Malaya. The MCP rebellion, whatever its methods and intentions, threatened the dollar earnings from rubber and tin. Far from falling foul of Nehru's tongue, the British came to respect his position on Malaya, and were broadly appreciative of Nehru's flexible attitude on the wider issue of Malaya. As General Harding (Far Eastern Command), Malcolm MacDonald (Commissioner General Southeast Asia) and Elser Dening (Head of Southeast Asia desk at the Foreign Office) all argued, 'Nehru has on the whole been sympathetic to our position in Malaya.'¹⁵² MacDonald wrote to Cripps that 'The more I see of him [Nehru] the more I feel his greatness. I think he has quite a sympathetic understanding of our problem in Malaya, and he is certainly always very friendly when we meet and discuss it.'¹⁵³ Malaya both informed and reiterated Nehru's conviction that the only way to forestall Communist advances was through a combination of both political progress and economic progress, and it was through the example of Malaya that Nehru hoped to educate the British.

Turmoil in Malaya and in Southeast Asia was something that Nehru acknowledged, but that he was reluctant to publicly condemn until the middle of 1949.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Nehru reasoned that the MCP uprising was Communist-

¹⁵¹ Review of the Situation in Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sarawak, Brunei, North Borneo and Philippines (Far Eastern Countries) by J.A. Thivy, letter dated 13/4/1949, File No. 103-C.J.K/49, NAI.

¹⁵² Singapore to FO, No. 1057, 31/12/1950, FN 1201/1, in FO 371/92916.

¹⁵³ Letter from MacDonald to Cripps, 13/3/1949, CAB 127/134.

¹⁵⁴ For the development of Nehru's condemnation of Communism in Southeast Asia see the chapter on the Colombo Plan.

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inspired and not nationalism as he recognised and respected. Nehru saw the MCP not as liberators or as true nationalists, but that did not mean that he was willing or able to outwardly support the case of the British without risk of domestic repercussions. Nehru further reasoned that stability could be achieved in Southeast Asia more easily by working with the British than against them, a fact that was not lost on the British. The stability of Southeast Asia was of paramount importance to Nehru, and with the threat of Communist victory in China growing, Chinese dominance of the MCP raised the spectre of increasing Chinese influence in the region. China was increasingly seen as a long term threat to the stability of Southeast Asia and as competition to Indian influence, with the MCP comprised mainly of Chinese, Malaya was at the epicentre of Indian worries. Nehru was thus eager to bring the Chinese into the international fold and to treat them as friends as an attempt to neutralise regional hostility.

The specific cases of Ganapathy and Sambasivam also allows us to see that the G.O.I. was sensitive when it thought that it was being kept in the dark and not treated with the level of respect that it deemed necessary as a sovereign power – a legacy of its colonial identity. There are two parts to this: one is a heightened sense of pride due to the fact that India was only recently decolonised; the second part was that being kept in the dark not only made India look impotent in its dealings with the UK but also provided opponents with a stick with which to beat Nehru.

Once again Nehru was forced to try to reconcile several different pressures: Indian opinion, world opinion and the balance of attempting to balance a foreign policy that satisfied both material and ideological requirements. Nehru preferred progressive colonialism to Communism in Southeast Asia in the short term because colonialism at least offered a semblance of stability. This is a key factor that has long been overlooked in the study of Indian foreign policy, and it was by way of historical heritage that immediate stability in Southeast Asia meant support of the British in their efforts in Malaya rather than see the region fall under the sway of the Chinese and Russians.

Overseas Indians also factored into Delhi's thinking. Nehru sought to dissuade overseas communities from being too dependent on India for support over

their domestic issues in other sovereign territories. However, one must question Lal's assertion that Nehru's foreign policy excluded the issue of expatriate Indians from its foreign policy both on the grounds that expatriate is a fluid concept and that Nehru clearly did not exclude this group from his policy formation.¹⁵⁵ The issue of Indians abroad had a resonance with the situation in South Africa, in particular, Ceylon, Burma and East Africa, which were emotive issues that could not be ignored by the G.O.I.. Thus the treatment of Indians in another part of the Commonwealth impacted upon responses to the troubles in Malaya.¹⁵⁶ The Indian population in Malaya was a direct result of imperial enterprise and the low wages and deleterious working conditions not only served as a reminder of this legacy, but provided a grievance for the MCP to exploit. Nehru continually pushed the British for better working conditions for Malaya and for them to follow a progressive path.

Nehru, moreover, was negotiating entry into the Commonwealth. It would serve no purpose for the G.O.I. to take a wider view of the cases of Ganapathy and Sambasivam and attack the entire enterprise of British imperialism in Southeast Asia. Criticism centred on Ganapathy and Sambasivam, as the British High Commissioner reported the reaction to the arrest of both Indians, writing that 'Malaya for the first time since independence has come in for much criticism this summer. This was occasioned largely by the death sentences...on two Indian trade unionists of Communist leanings who were involved in terrorist activities in the federated states.'¹⁵⁷ Nye continued that 'Congress and Leftist leaders as well as the Press indulged in the most immoderate abuse of the Malayan Government stigmatising it as a "Planters' Raj".'¹⁵⁸

Sambasivam and Ganapathy were not the only two Indians to be caught up in the Malayan Emergency, but were two of the most high profile due to the timing of their trials and the subsequent attention paid by the press and popular opinion. The G.O.I. was, therefore, prompted to attempt to resolve the situation by demonstrating support for Sambasivam and Ganapathy. In fact, the Indian Representative in Malaya

¹⁵⁵ Lall, 'India's Relationship with Non-Resident Indians, 1947-1996: A Missed Opportunity?', p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ The G.O.I. had exploited the new UN to make its case against the discriminatory policies of South Africa; for a recent account see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton and Oxford, 2009).

¹⁵⁷ Nye to CRO, Despatch No. 41, Ref. P/243, 9/9/1949, DO 142/479.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

and Singapore continued to work on the behalf of Indians prosecuted under the Emergency Regulations. M. Gopala Menon reported that during 1951, three Indian rubber tappers were sentenced to death, and that 'All efforts were made by this Representation to save their lives, but they met with success only in the last case.'¹⁵⁹ More prominent members of Singapore society than rubber tappers also fell foul of regulations in 1951 for disseminating MCP materials.¹⁶⁰ None of these, however, elicited such interest and intense reactions as the case of the two Indians dealt with in the spring of 1949.

Ganapathy and Sambasivam's trials, moreover, reveal something of the ambiguity of the situation in Malaya, and in India's rhetoric of foreign policy. They reveal how the impact of the press and public opinion influenced Nehru and his government. The G.O.I. had to attempt to rationalise and defend its policy to an incredulous public opinion that held their own nationalist struggle dear. Crucially, Malaya also illuminates the constraints acting upon Nehru, and especially the reliance on the old British imperial system in Southeast Asia. Despite the G.O.I.'s general discretion over the Malayan Emergency, the hanging of Ganapathy and the potential execution of Sambasivam provoked a defence of Indians abroad in reaction to public outcry directed and enflamed by the press and opposition in the Constituent Assembly. The criticism that emanated from the G.O.I., however, was specifically targeted at the Malayan authorities and at the procedural workings of the Emergency Regulations and not at the overall project of defending Malaya from Communism and in the same action defending colonialism. For example, Nehru was reported to have informed a press conference that the Malayan authorities had acted with great folly in their hanging of Ganapathy.¹⁶¹ Malaya was part of Nehru's realisation that events on the ground did not necessarily fit neatly into the ideological or principled tropes that were so often espoused as guiding the formulation of India's foreign policy. It is the interaction of the cases of these two men with the wider regional situation and Indian entry into the Commonwealth that provides an insight into Indian foreign policy.

¹⁵⁹ Annual Report for 1951, dated 20/12/1951, File No. 3(42)-R&I/52, NAI.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Reported that Nehru's speech took place on 11/5/1949, Letter from Listowel to Menon, 28/5/1949, PREM 8/967.

6) India and the Colombo Plan: Putting South Asia back in Colombo

In a world racked by schism and confusion it is doubtful whether free men can long afford to leave undeveloped and imprisoned in poverty the human resources of the countries of South and South-East Asia which could help so greatly, not only to restore the world's prosperity, but also to redress its confusion and enrich the lives of all men everywhere.¹

These words formed the closing remarks of the report of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee entitled 'Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia.' This Commonwealth initiative, known as the Colombo Plan, aimed to raise the economic standard of living of Asians through economic development set out in individual country plans and funded through Commonwealth contributions. The Colombo Plan also sought to lay the foundations of future economic growth, and thereby combat the spread of Communism in Asia by providing a physical and psychological assault against the appeal of Communism. The Colombo Plan aimed to facilitate the rehabilitation of the region so that it could play its part in balancing the world economy through the export of dollar commodities for the Sterling Area and the reducing of dollar expenditures for food imports. The Report was largely the product of three meetings held in 1950: Colombo in January, Sydney in May and London in September. But the seeds of what became known as the Colombo Plan are located in the years before 1950.

India was actively involved and a key influence in the formation of the Colombo Plan, as the plan served to satisfy several key aims of India's foreign policy: to foster regional co-operation, it was part of the settlement of India's sterling balances, and it was an attempt to engage the Commonwealth and potentially the US in the development of South and Southeast Asia largely on the basis of halting the spread of Communism in the region. Colombo, however, takes a back seat in the existing historiography to India's other regional moves, for example the Asian Relations Conference and the infamous Bandung Conference of 1955. The Colombo

¹ 'The Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia', EPC (50) 105, October 1950, CAB/134/226.

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Plan is one of the Commonwealth's lasting legacies and still provides technical assistance to this day. However, it is absent from the established narrative of India's foreign policy and the relevant volumes of the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* and the National Archives of India contain little reference to the Colombo meetings further compounding its absence. With few Indian governmental archival materials to utilise, British records provide a basic narrative of pertinent events and minutes of meetings.²

For Nehru economic development served the purpose of saving Asia for democracy as opposed to either Communism or Western imperialism. Economic development aimed to ensure that newly-independent nations could offer their citizens a tangible improvement in their standards of living, and to demonstrate to colonial territories, Malaya for example, that national development, not Communism, was the answer to their problems. Development was not simply, as Marc Frey argues, to 'legitimise continued colonial rule.'³ Development was rather part of the psychological counter-attack to Communism that Nehru prescribed to the Western powers, and it was for this reason that Nehru emphasised the threat to the West. Moreover, he presented the satisfying of Asia's nationalist aspirations with development, and also argued for development as a means of co-operation between the East and West. Through the Commonwealth platform, India was able to contribute to the moulding of policies for Asia, and maintain not only a claim to be a voice for Asians - not the leader of an Eastern Federation as Charrier suggests - but also to being a core member of a reformed Commonwealth.⁴

Nehru's alarm at Communist expansion was genuine, as evidenced by his own actions against Indian Communists, but was also employed in an attempt to exploit the interest of the UK, Commonwealth and US. John Aloysius Thivy, India's Representative in Malaya and Singapore, detailed a very similar argument in

² The story of Colombo from the British perspective also needs to be re-examined with an emphasis on sterling balances, but the task is outside the purview of the current work.

³ Marc Frey, 'Control, Legitimacy, and the Securing of Interests: European Development Policy in South-East Asia from the Late Colonial Period to the Early 1960s', *Contemporary European History* 12 (2003), p. 398. Whilst Frey's article is a welcome entry in an area that is all too often dominated by development studies rather than history, his account is limited in scope and ignores the central role that India had on the evolution of development in Southeast Asia.

⁴ Philip J. Charrier, 'Britain, India and the Genesis of the Colombo Plan, 1945-51', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1995, p. 1.

conversation with the MoEA in early 1949 when he argued that Britain had to be convinced that the only way to build a 'bulwark against Communism' was to remove racial discrimination and establish common equality, rights and duties in their territories, and also in the economic field. If this could be achieved then there would be a chance of 'effecting some measure of democracy and freedom in territories under British rule.'⁵ Thivy continued that 'If we base our attack on the dual grounds of (a) threat of Communism, and (b) India's security, we may break down Britain's selfish motives. Once Britain is won over, then half the battle for Asia's freedom is over. Britain will then become an active ally in the task of breaking down the resistance of the Dutch and the French in their colonial policy.'⁶ This exposition echoes the advice Nehru provided at the Commonwealth meeting in April 1949 concerning Malaya and Indonesia.

Additionally, India expected to benefit from the potential economic development of Asia. Giles Boquerat, in a similar fashion to the economist Michal Kalecki, concludes his study of India's foreign aid policy with the assertion that 'the Indian Government did not hesitate to take advantage of the East-West confrontation to mobilize aid from both superpowers.'⁷ However, this only holds true for the mid-1950 period and beyond, whereas in this earlier period India exploited a growing fear of the spread of Communism to loosen the purse strings of its Western allies. India's approach, to employ and exploit the fear of Communist expansion, developed alongside its own increasing realisation of the danger of the spread of Communism.

Part of India's emphasis on development as policy was that it would then enable India to be involved as opposed to any form of political or military approach, which India would have been unable to reconcile with a commitment to remaining free of formal obligations. The British were not blind to this fact and it informed their own formulation of their Southeast Asia policies to a large extent as India was

⁵ Review of the Situation in Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sarawak, Brunei, North Borneo and Philippines (Far Eastern Countries) by J.A. Thivy, letter dated 13/4/1949, File No. 103-C.J.K/49, NAI.

⁶ *Ibid.* C.S Jha Joint Secretary at the MoEA replied to Thivy that G.O.I. already doing all it can to press the needs of the people of Southeast Asia, but that could appear as interference in the matters of other governments. Jha's letter, however, runs contrary to continuing advice and actions of Nehru and Bajpai in their conversations with both the British and the Americans, see letter to Thivy, April 1949, Do. No. F.47-3/49-SIM (M), File No. 103-C.J.K/49, NAI.

⁷ Gilles Boquerat, *No Strings Attached? India's Policies and Foreign Aid, 1947-1966* (New Delhi, 2003), p. 401 and see Michal Kalecki, *Essays on Developing Economies* (Sussex, 1976).

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considered the 'the key to the whole South-East Asian regional co-operation. Without India we can achieve little.'⁸ For Nehru the approach also represented an example of the efficacy of the Commonwealth connection in international affairs and as evidence of the benefits of India's membership.

The Colombo Plan provided India with a forum in which to take part, to co-operate on the regional basis with other Asian nations and in a way that satisfied India fears that it was not obligated to follow any specific line or policy. Colombo, moreover, eventually provided India with a long-term sterling balance solution at a time when the fear of some form of readjustment was palpable. India decided to co-operate and contribute because assistance was all conducted on a bilateral basis, and so was able to maintain its principle of avoiding binding treaties. The anti-Communist aspect of the plan was seldom mentioned in public discourse and was certainly not emphasised by the G.O.I. The rhetoric of Colombo gradually developed to underplay any Communist-directed aspect of its inception, and chose rather to concentrate on the raising the standard of living for its own sake.

Of central importance for India, as for the Commonwealth and Sterling Area as a whole, was that any success from the initiative could have the overall effect of increasing world trade and, through its concentration on agricultural assistance, increase India's access to food supplies. Development served as a means to increase production in Southeast Asia in the hope of rebalancing dollar deficits, which in turn benefitted all, and this aspect of the plan cannot be forgotten or lost in the rhetoric.⁹ Setting Asia on the path to development would not only raise the standard of living, moving the territories closer to self-government, but also provided India with

⁸ CO/967/84, No.69, October 1949 'The United Kingdom in South-east Asia and the Far East', Cabinet paper prepared by the Foreign Office, cited in No.196, A.J. Stockwell (ed.), *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series B, Volume 3, Malaya, Part II: The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London, 1995). Also see the two separate PUSC papers that formed the report, PUSC Papers No. 32 and No. 52 of July and August 1949 in F17397/G in FO 371/76030. PUSC No. 32 and No. 52 together formed the FO's submission to Cabinet, see 'The United Kingdom in Southeast Asia and the Far East', Memorandum by Ernest Bevin, CP (49) 207, 18/10/1949, CAB 129/37.

⁹ The final report noted that, 'The increase in incomes is likely, other things being equal, to contribute to the expansion of world trade', 'Final Report of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-East Asia about Co-operative Economic Development', October 1950, EPC (50) 105, CAB 134/226. For example the submission prepared by Malaya focussed on investment in rubber plantations and tin mines in addition to agriculture and irrigation, see Frey, 'Control, Legitimacy, and the Securing of Interests: European Development Policy in South-East Asia from the Late Colonial Period to the Early 1960s', p. 401.

markets for exports crucial to its economic growth and balancing development budgets. As B.N. Ganguli argues, an important post-war trend was the continuance and expansion of India's imports, namely rice, timber mineral oils, from Southeast Asia, which underlined India's dependence on imports of food and raw materials. However, the link is not made that this expansion of trade figured into India's appreciation of expansionary Communism.¹⁰

The Planning Commission, under Nehru's leadership, prepared the submission for the Consultative Committee.¹¹ In their submission to the Commonwealth Consultative Committee, what became the Colombo Plan, 80 per cent of projects in the submission were already underway, as was the First Five-Year Plan from 1951. To a degree, Colombo was a rhetorical device that gave substance to the rationalisation of existing projects in India and made it a national plan.¹² The idea of national development was crucial to Nehru's conception of development as a key means to unite a fissiparous nation. Colombo was a codification of India's existing projects, or planned projects, not exclusively for economic reasons, but also for forging a sense of national identity through a commitment to economic development. India was able to secure international assistance whilst maintaining the national control of planning. Constructing the plans also served as a means to clearly set out India's needs, its progress since the war, and of emphasising the seriousness of their need for assistance.

Within the context of Britain's economic problems, most recently manifested in devaluation, India viewed the Colombo Plan as a means of securing regular and secure releases from her accumulated sterling balances amid continued Anglo-American financial discussions and rumours of cancellation. Britain had indicated that sterling releases would have to be addressed in the wake of devaluation in

¹⁰ See B.N. Ganguli, 'India and the Commonwealth: Economic Relations', in Verinder Grover (ed.), *International Relations and Foreign Policy in India, Volume 5, Great Britain, Commonwealth and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1992), p. 379 and also his larger work, *India's Economic Relations with the Far Eastern and Pacific Countries in the Present Century* (Bombay, 1956).

¹¹ Jerome B. Cohen, 'Problems of Economic Development in India', *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 1 (1952), p. 198. Francine R. Frankel, *India's Political Economy, 1947-2004: The Gradual Revolution* (Second edn, New Delhi, 2005) remains the most thorough analysis of India's developmental political economy.

¹² For the 80 per cent figure see Antonin Basch, 'The Colombo Plan: A Case of Regional Economic Cooperation', *International Organisation* 9 (1955), p. 5. Whilst this article contains a useful narrative, there is seldom any mention of the anti-Communist aspect of the enterprise.

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October 1949, but India's existing agreement remained in place until June 1951, after which time the releases would again have to be decided upon.¹³ Crucially, the Sydney meeting in 1950 provided India with access to technical assistance from the rest of the Commonwealth, linked to their Colombo submission which then formed the kernel of the first five-year plan.¹⁴ Involvement also held the prospect of American aid, both to India and more widely to the rest of South and Southeast Asia, through the demonstration of real progress towards self-help, which the US insisted upon as part of Truman's Point Four programme.

Oakman argues that 'To some extent, the Colombo Plan was a façade, a device intended to lure independent Asia into an alliance with the Western bloc', and at the heart of this chapter is the question of how India fits into this interpretation.¹⁵ India's role in where and when the idea originated can in part be demonstrated through examining the historiography. There are multiple existing narratives of the formulation of the Colombo Plan, but none as yet that take India as a key protagonist. Moreover, the Colombo Plan seldom forms a part of the narrative of India's foreign policy.¹⁶

The majority of the existing accounts end the analysis of Colombo at January 1950, but what is necessary is an emphasis on examining the subsequent development of the plan.¹⁷ Much of literature, for example, Ademola Adeleke and including Percy Spender himself, focuses too heavily on Australia and the contribution of Spender's idea that 'formed the kernel of the proposal that the Commonwealth foreign ministers transformed into the Colombo Plan.'¹⁸ Daniel

¹³ Cripps delivered a statement to Parliament to this effect on 26/10/1949, see EPC (49) 137, 14/11/1949, CAB 134/223.

¹⁴ Reporting on the Sydney meeting in May 1950, the first meeting of the Consultative Committee, a British report noted the importance that Asian countries attributed to this aspect, 'India, Pakistan and Ceylon are obviously feeling acutely their lack of men with skills of all kind', see CP (50) 123, 'Commonwealth Consultative Committee on Economic Development in South and South-East Asia: Sydney, May 1950', Memorandum by the Paymaster General, CAB 129/40.

¹⁵ Daniel Oakman, *Facing Asia A History of the Colombo Plan* (Canberra, 2010), p. 67.

¹⁶ For example, Ademola Adeleke, 'Playing Fairy Godmother to the Commonwealth: The United States and the Colombo Plan', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 42 (2004), pp. 393-411.

¹⁷ Tilman Remme is the key example of this, *Britain and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia, 1945-49* (London, 1995).

¹⁸ Ademola Adeleke, 'The Strings of Neutralism: Burma and the Colombo Plan', *Pacific Affairs* 76 (2003-2004), p. 594 and Percy Spender, *Exercises in Diplomacy: The ANZUS Treaty and the Colombo Plan* (Sydney, 1969).

Oakman, in a similar vein to David Lowe, also places too heavy an emphasis on the Colombo plan as Australian policy.¹⁹ Much of this literature focuses too tightly on the proceedings of the meeting in Ceylon in January 1950, which thus lends weight to the argument of Australian centrality.²⁰ There are, however, other narratives to consider, and as Lalita Prasad Singh notes it was Ceylon that first vocalised the kernel of the idea at the Colombo meeting.²¹ Whereas Charles S. Blackton argued in 1951 that the issue was first raised at the Colombo conference in January 1950, he provides little detail on the voice that suggested it.²² This research, however, places less emphasis on the meetings themselves and instead focuses on the communication of ideas before, during and throughout the meetings to discuss the Colombo Plan.

There is little established historiography on India and the Colombo Plan. Whilst the January 1950 meeting in Colombo is of importance, it is necessary to establish its place in the wider narrative of economic co-operation as an answer to Communism, and doing so helps to reveal the central role that India played that is too often neglected. The seeds for 'fruitful' discussions were sown in October 1948 at Commonwealth discussions in London and continued at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in April 1949. Lalita Prasad Singh attempted a partial rehabilitation of India's role as he argued that K.M Panikkar should be credited with originating the idea for circulating a memorandum in early 1949 containing proposals for an economic assault against the appeal of Communism.²³ J.C. Kundra argues that Colombo 'definitely resulted in India's agreement that Communism should be checked throughout South-East Asia by economic action.'²⁴ Although his judgement on where the idea originated is unclear as he also argues that the idea was

¹⁹ Daniel Oakman, 'The Seed of Freedom: Regional Security and the Colombo Plan', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 46 (2000), pp. 67-85 and *Facing Asia A History of the Colombo Plan* and David Lowe, 'Percy Spender and the Colombo Plan', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 40 (1994), pp. 162-76. Also see Lalita Prasad Singh, *The Politics of Economic Co-operation in Asia: A Study of Asian International Organisations* (Missouri, 1966), p. 177.

²⁰ Spender himself underplays the 1949 Commonwealth Meeting, *Exercises in Diplomacy: The ANZUS Treaty and the Colombo Plan* (Sydney, 1969).

²¹ See Singh, *The Politics of Economic Co-operation in Asia*, p. 177.

²² Charles S. Blackton, 'The Colombo Plan', *Far Eastern Survey* 20 (1951), p. 28.

²³ Singh does make mention of the fact that Spender and the other delegates had seen a memorandum focussing on economic needs of Asia by K.M. Panikkar, Indian Ambassador to China, prior to the meeting, *The Politics of Economic Co-operation in Asia*, pp. 177-178.

