ISAS Working Paper

From 'Asia' to 'Asia-Pacific': Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India's Regional Spaces[1]

Sinderpal Singh[2]

Executive Summary

Existing discussions of regionalism in Asia reveal diverse ideas of Asia's composition, with a lack of agreement about which states should be included/excluded in representations of 'Asia'. This paper seeks to engage the debate by looking at the case of Indian political elites and their efforts to frame India's own regional space within these larger questions on regional spaces in 'Asia' and the 'Asia-Pacific'. It aims to locate contemporary representations of India's regional space in a comparative historical framework by looking at India's earlier tryst with different regionalist projects like the Asian Relations Conference (ARC), New Delhi, in 1947 and the Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, in 1955. It would be argued that such similarities/differences in Indian representations of its regional space over time can be related to how Indian political elites have sought to negotiate Indian state identity, and as a result, India's role beyond its own borders from the time of its independence in 1947.

The paper consists of five sections. The first section will sketch the theoretical and conceptual framework of this paper. It will demonstrate the importance of grounding the 'regionalist' projects of political elites, in this case Indian political elites, within the context of domestic

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negotiations of state identity. It makes the point that the way in which a region develops is not a pre-existing given, but a choice made on specific historical and political grounds.

The second section will look at Nehru's efforts at framing India's place in 'Asia' at both the ARC Conference in 1947 and the Bandung Conference in 1955. This section will examine the manner in which Nehru's negotiation of Indian state identity had important implications for his 'India in Asia' project. It will outline the reasons why Nehru's region-building project shared dramatically different fates in 1955 as compared to 1947 and the reasons for the demise of 'Asia' as a regional idea after 1955.

The third section will mark out the initial basis of the 'Asia-Pacific' idea and the factors which led to India's exclusion from this regional space. The position of Japan and the United States (US), according to the context of Cold War politics, is central, in this instance, in understanding the manner in which this 'Asia-Pacific' regional idea originated and developed through this period. Such politics of region-building also explain the basis of inclusion/exclusion from this regional space, India being one of the most notable exclusion during the Cold War era.

The fourth section will look at how Indian political elites, since 1990, have endeavoured to 'locate' India within the regional space of 'Asia-Pacific'. It would examine the period beginning in the early 1990s till the present and trace how different sets of Indian political elites [from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress parties] re-negotiated certain notions of Indian state identity over this period. The implications of such domestic re-negotiations will then be related to how Indian political elites have framed India's place within this 'Asia-Pacific' space.

The concluding section revisits the key points made in the four sections of this paper. It makes the case for re-examining the manner in which the Indian state, via the political elites that represent the Indian state, approach India's place in different regionalist projects. Looking comparatively at two distinct historical periods, the paper demonstrates why we need to look at Indian political elites and how they frame Indian state identity when discussing India's history of navigating the different contours of international regionalism. Looking forward, therefore, India's continued role in the Asia-Pacific region will depend as much on the manner in which Indian political elites can domestically align the idea of India with the idea of the Asia-Pacific as it would on external factors beyond India's borders.

Introduction

Contemporary debates on regionalism in Asia have been marked by different visions of what constitutes 'Asia' and the basis on which inclusion/exclusion in such groupings should be based on.[3] This paper seeks to engage this debate by looking at the case of Indian political elites and their attempts to frame India's own regional space within these larger debates on regional spaces in 'Asia' and the 'Asia-Pacific'. It aims to locate certain contemporary representations of India's regional space in a comparative historical context by looking at India's earlier tryst with different regionalist projects like the 1947 Asian Relations Conference (ARC) in New Delhi, India and the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia. It would be argued that such similarities/differences in Indian representations of its regional space over time can be traced back to how Indian political elites have sought to negotiate Indian state identity, and consequently, India's role beyond its own borders from the time of its independence in 1947.

The first section will briefly outline the theoretical and conceptual framework of this paper. It will demonstrate the importance of grounding the 'regionalist' projects of political elites, in this case Indian political elites, within the context of domestic negotiations of state identity. The second section will look at Nehru's endeavours at framing India's place in 'Asia' at both the ARC Conference in 1947 and the Bandung Conference in 1955. This section will examine the manner in which Nehru's negotiation of Indian state identity had important implications for his 'India in Asia' project. The third section outlines the initial basis of the 'Asia-Pacific' idea and the factors which led to India's exclusion from this regional space. The fourth section will look at how Indian political elites, since 1990, have attempted to 'locate' India within the regional space of 'Asia-Pacific'. It would scrutinise the period beginning in the early 1990s till the present and trace how different sets of Indian political elites (from the BJP and Congress parties) re-negotiated certain notions of Indian state identity over this period. The implications of such domestic re-negotiations will then be related to how Indian political elites have framed India's place within this 'Asia-Pacific' space. The last section will serve as a conclusion, retracing the manner in which Indian political elites moved from framing India as part of 'Asia' during the Nehru era to 'Asia-Pacific' from the early 1990s onwards.

