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Sharinee L. Jagtiani, "Foreign Armies are Functioning on Asian Soil": India, Indonesian Decolonisation and the Onset of the Cold War (1945–1949). *Cold War History*, (published online, 07 April, 2022) DOI: 10.1080/14682745.2021.2021888

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There is an exciting new wave of Cold War scholarship that focusses on the roots and evolution of Indian diplomacy, and Sharinee Jagtiani's article pushes the envelope by focussing even more particularly on India's South-South diplomacy¹. The article makes the argument that non-aligned India's non-aligned diplomacy at the UN bolstered Indonesian claims for independence from Dutch rule. Jagtiani convincingly argues that this was one of India's first forays into diplomacy and it is fascinating because it preceded Indian independence in 1947. The period under study is 1945 to 1949, a founding moment for the republics of India and Indonesia but also the start of the Cold War. Jagtiani discusses the receding of imperial power from South East Asia overlapped with the arrival of the Cold War in the region. She places these developments against the wider context of Asian postwar politics and India's foreign policy under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Jagtiani bemoans the lack of attention paid to Indian diplomacy in works on Indonesia's struggle for independence, with major works focussed only on Australian support to Indonesia. The author provides a corrective to this narrative by using Indian archival material to highlight India's substantial role in internationalising the question of Indonesian independence. Jagtiani achieves this by focussing in five sections on what she calls pre-independence "Indian activism" on the Indonesian question, India's diplomatic response to Dutch police action in 1947 that facilitated a temporary peace settlement, then moves on to New Delhi's correspondence with Batavia (now Jakarta) with regard to communist insurgency on the archipelago, Delhi's mobilisation of American, British and Asian support for the cause of Indonesia and finally concludes with some thoughts on what insights we may gain from this diplomatic relationship for international history.

This work is exciting for multiple reasons, foremost amongst which is that it is one of the first studies that discuss as their sole focus the diplomatic relations between non-aligned states in the early Cold War period. Studies of the early Cold War period, even when they focus on states of the Global South tend to route analyses through American, British, or indeed, Soviet Russian points of view, discussing what Asian or African state diplomacy meant for the great powers.² As a corrective, Jagtiani's paper joins new literature that

¹ For notable new scholarship on this subject, see Alexander E. Davis and Vineet Thakur, "Walking the Thin Line: India's Anti-Racist Diplomatic Practice in South Africa, Canada, and Australia, 1946–55," *The International History Review*, 38/5 (2016), 880–899; Pallavi Raghavan, "Establishing the Ministry of External Affairs," in David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 80–91; Rakesh Ankit, "In the Twilight of Empire: Two Impressions of Britain and India at the United Nations, 1945–47," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38/4 (2015), 574–588; Swapna Kona Nayudu, "India Looks at the World': Nehru, the Indian Foreign Service & World Diplomacy," *Diplomatica*, 2 (2020) 100–117.

² For how non-aligned diplomacy led to other states embracing non-alignment, see Swapna Kona Nayudu, "In the very eye of the storm': India, the UN, and the Lebanon crisis of 1958," *Cold War History* 18:2 (2018): 221–237. For Soviet policy on Indonesia, see Larisa M Efimova, "Soviet Policy in Indonesia during the "Liberal Democracy" Period,

focusses primarily on Asian and African spaces, such as Cindy Ewing's article on the Colombo Powers, and moves beyond these spaces as sites of the Cold War, privileging their histories written from their archives.³

Second, Jagtiani's paper tackles an interesting period in modern India's international relations. The early Cold War intersected in India with the formation of the interim government, a period reanimated in historical international relations scholarship through work such as Rakesh Ankit's work on India at the UN.⁴ Finally, Jagtiani's paper tackles a significant theme in Indian diplomatic history – that of India's anti-imperialist positioning at the UN – following new histories of the UN such as in Vineet Thakur's analysis of India's first UN resolution⁵. In the paper, the author alludes to the Conference of the Youth of Southeast Asian Countries that took place in Calcutta in February 1948 (she also mentions the more widely known Asian Relations Conference). This is a significant parlay between more formalistic approaches to diplomatic history and the flourishing literature on solidarity movements across Asia in the 1940s to the 1960s, including but not limited to Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte's "Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War" and Kyaw Zaw Win's "The 1953 Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon."⁶ In terms of inter-Asian relations, the paper provides a respite from China-centred diplomatic histories of India. It would be interesting, for instance, to see similar work emerge on India-Burma relations, which in the Nehru-U Nu period would be fascinating.