²⁴ J.C. Kundra, *Indian Foreign Policy, 1947-1954: A Study of Relations with the Western Bloc* (Groningen, 1955), p. 192.

predominantly Indian.²⁵ Kundra, however, fails to examine the close relationship between Indian and British ideas on blocking Communism and the crucial factor of India's sterling balances. For India, pushing the economic front as the means to stop Communism was the only way to secure British and hopefully American development assistance to the region. S. Gopal, Nehru's official biographer, also gives little attention to Colombo and does so only in reference to Communist China, emphasising the centrality of the January 1950 meeting and Nehru's role, noting that:

As for aggressive communism, it could be best resisted in South East Asia by removing every vestige of colonial control and strengthening the nationalist forces. The Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, meeting at Colombo in January 1950, agreed; Nehru secured general acceptance that what was needed was not a Pacific pact on the lines of NATO but the raising, with the assistance of the Commonwealth countries, of the economic standards of the region.²⁶

An additional strand of the literature attempts to integrate the Colombo Plan within the narrative of British and, to a lesser extent, US foreign policy in Southeast Asia, and it is thus not difficult to agree with Adeleke's conclusion that much of the literature on the Colombo Plan has focused on the role of the Western powers. This is at odds with Oakman's assessment that little attention has been focussed on the economic, political and strategic context.²⁷ Oakman's observation does, however, have some merit: there is a palpable lack of literature that examines the role of, for example, the sterling balances within the wider context of the study of foreign policy.

Tilman Remme, for instance, charts the development of British foreign policy and the formulation of regional cooperation, in Southeast Asia.²⁸ Britain, argues Remme, crucially influenced by the need to secure Indian involvement, not active Indian agency, concluded that economic assistance was the best way to combat the Communist menace.²⁹ Remme, however, fails to adequately position India's role within these policies, and in doing so misses the central importance that the existence of the sterling balances had in the formulation of both Indian and British policies.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

²⁶ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, 1947-1956, Volume Two* (London, 1979), p. 65.

²⁷ Adeleke, 'The Strings of Neutralism: Burma and the Colombo Plan', p. 593 and Oakman, 'The Seed of Freedom: Regional Security and the Colombo Plan', p. 68.

²⁸ Remme, *Britain and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

Nicholas Tarling is among those who focus too heavily on the UK, describing Colombo as an ambitious strategy of British foreign policy.³⁰ Tarling acknowledges the importance of India in Southeast Asia in general, but only in so far as he notes that the British took account of the attitudes of Indian leaders.³¹

In 2009, B.R Tomlinson attempted to address the topic of the Colombo Plan in tandem with that of the sterling balance problem and concluded that the Colombo Plan did little more than to regularise the payment of wartime debts and slow down British economic recovery, but crucially fails to examine its significance.³² Whereas Schenk, in the context of her study on the impact of the Sterling Area on the British economy, argues that 'Instead, the plans to link these two aspects of the sterling area [balances and development] were rather disingenuous attempts to reduce UK liabilities while manipulating America into providing dollar aid to the sterling area.'³³ Schenk's analysis is far too reductive as she sets the entire scheme of regional development as a disingenuous exercise to extract money from the Americans in order to solve the balances problem rather than exploring the intricate links between Colombo and the sterling balances.³⁴

Philip Charrier also made a valuable contribution to the historiography by taking the policies of Britain, and to a lesser extent India, in Southeast Asia and charting the development of the Colombo Plan within the context of their regional policies. Britain, Charrier argues, was eager to create a multi-lateral post-colonial structure designed to satisfy the demand of the nationalists whilst safeguarding the

³⁰ Nicholas Tarling, 'The United Kingdom and the Origins of the Colombo Plan', *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 24 (1986), p. 3 and *Britain, South East Asia and the Impact of the Korean War* (Singapore, 2003) also see the recent book by Peter Lowe, *Contending with Nationalism: British Policy towards Southeast Asia, 1945-65: Global Conflict and Security since 1945* (London, 2009).

³¹ Tarling, 'The United Kingdom and the Origins of the Colombo Plan', p. 4.

³² B.R. Tomlinson. "'The Weapons of the Weakened": British Power, Sterling Balances and the Origins of the Colombo Plan', in *The Formation of the New International Order in Asia and the International Aid Plan*, (Tokyo, 2009), p. 54.

³³ Catherine R. Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s* (London, 1994), p. 35. This accusation was also made by Australia, which claimed that the UK was more interested in the economics than the foreign policy, see Oakman, *Facing Asia A History of the Colombo Plan*, p. 48.

³⁴ The British Cabinet even reported that, 'one of the more valuable by-products of the Colombo Plan, though not the primary objective, particularly vis-a-vis the United States, is thus likely to be that ... this problem of war-time accumulations of sterling balances will have been virtually solved.' EPC (50) 101, 27/10/1950, CAB 134/227.

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economic interests of the colonial powers.³⁵ As for India, Charrier argues that it wanted a narrowly Asian 'eastern federation led by India.'³⁶ In contrast, this research argues that India's interest in Colombo was designed to ensure that states in the region had the necessary economic stability and strength to warrant decolonisation, and to assist those recently decolonised.

Ritchie Ovendale made a start on examining Anglo-American relations in Southeast Asia, as did Merrill and McMahon. These accounts began to link the issues of Communism in Southeast Asia, with US and British policies for India, but without more than a passing reference to Colombo.³⁷ However, it was in 1993 with the publication of Anita Inder Singh's *The Limits of British Influence* that the set of British, Indian and American relationships were all considered in the same work.³⁸ Inder Singh's work, however, is directed in its focus on the British relationship with America concerning India rather than the individual set of bilateral relations. Moreover, Inder Singh gives little attention to the economic factors that underpinned the relationship and in particular fails to provide material on either the sterling balances or the Colombo Plan. In 'Playing Fairy Godfather to the Commonwealth' Ademola Adeleke raises the question of why the US ultimately bought into the plan, and argues that it was for its own political and strategic goals, informed by the Korean War, and not in support of the Commonwealth, that the US bought in.³⁹

³⁵ Charrier, 'Britain, India and the Genesis of the Colombo Plan, 1945-51'.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁷ Ritchie Ovendale, 'Britain, the United States, and the Cold War in South-East Asia, 1949-1950', *International Affairs* 58 (1982), pp. 447-64; Dennis Merrill, 'Indo-American Relations, 1947-50: A Missed Opportunity in Asia', *Diplomatic History* 11 (1987), pp. 203-26 and Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (New York, 1994). David Reynolds, in his 1988-89 article, argues that the literature of the late 1970s and 1980s was influenced by the sombre national mood in Britain as 'decline' entered the national vocabulary, which resulted in a seamier assessment of Anglo-American relations that emphasised competition as much as co-operation, 'Rethinking Anglo-American Relations', *International Affairs* 65 (1988-89), pp. 89-111. For a selection see, Ovendale, 'Britain, the United States, and the Cold War in South-East Asia, 1949-1950' and *The English-Speaking Alliance: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Cold War, 1945-1951* (Winchester, 1985); David Reynolds, 'A "Special Relationship"?: America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War', *International Affairs* 62 (1985-86), pp. 1-20; Lord Saint Brides, 'Britain, the United States and South Asia', in Wm. Roger Louis and H. Bull (eds), *The 'Special' relationship: Anglo-American relations since 1945* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 295-309; Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945* (New York, 1978); D.C. Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975* (Cambridge, 1984) and Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonisation of the British Empire, 1941-1945* (New York, 1978).

³⁸ Anita Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence: South Asia and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1947-56* (London, 1993).

³⁹ Adeleke, 'Playing Fairy Godmother to the Commonwealth: The United States and the Colombo

Whilst Adeleke examines the Anglo-American diplomacy surrounding the issue and positions it within the broader context of Louis and Robinson's Anglo-American coalition, there is extremely little on the place of India within the analysis and Adeleke fails to engage with the economic aspects of the problem.⁴⁰ Having reviewed the existing literature, there is scope for an interpretation that places India in the fore, and crucial to any analysis of India's actions in Asia is an appreciation of the threats posed by the growth of both domestic and international Communism.

'The Communist Party has been functioning in practically open revolt in certain parts of India'⁴¹

Nehru had long been committed to the economic development of India and the strength of post-war Communism served to reinforce his belief in the necessity of raising the standard of living of Asians. There were two sides to the evolution of India's stance on Communism: domestic and international, both of which were closely linked. India's international position on Communism was not an ideological stance against Communist ideals and principles, but against its expansionary moves and methods and the fundamental threat that it posed to Asian freedom. India's policy towards Communism, stability through economic and national development, was one of indirect action that reduced the chances of open conflict and aggression.

India's own domestic Communist problem was the key to its increasing realisation of the threat that external Communism posed to India itself and to Southeast Asia. Domestic Communism was the largest threat to the national project, and by May 1948 Nehru complained to his Principal Private Secretary that 'the fact of the matter is that the Communist Party has been functioning in practically open revolt in certain parts of India, indulging in violence, and sabotage and murder.'⁴² In spring 1948, Nehru was eager to publicly emphasise that the proscription of the Communist party in West Bengal and elsewhere were not directed by him, nor did they represent any change in India's international politics and should not be taken to

Plan', p. 395.

⁴⁰ Wm. Roger Louis and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Decolonisation', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22 (1994), pp. 462-511.

⁴¹ Note to Principle Private Secretary, 18/5/1948, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume II* (New Delhi, 1991), p. 180.

⁴² *Ibid.*

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mean the expression of sympathy for one bloc or another.⁴³ Despite Nehru's statement to the contrary, India agreed to assist the US by providing the particulars of known Communists in much the same way as they did with Britain.⁴⁴

Nehru's first public attack on domestic Communists came in July 1948 in the *Hindustan Times* in 'Nehru Denounces Communists' where he presented them as a threat to India's internal stability in the context of Hyderabad and the proscription of the CPI in West Bengal. Nehru provided an elucidation of his approach to combatting this insidious threat: economic recovery which in turn was dependent on the general recovery of trade.⁴⁵ Crucially Nehru still remained publicly reticent on the subject of international Communism in the face of continued criticism from Moscow.⁴⁶

By the beginning of 1949, in the domestic context, Bajpai stated in conversation with the US Ambassador that the G.O.I., after a long hesitation, had come out sternly against the Communists who were trying to create chaos in India as in other Asian countries.⁴⁷ H.V.R. Iengar (Secretary to Ministry of Home Affairs) further elucidated India's domestic take on Communism to the British, which was at the time free to operate in India apart from in Bengal. Suppression alone, he argued, was no cure for Communism and whilst there were 12,000 troops in Hyderabad, remedial economic measures were also being taken.⁴⁸

Nehru's approach to domestic Communists fundamentally influenced his opinions on how to deal with international Communism: through the amelioration of economic conditions on a national basis. In essence it was not combatting Communism, but combatting the conditions in which it thrived, namely economic hardship and the absence of national freedom. Repression was utilised in India, but

⁴³ See details of Speech on 6 April 1948, in telegram from US Embassy to State Department, 845.00B/4-478, RG 59, NARA.

⁴⁴ The US Embassy reported to the State Department that H.V.R. Iengar confirmed India's willingness to provide intelligence, 21/9/1949, 845.00B/9-2149, RG 59, NARA.

⁴⁵ *Hindustan Times*, 'Nehru Denounces Communists', 27/7/1948.

⁴⁶ S.K. Patil of the All-India Congress Working Committee also came to the conclusion that the Communists had become a menace to the internal stability of India and spent little time in sharing this view with the US, see record of Conversation with J. Jefferson Jones III, 7/9/1948, Enclosure to Despatch No. 1043, US Embassy to the State Department, 845.00/9-748, RG 59, NARA.

⁴⁷ From reported conversations between Loy Henderson and Bajpai, 16/3/1949, Enclosure to Despatch No. 240, 18/3/1949, 745.00/3-1849, R 59, NARA.

⁴⁸ Record of Conversation, Tour in New Delhi, 16-20/1/1949, Sir William Strang's Tour of Asia – Reports to Cabinet 17/3/1949', CP(49) 67, CAB 129/33.

repression without reform was directly linked in Indian public discourse with the colonial repression of the British Raj. Repression alone, Nehru and the G.O.I. feared, would continue to be used by critics to beat the government, and therefore a positive policy was needed.⁴⁹ The Government cannot 'look on supinely' when trouble was created argued Nehru, but he also expressed concern over international and domestic opinion over repression, doubting whether 'we are winning in this battle of gaining people's minds and hearts.'⁵⁰ Positive action, in conjunction with repression when necessary, therefore, was the only answer to the domestic Communist threat.⁵¹ Their actions did not fit with what Nehru saw as the 'everyday politics' of independence and the best way, Nehru also opined, to discredit the Communists in India was 'to lay stress on the violence, sabotage, terrorism, etc., and to deal with it all vigour and not to emphasise the fact of communism.'⁵² Nehru's policies represent one of the first expositions of hearts and minds tactics that he attempted to push on the British in their attempts to deal with Malaya.⁵³ Nehru's domestic problem informed and reinforced his belief that economic development was what Asia needed.

Despite any Soviet reaction, or internal criticism, the G.O.I. would not allow the Communists to undermine law, order and security in India. India's domestic Communist problem fundamentally influenced its attitude towards international Communism as Southeast Asia experienced a series of sustained Communist-inspired uprisings from Malaya to Burma. These were viewed as part of a Moscow-directed assault launched at the Calcutta Youth Conference and Communist Party of India Conference in February 1948. Thivy, the Indian Representative in Malaya, offered the view that the activities of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) were not simply a result of economic conditions or the undemocratic nature of Malaya, but that MCP actions took a firmer and stronger line of action in line with the common plan of action decided upon in Calcutta 1948.⁵⁴ India began to make much of its

⁴⁹ Nehru letter to B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, 13/5/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 11*, p. 179.

⁵⁰ Nehru to B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, 22/5/1949 in *ibid.*, pp. 181-82.

⁵¹ Nehru to B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, 23/5/1949 in *ibid.*, p. 184.

⁵² *Ibid.* For a short but informative argument based on the idea of 'everyday politics' see Dipesh Chakrabarty, "'In the Name of Politics' Sovereignty, Democracy, and the Multitude in India', *Economic and Political Weekly* 40 (2005), pp. 3293-3301.

⁵³ Nehru to B.C. Roy, Chief Minister of West Bengal, 22/5/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 11*, pp. 181-82.

⁵⁴ Additional Note from Thivy to the MoEA, 6/2/1949 in File No. MIC-1949-F.56-1/49-OSII, NAI.

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internal efforts to combat Communism to the UK and the US. In the summer of 1949, whilst emphasising that India had no sympathy for Communism when it manifested violently or in attempts to destroy states, Nehru privately made it clear that 'we have, however, consistently refrained from any activity that may be regarded as political hostility to Communist ideology as such or to communist states.'⁵⁵ Nehru's emphasis on avoiding conflict reinforced the need to combat Communism by development and through satisfying demands for national freedom. He wrote to Vijaylakshmi Pandit that the 'way to fight communism is not by armies, but by other methods and these are psychological as well as the adoption of progressive policies.'⁵⁶

India's interest in Colombo was part of Nehru's growing realisation of the complex nature of post-war international politics. The victory of the Chinese Communist Party at the end of 1949, and its recognition soon thereafter, played an important role in the continued development of India's approach in Southeast Asia. From condemning internal Communists, Bajpai privately informed Henderson in February 1950 that India disapproved of the avowed aims, activities and methods of international Communism.⁵⁷

Colombo was the first time that the Commonwealth met in Asia, although it was not, as Oakman argues, the first time that Asian members were given the opportunity to discuss their views of regional issues.⁵⁸ Nehru, for example, had previously stressed the need for a psychological counter-attack and positive measures in the economic field.⁵⁹ International Communism threatened both India's internal security, and a stable region of free nations. In Nehru's view of the situation,

⁵⁵ Nehru to Vijayalakshmi Pandit in Washington, 19/7/1949, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 12* (New Delhi, 1991), pp. 389-390.

⁵⁶ Nehru to Vijayalakshmi Pandit in Washington, 1/7/1949, in *ibid.*, pp. 408-409.

⁵⁷ Memorandum of Comments by Sir Girja Bajpai with Regard to a Draft of Memorandum Prepared by Loy W. Henderson, American Ambassador to India, Entitled 'Certain Aspects of the Foreign Policy of India', 7/2/1950, in communication from Henderson to State Department, 9/2/1950, 691.00/2-950, RG 59, NARA.

⁵⁸ Oakman, 'The Seed of Freedom: Regional Security and the Colombo Plan', p. 69. Nicolas Mansergh also notes that 'The Commonwealth had for the first time come to Asia', in 'The Commonwealth in Asia', *Pacific Affairs* 23 (1950), p. 18 as does Blackton, 'The Colombo Plan', *Far Eastern Survey* 20 (1951), p. 28.

⁵⁹ Letter from Percival Leisching (CRO) to Nye (UKHC) reporting on Nehru's closing remarks at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, 3/5/1949, DO 35/2921 and also see Minutes of the meetings, PMM (49) 6, Meeting of the Prime Ministers, 27/4/1949, CAB 133/89.

Communism 'appears to us...to come in the way of freedom', it was anti-national, he argued, and instead of concentrating on the inhabitants of Southeast Asia, the Communist movements thought 'rather of a wider world policy in which the interest of the Soviet Union are paramount.'⁶⁰ Part of Communist success in China was that they had been considered as liberators from foreign (American) interference, which had implications for Southeast Asia as Nehru argued at Colombo: 'they might be regarded as a liberating and economic rather than a military force, and we must do something to counter this.'⁶¹

The Commonwealth, Nehru argued at the London Commonwealth meeting in April 1949, 'must develop, and pursue, a positive policy for preventing war. And in Asia must take the form of removing the condition which encouraged the growth of communism.'⁶² Any moves, however, had to be undertaken in a way that did not threaten India's desire to remain outside of any bloc or treaty directed against any other. Colombo and a regional effort was also seen by Nehru as a key way to reduce the chances of international conflict, and to assert Asian primacy in solving an Asian problem as opposed to Europeans attempting to solve Asia's problems with little reference to Asians themselves.

'The Communist Victories in China have made a tremendous difference to Asia and the World'⁶³

These words from Nehru go some way towards demonstrating the profound international impact of Communist victory in China. India had to have relations with its giant neighbour with whom it shared approximately 2,500 miles of border stretching from Kashmir to Assam in the east, whatever the composition of its government, and it was Nehru's policy to engage rather than risk a confrontation with the Communist leaders of China. As early as June 1949, Nehru argued that India's approach should be one of friendly expectations and waiting to see what happens.⁶⁴ This early approach was in part based on Nehru's reading of Chinese

⁶⁰ Note by Nehru, 28/6/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, p. 370.

⁶¹ Nehru's comments at Colombo 'Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, Colombo, January 1950, Summary of Proceedings', Annex to 'The Colombo Conference', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, CP (50) 18, 22/2/1950, CAB 129/38.

⁶² PMM (49) 6, Meeting of the Prime Ministers, 27/4/1949, CAB 133/89.

⁶³ Nehru to B.C. Roy, 23/5/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 11*, p. 184.

⁶⁴ Note by Nehru, 28/6/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, p. 370.

nationalism, which he argued would eventually prove stronger than Communist doctrine, but that it would take time for the Chinese to overcome its influence.⁶⁵ Nehru provided a further elucidation of his views on China in conversation with Loy Henderson, the American Ambassador, arguing that Chiang Kai-Shek had alienated Chinese nationalism, which the Communists cleverly exploited to take over the leadership of Chinese nationalism. However, interference by Russia would be deeply distrusted and resented due to the anti-foreigner sentiment in Chinese nationalism.⁶⁶ Nehru reiterated his China approach in conversation with President Truman on his American trip in October 1949: it was an agrarian revolution that had been so mishandled by the Kuomintang that power had fallen by default to the Communists.⁶⁷ Bajpai echoed Nehru in asserting that Chinese Communism was different from elsewhere and that the Chinese and the Russians would not make happy bed-fellows.⁶⁸ This reading encouraged the notion that a friendly *modus vivendi* had to be reached, and part of this was speedy recognition of the new government. India's China policy was not, as argued by some, appeasement based on a naïve assumption that the Communist giant posed no threat, but that the best way to counter that threat was through engagement and inclusion in international and regional affairs.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 67. Also see, Record of Conversation between M.E. Dening and Nehru, 18/11/1949, Ref. CS/24C, 25/11/1949, and between Noel-Baker and Bajpai, 28/11/1949, Ref. 2180/31, DO 142/479. The policy of friendship did not, as argued by Dawa Norbu, come about as a result of the Chinese take over in Tibet, 'Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality', *Asian Survey* 37 (1997), pp. 1079-1080.

⁶⁶ Record of Conversation between Loy Henderson and Nehru, 8/2/1950, with Regard to a Draft of Memorandum Prepared by Henderson entitled 'Certain Aspects of the Foreign Policy of India', 9/2/1950, in communication from Henderson to State Department, 9/2/1950, 691.00/2-950, RG 59, NARA. Also see, Note by Nehru, 28/6/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, p. 370.

⁶⁷ Memorandum of Conversation by the Secretary of State (Acheson) between himself, Nehru, Truman and Bajpai, 13/10/1949, 845.002/10-1349, RG 59, NARA.

⁶⁸ Record of Conversation between Noel-Baker and Bajpai, 28/11/1949, Ref. 2180/31, DO 142/479.

⁶⁹ For an account that follows the line of Nehru's failure to view China as a threat based on the subsequent war between the two nations see the recent article by Sameer Suryakant Patil, 'India's China Policy in the 1950s: Threat Perceptions and Balances', *South Asian Survey* 14 (2007), pp. 283-301. Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* (London, 1972) is a must read account that debunks the myth that India was the victim of unprovoked Chinese aggression and also see his 'China and India: The Un-Negotiated Dispute', *The China Quarterly* 43 (1970), pp. 47-80. For another account that asserts Nehru's naivety see, Michael Edwardes, 'Illusion and Reality in India's Foreign Policy', *International Affairs* 41 (1965), p. 51. For other general discussions see, Hsiao-Ting Lin, 'Boundary, Sovereignty, and Imagination: Reconsidering the Frontier Disputes between British India and Republican China, 1914-47', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32 (2004), pp. 25-47; Fred W. Riggs, 'Tibet in Extremis', *Far Eastern Survey* 19 (1950), pp. 224-230; Parshotam Mehra, 'India, China and Tibet, 1950-54', *India Quarterly* 12 (1956), pp. 3-22; 'India's Border Dispute with China: Revisiting Nehru's Approach', *International Studies* 42 (2005), pp. 357-365; Mahendra 212

One vital point is that the Communist Party's victory was a *fait accompli* with the Kuomintang isolated on Formosa, and as Nehru told Thakin Nu of Burma: 'there is not much choice left in the matter and the facts of the situation lead us only to one conclusion.'⁷⁰ India argued that it was simply acknowledging fact, whereas withholding recognition could only be based on the fact that it was the Communist Party that had triumphed. In conversation with Donovan, the American Chargé, Bajpai said that whether the world liked it or not the Communists would establish themselves as the *de facto* and *de jure* government. Non-acceptance of this fact would push China towards the USSR, whereas accepting the Communists would strengthen the patriotic elements leading to an 'oriental Titoism'.⁷¹ Ignoring the fact did not mean the fact disappeared and rather than follow this line, India decided to award recognition although it delayed to allow Commonwealth consultation.⁷²

However, there was clearly apprehension in Delhi as India recognised the new Communist government in an attempt to neutralise any potential hostility. India followed a policy of friendship because their policy had to be clear, definite, unambiguous and not half-hearted.⁷³ This was to be a relationship built on attempting to develop a friendship for containment and engagement as opposed to isolation. Nehru thus emphasised to Thakin Nu that any anti-China or anti-Communist bloc in Asia had to be avoided lest it provoke the Chinese.⁷⁴ Nehru reasoned that China was not about to begin declaring war on neighbouring nations as any interference would come in the form of infiltration, agitation and would be propagandist in nature.⁷⁵ Fears of the impact of Communist victory in China on the co-ordination of insurrections in Southeast Asia were reinforced as delegates from 20 countries met in Peking under the World Federation of Trade Unions in late 1949,

Kumar, 'Sino-Indian Relations 1950-59', *International Studies* 5 (1963), pp. 21-32; K. Gopalachari, 'The India-China Boundary Question', *International Studies* 5 (1963), pp. 33-42; Norbu, 'Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality', and Guangqiu Xu, 'The United States and the Tibet Issue', *Asian Survey* 37 (1997), pp. 1062-1077.

⁷⁰ Nehru to Thakin Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, 1/12/1949, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 14, Part I* (New Delhi, 1992), p. 501.

⁷¹ Telegram No. 1105 from Donovan to State Department, 20/9/1949, 761.93/9-2049, RG 59, NARA.

⁷² Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 69. Hong Kong, the Emergency in Malaya and very large investments of approximately £300 million were the key factors involved in Britain's need to recognise China's new government.