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[3]   For examples of the historical and contemporary 'contests' over 'Asia', see Pekka Korhonen, 'Monopolizing Asia: The Politics of a Metaphor', in *Pacific Review*, Vol.10, no.3 (1997), pp. 347-65; David Camroux, 'Asia…Whose Asia? A "Return to the Future" of a Sino-Indic Asian Community', in *Pacific Review*, Vol.20, no.4 (2007), pp.551-75.

Going Regional at Home: The Indian Case

In his overview of the study of regionalism and its evolution as a concept within the academic discipline of international relations, Andrew Hurell notes that the politics of regionalism is often characterised by 'deep conflicts over the geographical scope of the region and the values it is held to represent'.[4] There have been earlier attempts within international relations to interrogate the basis of international regions and their regional interactions but they remained largely silent on the ideational constructions of such regional spaces, steeped as such studies were in the neo-functionalist quantitative predisposition within international relations during this period.[5] There has been, however a relatively recent re-engagement in the 1990s with such questions of 'region building', with a emphasis on the power of discursive constructions of regional places, in line with what some people have termed the 'return' of culture and identity to the study of international relations.[6] One of the pioneering studies on region-building and region-builders has been Iver Neumann's work on the Baltic region.[7] More recent writing on the politics of region construction has sought to use Neumann's earlier ideas and re-apply them to various regions and themes.[8]

The central thrust of the 'region-building' approach is to illustrate the point 'that the way in which a region develops is not a given, but a choice made on specific historical and political grounds', via 'certain, often historically developed, characteristics or connotations that actors draw upon'.[9] Central to this conception is the notion that regions are always works in progress,

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[4]   Andrew Hurrell, 'Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective', in Andrew Hurrell and Louise Fawcett (eds), *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p.66.

[5]   See for example, Joseph Nye (ed.), *International Regionalism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968); Richard Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz (eds), *Regional Politics and World Order* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973); Karl Deutsch et al, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1957).

[6]   Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil (eds), *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1996). Other related contributions during this period are: David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Bill McSweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Rodney Bruce Hall, *National Collective Identity: Social Constructs and International Systems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[7]   Iver Neumann, 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe', in *Review of International Studies*, Vol.20, no.1 (1994), pp.53-74. For Neumann's related works on this theme, see Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The 'East' in European Identity Formation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995).

[8]   For example, see C.S. Browing, 'The Region-Building Approach Revisited: The Continued Othering of Russia in Discourses of Region-Building in the European North', in *Geopolitics*, Vol.8, no.1 (January 2003), pp.45-71; Carina Keskitalo, 'International Region-Building: Development of the Artic an International Region', in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.42, no.2 (2007), pp.187-205; W. Larner & W. Walters, 'The Political Rationality of 'New Regionalism': Toward a Genealogy of the Region', in *Theory and Society*, Vol.31, no.3 (2002), pp.391-432.

[9]   Carina Keskitalo, 'International Region-Building: Development of the Artic an International Region', in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.42, no.2 (2007), pp.188.

always being created and recreated as part of the region-building process.[10] An equally important aspect of the region-building approach, especially as applied in this study, is the role of 'region-builders' in such creation and recreation of regional spaces intrinsic to region-building projects. Region-builders, in this instance, are 'political actors, who, as part of some political project, see it in their interest to imagine a certain spatial and chronological identity for a region'.[11] Such political actors, in their role as 'region-builders', are often state elites who identify their own politically expedient representations of regional identity and space as the expression of the states in whose name they speak.[12]

Using such an approach, this paper will look at two specific periods of Indian foreign policy and demonstrate the link between domestic negotiations of state identity on the part of Indian political elites and the manner in which they engaged in different region-building projects across two distinctive historical periods. The first period will be the stretch from 1947 to 1955, the period during which India's first Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, sought to frame certain specific ideas of 'Asia'. This period is analysed via examining two major international conferences, the 1947 ARC Conference and the 1955 Bandung Conference for two main reasons. The first relates to the deliberations at these two conferences and how they exhibit plainly that, in a period of great historical flux, post-colonial elites like Nehru perceived that the 'idea' of Asia was open to 'new' and, possibly, radical re-articulations. These two gatherings thus afforded crucial platforms for such possible 'new' representations of 'Asia' to be expressed, agreed upon and/or contested amongst these post-colonial political elites. The second reason is that a comparative examination of the deliberations and outcomes of the two gatherings of political elites affords a closer look at how and why Nehru's attempts to cultivate specific types of 'Asian-ness' met with differing levels of success at the two conferences. The second period, from 1990 onwards, is significant because of two factors. Firstly, it signalled the end of the Cold War, with far-reaching implications for the 'region-building' exercise in the Asia-Pacific space. Secondly, from 1990, certain fundamental changes began to take root within India, with critical consequences for the manner in which Indian political elites began to re-articulate Indian state identity.

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[10]   Bjorn Hettne & Fredrik Soderbaum, 'Theorising the Rise of Regionness', in *New Political Economy*, Vol.5, no.3 (2000), p.461.

[11]   Iver Neumann, *Uses of the Other: The 'East' in European Identity Formation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p.115.