Due to the particular focus of the paper on India Indonesia diplomacy, Jagtiani is also able to show how successive leaders from Sutan Sjahrir to Amir Sjarifuddin courted Nehru's support for the Indonesian cause. This is fascinating because studies of India Indonesia relations tend to concentrate on the Bandung period, in the run-up to the first Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955 of which India was one of the organisers. Studies on non-alignment as foreign policy also focus on the aftermath of the Bandung Conference and differences between Indonesian President Sukarno and Indian Prime Minister Nehru.

Through Jagtiani's paper, one is able to recover an earlier period of warmer relations between both countries but also a more diffuse view of Indonesian leadership and their relations with Nehru, who first as prime minister but also as India's foreign minister was the point of contact for all foreign leaders on all diplomatic matters for the 17 years that he held office. This also explains why Jagtiani has used material from India, with a focus on the *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, which is an indispensable archive for studying this period. It would have enriched the arguments presented here to see more use of Indonesian archives, which have been made accessible through the now digitised and conveniently available online archives of Soedjatmoko.⁷

Indeed, even though there is a perceptible lack of scholarship on Indonesian diplomacy in that early period, Samuel E. Crowl's writing on 'Indonesia's Diplomatic Revolution' is conspicuous by its absence.⁸ After all, if

1950-1959," *Cold War International History Project*, Wilson Center, 2011, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/soviet-policy-indonesia-during-the-liberal-democracy-period-1950-1959>

³ Cindy Ewing, "The Colombo Powers: Crafting Diplomacy in the Third World and Launching Afro-Asia at Bandung," *Cold War History* 19:1 (2019): 1-19.

⁴ Rakesh Ankit, "In the Twilight of Empire: Two Impressions of Britain and India at the United Nations, 1945-47," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38:4 (2015): 574-588.

⁵ Vineet Thakur, "The 'Hardy Annual': A History of India's First UN Resolution," *India Review* 16:4 (2017): 401-429.

⁶ Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, "Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War," *Journal of World History* 30:2 (2019): 1-19; Kyaw Zaw Win, "The 1953 Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon: Precursor to the Bandung Conference," in Derek McDougall and Antonia Finnane, eds., *Bandung 1955: Little Histories* (Victoria: Monash University Publishing, 2010): 43-56.

⁷ The Soedjatmoko Archive is accessible at <https://membacasoedjatmoko.com/>.

⁸ Samuel E. Crowl, "Indonesia's Diplomatic Revolution: Lining Up for Non-Alignment, 1945-1955," in Christopher E. Goscha and Christian F. Ostermann, eds., *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 2009): 238-257.

India was able to provide political and material support to the Indonesian cause, it is also because Indonesian diplomacy was able to skilfully make the case for such support. As Crowl shows, Batavia reached out to both New Delhi and Canberra and was able to combine two very different foreign policies for its own cause. It is regrettable that that perspective is absent from this important paper.

In the final section of the paper, Jagtiani briefly mentions India's concerns at "irresponsible communism' in Indonesia" (19) and the resultant unity of thought between India and the United States. This is a remarkable observation and it would be interesting to see more writing on this convergence and whether any active collaboration resulted from it, although in Jagtiani's assessment, it was eventually Indian and Australian pressures that led to Dutch withdrawal from Indonesia. It is not entirely clear why the author chooses to use the term 'activism' repeatedly in this section while describing Indian diplomacy, particularly at the UN, which is in contradiction with the stated aims of the paper – to provide a revisionist Cold War account that privileges Asian points of view. In the future, scholars may have to move away from even an inadvertent characterisation of postcolonial states as vigorous or agitated, when they were oftentimes both dexterous and prescient. Jagtiani quotes Sukarno saying on the eve of Indonesian independence, "I am trying vainly to measure the gratitude the Indonesian people owe to India and to her Prime Minister personally for the unflinching and brotherly support in our struggle in the past" (17). This is an excellent perch from which to approach the following decade up to and past Bandung – it complicates an otherwise popular view of Nehru and Sukarno as naturally poised to compete. The article thus provides a much-needed diplomatic history of India's involvement in the quest for Indonesian independence but also lays the ground for revising our view of India-Indonesia relations post decolonisation and well into the thick of the Cold War.

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