⁷³ Nehru to Thakin Nu, Prime Minister of Burma, 7/1/1950 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 14, Part I*, p. 504.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 505.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

which concluded with a manifesto call for the millions of workers in Asia to unite and overthrow the imperialist yoke.⁷⁶ Adding to this impression, an Indian précis of the situation in Malaya reported that the MCP ‘morale got a big boost when Communist forces triumphed in China in the fall of 1949’, had the nationalist regime continued, ‘it is doubtful whether the Malayan Communists would have been able to continue for any length of time. They would have had little support from the Chinese population in Malaya.’⁷⁷ As Mark Feer notes, Communism ‘made a fine art of infiltration and subversion, and has never shown much respect for international boundaries when afforded an opportunity to extend its sway.’⁷⁸ Nehru emphasised to Bajpai that the crucial point was that ‘armies do not stop communist infiltration or communist ideas. They have to be dealt with by other methods, namely a strong stable and progressive civil government undertaking major reforms.’⁷⁹ This view of China further reinforced the lessons learned from the domestic experience with Communism.

Communist victory in China further added to the existing anxiety in Delhi over Communism and Delhi was not reticent in sharing this with both the UK and the US, as can be seen from discussions with the British High Commission. Bajpai informed Roberts (UKHC) that the Belgian Ambassador passed Nehru information which suggested that the intention of a Communist China was to set up a system of Soviet republics on the USSR’s model, starting with, amongst others, Tibet.⁸⁰ Bajpai reported that after discussions with Nehru the G.O.I. remained as anxious as the British G.O.I. to retain Tibet as a buffer state between them and China.⁸¹ In conversation with the Americans, Bajpai attempted to assuage their misgivings

⁷⁶ See the *Times of India* report, ‘Communist Plan for Revolution in Asia’, 10/11/1949, p. 1, and Milton Sacks, ‘The Strategy of Communism in Southeast Asia’, *Pacific Affairs* 23 (1950), p. 231, and also Shao Chuan Leng, ‘India and China’, *Far Eastern Survey* 21 (1952), p. 74. On the conclusion of the conference see, ‘Peking Conference: Manifesto to Asia’s Workers’, 3/12/1949, *The Times of India*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Report from the Indian Representative in Malaya, Political Report for 1952, Part One – Federation of Malaya, Chapter II – Emergency Situation, 3(44)- R&I/53, R&I Branch, Annual Reports, MoEA, NAI.

⁷⁸ Mark C. Feer, ‘India’s Himalayan Frontier’ *Far Eastern Survey* 22 (1953), p. 137.

⁷⁹ Nehru in response to Bajpai’s note of 5/10/1951 in which Bajpai argued that, ‘though a large Chinese army or a Tibetan army under Chinese inspiration and leadership may not attempt an invasion of India, the possibility of small forces dribbling through the numerous passes, and then combining to make trouble for us cannot be and had not been ruled out’, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume. 16, Part II* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 560-561.

⁸⁰ Report of conversation between Bajpai and Roberts (UKHC), 18/9/1949, No. X.1652, DO 142/177.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

whilst at the same time revealing an important component of India's decision to recognise China's new government. With other Asian nations, particularly Burma, ready to recognise Communist China, India would be in an embarrassing position if it were to be the only major Asian power not to extend recognition.⁸² As Nehru explained to fellow Commonwealth members at Colombo, India intended to show firmness with China in anything affecting her security, but otherwise to be cautiously friendly.⁸³

The British initially wanted recognition discussed at Colombo, but India sought to recognise before the end of 1949, which helped to sway Britain's timetable.⁸⁴ The reluctance of other Commonwealth members only reinforced India's decision to recognise China before the end of 1949. As Anita Inder Singh argues, an Indian memorandum set out that a delay in recognition could embitter the Communists, enable them to raise popular sentiment against foreigners and hold manifold commercial and economic problems.⁸⁵ Moreover, the existence of large Chinese communities in many countries in Southeast Asia further counselled recognition and engagement. This memorandum was, however, largely concentrated on the needs of the nations that it was sent to, as Nehru wrote to B.N. Rau: 'for us, early recognition would be simple, since we need no special safeguards to protect political or economic interests.'⁸⁶ What Inder Singh fails to recognise is that any recognition of China had to be seen as India's own decision and taken on its own

⁸² Bajpai in conversation with Henderson, 6/12/1949, reported in Telegram No. 1518, 893.01/12-649, RG 59, NARA.

⁸³ Record of Nehru's comments at Colombo 'Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, Colombo, January 1950, Summary of Proceedings', Annex to 'The Colombo Conference', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, CP (50) 18, 22/2/1950, CAB 129/38.

⁸⁴ CM (49) 72 Conclusions, 15/12/1949, CAB 128/16. For Britain on Chinese recognition see, Ritchie Owendale, 'Britain, the United States and the Recognition of Communist China', *The Historical Journal* 26 (1983), pp. 139-158; W.C. Wolf, "'To Secure a Convenience": Britain Recognizes China – 1950', *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (1983), pp. 299-326; Lanxin Xiang, 'The Recognition Controversy: Anglo-American Relations in China, 1949', *Journal of Contemporary History* 27 (1992), pp. 319-343; James T.H. Tang, 'From Empire Defence to Imperial Retreat: Britain's Postwar China Policy and the Decolonisation of Hong Kong', *Modern Asian Studies* 28 (1994), pp. 317-337 and Wm. Roger Louis, 'Hong Kong: The Critical Phase, 1945-1949', *The American Historical Review* 102 (1997), pp. 1052-1084.

⁸⁵ Whilst this memorandum is instructive, Inder Singh provides no details of its location in the archives, *The Limits of British Influence*, p. 69. There is a copy of what one assumes is the memorandum in question in the *Selected Works* collection. The memorandum was sent to Britain, the US, Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka and Burma on 20/11/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 14, Part I*, p. 513.

⁸⁶ Nehru to B.N. Rau, Head of Indian Delegation to the UN, 25/9/1949 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 13* (New Delhi, 1992), p. 269.

terms to a timetable of its devising, and thus whilst extensive consultation took place, the final act was individual: the art of window-dressing was again practised by India. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had, in fact, expressed concern over any independent action on India's part, arguing rather to act as members of the Commonwealth, the UN or in mutual concert with other powers, as India did not 'stand to gain anything substantial' from early recognition.⁸⁷ Patel's strength of feeling about the process of recognising Communist China moved him to take the unusual step of discussing foreign affairs with the American diplomat Donovan.⁸⁸ Patel expressed his concerns that a Communist China, with Burma collapsing and Tibet vulnerable, presented grave problems for India as Donovan dismissed the notion that swift recognition would be rewarded with goodwill. Indian apprehension over the timing of recognition was evident as Nehru responded to concern from Patel and argued that it would be valuable for India to recognise earlier than the rest of the Commonwealth, but in consultation with them, as India could not recognise China after the rest of the Commonwealth for if it did so 'it would mean that we have no policy of our own, but follow the dictates of other countries.'⁸⁹ Following this line of argument, Nehru told Patel that recognition had to come before the planned Colombo Conference so as to maintain India's independence in foreign affairs and avoid accusations of India following the lead of other Commonwealth members. This was India's recognition in consultation with other powers rather than a joint recognition.⁹⁰

Communist victory in China brought Communism ever closer to India's border with Tibet and India's largely-undefined borders with China, which helped define India's policy of positive engagement. 'In view of developments in China', Nehru decided to keep in close contact with reactions in Tibet and acknowledged the need to formulate a policy.⁹¹ Nehru continued to express his desire to see an autonomous Tibet under Chinese suzerainty as had been customary during the Raj.⁹²

⁸⁷ Patel to Nehru, 6/12/1949, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973), pp. 86-87.

⁸⁸ Donovan to State Department, Telegram No. 1366, 4/11/1949, 893.01/11-449, RG 59, NARA.

⁸⁹ Nehru to Patel, 6/12/1949, in Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII*, pp. 87-88.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Nehru's Note to Foreign Secretary, 5/6/1949, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 11*, p. 389.

⁹² Nehru to V.K. Krishna Menon, 18/8/1950, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 15, Part I* (New Delhi, 1993), p. 429.

K.P.S. Menon's also informed the US that small arms exports to Tibet would continue but Nehru refused to supply any large quantity of arms to the Tibetans, and as Bajpai told the British, there was no chance of India engaging in any military adventure in Tibet.⁹³ India also strengthened its existing security arrangements in the border regions.⁹⁴

India's border policy emphasised that its territorial integrity was sacrosanct and this was a large contributory factor in its decision to pursue a policy of friendly engagement with China, which extended to campaigning for Chinese entry into the UN Security Council, whilst attempting to strengthen the buffer states on India's northern borders. For example, having lost the traditional outer-buffer of Tibet, India had to strengthen the inner-buffers, including, of course, Nepal with which India signed a Treaty of Friendship in February 1950.⁹⁵ In addition, India had suggested to the Nepalese Government that it needed to strengthen itself from Communist infiltration warning that unless more enlightened reforms were enacted they might fall prey to internal Communist-inspired uprisings.⁹⁶

After large numbers of Chinese troops entered Tibet in the autumn of 1950, Bajpai told Phillip C. Jessup that India was not as enthusiastic about China and was concerned by Tibet.⁹⁷ Nehru remained adamant that India's territorial borders be respected and he wrote to K.M. Panikkar that 'our position is first of all that our frontiers with Tibet, that is the McMahon Line, must stand where they are... There is no room for controversy on that matter.'⁹⁸ This defence of national boundaries was publicly repeated in the Lok Sabha: 'The McMahon Line is our boundary, map or no map. We will not allow anybody to come across that boundary.'⁹⁹ In November

⁹³ K.P.S. Menon in conversation with Donovan, Henderson to State Department, Deptel. 914, 10/1/1950, 793B.00/1-1050, RG 59, NARA and Note to G.S. Bajpai from Nehru, 9/7/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, pp. 410-411 and see Record of Conversation between Noel-Baker and Bajpai, 11/12/1949, F/19390, FO 371/76026.

⁹⁴ Feer, 'India's Himalayan Frontier', p. 138.

⁹⁵ India also signed a similar treaty with Bhutan in August 1949, see Norbu, 'Tibet in Sino-Indian Relations: The Centrality of Marginality', p. 1080. For a concise contemporary exposition of the buffer zone problem see, Feer, 'India's Himalayan Frontier', and also Riggs, 'Tibet in Extremis'.

⁹⁶ Henderson in Conversation with Bajpai, reported in Telegram No. 1488, 2/12/1949, 893.00 Tibet/12-249, RG 59, NARA.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation between Bajpai and Ambassador at Large Philip C Jessup, 26/1/1952, 691.00/1-2652, RG 59, NARA.

⁹⁸ Nehru to K.M. Panikkar, 25/10/1950, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 15, Part I*, p. 438.

⁹⁹ The Lok Sabha replaced the Constituent Assembly see Parliament of India, *Parliamentary Debates, Official Report*, 20/11/1950, cited in Feer, 'India's Himalayan Frontier', p. 138.

1950, India persuaded the UK and the US not to debate Tibet in the UN as, Guangqiu Xu argues, Nehru thought debate on the issue would not produce results.¹⁰⁰ The reasons that it would not produce results are the most revealing: there was physically nothing that any power could do to enforce any potential sanctions: Communist China was not represented at the UN; and India's overall policy of friendship towards China and any UN action on Tibet could have implications for India's own Kashmir problem. Any action over Tibet could of course had have had an impact on the situation in Korea and risk being included in the settlement of Korea. El Salvador condemned Chinese aggression in the General Assembly in November 1950, and with all eyes on India their delegate simply expressed the hope that the two parties would reach a peaceful settlement.¹⁰¹ India's reaction to the occupation of Tibet was not determined by a lack of realisation of the geographical and strategic consequences as argued by Parshotam Mehra, but rather by the dual realisation that nothing could physically be done to prevent it and that the best way to combat any further Communist encroachment in Asia was to trust in fruits of economic improvement and political freedom whilst fully engaging with China.¹⁰²

India's Neighbour: Burma

India's commitment to ensuring stability in bordering countries was first demonstrated by its willingness to provide funds for Burma in concert with the UK.¹⁰³ The funds were designed to help the central government stabilise the country largely against the Karen insurrection and Communist activities and to enable the purchase of essential supplies of rice. After Burma first requested aid in January 1949,¹⁰⁴ Commonwealth ministers met in February and again in April 1949 to discuss Burma and Britain and India decided to assist Thakin Nu's government with arms and financial support as a short-term measure whilst pushing for further

¹⁰⁰ Xu, 'The United States and the Tibet Issue', p. 1063.

¹⁰¹ Mehra, 'India, China and Tibet, 1950-54', p. 11.

¹⁰² Mehra, 'India's Border Dispute With China: Revisiting Nehru's Approach', p. 358.

¹⁰³ Much work remains to be carried out on Burma's place in India's early foreign policy as there is a real lack of well-researched history, but the annals of *Far Eastern Survey* and *Pacific Affairs* do go some way to providing a contemporary analytical narrative. Indian assistance, as was noted in Britain, would simply come from India's sterling balances, so in effect from the UK, see record of meeting at the Foreign Office, attended by both Denning and Nye, 24/5/1949, F8338/G, FO 371/76034.

¹⁰⁴ See 'Financial Assistance to Burma', EPC (49) 5, 22/1/1949, CAB 134/221.

dialogue with opposition forces.¹⁰⁵ Although this offer was rebuffed, Burma again requested assistance, again accepted, although India's share of any assistance would be small.¹⁰⁶ With no agreement reached by the time of the Colombo meeting, the issue was again tackled, where again India offered £1 million, the largest contribution after Britain's £3.75 million and the loan agreement was signed in June 1950.¹⁰⁷ India's financial contribution to Burma was from its own reserves in the form of the sterling balances.

India feared that continued chaos in Burma would threaten its commercial interests and potentially trigger a flood of Indian residents in Burma back to India's Eastern states, which were already overstretched with refugees from partition. Most importantly, however, was Burma's position as a net exporter of rice, 40 per cent of the world's exportable surplus; India purchased 50 per cent of its imports from Burma as did Ceylon and Malaya received 40 per cent of its imports.¹⁰⁸ Rice imports into India and Pakistan were already half the level of the 1930s and any reduction would further stress food supplies and affect prices and may have necessitated further dollar expenditure for foodstuffs. Burma's crop was exported through the state monopoly State Agricultural Marketing Board which had to purchase the crop from producers, but with the collapse of pre-war credit channels the finance had to be found through other channels. The sale of rice also provided the Burmese Government with crucial sterling funds as Burma remained a member of the Sterling Area on leaving the Commonwealth. Indian assistance to Burma, as part of a Commonwealth initiative, demonstrated the lengths to which it was willing to go to secure its regional neighbours. India's interest in Burma, as with the regional as a whole, was shaped by events in China.

¹⁰⁵ Matthew Foley, 'Post-Colonial Transition, Aid and the Cold War in South-East Asia: Britain, the United States and Burma, 1948-62', PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007, p. 92. The attempt to link the two issues of aid and a roundtable conference with the Karen ultimately proved too much for the Burmese government which rejected the offer.

¹⁰⁶ UKHC to CRO, No. X1817, 20/10/1949, F15863, FO 371/75704. For timing of this request see Nicholas Tarling, *Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Cold War* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 351.

¹⁰⁷ Foley, 'Post-Colonial Transition, Aid and the Cold War in South-East Asia: Britain, the United States and Burma, 1948-62', p. 101.

¹⁰⁸ Foreign Office Briefs for Bottomley, 1/2/1949, F2051/1151/79G, FO 371/75693 cited in *ibid.*, p. 70.

Indian Fear of Readjustment

With the deteriorating international situation, the Communist threat was exploited by India in an attempt to extract funds from both the UK and US.¹⁰⁹ One such example of this comes from a conversation between Franks Roberts of the British High Commission and Bajpai in the context of continued Communist victories in China, where Bajpai argued that 'with Communist danger threatening Asia it was essential for India to be economically as strong as soon as possible.'¹¹⁰ India, moreover, left no time in emphasising its financial needs to the British as Nehru's trip to the US approached, arguably under the impression that the British would make a case for India.¹¹¹

The problem of development in South and Southeast Asia, which was increasingly accepted as the only viable solution to the spread of Communism, was closely connected to the existence of the sterling balances. From the very accumulation of the sterling balances, India feared that under economic strain Britain would unilaterally cancel the debt, and with devaluation at the close of 1949, the prospect was once again raised. The Anglo-American loan agreement of 1945, in fact, had committed Britain to seek a mutual readjustment with the holders of the balances and the economic strain on Britain. India was at the centre of connection between development and sterling for two main reasons: it was the largest holder of balances, and was regarded as the key to South-East Asian regional co-operation. From before the Bombay Plan in 1944, India had remained determined to utilise the balances for economic development.¹¹² India, however, was eager to maintain the settlement of the sterling balances on a bilateral basis, rather than as part of some global financial settlement, for fear of losing out in any blanket readjustment.

In tandem with the Colombo talks, the sterling balances remained a central topic of discussion between the US, Britain and also Canada as all three worked

¹⁰⁹ Telegram from UKHC New Delhi to CRO Reporting Conversation with Bajpai, No. X 1653, 17/9/1949, DO 35/2921.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² P. Thakurdas, J.R.D. Tata, G.D. Birla, A. Dalal, S. Ram, K. Lalbhai, A.D. Shroff, and J. Matthai, *Memorandum Outlining A Plan of Economic Development for India: Parts One and Two* (Part One first Published 1944, both parts published in London, 1945).

towards a solution to the dollar shortage.¹¹³ At Tripartite talks in September 1949 there was broad acknowledgement that the balances had served the purpose of supporting much of Asia in the post-war years. It was also recognised, however, that Britain was unable to maintain releases at such a high rate.¹¹⁴ The twin issues of a resolution of Britain's and the Sterling Area's dollar problem and defending Asia from Communism through development formed a centre-piece of British conversations with the US during 1949-50. At the conclusion of the meetings a public memorandum of understanding stated that the sterling balances required further investigation.¹¹⁵

However, India and the other members of the Commonwealth had no representation at these meetings, had no input into the discussions and were only partially informed of the conclusions of the meetings. India and Pakistan both complained vociferously at Colombo that discussions vitally affecting their interests were being conducted, and decisions potentially made without prior or adequate consultation.¹¹⁶ This led to calls for all Sterling Area and Commonwealth governments to be fully informed of all negotiations and talks as it vitally affected their interests.¹¹⁷ These Indian and Pakistani complaints continued when British officials visited Delhi after Colombo despite an undertaking to furnish the Commonwealth with select information and timely consultation.¹¹⁸ Talks, the Commonwealth was informed, would continue in the spring after further detailed investigation.

Anglo-American discussions did indeed continue in the spring of 1950. Whereupon details of a potential partial cancellation were leaked, by the Americans Schenk argues, which prompted resentment from India at continued lack of adequate

¹¹³ See Ursula Lehmkuhl, 'From Conflict to Cooperation: Anglo-American Diplomacy in Search of a Postwar Design for Asia and the Pacific, 1945-1953', *American Studies* 38 (1993), pp. 83-97.

¹¹⁴ 'Report of the Washington Tripartite Talks', telegram from CRO to UKHC, No. 187, 1/10/1949 and also see 'The Washington Discussions, 7-12th September 1949', Memorandum by the Chancellor, CP (49) 101, 20/9/1949, CAB 129/36.

¹¹⁵ The intricate negotiations between the UK and the US are not examined in depth here as the key focus of the chapter is India's actions. The best way to examine these negotiations is through the *FRUS* series, the RG 59 series at NARA and through the files of the British Foreign Office.

¹¹⁶ See Report from Colombo, 'Discussions at Colombo on Washington Talks', Telegram No. 23, 11/1/1950, T 236/2686.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Minute by Sir Herbert Brittain (Treasury), 1/2/1950, T 236/2687.

consultation.¹¹⁹ In light of these rumours, V. K. Krishna Menon sent Cripps the following demands continuing the themes from Colombo: that India be sent all of the memoranda that had been sent to the US and Canada; that before anything else was discussed, India should be allowed to put its side of the story forward and that in the future Britain keep India informed of all matters and approach India for her reactions to any proposals and allow her to make her views known to the other participants.¹²⁰ Cripps responded to these complaints by asserting that no actions could be imposed on any balance holder, and reminded the G.O.I. that:

Over the last few years we have given many signs of our intention to deal honestly and justly with India in this matter...There is our sympathetic treatment, year by year, of the question of releases - often in the face of much criticism here, in reply to which we have not held back from making India's case clear. We have also firmly resisted any suggestion for drastic action - such as unilateral cancellation or the pressing of "counter-claims"- which would be as distasteful to us as it would be unacceptable to India. We feel that, in return, we are entitled to pursue the subject, for the time being, in the way we propose and to ask the Government of India to believe that its interests will not be in the least prejudiced thereby.¹²¹

This dialogue demonstrates that India remained nervous about continued access to its sterling balances, which fed into Indian willingness to engage in the Colombo Plan, and as Matthai reported India had, 'made it clear that there can be no question of any scaling down of these balances and they must be fully available for restoring the health to our economy.'¹²² In May 1950, despite British efforts to persuade the US to fund the sterling balances as part of a development package in Southeast Asia, Acheson informed Britain that there could be no linking of American development aid with a settlement of the sterling balances.¹²³ In light of this refusal, the British decided to continue as they had done since the war by negotiating releases with each holder, which would now be influenced by financial plans associated with any submissions to the Commonwealth Consultative Committee.¹²⁴ Britain thus proposed to proceed by discussing with 'India ... a scheme of releases over, say, the

¹¹⁹ 'Note: The Views of the Government of India on the Tripartite Talks', 27/4/1950, T 236/2691. Also see, Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s*, p. 36.

¹²⁰ Copy of note sent by Menon to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 21/4/1950, DO 142/229.

¹²¹ Note on the Sterling Balances on 26 April communicated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the High Commissioner for India in reply to the HC note of 21 April 1950, DO 142/ 229.

¹²² Matthai press release No.1438 from New Delhi, 28/4/1950 found in DO 142/229.

¹²³ Schenk, *Britain and the Sterling Area: From Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s*, p. 36.

¹²⁴ 'The Sterling Balances', Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, EPC (50) 58, 23/5/1950, CAB 134/296.

six-year period 1951-57 ... the period envisaged for the development programme to be drawn up as a result of the Sydney Conference.’¹²⁵ With this diverse context examined, let us turn to the meetings that eventually resulted in the Colombo Plan.

Nehru remained selective in his choice of international conferences; for example India initially refused to accept an invitation to a conference proposed by the Philippine President Quirino to discuss the situation in Southeast Asia in spring 1949. He refused to send representatives to a proposed meeting because, as he explained to Vijaylakshmi Pandit, it could not be divorced from an earlier conference with Chaing Kai-Shek and South Korea that resulted in a joint communique announcing a united front against Communism with scope for further consultation and a broadening of the front.¹²⁶ As the invitation from Quirino failed to preclude this subject from the conference it could be either honestly regarded or misrepresented as the promotion of some form of anti-Communist bloc in Asia.¹²⁷ Nehru was, in essence, only prepared to take anti-Communist measures on his own terms that did not impinge on his desire to keep clear of commitments. India, did however, grudgingly acquiesce to attend the Baguio conference from 26-30 May 1950, which is all but forgotten in the narrative of Asian co-operation but is significant as the first gathering of fully independent states of Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific on a governmental level.¹²⁸

Prime Minister Senanayake of Ceylon, acting on advice from London, sent invitations to his fellow Commonwealth members for the already roughly-scheduled Foreign Affairs meeting in Colombo in January 1950.¹²⁹ As set out above, the

¹²⁵ ‘Next Steps on the Sterling Balances’, Treasury note with annotation from Liesching, 10/6/1950, DO142/229.

¹²⁶ Letter from Nehru to Vijaylakshmi Pandit, 19/7/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, pp. 389-90. For the text of the communique see, Telegram from the American Charge d’affaires Philippines (Lockett) to Secretary of State, Manila, 12/7/1949, *FRUS* Vol. 7, Part II, 1949, pp. 1154-1155 and for confirmation of India’s initial refusal see, Telegram No. 833 from Henderson to State Department, 23/7/1949, 890.20/7-2349, RG 59, NARA.

¹²⁷ Letter from Nehru to Vijaylakshmi Pandit, 19/7/1949 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 12*, pp. 389-90 and see, Estrella D. Solidum, ‘Regional Co-Operation and ASEAN: The Philippine Experience’, *Asian Journal of Political Science* 5 (1997), p. 54.

¹²⁸ The conference is more fully integrated in the historiography of the post-war foreign policy of the Philippines, for example see Solidum, ‘Regional Co-Operation and ASEAN: The Philippine Experience’.