[12]   For example of works with other approaches to states as 'region-builders', see: Ole Weaver, 'Three Competing "Europes": French, German, Russian', in *International Affairs*, Vol.66, no.3 (April 1990), pp.477-93; K. Jayasuria, 'Singapore - The Politics of Regional Definition', in *Pacific Review*, Vol.7, no.4 (1994), pp.411-20.

Constructing Post-Colonial Asia: The Asian Relations Conference, Delhi, 1947

Nehru's idea that India's own struggle against colonialism and its eventual independence would bestow upon it 'special responsibilities' that went beyond its own borders was evident early on in India's independent history, as when in 1948, in the midst of discussing the framing of India's Constitution, Nehru was of the opinion that with India's independence, he

> saw the star of India rising far above the horizon and casting its soothing light…over many countries in the world, who looked to it with hope, who considered that out of this new Free India would come various forces which would help Asia'.[13]

This idea that India's independence, won as a result of a bitter battle against the injustices and discrimination of imperialism, held an important significance for the countries and peoples of 'Asia' was a theme that featured in Nehru's discourse even before independence in 1947. Nehru's own attempts to 'find' an India that could exhibit some form of over-arching unity despite its amazing variety, led him to the idea of representing India as a distinct civilisation. In his ruminations in his *Discovery of India,* he represents India's unity as some form of 'synthesis', a civilisation that was borne out of such a synthesis of various different cultures and influences.

It is instructive to note that Nehru makes a similar claim about China and how despite the apparent split between Nationalist and Communist China; it had a unique, common age-old civilisational identity, just like India.[14] In this representation, India and China both represented different Asian age-old civilisations – civilisational qualities which made them 'India' and 'China'. For Nehru, this discursive move was necessary for two main reasons. The first was the need to define an India that was more than just a product of British imperial design.[15] There was thus a need on the part of elites like Nehru to 'find' a pre-existing, pre-colonial India to legitimate the basis of a future independent Indian state. The second was the need to contest one of the central justifications of colonial rule – that the superiority of Western civilisation legitimated the imperial relationship between Britain and the Indians over whom it ruled.[16] The need to frame and represent a specific form of Indian civilisation, represented as one that was

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[13] Nehru's speech in the Constituent Assembly, 8 November 1948. See Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy – Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1971), p.17.

[14] *Ibid.,* p.47.

[15] For a deeper discussion of the link between British imperialism and 'creating' India, see Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[16] An excellent and insightful treatment of such legitimations of imperial control is to be found in Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

equal to, in some cases superior to, Western civilisation became imperative. As Prasenjit Duara notes, such deployments of 'civilisation' categories to fit the nascent territorial nation was hardly unique to Indian elites like Nehru but instead was part of a wider move by other 'Asian' elites to represent themselves as part of a progressive and historically glorious civilisation.[17]

This idea of representing 'India' as having a distinct, pre-colonial glorious civilisational past was tied up crucially with Nehru's representation of 'Asia' and the latter's own glorious civilisational past.[18] India's own civilisational past was for Nehru thus both distinct from as well as part of the wider civilisational heritage of 'Asia' that had existed before the advent of western imperialism into this region. For Nehru thus, the project of framing a specific 'Indian-ness' was linked to the framing of a specific Pan-'Asian-ness'. An important bedrock of both these representational projects was the idea of anti-racialism and the related 're-discovery' of a broad glorious national/Asian civilisation.

The gathering of 'Asian' countries at the ARC in 1947 was in some ways novel, yet it had certain precedents. There had been earlier gatherings of Non-Western leaders/representatives with resistance to western imperialism being the central motive of such gathering. Examples include the gathering of the First Congress of the Peoples of the East held in 1920 in the Muslim city of Baku, in the central Caucuses and the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism in Brussels in 1927, the latter in which Nehru not only represented the Indian Congress but also had a hand in organising the gathering.[19] However, what was unique about the ARC of 1947 was its historical singularity on several counts: the Second World War had just ended two years prior with the resultant military and political exhaustion of allied countries like Britain, India's independence was impending and last, but definitely not least, Japan had become a defeated and occupied power, making it almost defunct from playing any kind of 'pan-Asian' leadership role, a stark contrast to its leadership pretensions within Asia throughout a large part of the early twentieth century.

Nehru echoes the premise of Asia's historically shared civilisation heritage and India's central role in such a shared civilisation during the conference itself when he notes that:

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[17] Prasenjit Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', in *Journal of World History*, Vol.12, no.1 (2001), pp.106-107.

[18] *Ibid.,* p.110. Duara observes that in the Japanese case in the early part of the twentieth century, '"pan-Asian-ism" both fed and resisted the nascent imperialism of that nation'.

[19] For details of the Baku Congress see: Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford & Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), p.135. For the Brussels Conference and Nehru's personal ruminations on it, see: Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru, an autobiography: with musings on recent events in India* (London: Bodley Head, 1953), pp.161-65.