¹²⁹ See ‘Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, Colombo, January 1950’, annex to ‘The Colombo Conference’, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs’, CP (50) 18, 22/2/1950, CAB 129/38.

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beginning of the process of Commonwealth consultation can be found in October 1948, continuing through to William Strang's tour in early 1949 and the Commonwealth meeting in April 1949 where Nehru committed India to continuing its membership of the Commonwealth. In July 1949 Nehru had suggested that the question of what assistance other Commonwealth countries could give should be discussed in Ceylon, 1950.¹³⁰ Moreover, at the beginning of 1949, the Ambassadors of India, Australia, the UK, and the US met informally to discuss the consequences of a Communist Chinese victory, and it was here that K.M. Panikkar presented his ideas for the establishment of consultative machinery for economic co-operation and upon which the delegates reached a tentative consensus.¹³¹ K.M. Panikkar wrote that 'I thought the time had come to formulate a policy which would strengthen the economic, social and political structure of the area ... I wrote a memorandum the main argument of which was that without immediate and adequate help in the economic field, the political structure of South-East Asia would provide no more than a frail barrier to the expansion of communism.'¹³² Despite his admission that 'the proposals in that memorandum formed the basis of the discussions of the discussions which led to the Colombo Plan, Panikkar was only another, albeit important, voice in the chorus calling for constructive action.'¹³³

The Commonwealth link was crucial as India had to be seen to be involved in Commonwealth discussions and actions in Asia, to be taking a lead on Asian questions or risk being locked out of any regional co-operation, even if in public its role was emphasised far less than behind closed doors. Following his stance on the interconnectivity of development, national freedom and Communism at the Commonwealth meeting in April 1949, Nehru enthusiastically accepted the invitation from Ceylon to attend a meeting in Colombo in early 1950 for a discussion of Commonwealth foreign affairs. Subsequently, the Government of Ceylon were duly informed that Nehru welcomed the idea for the first half of January 1950.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Record of Meeting at the Foreign Office, 20/7/1949, DO 35/2921.

¹³¹ The American Ambassador (Stuart) reported to the State Department that a consensus had been reached and included a copy of the memorandum, Stuart to Secretary of State, No. 59, 8/3/1949, 890.00B/3-849, RG 59, NARA.

¹³² K.M. Panikkar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (London, 1955), p. 55.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹³⁴ Monthly Summary No.41, for Month Ending 14 November 1949, dated, 23/11/1949, Ministry of External Affairs, Monthly Summaries, File No. 12(155)-Pt/49, NAI.

Australia and Ceylon, as some historians argue, claim the provenance of the specific proposal for co-operative development, but Nehru opened the discussions on both of the key topics at the conference: China and Southeast Asia.¹³⁵

As the conference opened in early 1950, India suggested that as host Senanayake take the chair and preside over the proceedings, not only to follow custom, but to reinforce that the meeting was being held in Asia, discussing Asian problems with the consent and participation of Asian nations. After this Nehru opened the discussions on Southeast Asia with his oft-repeated advice that there must be a complete removal of foreign domination from the region and the solution of its pressing economic problems.¹³⁶ Far from the Colombo meeting overcoming Indian opposition as Remme argues, India was a most active participant and presented its views which were largely in line with the UK and the rest of the Commonwealth.¹³⁷ Continued foreign domination, Nehru further opined, was comparable to American influence in China, and may have the same impact in Southeast Asia.¹³⁸ Nehru, however, added a rider to his analysis of East-West relations when prompted by Bevin stating that he did not wish to see the West go from Asia, but he welcomed co-operation, what had to go was domination and control over Asian affairs.¹³⁹

The meeting covered a range of topics from recognition of China to the Japanese Peace Treaty. On the issue of Southeast Asia and Communism, Nehru argued and was echoed by MacDonald, that success would only come with the dual satisfaction of both the urge for political freedom and the urge for economic betterment. Which of the two would come first was a point that Nehru did not attempt to answer.¹⁴⁰ The conference subsequently drew to a close with the intention to meet soon after to further discussions on economic development in South and Southeast Asia under the aegis of a Commonwealth Consultative Committee. At

¹³⁵ Nehru's comments at Colombo 'Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, Colombo, January 1950, Summary of Proceedings', Annex to 'The Colombo Conference', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, CP (50) 18, 22/2/1950, CAB 129/38.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Remme, *Britain and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*, p. 211.

¹³⁸ Nehru's comments at Colombo 'Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs, Colombo, January 1950, Summary of Proceedings', Annex to 'The Colombo Conference', Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, CP (50) 18, 22/2/1950, CAB 129/38.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

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Colombo, therefore, one of Nehru's strategies to free Asia of Western domination was to emphasise the detrimental impact of the European presence in Asia on halting of the spread of Communism. Nehru, moreover, attempted to use the spread of Communism to help extract development aid and technical assistance from the more developed members of the Commonwealth. For the British, part of the aim in the ideological battle was to persuade Asians that their interests would be best served by democratic development in association with the West. This also rings true to a certain extent for Nehru's thinking as his aim was to see the development of independent nation-states without imperial influence of any kind and that emphasised the primacy of national development. Nehru fully endorsed the ideas discussed at Colombo with its aim of promoting regional co-operation and Asian co-operation with the West through economic development and even its anti-Communist hue as long as this was not presented as the sole motor behind the Commonwealth's actions. India's approach was confirmed by the first meeting in Colombo about which Bevin wrote 'There was...a remarkable unanimity of view as to the menace of communism and as to the necessity of improving the standard of life and the social welfare of the peoples of South and South-East Asia in order to combat this menace.'¹⁴¹ Nehru's approach also provides further evidence that however much India viewed Communism as a threat it could be exploited in dealings with the Commonwealth and also the US. Despite British intentions for the plan to secure its interests in Southeast Asia, India took part in an effort to gain materially from the exercise and to promote its ideas of regional policy.¹⁴²

As ever, the G.O.I. was conscious of public opinion and in public interviews and statements at the close of the conference, Nehru presented Colombo as 'satisfactory', emphasising the mutual free exchange of opinions and that no formal agreements had arisen, underplaying the scope of the Conference.¹⁴³ As with all of India's international affairs, Nehru and the G.O.I. sought to present their actions to the public and to the Chief Ministers in the Provinces as upholding the independence of India whilst furthering its influence. *Candidus* in *The Times of India* noted that 'Pandit Nehru's achievements were substantial both before and after he arrived in

¹⁴¹ 'The Colombo Conference', Memorandum by Ernest Bevin, CP (50) 18, 22/2/1950, CAB 129/18.

¹⁴² Remme provides the most accomplished account of Britain's Colombo policy, *Britain and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*.

¹⁴³ 'Scope of the Colombo Talks, No Formal Pacts', 13/1/1950, *The Times of India*, p. 1.

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Colombo', referring to Chinese recognition, assistance to Burma and a forestalling of recognition to Bao Dai, but there was also a minor reference to 'something like an informal Marshall Aid to Asia programme.'¹⁴⁴ In addition, Nehru reported to his Chief Ministers:

The Commonwealth Conference held in Colombo did not arrive at any startling conclusions. Nor was it expected to in spite of what the press wrote about it. These conferences are for mutual consultation and mutual understanding from which, of course, a measure of co-operation results. But each country represented there is an independent country and has ultimately to decide for itself. The questions discussed were recognition of the new China, the situation in Indo-China, the Japanese peace treaty, aid to Burma, and economic help to South and South-East Asian countries.¹⁴⁵

Colombo, moreover, was used to publicly justify India's foreign policy more generally as at the opening of the Lok Sabha in January 1950, India's first as a Republic, when Nehru emphasised Colombo and the Commonwealth as examples of friendly, constructive discussion without any derogation of national sovereignty.¹⁴⁶

Nehru remained anxious lest Australian motivations at the Sydney meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee be misconstrued by others as an attempt to build an anti-Communist bloc. Nehru wrote to Bajpai that 'our delegation must be warned against falling into this trap...we are not going to make ourselves parties to the creation of what might be called an anti-communist bloc in South East Asia.'¹⁴⁷ The aim was to combat Communism, the roots of Communism, but could not be seen to be anti-Communist.

Nehru pushed and exploited fears of Communism to support the furtherance of national development, both economically and politically. In communication with Bajpai Nehru added that 'to talk about raising economic standards in order to counter Communism is the wrong approach' and he explained that 'The grace of the act goes and the people might be benefit feel that this is incidental to some other and more

¹⁴⁴ 'Indian Political Notes: Balance Sheet of Colombo Conference', 19/1/1950, *The Times of India*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁵ Nehru to Chief Ministers, Letter 2 dated 18/1/1950 in G. Parthasarathi (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 2, 1950-1952* (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 3-9.

¹⁴⁶ Text of statement in UKHC to London, Telegram No. 374, 1/2/1950, DO 142/479.

¹⁴⁷ Nehru's note to General Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, 6/5/1950, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 14, Part II*, p. 438.

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opportunistic purpose.’¹⁴⁸ Part of this approach is due to the fact that Nehru did not want development to be seen solely as the answer to Communism but for the improvement of living standards in Asia as an end in itself. Focussing on Communism, Nehru added, ‘puts the question of economic help to South East Asia in the sphere of political controversy and conflict.’¹⁴⁹ Development, rather, should be seen as a legitimate aim in its own right, argued Nehru.

As decided at Colombo, the Consultative Committee first met in May 1950 in Sydney where the members decided that the best course of action was to draw up country-by-country development plans with India as a key participant. The second meeting was a meeting of officials rather than foreign ministers, and it is here that development as an end in itself, rather than its primary aim being to halt Communism, was emphasised.¹⁵⁰ With development leading to stable national units enshrined as the means to combat Communism and as the purpose of the Consultative Committee, there was little discussion of this aspect despite Nehru’s fears. Nehru thus sought to keep Colombo joint communiques at the least abstract and away from any direct discussion of individual Communist countries. Nehru’s reluctance to associate India’s recognition of Communist China with the Colombo meeting fits within this aim, and served to separate any positive action at Colombo from any discussion of Communism in specific countries in public.

Moreover, India desired to keep development primarily within the purview of the nation-state, and to utilise development as a means for the strengthening of nascent national unity through the removal of economic inequalities. At Sydney, the Australians attempted to push too quickly by suggesting the establishment of an immediate emergency fund, the idea of which was disregarded by both India and Britain as both countries wanted to focus on long-term planning.¹⁵¹ The Sydney conference decided that in light of the desperate need for technical assistance then a Commonwealth Technical Assistance Scheme would be set up immediately, funded largely by Britain, but also with a smaller contribution from India.¹⁵² The crucial

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ For a report on the conclusion of Sydney see, ‘Sydney Talks End in Agreement: Technical Aid Fund to Operate Immediately: Next Conference to be held in London’, *The Times of India*, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ Oakman, *Facing Asia A History of the Colombo Plan*, p. 49.

¹⁵² ‘Commonwealth Consultative Committee on Economic Development in South and South-East

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decision made at Sydney, however, was that each participating country prepare its proposals for a six year development programme to begin in 1951 based on an agreed questionnaire. These plans would then form the basis of a further Consultative Committee meeting in London in late 1950. Although the idea behind Colombo was some form of regional co-operation, or at least the semblance of co-operation, the second meeting enshrined the primacy of the nation-state in the process: 'in the preparation of their statements, it would be left to the countries themselves.'¹⁵³

Nehru was, however, frustrated at the progress in Sydney as is evidenced in his communication with his Chief Ministers: 'Both conferences [Colombo and Philippines] dealt, rather vaguely, with these subjects and no immediate picture of co-ordinated help has appeared', Nehru continued, 'We attended both these conferences, but we made it clear that we were not joining any group hostile to another group.'¹⁵⁴ June 1950 marked the beginning of the Korean War and the threat of escalation into global war, and this had two marked effects: one was to strengthen the need and desire for some form of psychological assault against the poverty of Asia, but it also made it more imperative than ever for Colombo not to be seen as an explicitly anti-Communist and anti-China measure. Moreover, it reinforced his belief in India's significant role as a bridge between the West and East.¹⁵⁵

With the principle of designing long-term six year plans agreed upon and after the US comprehensively rejected British attempts to link the settlement of the balances to development in South and Southeast Asia, Britain decided to follow the traditional path of arranging bilateral releases on a six year basis to coincide with the length of Colombo.¹⁵⁶ However, India and Britain both remained hopeful that the US

Asia: Sydney, May 1950', Memorandum by the Paymaster-General, CP (50) 123, 16/6/1950, CAB 129/40.

¹⁵³ 'Report of British Commonwealth Consultative Committee, Sydney, 19th May, 1950' Ref. CC/SY/Rep.1/Rev/1, Annex to 'Commonwealth Consultative Committee on Economic Development in South and South-East Asia: Sydney, May 1950', Memorandum by the Paymaster-General, 16/6/1950, CP (50) 123, CAB 129/40.

¹⁵⁴ Nehru's letter dated 30/5/1950 in Parthasarathi, *Jawaharlal Nehru, Letters to Chief Ministers, 1947-1964, Volume 2*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁵⁵ Korea falls outside the remit of this study largely because there is already a large corpus of literature devoted to the Korean War which manages to adequately examine India's role, for a good introduction see Inder Singh, *The Limits of British Influence*.

¹⁵⁶ 'The Sterling Balances', Memorandum by The Chancellor of the Exchequer, EPC (50) 58, 24/5/1950, CAB 134/225. Sir Percival Liesching envisaged, 'a scheme of releases over...the six-year

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would become more involved in Colombo.¹⁵⁷ India's Planning Commission had been in operation since April 1950 and at the second meeting of the Consultative Committee meeting in London in September 1950, the third Colombo meeting in total, India presented a scheme for consideration that impressed the other delegates and set the tone for the proceedings. India's plan placed emphasis on agriculture, and estimated that a sum of £1381 million would be spent over a six year period, with external finance meeting £608 million of the costs.¹⁵⁸ Hugh Gaitskell recorded that 'As at Sydney, the Indian delegation made a great impression, and their developmental programme, which was brilliantly expounded and defended, set the tone for much of the report....In almost every question which arose, Mr. Deshmukh could be relied upon to take the commonsense line.'¹⁵⁹

During the proceedings, Britain privately indicated to delegates that it would be willing contribute approximately £300 million from the accumulated sterling balances.¹⁶⁰ Deshmukh and Gaitskell met in London at the close of September 1950 and subsequently Gaitskell reported that informal negotiations had been proceeding in parallel with Colombo talks. Agreement was reached that India's future releases of sterling, at £35 million per year, would be in line with India's expected needs for the Colombo Plan.¹⁶¹ £35 million per annum, was broadly in line with what Britain had indicated it was capable of contributing to India's Colombo plan, which was based on the six-year timetable and the fact that the remainder of the balances had to be kept in currency reserve.¹⁶² The agreement, to come into force in July 1951, also

period 1951-57...the period envisaged for the development programme to be drawn up as a result of the Sydney Conference', 'Next Steps on the Sterling Balances', 10/6/1950, DO 142/229.

¹⁵⁷ See UKHC to CRO, 15/5/1950, DO 35/2923.

¹⁵⁸ See 'Colombo', Note by Cripps, September 1950, EPC (50) 88, CAB 134/296.

¹⁵⁹ 'Economic Development in South and South-East Asia: Report on the Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee', Memorandum by Chancellor Hugh Gaitskell, Annex description of the conference proceedings, EPC (50) 101, 27/10/1950, CAB 134/227.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* and 'Colombo Plan', Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Commonwealth Relations Secretary and Minister of state for Colonial Affairs, C (51) 51, 20/12/1951, CAB 129/48. The British had accepted that based on India's past drawings on the balances, its balance of payments would need the support of approximately £50m a year, see Annex to draft paper 'India's Sterling Balances', by Sir H Brittain (Treasury), UE/E169/2, 31/8/1950, FO 371/82963.

¹⁶¹ 'Economic Development in South and South-East Asia: Report on the Meeting of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee', Memorandum by Chancellor Hugh Gaitskell, Annex description of the conference proceedings, EPC (50) 101, 27/10/1950, CAB 134/227. Also see 'Sterling Releases to Finance Colombo Plan' 20/3/1951, *The Times of India*, p. 1.

¹⁶² S.L.N. Simha, *History of The Reserve Bank of India, Volume 1, 1935-51* (Bombay, 1970, Reprint 2005), p. 628.

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transferred to the Reserve Bank of India a sum of £310 million to act as India's currency reserve, but which was not to be drawn upon without prior discussion with London. At the end of 1951, the issue of outstanding balances had largely been solved, and by the end of the Colombo Plan, Pakistan, Ceylon and India's holdings of sterling would be at a level that could serve as the minimum currency backing and reserve.¹⁶³

Deshmukh underplayed the potential benefits to India from the Colombo Plan to the press in London and noted that 'People in India are particularly happy to be associated in these labours because of India's centuries-old friendly interest in our neighbours of South-east Asia.'¹⁶⁴ In doing so he emphasised India's active role as a participant rather than as a recipient. The agreed report of the Consultative Committee, containing all of the development plans, was made public and only after this could details of the sterling agreement be released so as to keep the two issues separate.¹⁶⁵ The Indian Finance Minister's statement on the sterling balances agreement, moreover, made no links to the agreed schedule of the Colombo Plan and chose to focus rather on the flexibility of the carry over feature of the new agreement. This carry over ensured that India's access to her sterling balances would not be lost if, for example, in any given year her balance of payments entered a surplus and thus provided crucial support over a six year period.¹⁶⁶ There are several potential reasons for this approach: first, in light of US reluctance to connect the issues of development and balances, it was considered wise to keep the two separate in public and secondly the G.O.I. were reluctant that balance releases be seen as a British contribution to India's national development. What Deshmukh failed to recall, however, was that he had given his understanding that the agreement would have to be abrogated if economic circumstances took a turn for the worse.¹⁶⁷ Whilst it was by no means the only factor in India's decision-making process, the

¹⁶³ 'Sterling Balances', Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, C (51) 57, 20/12/1951, CAB 129/48. The Cabinet paper explaining the London meeting noted that 'this problem of war-time accumulations of sterling balances will have been virtually solved.' EPC (50) 101, 27/10/1950, CAB134/227.

¹⁶⁴ 'Development of South-East Asian Countries: Commonwealth Talks on £1,725 Million Plan', 26/9/1950, *The Times of India*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ India replied to the British Government through the High Commission, UKHC to CRO, No. 3290, 24/11/1950, DO 35/2684.

¹⁶⁶ Text of the Indian Finance Minister's Statement to Lok Sabha, 8/12/1950, UKHC to CRO, No. 3427, DO 35/2684.

¹⁶⁷ Commented on in the British Cabinet as they authorised the balances settlement that had largely been agreed with the previous Labour Government, CC (52) 14th Conclusions, 8/2/1952, CAB 128/24. 231

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availability to utilise her remaining sterling balances must be taken into consideration, especially when in the context of the fear of cancellation. The Colombo Plan submitted by India later became the First Five-Year Plan, and as such had to be emphasised as a national effort, a national plan, and as such the G.O.I. insisted that British contributions to the Colombo Plan in the form of sterling releases were not classed as contribution from Britain but as a repayment of debt. The US sent observers to the London meeting¹⁶⁸ and interest in Colombo increased throughout 1950, with Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, Burma and Indonesia attending the London meeting in various capacities. Indo-China joined the Consultative Committee in 1951, Burma and Nepal in 1952, Indonesia in 1953, Thailand and the Philippines in 1954 with the Japanese also joining as donors in 1954.

The hope that demonstrating a willingness to act would bring US aid on board was partly realised after the outbreak of the Korean War, as in November 1950 the Americans joined the Consultative Committee and ‘began to draw closer to the real ideals of the Colombo Plan.’¹⁶⁹ At the end of 1950, with the publication of the Colombo Plan imminent, the US agreed to association with the Colombo Plan and let it be known that it would be desirable if non-Commonwealth countries were also invited.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, with India’s need clearly set out, the \$4.5 million Indo-American Technical Agreement was signed in December 1950 which was followed by the Wheat Loan Act Bill after its tortuous journey through Congress.¹⁷¹ As David Lowe argues, by November 1950 the US decided to link some of their own aid with the work of the Consultative Committee.¹⁷²

The final Consultative Committee Report, as agreed by all members, began with the important psychological message for Asia:

The peoples of Asia have long left the pressure of poverty and hunger.

¹⁶⁸ Oakman, *Facing Asia A History of the Colombo Plan* (Canberra, 2010), p. 56.

¹⁶⁹ Harry F. Bangsberg, ‘The United States and the Colombo Plan’, *India Quarterly* 15 (1959), p. 133.

¹⁷⁰ Dean Acheson to Embassy in London for communication to the British Government, 22/11/1950, 890.00/11-2250, RG 59, NARA.

¹⁷¹ Dennis Merrill, *Bread and the Ballot: The United States and India’s Economic Development, 1947-1963* (Chapel Hill and London, 1990), p. 3. The key text on this remains R.J. McMahon, ‘Food as a Diplomatic Weapon: The India Wheat Loan of 1951’, *Pacific Historical Review* 56 (1987), pp. 349-77.

¹⁷² Lowe, ‘Percy Spender and the Colombo Plan’, p. 166.

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While the realisation of self-government could not of itself relieve this situation, it has made possible a new approach to the problem of raising living standards through the vigorous development of national resources. Among the peoples of Asia hopes and aspirations have been raised by the plans of their Governments to secure a fuller life for them.¹⁷³

The emphasis was on the national, and there was no direct mention of a Communist threat. The rhetoric of the plan satisfied both Indian sensibilities and the demand for developmental assistance on a national level, provided bilaterally for the development of national economies. The closing words of the report are as close to an admission of the anti-Communist nature of the plan as can be found:

In a world racked by schism and confusion it is doubtful whether free men can long afford to leave undeveloped and imprisoned in poverty the human resources of the countries of South and South-East Asia which could help so greatly, not only to restore the world's prosperity, but also to redress its confusion and enrich the lives of all men everywhere.¹⁷⁴

These efforts were not simply about anti-Communism, but about the beginnings of some form of regional co-operation in the pursuit of a common goal to improve the economic situation of Asia, which in turn was part of the process of decolonisation. As part of this, India provided technical assistance and training to other members of the Colombo Plan, so was not all about what she could get, but also about what she could contribute. *The Times of India* reported that in 1955 India was providing technical training for 190 Nepalese, 46 from Ceylon, 2 from Malaya, 21 from the Philippines, 12 Burmese, 15 Indonesians, 29 Pakistanis with 8 from Thailand and 2 from Vietnam.¹⁷⁵ These figures represent an effort by the Indian state in its belief in the circulation of 'government technologies' which strengthened the primacy of the developmental state.¹⁷⁶ The list also demonstrates the appeal of Colombo as it was extended to non-Commonwealth countries from the end of 1950.

Conclusions

The key contribution that this chapter makes to the existing historiography is

¹⁷³ 'Final Report of the Commonwealth Consultative Committee on South and South-East Asia about Co-operative Economic Development', October 1950, EPC (50) 105, CAB 134/226.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ 'Lok Sabha Questions', 7/12/1955, *The Times of India*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ See Sunil S. Amrith for his exposition of what he argues were the two meanings of internationalism in the 1950, 'Asian Internationalism: Bandung's Echo in a Colonial Metropolis', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6 (2005), pp. 557- 569.

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to provide a study of India's role in the formation of the Colombo Plan in the context of the Cold War and colonialism in Southeast Asia. This chapter emphasises Indian agency in the process and demonstrates that there were several parties involved in the Colombo Plan and there were several agendas at work. This analysis does not argue that Indian influence was decisive in the formulation, but rather that Indian views were fundamental in shaping the course of Commonwealth actions in Southeast Asia. The eventual structure of the Colombo Plan, with the emphasis on bilateral assistance based on well-reasoned individual projects, was at once shaped by India and enabled India to participate. Economic co-operation was supported by Nehru as a means to forestall the need for military or political pacts and agreements in Southeast Asia, and this fact was key in the formulation of British designs for regional co-operation.¹⁷⁷

The Colombo Plan, provided an answer to Communism based on Nehru's own reading of the situation and his belief in the power of economic improvement translated into support for the initiative. The general purpose of the plans was to increase the annual production of food above the annual rate of population increase, thereby ensuring food supply was not outstripped by population growth, which would lay the foundations for future economic development and growth through industrialisation.

This research also demonstrates that the two issues of Communism in Southeast Asia and a resolution for a more fruitful use of the sterling balances developed separately, and dovetailed in late 1949-early 1950. The Colombo Plan was not exclusively designed as a solution to the sterling balances. Colombo also possessed the potential as a conduit for the flow of American aid to the region. India, furthermore, managed to receive an assurance on its sterling balances linked to its own development plans and to regional efforts at economic improvement and co-ordination, and likewise saw the provision of Technical Assistance organised and provided within the purview of national plans for development.

Indian involvement, both psychologically as a democratic Asian power and as a member of Commonwealth, was crucial and significant, for without Indian

¹⁷⁷ For an example of this see, Foreign Office meeting to discuss aid to Asia attended by Nye and Denning, 24/5/1949, F8338/G, FO 371/76034.

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involvement Colombo would have had little credibility with other Asian nations. In addition, involvement allowed India to present itself as a regional player and as an alternative model to Communism. The Commonwealth approach to a certain extent meant that others were able to take the lead once India had let its ideas be known, and in doing so India received the benefits without the risks and without compromising its professed stand of neutrality. Economic co-operation was the only form of involvement that India was willing to engage with and this was well-known to the British and the Commonwealth.¹⁷⁸ Regional economic co-operation, it is argued, ensured India's core national interests and also advanced the cause of anti-colonialism and development as an integral part of nation-building. For India, Colombo served a dual purpose: it assuaged a genuine anxiety at the spread of Communism, but it also served India's purpose for securing development aid and generally raising living standards as development was employed to save Asia for democracy. The fear of Communism was a convenient means with which to secure funding for development.

Colombo sought to forge some form of regional co-operation, or at least the semblance of co-operation, but the second meeting in Sydney enshrined the primacy of the nation-state in the process: 'in the preparation of their statements, it would be left to the countries themselves.'¹⁷⁹ India not only received vital technical assistance as part of the Colombo Plan but also gave assistance to Southeast Asian nations: it was an active participant in the Plan.¹⁸⁰ India was also able to present itself as a compassionate regional power based on its participation. The key to Colombo's success was the very fact that the Colombo Plan was not a plan, but a framework in which national development plans could take advantage of bilateral aid and technical assistance. Although one of the aims of development was removing the evils that Communists thrived on and exploited, Nehru refused to present it in those terms to Asians and instead he urged the virtue of development in itself rather than as a means to an end.

¹⁷⁸ Nye argued as much in a Foreign Office meeting to discuss aid to Asia, 24/5/1949, F8338/G, FO 371/76034.

¹⁷⁹ 'Report of British Commonwealth Consultative Committee, Sydney, 19th May, 1950' Ref. CC/SY/Rep.1/Rev/1, Annex to 'Commonwealth Consultative Committee on Economic Development in South and South-East Asia: Sydney, May 1950', Memorandum by the Paymaster-General, CP (50) 123, 16/6/1950, CAB 129/40.

¹⁸⁰ D.P. Barooah, *Indo-British Relations, 1950-1960* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 262.

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India saw the opportunity of economic development as a means of promoting and managing decolonisation, with the economic development of countries in Southeast Asia increasing their resistance to Communism at the same time as progressing towards self-government, which India argued was the key to fighting Communism. Economic progress and political stability was the key mantra behind the Colombo Plan and was vitally informed by India's reading of the situation in Southeast Asia. Every move India made in regard to China, from Tibet to Panscheel was designed to keep China as 'friendly' as possible and to neutralise any threat from across the border. The contested nature of the border, inherited from the British, itself partly determined this policy.

The crucial point to emphasise is that Britain had come to terms with the fact that any regional efforts in Southeast Asia could not go ahead without Delhi's approval and involvement.¹⁸¹ Remme's analysis, despite its valuable contribution to the historiography of post-war British policy, focuses so tightly on British efforts that it neglects to examine any Indian agency. It must be re-emphasised that this is not a history of the development of British or Australian regional policy, as much of the existing literature attempts to present Colombo in this way, but rather it is an effort to examine India's crucial role. It is an analysis of India's growing realisation of the threats of Communism and how it could be employed to secure and further India's own interests in Southeast Asia.

¹⁸¹ Remme, *Britain and Regional Cooperation in South-East Asia, 1945-49*, p. 212; 'Britain, the 1947 Asian Relations Conference, and Regional Co-operation in South-East Asia', in A. Gorst, L. Johnman and W. Scott Lucas (eds), *Post-War Britain, 1945-64: Themes and Perspectives* (London, 1989), pp. 109-134 and also see Ovendale, 'Britain, The United States, and the Cold War in South-East Asia, 1949-50'.

7) ‘Halt this Cannibalism! Severing the Heads of Liberation Fighters’¹: Colonial Legacy and Colonial War, India, Britain and Gurkha Recruitment for Malaya

As the colony of Malaya experienced a sustained rebellion directed by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the Gurkhas of the British Army were put into action in the jungles of the peninsula. The Gurkhas had constituted an integral part of the Indian Army since the beginning of the nineteenth century and were employed in theatres world-wide during the following 150 years. In reaction to this practice, the Indian National Congress (INC) deplored the use of ‘foreign mercenaries’ in the Indian Army, in addition to protesting against the use of the Indian Army abroad. Such was the Indian opposition that in 1945 Nehru warned Nepal about permitting the Gurkhas to be used for the suppression of Asian freedom movements.² With the transfer of power in 1947, the sobering practicalities of power overcame the ideology of Congress opposition and India, the UK and Nepal agreed on a tripartite framework for the continued use of troops by both the Indian and British armies.³

In the face of Nepalese refusal of the British request for recruitment depots on its soil in 1947, the G.O.I. allowed the British use of existing depots in India on a temporary basis. They also assured crucial transit rights so that Gurkhas could leave Nepal’s landlocked borders. The nascent nationalist parties in Nepal followed the lead of the INC’s old pronouncements of opposition and criticised the recruitment of Nepalese nationals into the British Army. These objections aroused domestic support despite the fact that the recruitment of Gurkhas ensured a level of stability through its economic benefits that were vital for the largely rural Nepalese economy.⁴

With the departure of the British from South Asia, the traditional relationship of the Raj to Nepal was little altered, as the inheritor G.O.I. remained the closest

¹ Headline in *Cross Roads* Volume 4, No.4, 16/5/1952, see enclosure to letter from Summerhayes (British Ambassador to Nepal) to Foreign Office, 12/6/1952, FN 1201/17, FO 371/101156 and *Cross Roads* 3/8/1952, FN 1201/34, FO 371/101157.

² Telegram from Kathmandu to FO, No. 34, 22/1/1951, F 1201/12, FO 371/92916 and ‘Reaction in India to Events in Indonesia’, Reported from New Delhi, *Manchester Guardian*, 25/11/1945, p. 5.

³ As one British official noted ‘for political reasons the leaders of the Indian National Congress used to declaim that they would never employ “foreign mercenaries” in the Indian Army when they came to power but readily forgot those declarations when the time came to put these into practice.’ See Telegram from Kathmandu to FO, No. 34, 22/1/1951, F 1201/12, FO 371/92916.

⁴ See Mary Des Chene, ‘Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gorkhas as Diplomatic Currency’, *South Asia Bulletin* XIII (1993), p. 72.

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partner of Nepal, and for all intents and purposes guaranteed Nepalese security as a means to defend India's north-eastern border region as the British had done. The importance of Nepal's geographical position was reinforced by Communist China's annexation of Tibet, and was demonstrated in the Treaty of Peace of 1950 signed by Nepal and India. India's China policy was not based on a calculation that the Communist giant posed no threat, but that the best way to counter that threat was through friendly engagement and inclusion in international and regional affairs, India's policy was in part determined by the need to maintain friendly relations across their large shared border and to limit Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.⁵ The loss of the traditional outer-buffer of Tibet meant India had to strengthen the inner-buffers, including Nepal.⁶ India saw Nepal as part of its sphere of influence and in view of Tibet, Nehru wrote, reform was needed in Nepal and delaying would invite trouble.⁷ The G.O.I. further suggested to the Nepalese Government that it needed to strengthen itself from Communist infiltration and warned that unless more enlightened reforms were enacted they might fall prey to internal Communist inspired uprisings.⁸ India, in essence, had no desire to have domestic chaos in such a strategically vital area as Nepal.⁹

Nepal's fluid political situation with the relative decline of the Rana regime and the rise in influence of the Nepali Congress, necessitated that the King step in and restore a sense of political stability. Throughout these troubles Nehru and the G.O.I. played an influential and co-ordinating role as a tutor to Nepal ensuring a level of political and economic stability. With the failure to reach any sustainable agreement between the Congress and Ranas, the King ruled in an interim capacity with an Advisory Council from late 1952 and so all criticism for decisions rested

⁵ See the chapter on the Colombo Plan for an examination of India's early China policy and for a recent, if somewhat unbalanced, account of India's threat perception of China see that follows the line of Nehru's failure to view China as a threat based on the subsequent war between the two nations see the recent article by Sameer Suryakant Patil, 'India's China Policy in the 1950s: Threat Perceptions and Balances', *South Asian Survey* 14 (2007), pp. 283-301. Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* (London, 1972) is a must read account that debunks that myth that India was the victim of unprovoked Chinese aggression.

⁶ Also see, Shao Chuan Leng, 'India and China', *Far Eastern Survey* 21 (1952), pp. 73-78 and Mark C. Feer, 'India's Himalayan Frontier', *Far Eastern Survey* 22 (1953), pp. 137-141 and the chapter on the Colombo Plan in this thesis.

⁷ Nehru to B.C. Roy, 30/9/1950, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 15, Part I* (New Delhi, 1993), pp. 469-470.

⁸ Henderson in Conversation with Bajpai, reported in Telegram No. 1488, 2/12/1949, 893.00 Tibet/12-249, RG 59, NARA.

⁹ Record of Conversation between Bajpai and Ambassador at Large Philip C Jessup, 4/2/1950, 691.00/2-452, RG 59, NARA.

with him alone.

As Malaya fell into the chaos of the MCP rebellion, the Gurkhas supported existing British troops. These highly trained soldiers not only possessed experience in jungle warfare, but were considerably closer to the Malayan theatre than British reinforcements if, in fact, British troops could be found at all in the grip of the post-war manpower shortage. Nehru was willing to tolerate British colonialism's survival in Malaya temporarily, as opposed to an aggressive and militant Communism as examined earlier in this thesis. Tacit support of the British in Malaya thus served Nehru's immediate aim of securing stability in Southeast Asia. It also supported the longer-term aim of the development of a world of independent, democratic states, as the G.O.I. was reluctant to see Communist influence, Chinese Communist influence, spread throughout Southeast Asia, which was an area it considered vitally important. A stable Malaya also ensured the continued supply of dollars and strength to both the Sterling Area and to India.

The use of Gurkhas in Malaya was not without its problems in India as political opponents, the leftist press, members of the Congress Party and the public more generally became increasingly opposed to Indian complicity, through the Tripartite Agreement of 1947, in the recruitment of Gurkhas for the British fight in Malaya. In the eyes of the public and official parliamentary opposition, whatever the political hue of the MCP, assisting Britain in their need for Gurkhas was equated with facilitating the maintenance of British imperialism in Southeast Asia. This sensitivity was evident in the Indian response to British enquiries about an increase in Gurkha numbers when the Indian Ambassador in Nepal explained that they had to tread carefully before the first post-independence elections in 1952 and avoid criticism in relation to the Gurkhas.¹⁰ The Gurkha issue, moreover, threatened to confirm the condemnation of those who opposed India's membership of the Commonwealth in 1949, and more generally India's foreign policy. Criticisms from political opponents, the press and the public focussed around two newspaper articles in *Cross Roads*, the first of which accused the G.O.I. of complicity by its maintenance of the Tripartite Agreement, and the second exposed the fact that the depots on Indian soil were still being used for enlistment, a fact that Nehru had flatly

¹⁰ Note from British Ambassador Nepal to Foreign Office, Despatch No. 31 (2265/47), 22/9/1951, FN 1203/73, FO 371/92919.

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denied previously. Nehru was attacked not only for allowing the British to impinge on Indian sovereignty, but also for going against to the anti-imperialist sentiments of the nation.

Nehru was, therefore, placed in a delicate position by these criticisms against Gurkha recruitment, and was faced with three competing pressures that had to be balanced: sustained opposition on the domestic front, the necessity to maintain a level of stability in Nepal and the demands of the British fighting the MCP in Malaya, which ultimately helped to secure stability in Southeast Asia. It is these three competing pressures that the chapter focuses on as it explores the G.O.I.'s attempts to reach a resolution to the problem of Gurkha recruitment. The line of action Nehru chose to take was to facilitate the transfer of all Gurkha recruitment facilities to Nepal. It is to this aim that the G.O.I. worked from August 1952 - May 1953 under sustained criticism from domestic political opponents and public opinion more widely. The exercise was essentially one of political window-dressing, designing a settlement that was acceptable to all parties without fundamentally altering the principle of recruitment as established by the Tripartite Agreement. In order to achieve this aim the chapter employs newly-released British documents to integrate the Gurkhas in to the wider history of both Indian regional and international relations.¹¹ The recruitment of Gurkhas was a legacy of imperialism that was thrown into stark relief by the rebellion in Malaya and the challenge to Nehru's claims to an anti-colonial, and to a certain extent, a non-aligned foreign policy that the situation had produced. There is, moreover, a very limited historiography pertaining to the recruitment of Gurkhas. Therefore the focus of the chapter is on placing the issue of Gurkha recruitment in something other than the military history tradition.¹² Whilst Yuri Nassenko narrates that the Lok Sabha called Nehru up on the Gurkhas, he takes the story no further and offers no contextualisation.¹³ The Tripartite Agreement, the

¹¹ The Foreign Office files regarding the recruitment of the Gurkhas remained, for the most part, classified until they were released after review in 2006. The initial release dates for FO 371/92916-19 ranged from 2027-28; for FO 371/101156-59 were set in 2028, and FO 371/106872-76 were closed for 50 years. The work by Raffi Gregorian, *The British Army, the Gurkhas and Cold War Strategy in the Far East, 1947-1954* (London, 2002) was the last major work that addressed, albeit briefly, the topic of recruitment, but it was unable to take advantage of the newly released CRO and FO documents and thus relied on sources mainly from DEFE.

¹² The only two examples that really examine the politics of the recruitment are Des Chene, 'Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gorkhas as Diplomatic Currency' and Gregorian, *The British Army, the Gurkhas and Cold War Strategy in the Far East, 1947-1954*.

¹³ Yuri Nassenko, *Jawaharlal Nehru and India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 170.

relationship between India and Nepal and the state of Nepalese politics in the early 1950s are examined to provide the essential context for discussing the Gurkhas. The investigation will subsequently turn to the criticisms the G.O.I. faced from parliamentary opposition, the press and public opinion, which in turn leads us to the reactions of the G.O.I..

The Tripartite Agreement 1947

The Gurkhas formed some of the most combat-experienced and formidable units in the Indian Army, and with the transfer of power both Britain and India sought to retain their services and the right to recruit troops in Nepal. This continued recruitment was welcomed by the Nepalese Government as a secure revenue stream, a mechanism to reduce unemployment and a means to maintain political stability. As the transfer of power approached, British use of the Indian Army in foreign wars, especially Indonesia, threatened to derail any future agreement between the UK and Nehru over the continued use of Gurkhas in the British Army. Discussing the Indian population's adverse stance on Gurkhas, Nehru reasoned with General Montgomery that it was the 'the past that had produced the present psychological approach of our people.'¹⁴ This meant that 'anything that we might do and which might lead to the continuation of the old tradition of Gurkha troops for imperial purposes would be subject to adverse comment in India.'¹⁵ Internationally, Nehru asked Montgomery to consider, given the psychological background of the issue, not only how Indians would see it, but how Southeast Asia in particular would perceive it if India facilitated the use of Gurkha troops for the British.¹⁶ Nehru was, however, aware of British difficulties and verbally agreed to ensure certain facilities and transit rights for the continuation of British recruitment. Montgomery finally reasoned with Nehru that the Gurkhas were necessary as a reserve for emergencies and British commitments in the Far East and that 'these troops would not be used locally and certainly not against peoples' movements for freedom.'¹⁷ With this assurance, the interim Indian Cabinet accepted a paper by Nehru on the topic which led to the

¹⁴ Nehru's note on Conversation with Sir Terence Shone (UKHC) and Viscount Montgomery (CIGS), 23-24 June 1947 – Despatch No. 63, New Delhi to London, 28/6/1947, L/S&G/7/1253, IOR.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Sir Terence Shone (First High Commissioner to India) to Clement Attlee, No.63, 24/6/1947, PREM 8/537, cited in Gregorian, *The British Army, the Gurkhas and Cold War Strategy in the Far East, 1947-1954*, p. 40.

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commencement of negotiations with the Nepalese.¹⁸

After Britain and India had worked negotiated a settlement, a Tripartite Agreement was signed between both parties and Nepal in November 1947, assuring a division that allowed twelve battalions to remain part of the Indian Army with the 8 battalions entering British service.¹⁹ India provided crucial transit rights for the Gurkhas through Indian territory so they could leave landlocked Nepal and serve overseas. Certain depot facilities were also granted as the Nepalese had refused to grant Britain the right to establish facilities inside Nepal. With the conclusion of the agreement, Nehru commented to the Constituent Assembly that the G.O.I. 'have agreed to grant His Majesty's Government certain necessary facilities, such as, the use, as a temporary measure, of the existing depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum.'²⁰ From its very inception the operation of the Agreement was contingent upon the goodwill of the G.O.I., especially regarding transit rights. The Agreement was, however, not a binding treaty but a gentlemen's agreement, and could be abrogated if the Nepalese found themselves at war, or if one of the signing parties denounced the agreement.²¹ Both Britain and India, therefore, had a shared interest in the continuance of a stable Tripartite Agreement that ensured the flow of recruits to both armies.

The Gurkhas replaced the Indian Army as the core of British expeditionary forces East of Suez and represented an integral part of the forces combating the MCP, representing 8 out of a total of 23 total battalions in 1952. Therefore, it was critically important that Gurkha services were retained for the British Army.²² With the departure of the British from South Asia, India's influential relationship with its

¹⁸ Nicolas Mansergh (ed.) with Penderel Moon, *The Transfer of Power, Volume XII: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty: Princes, Partition and Independence, 8 July-15 August, 1947*, No. 320, 2/8/1947 (London, 1983), pp. 486-487. It is also interesting to note that such an important issue was handled by the Indian cabinet so close to the transfer of power.

¹⁹ CRO letter to the FO, from Brigadier R. Gordon, 16/11/1949, F17390, FO 371/76271. The theoretical numbers were 75,000 troops for India and 15,000 for the UK see footnote two in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 19* (New Delhi, 1996), p. 621. India also initially took a larger contingent of Gurkhas on loan, which proved useful in Kashmir against Pakistan and in Hyderabad and as Shri Ari Bahadur Gurung commented in the Constituent Assembly, 'the Gurkhas have played their part in the preservation of the independence of India and are now actually fighting in Kashmir after fighting in Hyderabad. They have had their share of the work in the preservation of India's independence.' Tuesday 30 November 1948, Volume VII, last accessed 30/6/2010 on <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/debates.htm>.

²⁰ Nehru repeating his 10/12/1947 Constituent Assembly statement in 1952, UKHC Delhi to CRO, No. 984, 8/8/1952, FN 1201/26, FO 371/101156.

²¹ Minute by R.H. Scott (FO SEA Department), 19/2/1951, F 1201/21, FO 371/92916.

²² Colonial Secretary reporting to Cabinet, CC (52) 107, 22/12/1952, CAB 195/11.

smaller neighbour was instrumental in securing the continued flow of recruits. India's relationship with landlocked Nepal was determined by a combination of historical legacy and geography, and as Nepal's political system developed erratically India's influential position was utilised to ensure Nepal's political stability. For Nehru there were two key strands to this crucial political stabilisation: the King and the Nepali Congress.²³ As for economic stability, the Gurkha troops that served in both the Indian and British armies represented Nepal's most valuable commodity and a key revenue source and provided vital employment for those living in the Kathmandu Valley. Before the Second World War some 45-50 lakhs rupees went to Nepal for pensions and some 125 lakhs rupees went to the Gurkhas directly, much of which found its way back to Nepal.²⁴ As Nehru told Alexander Clutterbuck, the British High Commissioner: 'the economic and social benefits' would largely inform the decision of Nepal.²⁵ These benefits would inform the decision but not determine its outcome.

Nepal was situated in a strategically important position in the Himalayas, between the north-eastern border of India and Tibet. India's interest in the stability of Nepal was further reinforced by the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 that brought Communism to the frontiers of Nepal and India and posed a threat to the northern borders of India and the stability of the Himalayan region and South Asia more generally. On reflection, Nehru argued that although the chances of a large-scale Chinese invasion of Nepal or India 'can be ruled out even as a remote contingency', there could be petty troubles in the border regions that could be solved by check posts and other measures.²⁶ Nehru emphasised to Bajpai that the crucial point was that 'armies do not stop communist infiltration or communist ideas. They have to be dealt with by other methods, namely a strong, stable and progressive civil

²³ Letter from Nehru to M.P. Koirala, 21/6/1952 in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 18* (New Delhi, 1996), p. 492.

²⁴ Comment on Draft Paper, Draft Paper from Foreign Secretary to H.M. Minister Nepal, c.1935, L/P&S/12/3017, IOL, cited in Des Chene, 'Soldiers, Sovereignty and Silences: Gorkhas as Diplomatic Currency', p. 72.

²⁵ UKHC to CRO, No. 1336, 28/10/1952, FN 1201/102, FO 371/101159.

²⁶ Nehru in response to Bajpai's note of 5/10/1951 in which Bajpai argued that, 'though a large Chinese army or a Tibetan army under Chinese inspiration and leadership may not attempt an invasion of India, the possibility of small forces dribbling through the numerous passes, and then combining to make trouble for us cannot be and had not been ruled out', in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 16, Part II* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 560-561. Nehru's words would of course ring hollow a decade later as China invaded Indian territory on a large scale.

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government undertaking major reforms.²⁷ Nehru further elucidated his thoughts about Nepal's strategic value in conversation with Clutterbuck, commenting that there 'was always the question of Tibet or China across the border which might take advantage of any step which could be utilized for public agitation in Nepal.'²⁸ For Nehru, the stability of Nepal was essential for regional security and for protecting India's borders.

The Treaty of Peace, signed in 1950, formalised the India-Nepal relationship in so far as each state pledged to inform the other of any misunderstandings with neighbours (namely China). Nepal also agreed to accept Indian aid in the event of aggression (again, namely China as no other power could threaten Nepal over land). The relationship extended to the economic plane with India supporting Nepalese economic development with contributions through the Colombo Plan.²⁹ An Indian Military Mission reorganised the Nepalese Army whilst the Indian Air Force surveyed the country³⁰ and in April 1952, with the Nepali Congress in an active coalition government, the King and Congress leader M.P. Koirala further reinforced their dependence upon their neighbour and de facto tutor by asking for a mission of civil servants.³¹ Further to the Treaty of Peace and the Civil Mission it was agreed between M.P. Koirala and Nehru during January 1952 that the defence and foreign policies of India and Nepal would be closely co-ordinated.³² For his part, Nehru wanted to keep foreign powers out of Nepal as far as possible and warned M.P. Koirala about approaching the US for assistance.³³ Nehru, in fact, wanted to supply

²⁷ Nehru in response to Bajpai's note of 5/10/1951 in which Bajpai argued that, 'though a large Chinese army or a Tibetan army under Chinese inspiration and leadership may not attempt an invasion of India, the possibility of small forces dribbling through the numerous passes, and then combining to make trouble for us cannot be and had not been ruled out', in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 16, Part II*, pp. 560-561.

²⁸ Nehru in note to Secretary-General MoEA, 7/1/1953, reporting on conversation with the High Commissioner, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 21* (New Delhi, 1997), pp. 522-524.

²⁹ India was a fully involved participant in the Colombo Plan and evidently exploited the initiative for its own purposes of supporting stability in Nepal to prevent the spread of Communism both from its own financial resources but more importantly by using Commonwealth aid to stabilise Asia.

³⁰ Werner Levi, 'Nepal in World Politics', *Pacific Affairs* 30 (1957), p. 239.

³¹ Nehru's interim talks with Nepalese officials, 21/4/1952 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 18*, p. 481. Nehru agreed to send some assistance, and the idea of the mission was to reform the administrative machinery of Nepal and stabilise the government and was in addition to a military mission requested by the King in February 1952, see letters Nehru to King Tribhuvan, 25/4/1952 and Nehru to M.P. Koirala, 21/6/1952 in *ibid.*, pp. 487 and 494.