India has always had contacts and intercourse with her neighbour countries…With the coming of British rule in India these contacts were broken off and India was almost completely isolated from the rest of Asia…This Conference itself is significant an expression of that deeper urge of the mind and spirit of Asia which has persisted in spite of the isolationism which grew up during the years of European domination.[20]

The central premise of this conference, for Nehru, was to rediscover this Asian civilisation that he spoke about, and to represent what 'Asia' and 'Asian-ness' now represented. In his role as region-builder, Nehru attempted to do two things that were outlined as part of the region-building approach. Firstly, he sought to place India within this region that both he and others had termed 'Asia'. This he did by representing 'Asian-ness' at that point in time as predominantly a movement against colonialism broadly and Western imperialism more specifically. With this move, he discursively aligned his idea of 'Indian-ness' with that of 'Asian-ness'. Secondly, he then sought to place India as a core part of this new 'Asian-ness'. This he did by representing India's battle against the racially motivated subjugation of colonialism as a path which could serve as a template for other Asian countries looking to free themselves from the shackles of Western colonialism. In the opening plenary address, Nehru notes that:

Apart from the fact that India herself is emerging into freedom and independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia. Geography is a compelling factor, and geographically she is so situated as to be the meeting point of western and northern and eastern and southeast Asia. Because of this the history of India is a long history of her relations with the other countries of Asia.[21]

The fact that Nehru was already part of a provisional government that was, very shortly, about to lead an independent India made this claim to India's centrality within this 'Asian' space even stronger. More importantly, Nehru's attempt to fuse India as Asia's 'centre', both spatially and ideationally, was part of the representational exercise of 'centring' India within this Asian regional space.

Overall, it is largely agreed that the ARC was fairly successful, at least from the Indian state's perspective. This was primarily because of its largely modest aims.[22] For Nehru, in his role as

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[20] Quoted in Asian Relations, *Being Report of the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, March-April 1947* (New Delhi: Asian Relations Organization, 1948), p.23.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] In his classic study, Sisir Gupta notes, 'the conference has been viewed as a success by most Indian writers…within the limited context of its aims'. Sisir Gupta, *India and Regional Integration in Asia* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p.37.

region-builder, this conference was relatively successful mainly because of two factors. Firstly, there were hardly any contestations about the need for 'Asia', with its attendant civilisational claims, to represent a rediscovered spirit of resistance to western colonialism. As such, aligning a specific form of 'Indian-ness' to this particular brand of 'Asian-ness' was not too controversial a move on the part of Nehru. Secondly, India's centrality was also largely acknowledged mostly because of the fact that it was destined to be the first Asian country to obtain independence from colonial British rule and as such had, on some level, reached the basic aim of the countries gathered in the conference – that of political freedom from western colonial control. Nehru, however, would find that such region-building tasks were not always unproblematic and this he would discern by the end of the Bandung Conference in 1955.

Constructing Post-Colonial Asia II: The Afro-Asian Conference, Bandung, 1955

Meeting in Bogor, Indonesia, in December 1954, the five countries that comprised the 'Colombo Powers,' (Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan), decided that the upcoming Bandung Conference in 1955 would determine its own procedure and agenda. These powers did however list four general objectives for the Bandung Conference.[23] They were:

1. to promote goodwill and cooperation among the nations of Asia and Africa, to explore and advance their mutual as well as common interests, and to establish and further friendliness and neighbourly relations;
2. to consider social, economic and cultural problems and relations of the countries represented;
3. to consider problems of special interest to Asian and African peoples – for example, problems affecting national sovereignty, of racialism and colonialism; and
4. to view the position of Asia and Africa and their peoples in the world today and the contribution they can make to the promotion of world peace and cooperation.[24]

Keeping to this general theme, in his opening address as the representative host of the 1955 Bandung Conference, President Soekarno of Indonesia, while mindful of the large variation amongst the diverse group of Asian and African states/representatives gathered, pointed to the basic continuity the gathering shared with the one in Delhi in 1947. Soekarno observed that:

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[23] For details of the Bogor meeting, see: Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), pp.20-22. Abdulgani, an Indonesian diplomat, was Secretary-General of the Organising Committee for the Bandung Conference.
[24] George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.3.

we are of many different nations, we are of many different social backgrounds and cultural patterns…Our national characters, or colours or motifs are different. Our racial stock is different and even the colour of our skin is different…We are united, for instance, by a common detestation of colonialism in whatever form it appears. We are united by a common detestation of racialism.[25]

There was thus a sense that despite the major global events that had taken place since 1947, like the emergence and escalation of Cold War rivalry between the two rival blocs and the de-colonialisation of a large number of states, that a common rejection of the racialism and imperialism that colonialism entailed would still form an important and sufficient basis for fraternity, as it was in Delhi in 1947.[26] This, at least, was the initial sense shared amongst the 'Colombo Powers', as evident from the four general objectives outlined above. It would be the 'filling in' of the conference's agenda, moving beyond just general objectives, which would however prove more problematic.