³² Letter from Nehru to M.P. Koirala, 25/4/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 486.

³³ *Ibid.* Nehru also warned the King against consulting with foreign powers without India's advice and experience, Nehru to King Tribhuvan, 25/4/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 488.

Nepal as far as possible from Indian resources partly borne out of a fear of American penetration of Nepal and any concomitant Chinese reaction.³⁴ The fear of foreign (non-Indian) influence in Nepal is also further reflected in Nehru's stern warnings about the use of foreign (non-Indian) personnel in Nepal which was reiterated to the Nepalese several times.³⁵

Nepal's political structure was in a state of flux from 1945 with the relative decline of the Rana regime and the increasing strength of nationalism. The Nepali Congress was the main opposition body to the Rana regime that had held sway over Nepal with tacit British support, with the King as figure head.³⁶ The Rana's power, entrenched since 1846, was in swift decline whilst the influence of the Nepali Congress was on the increase. Within this fluid system the King of Nepal, a figurehead since 1846, took central stage as a stabilising and unifying factor in Nepalese politics with the full support of the G.O.I.³⁷ This new union represented the largest expression of popular political opposition in Nepal and in terms of policy goals, alongside the democratisation of Nepal, the Nepali Congress favoured 'the closest relationship with India and would not tolerate the penetration of Nepal by foreign influences, political, economic, or military.'³⁸ Crucially for the recruitment of Gurkhas, the Nepal National Congress expressed its abhorrence at the practice of recruitment protesting as early as March 1949. They argued 'against the policy of allowing Gurkhas to be recruited in the British Army. It is reactionary and shameful; smacks of dependent status. The Nepal Government is advised to give up this practice forthwith.'³⁹ Further evidence of the aversion to recruitment was displayed

³⁴ Nehru to Foreign Secretary, 28/5/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 489. In 1949, the Indian Ambassador in Nepal complained to Patel of the continuing influence of the British, which Patel agreed needed to be lessened. See letter from Surjit Singh Majithia to Patel, 26/4/1949, in Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50, Volume VIII, Foreign Policy in Evolution-Constitution Making-Political and Administrative Problems* (Ahmedabad, 1973), p. 38, and Patel's response 9/5/1949, p. 39.

³⁵ Nehru to M.P. Koirala, 21/6/1952 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 18*, p. 494; Nehru to M.P. Koirala, 25/4/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 486 and Note to Foreign Secretary, 'Anglo-American Activities in Nepal', 21/6/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 495.

³⁶ The Nepali National Congress, the predecessor organisation of the Nepali Congress, was established in Calcutta in 1946 under the organisation of two brothers, Bishewar Prasad Koirala and Matrika Prasad Koirala. The Nepali National Congress joined forces with the Nepali Democratic Congress (established in 1948 by Mohandra Vikaram Shah and Surya Prasad Upadhyaya) in the spring of 1950 to form the Nepali Congress with M.P. Koirala as its first president, although a rump Nepali National Congress party remained in existence, Werner Levi, 'Government and Politics in Nepal: I', *Far Eastern Survey* 21 (1952), p. 187.

³⁷ For a brief introduction see, Asad Hussain, *British India's Relations with the Kingdom of Nepal, 1857-1947: A Diplomatic History of Nepal* (London, 1970).

³⁸ Levi, 'Government and Politics in Nepal: I', p. 188.

³⁹ Major-General Bijaya Shamsheer Jung Bahadur Rana handed the clipping to the British Ambassador

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when the Congress was briefly in power. Under pressure from the other Nepalese opposition parties, in particular the Communists, M.P. Koirala announced that he would recall all Gurkhas serving abroad, but added that the process would be gradual due to economic considerations.⁴⁰

Within this political flux, the G.O.I. made it known that their favour lay with the Nepali Congress and that it was time for the Ranas to relinquish power. In the turbulent months after a failed Nepali Congress takeover bid, the leader of the Nepali Congress, at this point, U.R. Upadhaya, in November 1950 called for Indian intervention in Nepal. In the face of political impasse, Nepalese nationalists invited continued and direct Indian input in solving Nepal's political problems.⁴¹ By courting direct Indian involvement in Nepalese politics, the relationship between India and Nepal was far more involved than that between the Raj and Nepal.

The Nepalese Defence Minister and Director General for foreign affairs, therefore, made their way to Delhi for six weeks of talks, during which the Rana regime announced that it was willing to implement the failed Government of Nepal Act of 1948. India pushed for more and suggested that a constituent assembly be elected and that an interim government representing popular opinion and enjoying popular support should be appointed. This was to be composed of both popular representatives and members of the Rana, one representative should be Prime Minister appointed by the King, and finally Indian suggested that the King should remain head of state.⁴² The Ranas agreed and so an Interim Cabinet of seven Ranas and seven popular representatives was formed, the King was to return and the Constituent Assembly would be called no later than 1952.

Power sharing did not run smoothly, however: by April 1951, B.P. Koirala openly talked of a crisis in the government and by November the Congress had left the government.⁴³ This move was swiftly followed by the resignation of the Rana Prime Minister so that the King would be free to form a cabinet of better popular

in Kathmandu during talks, telegram from Kathmandu to FO, No. 51, 13/5/1949, F 7010, FO 371/76271.

⁴⁰ See FN 1201/9, FO 371/101156, which contains a Reuters report on the Prime Minister's Statement of 3/5/1952.

⁴¹ Levi, 'Nepal in World Politics', p. 238.

⁴² Levi, 'Government and Politics in Nepal: I', p. 190.

⁴³ See the second of Werner Levi's articles, 'Government and Politics in Nepal: II', *Far Eastern Survey* 22 (1953), p. 5.

representatives. The King duly asked M.P. Koirala to form an all-commoner cabinet, composed of eight members of the Nepali Congress and four independents. The Nepali Congress, however, had its share of factionalism, especially between the Koirala brothers and by July 1952 a schism emerged between the ministerial (M.P. Koirala) and the organisational (B.P. Koirala) wings after the Working Committee attempted to force a smaller cabinet chosen by them onto the Prime Minister.⁴⁴ M.P. Koirala resigned as Prime Minister so that he could go before the Nepali Congress Committee simply as another member and not as the Prime Minister to contest his three year expulsion from the party. The result of this was a vote for B.P. Koirala and a deep division within the party.

In response to the uncertain situation and with the Nepali Congress unable to form a cabinet, the King took matters into his own hands and announced the appointment of a five-man Advisory Council, containing some Ranas, that would last until an effective and representative Council of Ministers could be established.⁴⁵ Thus the failure of the Nepali Congress precipitated a situation where power, and therefore, criticism for decisions was concentrated in the hands of the King who was viewed by Delhi as an interim stabilising influence until such a time that a representative government could be formed. In fact, Nehru informed the King that with 'the Nepali Congress having failed for the moment, the only cementing and stabilising factor was the King.'⁴⁶

The state of Nepalese politics was an issue for recruitment depots on Nepalese soil as it directly affected and limited both the King's and Nehru's room for manoeuvre in the face of popular opposition to the principle of British recruitment. The principal role of the King was to provide interim leadership until such a point that the plans for the democratisation of Nepal could continue and he was, therefore, reluctant to take decisions that would be unpopular with public opinion or the Nepali Congress. This increased Indian influence over, and tutelage of, Nepal caused consternation in London and further reinforced the existing tendency of seeking to gain Indian approval over issues concerning Nepal and the Gurkhas.⁴⁷ Nye commented on the relationship that had developed between India and Nepal since

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Nehru's note on conversation with the King on 4/9/1952 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN*, Volume 19, p. 569.

⁴⁷ Levi, 'Government and Politics in Nepal: II', p. 6.

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the transfer of power in August 1947, arguing that 'Whilst [the] Government of India outwardly maintain a strictly correct attitude in treating the Government of Nepal as entirely independent, in fact we all know quite well that they are exerting improper pressure on them and endeavouring to treat them as a satellite country.'⁴⁸

As the path that Nepal was taking became clearer, both in terms of the long road to a more democratic political apparatus and towards a position of tutelage under India, the British became increasingly aware of the tenuous provisions provided by the Tripartite Agreement.⁴⁹ The British oscillated between the positions of apprehension about the Indian stance on Gurkhas, to planning to ask India to intervene with Nepal on their behalf.⁵⁰ For example, in their attempts to get the Gurkha recruitment ceiling raised throughout 1950-1951, London assumed that Nehru would not stand in their way, but also that it was essential to get Indian blessing for any alterations.⁵¹ British hope for Indian support was an assumption based on the realistic and supportive position that Nehru had mostly taken in response to the Malayan Emergency. As the Colonial Office opined: 'we have always found that the Indian Government have adopted a reasonably cooperative attitude over the Malayan Emergency, and it is perhaps just possible that they might be induced to bring their influence to bear on the Nepalese Government.'⁵² The development of the close cooperation between Nepal and India led Britain to consider that without the goodwill and the active support of the G.O.I., the practice of recruitment could not continue. As Olver of the CRO minuted, 'with the increasing Indian influence in and control over Nepal, any long-term arrangements must be based primarily on the goodwill of the Government of India.'⁵³ Gurkha recruitment for both India and Britain was contingent upon the willingness of Nepal, which had been assured under Rana rule, but as the Nepali Congress and other opposition groups in favour of the democratisation of Nepal gained strength and entered into the political sphere, recruitment could no longer be assured.

⁴⁸ High Commissioner Nye, UKHC to War Office, No. 13, 4/1/1951, FN 1201/1, FO 371/92916.

⁴⁹ See FO 371/92916 and FO 371/92917 in particular.

⁵⁰ Minute by R.H. Scott (FO), 19/2/1951, F1201/21, FO 371/92916.

⁵¹ See FO 371/92916, 92917, 92918 and 92919 for additional details.

⁵² Letter from J.D. Higham (CO) to J.D. Murray (FO), 20/11/1951, FN 1201/83, FO 371/92919.

⁵³ For one of many examples see the minute by J.S. Olver, FN 1201/22, FO 371/92917.

India and Britain's Colonial War in Malaya

From the outset of the Malayan Emergency, the Gurkhas, like the Indian Army before them as the so-called Sword Arm of Empire, formed the backbone of British forces in Malaya. Initially, little was said in India about the Tripartite Arrangement that tied India to British actions in Nepal. However, in 1952 this situation exploded into sustained criticism of the G.O.I. One early exception was *Blitz*, a leftist weekly that denounced the use of Gurkha troops in Malaya to suppress what it termed an Asian freedom movement, and called on the government to put pressure on Nepal to cease recruitment and for the government to refuse transit rights.⁵⁴

After *Blitz*, left press opposition in reference to the G.O.I.'s consent of Gurkha recruitment reappeared in the spring of 1952, when the Communist newspaper *Cross Roads* reported that the practice of beheading was taking place by British Army Gurkhas in Malaya. The headline 'Halt this Cannibalism! Severing the Heads of Liberation Fighters', catalogued the offences of the British regime in Malaya based on information obtained from the London-based Communist paper the *Daily Worker*.⁵⁵ Sections of the leftist press, both in Britain and India, considered the situation in Malaya in the same terms as the Viet Minh and their fight against French imperialism in Indo-China, stating that: 'the British imperialists are resorting to every atrocity to hold on to Malaya against the wishes of its people.'⁵⁶ Instead, the article suggested that 'the war in Malaya must cease. The British imperialists must quit the country, they have no business to be there. Malaya must be independent to shape its own destiny.'⁵⁷ This opinion was in contrast to the views expounded by the G.O.I. in its rare comments on the topic in public debates and in private to the British Government.

In response to the criticism caused by the *Daily Worker* story in London, the British Government promised to stop the practice and the G.O.I. also received a censuring in the editorial:

India's name is associated with the suppression of the Malayan

⁵⁴ Opdom Report No.55, 9-16 July 1948, No. 2335, 17/7/1948, DO 142/404.

⁵⁵ *Cross Roads* Volume 4, No.4, 16/5/1952.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

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Liberation struggle. Gurkha troops, recruited with the consent of the Indian Government, are helping the imperialists in Malaya. This disgrace must end. Gurkha troops must be recalled. India must withdraw from the Commonwealth, which is only a combine of colonial looters and murderers.⁵⁸

The imperial detritus represented by the Tripartite Agreement and the assumed tacit consent of the G.O.I. raised the shackles of the leftist press, which had consistently opposed association with Britain and especially membership of the Commonwealth. The report in *Cross Roads* also had political repercussions as questions were raised in the Lok Sabha. On 12 June 1952, Nehru was questioned about the arrangements regarding the Tripartite Agreement.⁵⁹ Nehru was asked if the G.O.I. had given the British special facilities to recruit Gurkhas on Indian soil, to which Nehru responded that this information was incorrect and, furthermore, that it was not within the purview of the G.O.I. to interfere in relations between Britain and Nepal.⁶⁰ The impact of the story on Gurkha recruitment was considered harmful, both in Nepal but more importantly in India; however, there was no follow up to this story until the autumn of 1952 when it was revealed by *Cross Roads* that recruitment and enlistment for Malaya was actually taking place on Indian soil.⁶¹

Cross Roads followed its assaults of the spring and caused a conflagration of fierce opposition to the Nehru Government, not only over its complicity in what it argued was an anti-colonial struggle, but also for compromising Indian sovereignty and compromising independence by allowing Britain to operate on Indian soil.⁶² As the editorial noted 'it is not merely with the connivance of the Indian government but with their active cooperation and help that men are being enlisted.'⁶³ The publication went on an all-out attack against the Government, in particular Nehru, dedicating several double-pages to the story of Gurkha recruitment. The article further demanded that British recruiters be expelled from India, and that the recruitment depots be disbanded immediately and no other facilities or transit rights should be

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ UKHC to CRO, No.152, sent 9/8/1952, received 20/8/1952, FN 1201/35, FO 371/101157.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ HM Ambassador Nepal to FO, 22612/2, 12/6/1952, FN 1201/17, FO 371/101156.

⁶² *Cross Roads* 3/8/1952.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

awarded.⁶⁴ The fact that Nehru had already provided inaccurate information in the Lok Sabha in June only further angered public opinion and newly sworn in Opposition following the first elections in post-independence India.⁶⁵

The politically neutral *The Times of India* subsequently reported on the parliamentary Opposition's reaction in the Lok Sabha, noting that the 'five Leaders of the Opposition in the House of the People on Monday demanded the annulment of the tripartite agreement...enabling recruitment of Gorkhas by Britain on Indian soil.'⁶⁶ The leaders of the Opposition parties - S.P. Mookerjee (Mukherjee) of the far-right Nationalistic Democratic Party (Jan Sangh), Jivatram Bhagwandas (aka Acharya) Kripalani of the Socialist Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party⁶⁷ (the Socialist Party had joined Kriplani), A.K. Gopalan of the Communists, Tridid Chaudhiri of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and Shankar Shanturam More of the Peasants and Workers Party - appropriated the anger already created and stirred up by the *Cross Roads* articles, both in May and August, and pushed Nehru in the Lok Sabha on 8 August 1952. The Opposition leaders' statement demanded an explanation for Nehru's earlier misleading statement, a stop to the Tripartite Agreement, including transit rights, and recruitment of Gurkhas on Indian soil, which 'is an action that deeply wounds the noblest anti-imperialist sentiments of our freedom loving people.'⁶⁸

The Opposition was not a homogenous group, but rather a disparate set of parties from across the political spectrum of Indian politics. The popular support enjoyed by Congress during the struggle against Britain was no less evident in the first elections of independent India in 1952. Support for Congress and its leaders derived from an unrivalled legacy and reputation amongst the mass of the population, and Congress also possessed a national organisational structure inherited

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ It is not possible to ascertain whether Nehru was aware of the extent of British recruitment activities, although he did write to B.G. Kher, India's High Commissioner in London, that, 'As a temporary measure, we agreed that this recruitment might take place in the existing depots on Indian soil near the Nepal border', however, 'After that I lost sight of this matter ... To my surprise, I have discovered only now that our Defence Ministry has not only been permitting this but encouraging it.' Letter from Nehru to Kher, 9/8/1952, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 19*, pp. 623-25.

⁶⁶ *The Times of India*, 12/8/1952, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Lewis P. Fickett described the Praja Socialist Party as ranking 'as the major opposition party to the dominant Congress', 'The Praja Socialist Party of India - 1952-1972: A Final Assessment', *Asian Survey* 13 (1973), p. 826.

⁶⁸ *The Times of India*, 12/8/1952, p. 3.

from its days as an anti-colonial platform, which no other organisation could equal.

Emphasising popular support does not mean to argue that Congress made the transition from a one-objective organisation to a political party without teething problems, and Congress was no exception to the rule that unions designed for a single purpose fall apart when the objective is achieved.⁶⁹ For example, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) left Congress in 1948 after Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel pushed Congress too far to the right.⁷⁰ The subsequent splits in the Socialist Party left the Communist Party of India (CPI) as the most consistent politically left force in Indian politics.⁷¹ The splits in Congress also produced two of the opposition parties in the Lok Sabha, the Socialist Party and the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party, which merged in September 1952 to form the Praja Socialist Party. The elections produced a parliamentary Opposition facing Congress that posed no tangible threat to its majority, but nonetheless represented a broad spectrum of political parties.⁷² The CPI broadly followed the line set by Moscow, which from mid-1950 meant engaging in parliamentary methods in their attempt to present a viable alternative to the Congress vision.⁷³ Opposition parties, despite their disparate political positions, had few qualms about grilling Nehru on the finer points of his foreign policy and they

⁶⁹ Werner Levi, 'India's Political Parties', *Far Eastern Survey* 20 (1951), p. 169.

⁷⁰ Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund (eds), *A History of India* (Third edn, London 2002), p. 299. Within the Congress, the duumvirate of Nehru and Patel's leadership was not without its strains as Patel broadly represented the right of the party and Nehru the centre-left. This divergence exposed itself most forcefully during the 1950 Congress Presidential elections when Patel and Nehru supported different candidates. Patel's support with the Congress high command ensured his candidate was victorious, and provided the remaining left leaning members of the Congress with yet more evidence of the direction of the party. Faced with defeat, Nehru's candidate Jivatram Bhagwandas (aka Acharya) Kripalani, left Congress to form the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party.

⁷¹ Kulke and Rothermund (eds), *A History of India*, pp. 299-300 and also see, Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 38-41.

⁷² With the votes of 105,944,495 people counted for the 1952 elections, Congress claimed a clear victory in the Lok Sabha winning 364 (74.4 per cent) of the 489 seats with some 45 per cent of the vote in the first past the post system. Of the 13 other national parties, the CPI came a distant second with 26 seats (5.3 per cent) from only 3.3 per cent of the vote. The Socialist Party, led by Narayan, contested more seats than the Communists, but only took 12 from 10.6 per cent of the national vote. Kripalani, having been defeated in the Congress Presidential nominations, took the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party to victory in 9 seats with 5.8 per cent of the national vote, see Levi, 'India's Political Parties', p. 171. Corbridge and Harriss argue that between them the CPI and the socialist parties won 20 per cent of the vote. Although they fail to go into any further detail than this, see Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 52. On the right of the political spectrum, the Jan Sangh, led by S.P. Mukherjee won just three seats. Between them, independents won some 37 seats and pooled 15.9 per cent of the vote.

⁷³ See chapters 7&8 in M.R. Masani, *The Communist Party of India: A Short History* (New York, 1954), pp. 99-164.

represented a constituency of opinion ranging from the far left with the Communists to the Jan Sangh on the right. Foreign affairs was publicly one of the most clearly defined areas of Congress policies and an area with which the opposition parties, especially the CPI, grew increasingly concerned in the face of the Cold War. Congress' majority does not negate the fact that Nehru and the G.O.I. expressed concern over the negative impact of sustained criticism and questioning of the underpinnings of Nehruvian foreign policy.

In the face of this hostility, Nehru attempted to deflect the criticisms of recruitment by emphasising the independent nature of the Government of Nepal and that it was not within India's rights to demand the cessation of recruitment in Nepal. Furthermore, he argued, it was agreed that 'for the present' the UK might continue to use the existing depots at Gorakhpur and Ghum near Darjeeling.⁷⁴ Nehru further emphasised that this was only ever meant to be a convenient and temporary measure and claimed that India acquiesced in order to meet the wishes of Nepal not the British. The opening of two new depots, Jalapahar (March 1948) and Lehra (February 1950), however, was viewed far more as an act of the current government and not as imperial baggage. Nehru again used Nepal as a cover to hide behind, stating that 'facilities to use recruiting depots in India were originally asked for and granted by us as a purely temporary measure ... and have continued for some years in order to meet the wishes of the Nepal Government in this matter.'⁷⁵ As a means to placate hostility, Nehru was at pains to emphasise that the only activities that took place on Indian soil were medical examinations and formal enrolment, not training.

Despite the fact that Nehru had earlier denounced any knowledge of these arrangements, he was now hiding behind them and using the wishes of the Nepal as a shield. Whether or not Nehru and the MoEA were fully aware of the extent of British activities is not ascertainable without reference to G.O.I. records, a distant prospect, but it was nonetheless the case that the Tripartite Agreement was signed and that the British had recently been allowed to sign ten year leases for properties on Indian soil.⁷⁶ Denying knowledge of certain events was, moreover, a useful

⁷⁴ Full text of the speech in UKHC to CRO, No. 984, 8/9/1952, FN 1201/26, FO371/101156. Also see UKHC to CRO, No. 152, sent 9/8/1952, received 20/8/1952, FN 1201/35, FO 371/101157.

⁷⁵ Full text of the speech in UKHC to CRO, No. 984, 8/9/1952, FN 1201/26, FO 371/101156.

⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that the British Government never seriously considered taking the legal route, judging that this was a political and not a legal problem.

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mechanism for trying to defuse hostility. Nehru concluded his response to the Lok Sabha by promising that the issue would be taken up with the two governments. This was a measured response, reflecting Nehru's reluctance to allow the opposition parties to dictate to him, his respect for international agreements as a basis for international co-operation, and also his willingness to assist in the continued recruitment of the Gurkhas both for the convenience of the British but also to ensure the economic and political stability of Nepal.

With the public reaction to the *Cross Roads* stories growing and five of the Opposition parties and the Congress Party itself voicing not only strong condemnation, but demands for immediate British withdrawal, the MoEA's Commonwealth Secretary met Clutterbuck to inform him that there were great pressures on the government.⁷⁷ The Secretary began this task by conveying to his British counterpart that Nehru was genuinely surprised to learn that the British were still on Indian soil and felt that this was outside the terms of the Tripartite Agreement.⁷⁸ The Secretary continued that there was a great deal of feeling on this subject in India, and that 'Nehru said that it might be Communist-inspired, but feeling on the subject was by no means confined to Communists.'⁷⁹ This admission clearly reflected the breadth of opposition that Nehru faced from various domestic quarters, but despite this, the British were told that any changes were not likely to happen in the immediate future.⁸⁰

The admission of the importance of opposition again reveals something of the influence of public opinion on the execution of Indian foreign relations that is neglected in the current historiographical literature.⁸¹ It was not simply the fact the recruitment was taking place on Indian territory, but as Nehru reported to B.G. Kher, Indian High Commissioner, 'the difficulty, of course, is that the employment of Gurkhas in Malaya is a constant irritant to large sections of Indian opinion.'⁸² Nehru

⁷⁷ UKHC to CRO, No.1031, 22/8/1952, FO 1201/56, FO 371/101157 reported that much of the Congress Party was also incensed by the recruitment.

⁷⁸ UKHC to the CRO reporting on Conversations with Indian Secretary, No. 1002, 15/8/1952, FN 1201/29, FO 371/101156.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Ton That Thien, for example, argues that Nehru paid little attention to public opinion, *India and South East Asia, 1947-1960: A Study of India's Foreign Policy towards the South East Asian Countries in the Period 1947-1960* (Geneva, 1963), p. 250.