Before that however, turning to Nehru and India, the period between 1947 and 1955 was most obviously momentous for both. One of the major challenges that Nehru faced, especially after the death of Gandhi, was reframing Indian-ness, moving from the nebulous idea of India signifying a symbol of resistance to the imperial subjugation of British colonialism to a more specific mode of ordering the Indian state and what it represented as the driving force of a now-independent country. As Benjamin Zachariah notes in his study of Nehru, the deliberations over India's new constitution made the latter realise that his plans for a 'socialist' framework for a newly independent India did not have enough converts both within and outside the Congress Party.[27] Instead there was a compromise of sorts – the redistributive imperative was to be achieved via the mantra of 'economic planning'.[28] Out of this came a somewhat new, reordered idea of India – that it was still a symbol of anti-imperialism but now it was given deeper content. India was now to aim for 'national self-sufficiency', a continuation, but yet an important elaboration on its earlier anti-imperial, anti-colonial identity. Nehru thus had reworked 'Indian-ness' to signify national self-sufficiency as a form of India's perennial anti-imperialist identity.

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[25] From Soekarno's opening address at the Asian-African Conference, 18 April 1955. Full text of speech reproduced in: George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.43. See also, Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), p.173.

[26] For a discussion of Bandung's significance for later discourses on neo-colonialism within Asia, see: David Camroux, 'Asia…Whose Asia? A "Return to the Future" of a Sino-Indic Asian Community', in *Pacific Review,* Vol.20, no.4 (2007), pp.555-6.

[27] Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), p.151.

[28] The highly regarded Indian political scientist, A. Appodorai, terms Nehru's efforts to blend a socialist, re-distributive ethos into the workings and the idea of democracy in India as an example of 'democratic socialism'. A. Appodorai, *Indian Political Thinking: From Naoroji to Nehru* (Madras: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp.117-8.

This particular representation of Indian state identity at home had specific implications for the representation of India abroad. This notion of self-sufficiency and self-reliance permeated into Nehru's foreign policy outlook for India. In terms of policy stances, it translated into one of Nehru's major foreign policy mantras – 'non-alignment'. Just as domestically, a specific meaning and content had been given to earlier broad notions of anti-imperialism, the same now applied to Indian foreign policy. For Nehru, non-alignment and staying out of the bloc politics of the Cold War was a commonsensical extension of India's perennial steadfast resistance to anti-imperialism in all its permutations. For Nehru, this particular representation of India was not just an expression of India's 'true' identity, but rather that of Asia-Africa as well, given their commitment to defeat colonialism and imperialisms of all kinds. It is here also that the disjuncture between Nehru's representation of India and his representation of India's place in its wider Afro-Asian space begins to come unstuck.

Being initially not convinced of the utility of holding an Afro-Asian conference, Nehru, as part of the five 'Colombo Powers', was aware of the many potential areas for strong disagreement and heated discussion rather than commonality and unity of purpose among potential invitees – the issue of Israel and Palestine chief among these.[29] However, one of the central considerations that changed Nehru's mind on this matter was the opportunity such a gathering offered to the Asian-African countries to convince the newly Communist government of China to engage with the wider international community, rather than just being cocooned in its close ideological relationship with the Soviet Union.[30] This desire emanated from Nehru's hope that the Bandung gathering would endorse and represent India's own non-aligned outlook for 'Pan-Asian-ism', with Asian countries forming the core of the Afro-Asian grouping.[31] Besides China, Nehru's chief concern was with the impending formation of SEATO (Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation), an organisation of Asian countries that would soon become part of US-sponsored military alliance along the lines of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) of Western Europe.[32] This organisation, for Nehru, flew in the face of the non-alignment doctrine that he

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[29]   For an elaboration, see: S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol.II (London: Jonathan Cape, 1979), p.232. See also: Jyoti Sengupta, *Non-Alignment: Search for a Destination* (Calcutta: Naya Prokash, 1979), pp.94-5. Sengupta was an Indian journalist during this period with access to the Sri Lankan Prime Minister at this time, Sir John Kotelawala, Sri Lanka's representative to the preparatory meetings prior to and to the Bandung Conference itself.

[30]   Anthony Reid, 'The Bandung Conference and Southeast Asian Regionalism', in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (eds), *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), p.23.

[31]   As Krishna Menon, Nehru's long-time confidante and Indian foreign minister later pointed out, from the Indian perspective, 'Bandung was largely Asian'. Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.60.

[32]   For details on the factors leading up to the formation of SEATO, see: Yano Toru, 'Who Set the Stage for the Cold War in Southeast Asia?', in Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye (eds), *The Origins Of The Cold War In Asia* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1977), pp.329-33.

wanted to hoist onto 'Pan-Asian-ism', as an integral part of India playing a leading role in this grouping of countries.