⁸² Letter to Indian High Commissioner in London, Kher, 2/9/1952 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 19*,

again wrote to Kher at the end of September, noting that ‘there is no doubt about the feeling in India on this subject. It is foolish to think that this feeling is confined to the Communists.’⁸³ Nehru communicated the consequences of the pressure that he had to operate under in a letter to Kher in reference to Ganapathay and Sambasivam, commenting that ‘the subject [of Malaya] having come up before us and received wide publicity ... is exceedingly difficult to ignore.’⁸⁴

The reality of this domestic pressure was repeatedly communicated to Clutterbuck, who consequently reported to London on several occasions about the Indian public and political pressure that Nehru faced. Following a meeting with the Commonwealth Secretary in Delhi, Clutterbuck reported that ‘the important point which he had been asked to put to me was that, whatever the circumstances of 1947, the position today was that for reasons of policy the Government of India felt it impossible to allow continued recruiting on Indian soil; it would surely be readily understood that this would not be consistent with Indian’s declared policy of independence.’⁸⁵ Clutterbuck followed with the assessment: ‘I fear that this matter is not merely one of keeping record straight with Parliamentary Opposition and that there is very strong pressure on the Prime Minister. Indians are therefore likely to press vigorously their demand for withdrawal of recruitment facilities.’⁸⁶ Although, as Nehru had pointed out, this pressure originated from the Communist press, political parties of both the left and right joined in chorus to criticise the Prime Minister, as did members of the Congress Party. Therefore, Nehru had to act.

Gurkha recruitment was not simply a limited episode, but it drew into stark relief both India’s sovereignty, and the claims made for an independent foreign policy based on the principles of anti-colonialism and neutralism. This is why the episode was so swiftly exploited by the press and the Opposition and used a stick with which to beat Nehru’s government. Writing to Krishna Menon, Nehru elucidated the difficult situation in which Gurkha recruitment placed him, noting that ‘I think I realise the various aspects of this question and the reactions

p. 630.

⁸³ Letter to Kher, 30/9/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 636.

⁸⁴ Letter to Kher, 2/9/1952 in *ibid.*, p. 629.

⁸⁵ UKHC New Delhi to CRO, No 1015, 18/8/1952, FN 1201/33, FO 371/101157.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

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in the British mind. But once the subject assumes importance in India it is difficult to ignore it.’⁸⁷ Nehru continued giving the reasons why it would assume importance: ‘a subject of this kind excites the public mind and practically no Indian is prepared to accept recruitment of soldiers on Indian soil for a foreign army, more so for their employment in Malaya at present.’⁸⁸

In light of the sustained domestic criticism that he thought damaging, Nehru both wanted and needed a fairly swift and acceptable resolution to the problem to diffuse domestic political opposition, but also to demonstrate that he was in control. Nehru emphasised to Krishna Menon that he did not intend to allow the Gurkha question ‘to become a major issue or to demand anything to be done suddenly.’⁸⁹ Despite the pressures on him, Nehru wrote to Kher that ‘I have no desire to embarrass the British Government on this or any other issue’, he continued that ‘We shall however try to go slowly about this and not create too much of a fuss.’⁹⁰ Nehru’s objective was therefore to produce a formula that was acceptable to all three parties, that would last for a number of years so that opposition would not again be raised, and that did not disrupt the British recruitment of Gurkhas for Malaya.

After the initial meeting between the MoEA and Clutterbuck, India produced an aide-memoire for the British, which stated the Indian problems and maintained that they wished ‘to terminate, as early as possible, the facilities given, as a temporary measure, to the United Kingdom for the recruitment of Gurkha troops in India.’⁹¹ Crucially for continued recruitment, the Indian authorities at no point questioned transit rights, the Tripartite Agreement, or the use of certain other facilities. The aide-memoire only focussed on enlisting on Indian soil. It was these depots to which the parliamentary Opposition, the public and press objected for the most part and the role they played in furnishing the British with troops. The G.O.I. maintained the depots were only ever intended to be temporary measures. However, in conversation with Clutterbuck, the Indian Secretary intimated that they would be

⁸⁷ Nehru responding to V.K. Krishna Menon, 2/9/1952, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 19*, p. 627.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Letter from Nehru to Kher, 2/9/1952, in *ibid.*, p. 629.

⁹¹ UKHC New Delhi reporting to the CRO, No.1010, 18/8/1952, FN 1201/31, FO 371/101157.

willing to compensate the British for the two new depots at Lehra and Jolapahar.⁹²

The G.O.I. had little intention of making recruitment difficult for the British, and attempted to make this clear to them. For example, the Indian Ambassador in Nepal, in conversation with the British Ambassador in Nepal, stated that he had been pressing for 'Gurkha recruitment and of Indian need to help resist communism in Malaya and elsewhere.'⁹³ This sentiment was echoed by Kher, in London, who informed London that Delhi did not want to make things difficult, and went so far as to admit that if they had not been pushed by the official Opposition then the G.O.I. would not have been calling for a termination.⁹⁴ Kher went even further in September, in conversation with the Commonwealth Secretary, when it was reported that 'he assured me that Indian Government was most anxious to help in any way it could to help find a solution.'⁹⁵ Kher further intimated that the G.O.I. may inform the Government of Nepal of the utility of the continued flow of recruits to the British Army.⁹⁶

Nehru assured Clutterbuck by repeating that he had no desire to do anything sudden or upsetting to the British, but that 'now India was independent it was no longer politically possible for recruitment for a foreign army to take place on Indian soil.'⁹⁷ Nehru was adamant, however, that this move was not predicated on placating the Communists and the Opposition, but came from concern for the Indian nationalist sentiments of the population.⁹⁸ Nehru was at once both setting up defence for his actions and demonstrating to the British that the move was not designed to aid the Communist cause in any way.

The broad acceptance of the principle of British recruitment was a point that both India and Britain were honest about in their communications, and it encouraged the British to be more appreciative of the Indian position and more positive about securing Indian assistance with Nepal. Indeed, Percival Liesching (Permanent

⁹² UKHC New Delhi to CRO, No 1015, 18/8/1952, FN 1201/33, FO 371/101157.

⁹³ Kathmandu to FO, No.185, 21/8/1952, FN 1201/36, FO 371/101157.

⁹⁴ Telegram from CRO (Lord Salisbury) to UKHC New Delhi, No. 1420, 25/8/1952, FN 1201/39, FO 371/101157.

⁹⁵ CRO (Salisbury) to UKHC New Delhi, No.1511, 12/9/1952, FN 1201/58, FO 371/101157.

⁹⁶ Telegram from CRO (Salisbury) to UKHC New Delhi, No. 1420, 25/8/1952, FN 1201/39, FO 371/101157.

⁹⁷ UKHC New Delhi to the CRO Reporting on Conversation with Nehru on 27/10/1952, 28/10/1952, FN 1201/102, FO 371/101159.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

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Secretary Commonwealth Relations Office) advised Churchill ‘the Indian Government are under domestic pressure on this point, and it would be wise for us to meet them if we can.’⁹⁹ In fact, Clutterbuck reported that ‘Nehru himself has always had doubts about Gurkha recruitment for the British; he was however prepared to face realities and, latterly, has appreciated the value of the contribution of the ‘British’ Gurkhas in Malaya.’¹⁰⁰ The British were broadly appreciative of Nehru’s flexible attitude on the wider issue of Malaya, and hoped that despite the public outcry, this would continue. As General Harding (Far Eastern Command), Malcolm MacDonald and Dening argued: ‘Nehru has on the whole been sympathetic to our position in Malaya.’¹⁰¹ The British considered the pressures of Nehru’s position, and the constraints acting upon him, as S.J.L Olver of the CRO raised the point that Indian objections were based on a reaction to a public outcry.¹⁰² This understanding led to the impression that they could ‘reasonably count on India not to obstruct a settlement with Nepal which would enable them to say no recruitment will in future take place on Indian soil.’¹⁰³ The more swiftly a settlement could be reached with Nepal, the sooner the British depots could cease causing irritation for the G.O.I., and it was towards this resolution that India and Britain then turned.

In part due to the legacy of the Tripartite Agreement, and in part due to increased Indian influence over Nepalese politics, a solution to the problem of British depots was not possible without Indian assistance. The British viewed the Nepalese as unwilling to accept any British proposals for fear of angering India, and on the other hand the British were reluctant to approach Nepalese without first getting Indian approval and pledges of assistance. As Clutterbuck reminded London ‘we must face the unpleasant fact that the Indians hold the whip hand in this matter, and doubly so in view of their influence in Kathmandu.’¹⁰⁴ Britain had to secure Indian acquiescence for any moves that it wished to make in Nepal, a direct reflection of India’s increased influence over Nepal and its King.

In the same way as they handled the Tripartite Agreement negotiations,

⁹⁹ Memorandum to the Prime Minister from Liesching, P.L.1-52, 29/8/1952, FN 1201/49, FO 371/101157.

¹⁰⁰ UKHC to CRO, No. 1031, 22/8/1952, FN 1201/56, FO 371/101157.

¹⁰¹ Singapore to FO, No. 1057, 31/12/1950, FN 1201/1, FO 371/92916.

¹⁰² Minutes to FN 1201/33, FO 371/101157.

¹⁰³ UKHC to CRO, No.1275, 14/10/1952, FN 1201/87, FO 371/101158.

¹⁰⁴ UKHC to CRO, No. 1031, 22/8/1952, FN 1201/37, FO 371/101157.

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Britain and India engaged in a diplomatic tussle over who would approach whom, with what proposals and on what timetable. Time was not on the side of the G.O.I., or the British, as the Lok Sabha was due to reconvene on 5 November with the assumption that the Opposition would demand to know the outcome of Indian representations to the British.¹⁰⁵ In fact, on the first day of the new session in the Lok Sabha, H.N. Mookerjee, asked Nehru what steps had been taken to terminate the facilities used by Britain. In reply Nehru attempted to placate opposition and stated that:

In August 1952, the Governments of the UK and Nepal were informed that the Government of India wished to terminate, as early as possible, the facilities given as a temporary measure to the Government of the UK for the recruitment of Gurkha troops in India. The UK Government have informed us of their willingness to meet our wishes on this subject. The matter is now under discussion with the Governments concerned.¹⁰⁶

High Commissioner Kher was in the meantime summoned to the CRO to discuss with the Commonwealth Secretary 'some way out of the difficulty which would remove the problem of both Governments.'¹⁰⁷ It became patently clear at this juncture that the two Governments both concurred on the only long term settlement possible: to secure depots in Nepal itself. Anxious to secure a settlement, the British sought to gain Indian assurances of support before it made its approaches to the Government of Nepal, something which the Indians were reluctant to do, but the G.O.I. would give its advice to the Nepalese if consulted.¹⁰⁸ Kher again reiterated that India was anxious to help find a solution to the problem and would pass this on to Delhi.¹⁰⁹ Concurrently to the discussions in London, and in light of the Indian aide memoire, the Indian Cabinet met to discuss the topic of the Gurkhas and reaffirmed that there could be no agreement for the use of depots on a permanent basis by another sovereign power, and therefore suggested that Lehra and Jalapahar be shut down. However, the G.O.I. agreed that the depots could be used until alternative arrangements could be made.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Reported from UKHC New Delhi to CRO, No. 1251, 9/10/1952, FN 1201/79, FO 371/101158.

¹⁰⁶ Nehru's statement to the Lok Sabha of 5/11/1952 reported to London from Delhi, Ref: D/2/I, 6/11/1952, FN 1201/111, FO 371/101159.

¹⁰⁷ Record of Conversation between Commonwealth Secretary and Indian High Commissioner, September 1952, D.3343/1, FN 1201/60, FO 371/101157.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ UKHC to CRO, No. 1273, 13/10/1952, FN 1201/85, FO 371/101158.

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With its approaches made and confident of Indian goodwill, the British simultaneously forwarded its request to Nepal and informed the G.O.I. of the move. In Delhi, Clutterbuck saw Nehru to remind him one last time that 'we count in general upon Indian good offices.'¹¹¹ In fact, Nehru had already spoken to Nepal's King Tribhuvan in general terms whilst he was in Delhi from 4-7 September,¹¹² who at this time was still heading an interim 'caretaker' government.¹¹³ Nehru duly informed the King that India was no longer able to offer recruitment facilities to the British, and that there was presumably also opposition to the practice in Nepal.¹¹⁴ Whilst emphasising his desire not to inconvenience the UK, Nehru informed the King that India would be willing to provide vital transit facilities as was custom under the Tripartite Agreement.¹¹⁵

Nehru's informal approach and advice to the King reflected his wish not to be seen to be unduly influencing another nation, but he did nevertheless inform the British that King that he hoped he would be as accommodating as possible to their needs.¹¹⁶ Nehru, however, noted to the British and to the King that such facilities would probably only be on a temporary basis as the nationalist sentiment in Nepal further developed. Time was of the essence for Nehru since the more quickly a settlement with Nepal could be found, the more quickly British depots in India could be closed, or at least the more disagreeable activities transferred to Nepal. Whether or not Nehru was ideologically opposed to the principle of recruitment was not the determining factor. The key problem was satisfying Nepal, the G.O.I.'s domestic opponents, and maintaining relations with Britain and their flow of Gurkhas.

As Clutterbuck met with Nehru to hear about the King, the Commonwealth Relations Secretary saw Kher in London to reiterate the fact that Britain hoped to be able to count on India's support 'if they were brought into the picture' by the Nepalese approaching them for advice.¹¹⁷ Kher, who did not hide his support for the

¹¹¹ CRO to UKHC, No. 1754, 24/10/1952, FN 1201/97, FO 371/101158.

¹¹² Letter from Nehru to King, footnote 4 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 21*, pp. 521-22.

¹¹³ UKHC New Delhi to the CRO Reporting on Conversation with Nehru on 27/10/1952, 28/10/1952, FN 1201/102, FO 371/101159.

¹¹⁴ Nehru's record of talks with the King of Nepal on 4/9/1952, in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 19*, p. 569.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ UKHC New Delhi to the CRO Reporting on Conversation with Nehru on 27/10/1952, 28/10/1952, FN 1201/102, FO 371/101159.

¹¹⁷ CRO to UKHC New Delhi Reporting on Conversation with Indian High Commissioner on

British, replied by assuring the Secretary that the only real difficulty was that of recruiting the Gurkhas on Indian soil. Apart from that there would be no issue at all about good will.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Summerhayes, the British Ambassador in Nepal, met with various members of the Nepalese Advisory Council to formally discuss the continuance of British recruitment and the form of the relocation of depots from India to Nepal.¹¹⁹ Both Sri Khadgaman Singh (Foreign Affairs) and General Kaiser (Defence) saw few potential problems with British proposals as no one wanted an early end to recruitment. Meanwhile, at a full Council meeting, the Nepalese discussed the initial British approach for depots in Nepal on 3 November 1952, but a decision was postponed to enquire whether or not the Indians desired Tripartite talks, a prospect that neither the Indians nor the British had previously expressed interest in.¹²⁰ The Nepalese approached the Indians through their Ambassador in Delhi, and in reply the G.O.I. orally reported that it had no objections to Nepal granting further recruitment aid.¹²¹

With the British approach made, Nehru formally replied to the King in writing. He noted that in light of the inability of the G.O.I. to continue providing recruitment facilities, and taking into consideration the fact the Nepalese popular opinion was against the establishment of British depots in 1947 and remained opposed to the principle of foreign armies recruiting on Nepalese soil, Nepal should as a short term policy allow the British to establish depots in Nepal.¹²² Nehru further suggested to the King that a time period of four-five years 'subject to a reconsideration at the end of that period or at any time within that period at twelve months' notice at the instance of either Government.'¹²³ This last clause was a sop to opposition and an attempt to provide a get-out mechanism for the King that would be very unlikely to be used but was essential for political window-dressing.

At this time, the British High Commissioner, in a confidential conversation with the Nepalese Ambassador in Delhi, learned that Nehru had formally replied to

27/10/1952, 28/10/1952, FN 1201/103, FO 371/101159.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ This was reported in Despatch No. 45 from Kathmandu to FO, 31/10/1952, FN 1201/109, FO 371/101159.

¹²⁰ Ambassador in Kathmandu to the FO, 4/11/1952, FN 1201/105, FO 371/101159.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Nehru to the King of Nepal, 7/11/1952, replying to King's letter of 3/11/1952, in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Volume 20* (New Delhi, 1997), pp. 483-485.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

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the King of Nepal's letter in the first week of November. The response detailed that India did not oppose the establishment of training depots in Nepal and that for their part the Indians would continue to offer transit rights.¹²⁴ The High Commissioner learned of the temporary nature of any settlement, a period of four to five years, but the Nepalese Ambassador did not see this precluding the possibility of a longer term agreement after the end of the five years.¹²⁵ The spectre of a five year time limit in conjunction with the prospect of investing in new facilities in Nepal did not appeal to the British authorities, who made the Nepalese Ambassador in Delhi (Bijaya) aware of their feelings as he was recalled to Kathmandu to advise the King.¹²⁶

A further week passed, and there was still as yet no formal Nepalese reply to Britain, partly because the Nepalese were waiting for the President of the Nepali Congress to return from India. On 24 November, it was reported to Summerhayes by General Bijaya that a decision was that day to be taken by the Advisory Council, and on 25 November Defence Counsellor Kaiser confidentially told Summerhayes that Nepal had agreed to depots, but with the five year limit terminable at a year's notice, the wording of which was strikingly similar to that suggested by Nehru in his letter to the King.¹²⁷ This last caveat, Kaiser argued, was a concession to local opposition.¹²⁸ However, it was also reported by the Defence Counsellor that the twelve month notice period was included at the suggestion of India. In light of the Indian assistance offered to the British, the twelve month clause was inserted as a sop to both Indian and Nepalese domestic opposition to make it easier to get an agreement past those opposed to such actions and at the same time ensure continued recruitment. The British knew of these moves by India, but this remained confidential information from the Counsellor for Defence. As the Foreign Office argued, Gurkha recruitment was 'so entirely inconsistent with the principles of anti-colonialism, etc., which theoretically guide Indian foreign policy, that they must save their faces in some way.'¹²⁹

¹²⁴ UKHC reporting to London on conversation with Nepalese Ambassador in Delhi, No. 1386, 12/11/1952, FN 1201/113, FO 371/101159.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ UKHC to CRO, No. 1431, 21/11/1952, FN 1201/116, FO 371/101159.

¹²⁷ Nehru to the King of Nepal, 3/11/1952 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 20*, pp. 483-485.

¹²⁸ Kathmandu to Foreign Office, No. 266, 26/11/1952, FN 1201/114, FO 371/101159.

¹²⁹ Frank Roberts in Minute to R.H. Scott of FO, 15/12/1952, FN 1201/126, FO 371/101159.

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Nepal officially informed the British of their decision through the Ambassador in Kathmandu, who argued that the government had to take into account the increasingly nationalist future generations of Nepal, and as such the Government could not 'in the circumstances, commit themselves to any permanent or long term policy, as this might come into conflict with the wishes of the people in the future.'¹³⁰ The case of the twelve month clause was taken up with the King on 29 November, who argued that there were certain criticisms of continuing recruitment which necessitated certain concessions.¹³¹ The Defence Counsellor, once again confidentially, reiterated his opinion that the clause had been forced upon Nepal, but that the aide-memoire should be considered and that the Counsellors would give their support for the elimination of the clause.¹³²

Simultaneously, the Indian Ambassador in Nepal suggested to the British Ambassador that the Nepalese had gone a long way for the British and that they could hardly wish to invite additional criticism by giving longer terms; the inclusion of the twelve month notice period was also a means to placate the opposition and would satisfy the pride of subsequent governments so that they would feel less inclined to question the agreements in future.¹³³ Once again, it was Indian influence on Nepal, or more precisely the King, that was viewed as the answer to the problem. The British aimed to demonstrate to Nehru that it was Indian influence that was the decisive factor as well as making him see the disastrous consequences that any cessation would have on actions in Malaya 'and therefore on our whole relations with India, of any Indian failure to give us the full support over this which we are entitled to expect from a fellow-member of the Commonwealth.'¹³⁴ The British Chiefs of Staff pushed for this hardening of attitude and, on the same page as noting that India assisted by consenting to changes and encouraging Nepal to agree to depots, argued that the G.O.I. 'are entirely responsible for the present position and it is felt we must now be firm. We should now put forward our own terms, which

¹³⁰ Aide-Memoire sent through the British Ambassador, No. 273, 28/11/1952, FN 1201/119, FO 371/101159.

¹³¹ Record of Ambassador's conversation with the King, No. 275, 29/11/1952, FN 1201/120, FO 371/101159.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Record of Ambassador's conversation with the Indian Ambassador, No. 276, 1/12/1952, FN 1201/21, FO 371/101159.

¹³⁴ Minute by S.J.L. Olver, 2/12/1952, FN 1201/25, FO 371/101159.

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should be acceptable to both India and Nepal.¹³⁵

Clutterbuck thus saw Nehru and impressed upon him the impractical nature of the Nepalese proposals.¹³⁶ First, if Nehru wanted to emphasise the independence of Nepal then he should be reminded of the great influence that India has over the King; second, any interruption in the flow of recruits would seriously hamper the campaign against Malayan insurgents and would thus retard the development of self-government; thirdly, the cessation of Gurkhas would seriously affect the Nepalese economy, and finally the quicker these arrangements could be settled the more swiftly the British could relinquish their depots on Indian soil.¹³⁷ Nehru, in the meantime, was again questioned in the Lok Sabha about the progress of the negotiations on 12 December 1952 by Mukherjee.¹³⁸

On his return from a tour of Southern India Nehru again discussed the matter of the Nepalese terms with Clutterbuck.¹³⁹ Nehru explained his advice given in terms of the context of the political situation in Nepal, with the King acting as a 'caretaker' of sorts, and as such was reluctant to engage in any long term arrangements. However, Nehru assured Clutterbuck that the suggestion of the twelve month notice period did not originate with him, which was promptly communicated to London.¹⁴⁰ Nehru's denial over the twelve month clause was not crucially important as he was still considered to be the only hope of negotiating a settlement. Instead Nehru argued that the fluid situation in Nepalese politics focused criticism for decisions on the King to an unusual degree, which meant that any settlement had to be politically acceptable to Nepalese opinion.¹⁴¹

In order to move forward as quickly as possible with the political window dressing, Clutterbuck and Nehru decided to convene a further meeting so that Clutterbuck and Pillai (Secretary General at Ministry of External Affairs) could work

¹³⁵ C.O.S. (52) 653, 2/12/1952, FN 1201/25, FO 371/101159.

¹³⁶ CRO to UKHC, No. 2128, 23/12/1952, FN 1201/134, FO 371/101159.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ See details in FN 1201/137, FO 371/101159.

¹³⁹ High Commissioner's Record of Conversation with Nehru on 8/1/1953, No. 18, 8/1/1953, FN 1201/4, FO 371/106872.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* It is entirely possible that the King of Nepal had suggested the 12 month period when in discussions with Nehru, but there is no documentary evidence for verification.

¹⁴¹ Following the resignation of M.P. Koirala as Prime Minister on 10 August 1952, the King decreed that he would rule Nepal through an Advisory Council composed of non-party leaders until such a time that a representative Council of Ministers could be established.

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up a plan to take to Nehru, and then to the Nepalese.¹⁴² Clutterbuck, therefore, approached Pillai on two points: primarily to get the one year's notice removed and if this was successful to extend the five year limit to at least seven.¹⁴³ With the reassurance from Nehru's denial of inserting the twelve month notice period, it was hoped that the Indians could be brought to agree that the practical considerations of the case would override the King's apprehensions. On the second point, Clutterbuck was not confident that the Indians would be moved from the five year model and instead he proposed that an agreement should last for seven years from the 1 January 1953 and should be extended each year on 31 March unless notice to the contrary was given.

In Kathmandu Summerhayes suggested that it would be possible to get the Indians and the Nepalese to agree to seven years with the two year notice period.¹⁴⁴ The British once again placed their faith in Nehru's ability to influence the Nepalese.¹⁴⁵ However, at the same time the suggestion was floated that if no satisfactory arrangement could be secured, then Nehru would be left until he visited London for the Coronation of Elizabeth II.¹⁴⁶ But, as Clutterbuck argued, the longer the situation was allowed to drift then the more time this left for opposition to develop. With the prospect of elections in Nepal the following year it was imperative to push an agreement through. For Nehru, the Gurkha problem had been a running issue with the Opposition since June 1952, and the longer it continued the longer the attacks against his policies continued.

Consequently, Pillai and Clutterbuck met on 16 January and Clutterbuck illustrated the severe limitations that the initial proposals placed on the British, about

¹⁴² Sir Raghavan Pillai, was yet another British-trained Indian that attained the highest office in independent India, he was described by the British High Commission as 'an exceptionally able career I.C.S. man' and friendly to the British having schooled there, see letter from R.H. Scott (FO) to F.K Roberts, 24/11/1949, F17656/1051/85, FO 371/76098. In a similar fashion to the absence of literature on G.S. Bajpai, there is no academic literature that the author was able to locate written on Pillai and as such we are unable to examine the impact of these men on Indian foreign policy, and in addition the importance of continuing Indo-British links are obfuscated.