In a telling speech at Bandung, Nehru laments the emergence of the bloc politics of the Cold War and links it to the repercussions both for Indian 'identity' and the wider identity of the Bandung grouping. In his view,

> if I join any of these big groups I lose my identity; I have no identity left, I have no views left…Therefore every step that that takes place in reducing that area in the world which may be called the unaligned area is a dangerous step and leads to war…It is an intolerable thought to me that the great countries of Asia and Africa should come out of bondage into freedom only to degrade themselves or humiliate themselves in this way.[33] Nehru, in his role as region-builder, attempted to re-articulate earlier less definite notions of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism expressed in Delhi in 1947 into a more specific idea of anti-imperialism as nonalignment in Bandung in 1955. He had managed to deploy such meanings into representations of India between 1947 and 1955 and now attempted to do the same for the Afro-Asian gathering. This time, however, there were fierce contestations to such a representation and with it to Nehru's attempts for India to play a central role in the grouping.

One of the most strident contestations came from India's two closest neighbours. The first, rather expectedly, came from Pakistan. Having just joined the US-backed SEATO a few months prior, Pakistan made it a point from the outset to equate Communism and all its manifestations as imperialistic. Following on from this, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, John Kotelawala insisted that the gathering condemn Soviet colonialism over what he termed were its satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe if all gathered were serious about wanting to do away with all forms of colonialism.[34] As much as Nehru tried to scuttle away the proposal on procedural grounds (one of them being that Central and Eastern Europe were not part of 'Asia-Africa' and thus should not be discussed), several other countries joined in support of Sri Lanka's proposal, namely Pakistan and Turkey, both being part of the western-sponsored Baghdad Pact and NATO respectively. Nehru's central aim – to link anti-imperialism/anti-colonialism to the principle of 'non-alignment' – was therefore beginning to falter at Bandung.

One of the central reasons why such a link was rejected by a number of countries at Bandung was due to the fact that these nascent nation-states saw other Asian countries as the primary

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[33]   George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp.66-7.
[34]   Jamie Mackie, *Bandung 1955: Non-Alignment and Afro-Asian Solidarity* (Singapore: Editions Didier Millet, 2005), pp.73-4.

threats to their identity and security. The imperialism of 'white' western states was still a concern but the fear of 'Asian' imperialism was far greater for certain smaller Asian states.[35] The shadow of India, China and Indonesia, three of the largest Asian states, loomed perilously large for other Asian states gathered at Bandung. These 'aligned' countries had become part of US-led, purportedly anti-Communist military pacts largely to guarantee their security and identity against certain other Asian states.[36] It was this specific link between 'identity' and 'anti-imperialism' that Nehru failed to grasp at Bandung. He failed to grasp that 'anti-imperialism' did not necessarily translate into 'non-alignment' for all gathered, largely because certain Asian states viewed joining military-political 'blocs' (mainly the US bloc at this point in time) as a collective defence guarantee against potential Asian 'imperialism'.

Nehru, however, was not alone in equating non-alignment to anti-imperialism as the cornerstone of a new 'Asian-ism' at Bandung. In this he was supported strongly by the leaders of both Burma (now known as Myanmar) and Indonesia. However, his failure as a region-builder lay in not being able to get the wider support of other Asian states to endorse his 'idea' of 'Asia' as an 'unaligned zone', beyond the sphere of East-West bloc politics. More specifically, although India was still seen by most of the other states as part of the 'Asian space', Nehru could not reinforce India's central role within this space. This was because he could not get the Asian states at Bandung to place 'non-alignment as anti-imperialism' at the core of the 'idea' of 'Asia' as he had done with the 'idea' of 'India'. Although much has been said, some of it very recently, about the success of the Bandung Conference and the 'Bandung Spirit' for 'Pan-Asian-ism', it was not a case-study of successful region-building on the part of Nehru.[37] A quick comparison between official Final Communiqué of the conference and Nehru's closing remarks will illustrate this point quite clearly.

Two sections (out of the seven sections) contained within the Final Communiqué of the Bandung Conference are especially relevant. These are Section (D), 'Problems of Dependent Peoples' and

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[35] For an interesting account of how the US government itself was concerned about its military pacts being seen as vestiges of 'white', Western imperialism in the run-up to Bandung , see: Matthew Jones, 'A "Segregated" Asia?: Race, the Bandung Conference and Pan-Asianist Fears in American Thought and Policy, 1954-1955', in *Diplomatic History*, Vol.29, no.5 (November 2005), pp.841-68.

[36] For details on how certain 'aligned' states approached the Bandung Conference, see: Ang Cheng Guan, 'The Bandung Conference and the Cold War International History of Southeast Asia', in See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (eds), *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), pp.27-47.

[37] Even as early as 1957, one writer laments, 'since Bandung, it has become fashionable to invoke the "Bandung Spirit" on every possible occasion'. Georgiana G. Stevens, 'Arab Neutralism and Bandung', in *Middle East Journal*, Vol.11, no.2 (1957), p.148. For a more recent call to re-examine such 'triumphalist' interpretations of Bandung, see Pang Yang Huei, 'The Four Faces of Bandung: Detainees, Soldiers, Revolutionaries and Statesmen', in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol.39, no.1 (February 2009), pp.63-86.

Section (G), 'Declaration on the Promotion of World Peace and Cooperation'. [38] In Section (D), the Conference echoes sentiments echoed earlier at the ARC in 1947, agreeing that 'colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end [and] in affirming that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights'.[39] This marked continuity in embedding a generic rejection of colonialism at the heart of a new 'Asian-ism', an idea whose genesis can be traced to the ARC in 1947. More interestingly, a small part in Section (G) asserts that those gathered should demonstrate 'abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers (and) abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries'.[40]

It is important to note here that participation in collective defence arrangements/pacts per se was not rejected but only its use to serve the interests of the big powers, an oblique reference to the US and the Soviet Union. The second part on countries not exerting pressure on other countries was a counter-balancing point – a veiled reference to larger Asian states like China, India and Indonesia vis-à-vis the smaller Asian states.

The disjuncture between the Final Communiqué and Nehru's own ideas of 'Pan-Asian-ness' can be discerned from the latter's closing remarks at Bandung. In a speech which contained the standard references to there being 'yet another spirit of Asia today', and of this new Asia no longer being 'a submissive Asia', one particular part of Nehru's speech illustrates his departure from the Conference's Final Communiqué. In a thinly disguised attack on Asian states joining collective defence pacts and the impact of this on an 'Asian-ism' being true to the principles of anti-imperialism, he observed that the gathering at Bandung

> (r)epresents the ideals of Asia, it represents the new dynamism of Asia…We are Asians or Africans. We are none else. If we are camp followers of Russia or America or any other country of Europe, it is, if I may say so, not very credible to our dignity, our new independence, our new freedom, our new spirit and our new self-reliance.[41]

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[38] George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp.76-85; Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), pp.197-206.

[39] Roeslan Abdulgani, *The Bandung Connection: the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung in 1955* (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1980), p.202.

[40] George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.84.

[41] *Ibid.,* p.74.

The distance between the agreed Final Communiqué and Nehru's closing remarks is clear. The communiqué reinforced earlier broad notions of a new 'Asian-ism', formulated at the ARC in 1947, centred on notions anti-colonialism and racial equality. Nehru wanted to go further, to link these broad notions to the specific idea of non-alignment as anti-imperialism. In his role as region-builder, he sought to hoist this particular representation upon this new 'Asian-ism', at the same time positioning India at the core of this region-building exercise. However, such attempts on the part of Nehru were unsuccessful at Bandung. India, for other Asian states, remained part of the Asian space but its core role came to be increasingly questioned just as its non-alignment mantra came to be viewed with scepticism by the other Asian states at Bandung.

Constructing the Asia-Pacific: Cold War Imperatives

Arif Dirlik has argued that although the term 'Asia-Pacific', along with related terms like 'Pacific Rim' and 'Pacific Basin' have become relative commonplace, the meaning of these terms still remains fuzzy. The immediate reference is obviously geophysical – a reference to societies/states on the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean and those within it. However, the actual usage itself sometimes left out some of these societies/states while including societies/states outside the physical boundaries of the Pacific Ocean. Arif concludes that 'the terms represent ideational constructs that, although they refer to a physical location on the globe, are themselves informed by conceptualizations that owe little to geography understood physically or positivistically; in order words, that they define the physical space they pretend to describe'.[42]

In representations of both 'Asia' and the 'Pacific', Japan's position as a region-builder has been core, both physically as well as in intellectually conceptualising the parameters of these regional spaces, as far back as the late nineteenth century.[43] In the post-war period, however, until the 1960s, Japan's attempts to play any kind of role in the Asian region, much less re-articulate any vision of a regional space, were crippled by latent suspicions towards Japan on the part of several newly independent Asian states. By the late 1960s though, as Japan became the third largest national economy in the world after the US and the Soviet Union (by 1967), it began to represent itself as a member of two identifiable regional groups. Japan, according to this representation, belonged firstly to the advanced industrialised countries, specifically the Pacific advanced

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[42]   Arif Dirlik, 'Introducing the Pacific', in Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1998). See also: Arif Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure', in *Journal of World History*, Vol.3, no.1 (1992), pp.55-79.
[43]   For an elaboration, see Pekka Korhonen, *Japan and Asia-Pacific Integration: Pacific Romances, 1968-1996* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.89-105. Prasenjit Duara, 'The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism', in *Journal of World History*, Vol.12, no.1 (2001).

countries. Secondly, Japan was also part of Asia.[44] Put together, a conception of an 'Asia-Pacific' region, a distinctive regional entity that suitably captured Japan's dual 'position', was put forth. More importantly the 'Asian' part of this early 'Asia-Pacific' idea did not necessarily include the whole of 'Asia', as usually understood. Therefore 'the concept of Asia relevant to Japan is in a process of being defined through the term "Pacific", so that it means what is today known as East and Southeast Asia'. [45]