¹⁴³ The High Commissioner Reported his intentions to London, No. 22, 9/1/1953, FN 1201/5, FO 371/106872.

¹⁴⁴ Minute by Summerhayes, 9/1/1953, FN 1201/6, FO 371/106872.

¹⁴⁵ Anthony Eden wrote to Lord Swinton that given whole-hearted Indian support there was still a chance that an agreement terminable only after seven years was possible, 14/1/1953, FN 1201/6, FO 371/106872.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Lord Swinton to Clutterbuck, 1/1/1953 and Clutterbuck's reply of 12/1/1953, both in FN 1201/11, FO 371/106872.

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which Pillai seemed to be unaware.¹⁴⁷ Pillai played a listening role, Clutterbuck held back from elucidating his seven year proposals, and the meeting ended with agreement to meet again in a week's time once Pillai had discussed the political situation with the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, who was shortly returning to Delhi, and with Nehru. Pillai and Clutterbuck met once again, although Pillai had been unable to see Nehru, and explained what he felt to be one of the crucial matters: the fluid political situation in Nepal. Pillai argued that it was both the Nepalese and Indian objective to see a government formed to continue on until elections held in the near future, and as such any government would most likely be unwilling to engage in any long term agreements that would open them up to criticism and tie in future governments.¹⁴⁸ Thus Pillai could see only two alternatives:

- i) Fixed term with escape clause to be applied at any time.
- ii) Interim agreement on the understanding that more lasting agreement could be signed with a new Nepalese Government.

Pillai did believe that a seven year term would be possible but only with the proviso of a short term notice period. Therefore, he suggested that the British gave thought to (ii). In the meantime Pillai promised to make further enquiries and to seek discussions with Nehru. These discussions, from the point of view of the Indians and the Nepalese, represented not a fundamental attack on the process of recruitment, but a way of finding an acceptable formula that satisfied the needs of the three involved parties. Clutterbuck reported that 'Pillai made it clear to me that in his view issue was one merely of window-dressing. Everybody...wanted recruitment to continue – the Governments of India and Nepal, the Koiralas (he thought) and of course the Gurkhas themselves.'¹⁴⁹ For both the British and the Indians, the need for a settlement continued to press as without agreement no changes would be possible before the start of the new recruitment season.

The G.O.I. continued to assist the British to find a solution to their problem, and Pillai again met Clutterbuck on 11 February 1953.¹⁵⁰ Contrary to the opinion of

¹⁴⁷ Record of Meeting transmitted from UKHC to CRO, No. 53, 17/1/1953, FN 1201/8, FO 371/106872.

¹⁴⁸ Record of Conversation between Clutterbuck and Pillai on 26/1/1953, No.86, 27/1/1953, FN 1201/13, FO 371/106872.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Record of Conversation between Clutterbuck and Pillai on 11/2/1953, No. 146, 11/2/1953, FN

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Summerhayes, Pillai confirmed that there was little chance of a change in the government of Nepal after Nepalese Congress attempts to form a government had failed.¹⁵¹ In light of this development, Clutterbuck pushed Pillai on the topic of a seven year settlement, to which he was receptive and did not mention the escape clause. Pillai thus sought talks with Nehru, who again faced questions in the Lok Sabha. During supplementary questions Nehru implied that even transit facilities could not be expected to last indefinitely but for the term of the Tripartite Agreement.¹⁵² This statement, largely for public consumption, was both damaging in light of the current discussions and was contrary to the G.O.I.'s professed wish not to inconvenience Britain and their attempts to continue recruiting Gurkhas. However, the answer was also incorrect as the Tripartite Agreement was of indefinite length. Nehru, when questioned how the situation in Malaya affected Gurkha recruitment, admitted to the Lok Sabha that what happened in Nepal was not directly the concern of the G.O.I. in an attempt to separate India from the decision-making process in public, although in private it was through India that an acceptable formula was being devised.

Pillai and Clutterbuck met in the shadow of Nehru's answers in the Lok Sabha, which Pillai argued should not worry the UK as the answers to supplementary questions were often forgotten as soon as they were asked, and it must also be remembered that Nehru had not been in the loop regarding the development of the Pillai-Clutterbuck talks since 9 January 1953.¹⁵³ The British, alarmed at the length of time the Gurkha negotiations were taking, and also shaken by Nehru's statement in the Lok Sabha, informed Clutterbuck that the matter of three frigates due to be delivered to India was under question and that the possibility of delaying the delivery of these ships until a satisfactory conclusion of the Gurkha episode was being examined in London.¹⁵⁴ Clutterbuck, seeing the folly of the move, argued against this, stating that it could not only risk Gurkha recruitment, but could also wreck relations over the entire field; moreover, Nehru was currently considering Pillai's

1201/21, FO 371/106872.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* Clutterbuck reported on attempts to form a government on 9/2/1953, No. 129, FN 1201/18, FO 371/106872.

¹⁵² The implications of Nehru's answer to supplementary questions on 13/2/1953, discussed in UKHC to CRO, No. 162, 14/2/1953, FN 1201/22, FO 371/106872.

¹⁵³ Record of Conversation between Clutterbuck and Pillai, No. 174, 17/2/1953, FO 371/106872.

¹⁵⁴ CRO to UKHC, No. 400, 7/3/1953, FN 1201/39, FO 371/106873.

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submissions to him.¹⁵⁵ This threat was not a symptom of a lack of trust for Nehru, but rather was demonstrative of the extreme importance of the continued recruitment of Gurkhas.

On 18 March, Pillai reported to Clutterbuck that Nehru was in the process of considering the question of Gurkha recruitment and was almost in a position to give his reactions, but that it would take another week whilst Nehru held further discussions with the Nepalese Ambassador.¹⁵⁶ Pillai confided in Clutterbuck that the political situation in Nepal had made the whole process tiresome and that the American coined slogan 'Asians fighting Asians' had played right into the hands of the Communists. Clutterbuck replied that 'there were certain difficulties to be overcome, (but) I hoped the Prime Minister realised that this was a matter of first class importance.'¹⁵⁷

After full discussions with the Indian Ambassador in Nepal and the Nepalese Ambassador in Delhi, Nehru devised a compromise formula that sought to meet British needs.¹⁵⁸ Although the five year limit remained intact, with any extensions to be negotiated near the end of the term, the twelve month notice period had been dropped to be replaced with a proviso for joint consultation if either party wished to change the terms of the agreement.¹⁵⁹ The G.O.I., at the behest of Clutterbuck, informed Nepal that this provision did not extend to the length of the agreement and thus should not be seen in the same context as the twelve month notice clause, which had from the beginning been the real bugbear for the British.¹⁶⁰ The British, for their part, found the proposals agreeable, in light of the difficulties in Nepal and the pressure under which Nehru had to operate. Therefore, the High Commissioner was

¹⁵⁵ UKHC to CRO, No. 302, 11/3/1953, FN 1201/41, FO 371/106873. It was decided that the Frigates would continue as planned, but that when the Indians arrived in London for the Coronation they would be told that defence aid of this kind should attract reciprocal assistance from them. CRO to UKHC, No.517, 31/3/1953, FN 1201/41, FO 371/106873. In December 1952, in Cabinet, Churchill had gone so far as to comment that, 'Tell Nehru that if he interferes then he will get no more arms from us in future. Make it a major issue with him.' CC 107 (52), 22/12/1952, CAB/195/11. However, it appears as though these threats were never transmitted to the High Commissioner for communication to Nehru.

¹⁵⁶ Record of Conversation between Clutterbuck and Pillai of 18/3/1953, No. 331, 19/3/1953, FN 1201/44, FO 371/106973.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Record of Conversation between Clutterbuck and Pillai, 15/4/1953, No. 436, 15/4/1953, FN 1201/50, FO 371/106873.

¹⁵⁹ Details of the Memorandum in UKHC to CRO, No. 437, 15/4/1953, FN 1201/51, FO 371/106873.

¹⁶⁰ Pillai reported on these developments to Clutterbuck, UKHC to CRO, No. 551, 9/5/1953, FN 1201/76, FO 371/106873.

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informed that the British Government accepted the terms set out and would use them as a basis for approaching the Government of Nepal.¹⁶¹ Thus, after almost a year since the first *Cross Roads* story concerning India's complicity in recruiting Gurkhas for the British Army in Malaya, India designed a compromise formula whereby British recruitment would take place on Nepalese soil rather than Indian soil. The opposition to recruitment in India potentially threatened to scuttle British recruitment of Gurkhas completely.

Conclusions

Through examining both the Indian and the British sources, it has been possible to investigate the issue of Gurkha recruitment. Until now Gurkha recruitment has not been placed in its international context of Cold War and decolonisation in South and Southeast Asia. The British sources, whilst appreciating Nehru's importance and the pressures under which he operated, paint him as willing to assist. The available Indian sources, predominantly the *SWJN*, provide an appreciation of Nehru's role as largely one of him insisting that the British leave India, but without a focus on the assistance provided to the British. For Nehru, the situation was a complex one: he sought stability in Nepal especially in the face of Chinese irredentism, he wanted opposition at home to cease, and he wanted the continued recruitment of British Gurkhas for Malaya.

Once again, and similar to the cases of Ganapathy and Sambasivam, the Gurkhas were another example of India's imperial detritus impacting on both bilateral and, more widely, on regional and Cold War connections. The Gurkhas, like the sterling balances and a large Indian population abroad, were all a direct legacy of empire that interacted with, and were sometimes in conflict with, the policies that Nehru largely attempted to follow. The British Government was well aware of the domestic pressures on Nehru, but as time pressed on they became less inclined to consider these pressures and throughout this Nehru was anxious not to upset the British or interrupt the flow of recruits. However, the situation was such that Nehru was the only hope that the British had of securing any agreement with the Nepalese. Nehru was ideologically opposed in principle to the idea of recruitment, but the practicalities of the situation overrode but did not entirely extinguish these

¹⁶¹ CRO to UKHC, No. 681, 4/5/1953, FN 1201/67(A), FO 371/106873.

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principles. Moreover, Nehru was under extreme pressure from the parliamentary Opposition, the left press and popular opinion. One of the most compelling facets of this example is the power of public opinion, opinion informed by the legacy of the struggle for freedom that exerted a very compelling influence on Nehru's room for manoeuvre and action with the British. Nehru again faced questions in the Raya Sabha for B. Rath (Communist) in the Autumn of 1953, where Nehru followed his well-used line that it was not a matter for the G.O.I. to interfere in relations between Britain and Nepal.¹⁶²

Whilst ideologically opposed to recruitment, this did not drive Nehru's actions. Nehru was largely honest with the British. He did not hide that he thought recruitment an anachronism, but that in the circumstances it was a necessity, and he also admitted to the pressures that he was under in the form of opposition and criticism. Most tellingly, Nehru largely avoided the topic of transit rights, which were essential for any recruitment to take place. Had an agreement been reached with the Nepalese and the G.O.I. refused transit rights then the entire mechanics would have been unworkable. Nehru's association with India's foreign policy had its negative aspects as evidenced by the fact that attacks against recruitment became attacks against Nehru.

The regional politics of South Asia also had a significant role to play with the Gurkhas. Not only were the Indians and British under pressure, but also the King of Nepal, and in conversation with Clutterbuck Nehru argued that the King 'had no particular objection to its continuing for some time, (but) he had to do something which he could explain and justify to his own people.'¹⁶³ The art of political window-dressing was practised with some confidence during these months of negotiations as each of the three parties attempted to arrive at a flexible and lasting settlement that met the needs of British recruitment but that could also satisfy the voices of opposition in both Nepal and India. The twelve-month notice period was inserted, whether by the King or at Nehru's insistence, to ensure that the future Government of Nepal possessed the adequate mechanisms, not necessarily to cancel recruitment, but to satisfy their national pride by having the option to do so. The twelve month notice clause was in reality neutralised by the economic imperatives of

¹⁶² 'Gorkha Recruits to British Army: No Restrictions by India', 27/8/1953, *The Times of India*, p. 11.

¹⁶³ Note to Secretary General, MoEA, 7/1/1953 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 21*, pp. 522-524.

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recruitment. As Nehru told the British High Commissioner, 'the economic and social benefits' would largely inform, but not determine, the decision of Nepal.¹⁶⁴ The economic gains from recruitment provided stability and a reasonable hope of advance and reform. The British, however, could not rely on future governments in Nepal seeing the benefits of continued recruitment and so an agreement was a necessity. With the failure of the Nepali Congress to form a stable government, the King of Nepal and his council of advisors, containing several Rana veterans, faced the focussed criticism of popular opinion in Nepal. The King sought a lasting settlement that would mean that he could escape sustained criticism, and would reduce the desire of any new government to abrogate any treaty agreements.

This case study also demonstrates India's own strategy of buffer states and the extension of influence over other sovereign territories to ensure that most important of Indian goals: regional stability. India was keen to have a stable and prosperous Nepal on its north-eastern border with Tibet, which became all the more important with the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950. This stability in large part depended upon the income derived from the Gurkhas, at the same time as desiring stability for Southeast Asia more generally through the continued use of Gurkhas in Malaya.

Nehru and the G.O.I. were extremely sensitive in the face of the criticism from the Opposition and the leftist press, who appropriated the language of liberation to defend the actions of the MCP in Malaya and berate the Government for their role in subjugation of freedom struggle. When the story of recruitment broke, in the autumn, the ambiguity of the situation allowed its appropriation by the left and provided them with a stick with which to beat the Government and castigate its entire foreign policy stance. Both the cases of Sambasivam and Ganapathy and the story of the Gurkhas demonstrate how influential the press was in fomenting opposition to aspects of Nehru's foreign policy that went against the general guiding principles, and also how effective the official Opposition could be when it had the backing of a section of the press. Moreover, as Nehru admitted many times, feeling on the issue of the Gurkhas being used in Malaya was not simply confined to the Communists and the left, and as he wrote to Menon: 'a subject of this kind excites the

¹⁶⁴ UKHC to CRO, No. 1336, 28/10/1952, FN 1201/102, FO 371/101159.

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public mind and practically no Indian is prepared to accept recruitment of soldiers on Indian soil for a foreign army, more so for their employment in Malaya at present.’¹⁶⁵

In the face of domestic opposition, Nehru was compelled to make some balanced concessions and make a point of asking the British to find alternative arrangements whilst in fact assisting in helping them do so and intimating that they were willing to pay a level of monetary compensation. Crucially the issue of transit rights was not questioned, which would have put an end to British recruitment even had the Nepalese agreed to depots on their soil. Taken as a whole, Indian actions cannot be described as anti-recruitment: they supported continued British recruitment through the Tripartite Agreement, guaranteed continued transit rights and assisted in negotiations with the Nepalese. As an Indian official argued to the British High Commissioner, whatever the settlement reached, the government continued to expose itself to sustained criticism because ‘the communist object was to stop transit of Gurkhas altogether.’¹⁶⁶

Furthermore, this episode demonstrates India’s stance on Communism in Malaya and more widely in Southeast Asia and that Nehru was more willing than previously appreciated to give British help to combat militant and expansionary Communism, which was closely linked to the progressive nature of British policies in Malaya. Stability, as ever, was the key word for Nehru – despite Malaya being the site of some of the most exploitative business practices in the empire. Nehru was prepared to accept colonialism rather than militant Communism attempting to hijack a nascent national liberation struggle. The case of Malaya more generally is an example of the fact that the idea of colonialism and its eradication was not always consistent with supporting those physically trying to destroy the colonial system.

In essence, Nehru had to play a sticky wicket and did so in the only way that could satisfy domestic opposition and popular opinion more widely, not inconvenience the British and maintain the flow of recruits to Malaya, safeguard the economic and political stability of Nepal, and also safeguard the Tripartite Agreement, which in turn ensured access to Nepalese recruits for the Indian army. Like India’s pragmatic actions over Ganapathy and Sambasivam, the case of the

¹⁶⁵ Nehru responding to V.K. Krishna Menon, 2/9/1952 in Gopal (ed.), *SWJN, Volume 19*, p. 627.

¹⁶⁶ UKHC to CRO reporting conversation with un-named Indian MoEA Official, No. 1168, 22/9/1952, DEFE 7/1922.

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Gurkhas highlights Nehru's pragmatic and realistic attitude towards the situation in Malaya regarding Communist insurrection in a colonial territory and in the wider scope of regional stability in both Nepal and Malaya. Nehru adopted a flexible position over Gurkha recruitment and to achieve his aims Nehru needed to balance three competing pressures: Nepalese politics, the demands of India's domestic opposition and public opinion and the British requirement for Gurkhas to fight in Malaya.

Conclusions

8) Concluding Notes

Conclusions for the specific case studies have already been provided at the end of each chapter and so here the emphasis is placed on their collective contribution to the wider understanding of India's foreign policies. The primary objective of this thesis was to provide a nuanced analysis of the first years of Indian independence that filled the silences in the existing narrative and historiography that emphasise an idealistic and morally governed foreign policy. Through the preceding examination, and by employing a wide range of archival materials, it has been possible to recast India as a key Cold War player in South and Southeast Asia that balanced its national interest with the need to publicly adhere to its espoused foreign policy principles.

The key contributions that this thesis has made can be best explained through the interconnected strands the flow throughout the case studies: first, India's transfer of power, its transition to independence, and its imperial legacies. The absence of a developed foreign affairs department and the need for economic development in India, South and Southeast Asia are two prime examples. The research contributes to both an understanding of the process of the external transfer of power and of the need to construct the apparatus of state post-independence. By examining specific episodes in India's foreign policy in the transition period from colony to nation-state, Indonesia for example, the thesis has provided a bridge between the two spheres that is all too often disregarded by scholars who treat 1947 as a caesura in India's history, the starting point of the national story.¹

Second, and at the core of this thesis, was an examination of the interaction between colonialism and Communism in South and Southeast Asia, and how Nehru's, and others', reading of this affected Indian foreign policy. The thesis explored the closely related nature of colonialism, decolonisation and the threat of Communism in Southeast and South Asia, but did not seek to write a regional history. Fundamentally, Nehru feared and opposed the violent spread of Communism. But he also exploited British, Commonwealth, and later US, fears of Communist expansion in an attempt to influence policy in the region in order to

¹ However, 1946 with the establishment of the Interim Government, rather than 1947 is the cut off point for access to Government archives and Nehru's and V.K. Krishna Menon's private papers.

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further the aim of decolonisation and to secure development aid for India and the region by presenting economic development and political freedom as the answer to Communism.

Third, and closely linked to the above point, India's actions over Malaya, Commonwealth membership and the Colombo Plan serve to demonstrate the importance of the Sterling Area and India's sterling balances in both its own development needs and in its approach to Communism and colonialism in Southeast Asia. This emphasis is well overdue and serves to contextualise India's international affairs with its colonial legacy of the sterling balances. In sum, emphasis was placed on India's own national interests in a peaceful transformation of colonial Southeast Asia to a collection of democratic nations as opposed to militant Communism. Moreover, this research, through its analysis of the lack of stability in South and Southeast Asia, adds a depth of understanding to why Nehru was so eager to avoid international instability, and provides further context to India's peacemaking actions regarding the Korean War, the Indo-China war and also later on with the Suez crisis.

The fourth key strand is the focus on India and Britain and this derived from the fact that in the first years of independence Britain was India's closest international partner. This is further reinforced by the focus on Southeast Asia where Britain remained the key regional power. This thesis was not, however, limited to an attempt to write a history of the bilateral relationship between India and Britain or to chart the decline of that relationship, but rather to examine the complex bonds that remained between the two countries in the first years of independence in the context of Communism and colonialism in Southeast Asia. In this way this research has also contributed to the wider historiography of the decolonisation of the British Empire in Asia through its re-examination of this key relationship. Much of the existing literature, however, seeks to examine the Indo-British relationship in order to chart its decline and this retrospective and myopic approach neglects to analyse the strengths and complexities of the post-independence relationship.

Fifth, the focus on Sino-Indian relations in South and Southeast Asia in this research contributes to an understanding of India and China outside of the teleological narrative of the 1962 war. An integral part of Nehru's appreciation of international Communism came from Communist victory in the Chinese civil war,

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which positioned China as a rival to Indian influence in Southeast Asia. As with Malaya, the Commonwealth and Colombo, the Gurhka case study demonstrated Indian anxiety towards an expansionist China. This research focused on Indian perceptions of the threat of China not, as much of the existing literature does, with the exclusive aim of tracing the roots of the Sino-Indian war of 1962, but rather by examining the early years of Sino-Indian interactions in colonial Southeast Asia. Moreover, the thesis explored the connection between India's domestic Communist troubles and international Communism in order to demonstrate Nehru's increasing awareness of the destabilising impact of Communism in Southeast Asia.

Sixth, this research has clearly demonstrated that strict neutralism or non-alignment, as espoused by Nehru in September 1946, was an aim, an aspiration, a goal, but one that was not fully realised in the first years of Indian independence as it became more of a rhetorical commitment in the face of prevailing domestic and international circumstances. Neutralism, for Nehru, was a fluctuating position based on the particular set of circumstances present in each episode on the international stage, and was not simply a moral and ideologically driven policy that determined all of India's external relations. A firm rhetorical commitment to neutralism endured and it remained a key aspiration as the G.O.I. sought to present its foreign policy as unique and 'Indian' in order to satisfy a broad spectrum of public opinion at home. Although not the primary aim of the thesis, the research has begun to de-centre the teleological narrative that dominates the existing historiography that seeks to chart a path to Bandung and beyond to the Non-Aligned Movement, and which reinforces the notion of a solely morally directed and idealistic foreign policy. Through examining previously neglected episodes in India's external relations, and by shifting attention to India's earliest international forays, this work places the Asian Relations Conference and the conference on Indonesian freedom into their respective historical contexts rather than simply as part of the path to Bandung.

The other key guiding principle of Indian foreign policy, anti-colonialism, was far from being universally applied and, like neutralism, was flexible and contingent on the specifics of each situation. For example the differences between India's attitudes towards freedom movements in Indonesia, Indo-China and Malaya. More so than India's unwillingness to formally align itself in the Asian Cold War, anti-colonialism was an emotive issue with Indian public and political opinion.

Conclusions

Seventh, and stressing the hitherto neglected links between the domestic and international, the presentation of Indian foreign policy was politically window-dressed by the G.O.I. Its private dealings with other nations were, at times, at variance with the image that it presented to the Indian public and the political establishment, for example Indonesia, Malaya and the Gurkhas. Public opinion, as perceived by the G.O.I., was a far more important component in the exercise of Indian foreign affairs than is currently accepted in the historiography. Part of the importance of public opinion comes from the fact, as demonstrated in the Indonesia chapter, that India's external identity, its championing of certain causes drew, on the Congress platform from before independence, invoking Gandhi in particular, and was used as a component in the construction of India's national identity as non-violent and anti-colonial. Furthermore, the case studies examined the relatively underdeveloped field of political criticism of the G.O.I.'s external affairs, most prominently through the Malaya, Commonwealth membership and Gurkha recruitment chapters.

Overall, with its concentration of primary archival materials from a range of countries (the first time that this has been done on such a scale and with India as the central focus), it has been possible to construct a more finely grained picture of India's foreign relations than is otherwise possible when depending solely upon Indian archives, much of the material in which remains inaccessible. Through this method this thesis re-examined India's role in the Asian Cold War to show it as a key, if somewhat reluctant, player in the international relations of the early Cold War that pursued its national interests. The conclusions reached here add a depth of understanding to those case studies that already featured in the existing narratives of India's foreign policy: the Commonwealth membership decision and Indonesia's freedom struggle. Both of these examples benefit from being placed in the re-worked narrative provided by this thesis that is informed and constructed by the other case studies that have until now been neglected by scholars. This selection of studies also serves to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the episodes under discussion. It is through the combination of these studies that much is revealed about India's external behaviour, and the extent to which it was influenced by its domestic situation as the need for food, for economic growth and development fundamentally underpinned its foreign relations.

Conclusions

This research has explored India's actions in Southeast Asia in order to recast and emphasise its role in the history of the early Cold War in South and Southeast Asia, and has demonstrated its active and key regional actions in the period before Bandung in 1955 through its existing connections with the British Empire and Commonwealth. This thesis explored India's earliest forays in international affairs in the context of its own transfer of power, its domestic economic and political needs, and the Cold War and decolonisation in South and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, this work offers future research opportunities by demonstrating that there are many silences in both the G.O.I.'s presentation of its external policies and in the existing historiography, which can be read by employing the range of sources employed in this research.

Conclusions

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