Regions, though constructed by statesmen, are hardly arbitrary or random. They are represented on the basis of certain ideological foundations as evidenced from the previous discussion on earlier attempts to forge an Asian region. One of the central ideological foundations of such early Japanese constructions of the 'Asia-Pacific' was 'economism'. Similar to earlier rhetoric about the 'Pacific Age', an important part of the 'Asia-Pacific' 'idea' was centred around the vision of economies growing and developing rapidly, in a context where it became taboo to even mention military affairs within discussions of the 'Pacific' or the 'Asia-Pacific'. [46] By the 1980s, the term 'Asia-Pacific' was no longer an unfamiliar term in both the policy and academic discourses on international regionalism. The 'economism' that under laid earlier representations continued into this period, especially with the advent of NICs (Newly Industrialised Countries) or the 'Asian Tigers', comprising of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. In fact, these examples of export-led capitalist development were lauded as models for other countries in the 'Asian' region which had chosen (mistakenly according to this discourse) economic policies of 'self-reliance' or 'socialist development' (Burma and North Korea).[47] Despite being originally left out of this Asia-Pacific region in the 1970s, on the basis of its "socialist" character, China post-1978 (with Deng Xiaoping's economic 'reforms') began to slowly accepted as part of this economically "dynamic" regional space.[48] By the late 1980s, the Asia-Pacific region, in line with this dominant representation, included most of East Asia (with the notable exclusion of North Korea, Myanmar and Indochina, mainly Vietnam), Japan, the US, Australia and New Zealand.

A second basis of this specific representation of the 'Asia-Pacific' was military-strategic. In this particular representation, US conceptions of regional 'order' were crucial. Up till the mid-1960s, the US perceived its strategic interests in Asia as that of facing the greatest of threats from the

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[44]   Pekka Korhonen, *The Origin of the Idea of the Pacific Free Trade Area* (Jyvaskyla: University of Jyvaskyla, 1992), p.162.

[45]   *Ibid.*

[46]   Pekka Korhonen, "The Pacific Age in World History", *Journal of World History*, Vol.7, no.1 (1996), p.64.

[47]   For details see: Bruce Cummings, 'Rimspeak; or, The Discourse of the "Pacific Rim"', in Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1998), pp.32-3. For an examination of the economic-cultural basis of representing Asia from the perspective of other states within Asia, see: Khoo Boo Teik, 'The Value(s) of a Miracle: Malaysian and Singapore Elite Constructions of Asia', in *Asian Studies Review*, Vol.23, no.2 (1999), pp.181-92.

[48]   Bruce Cummings, 'Rimspeak; or, The Discourse of the "Pacific Rim"', in Arif Dirlik (ed.), *What is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea* (Maryland & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Pub., 1998), p.31.

Chinese-Soviet alliance and its military-ideological support for 'Communist' movements within this regional space. Beginning in 1950, the Korean War and its aftermath were enduring reminders for the US of the contested nature of the 'Asian' space.[49] The US sought to make a legitimate role in this part of the world by fashioning this space as not just 'Asia' but as 'Asia-Pacific', in effect placing itself 'within' this seemingly geo-physically defined space.[50] The Vietnam War, the domino theory and conceptions of a monolithic Sino-Soviet threat to the US interests and allies in Asia and the Pacific were the salient features of this 'struggle' over the 'Asia-Pacific' space. In important respects, these military-strategic elements were of course intimately linked to the market-capitalist aspects of Asia-Pacific region-building.

A discernible shift occurred with the Sino-Soviet 'split' by the mid- to late-1960s and the signing of the Shanghai communiqué between the People's Republic of China and the US in 1972, signalling a normalisation of ties between the two countries.[51] From this period till about the end of the 1980s, the US and the China viewed each other as uneasy partners, both seeking to retard the military-strategic aims of the Soviet Union within the Asia-Pacific region, while remaining wary of each other's intentions within this regional space. Reflecting this tension, one of the central principles underlying the Shanghai communiqué was that 'neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony', with no geographical definition given for the 'Asia-Pacific' either in the communiqué or anywhere else. [52] Despite the lack of any clearly stated definition, it was clear that one important site of such a Soviet challenge by the late 1970s was the close relationship between the Soviet Union and Vietnam. This relationship was deepened gradually by the provision of naval and airbases to the Soviet Union at Vietnam's Danang and Cam Rahn Bay.[53] Such developments were seen in military-strategic terms as providing the Soviet Union with military reach into the Pacific Ocean and as part of 'the Soviets' quest for 'Asian Pacific' status by extending their ocean fleet capacity from the Sea of Okhotsk to the

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[49]   As one observer notes, the Korean War 'experience reinforced in blood, US determination over the next two decades to take the lead, pay the costs, and run the risks…to "contain" the spread of Chinese and Soviet-backed Communist expansion in the Asia-Pacific'. Robert Sutter, *The United States in Asia* (Lanham & Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield Pub., 2009), p.3.

[50]   On a similar note, more recently, there have been calls for the US to be accepted as part of the East Asian region, even though it is understood that barring a 'continental drift, the US will never be an Asian country in geophysical terms'. Donald K. Emerson, *Asian Regionalism and US Policy: The Case for Creative Adaptation*, RSIS Working Paper, no.193 (19 March 2010), p.1.

[51]   For a fuller discussion see, Steven I. Levine, 'China and the Superpowers: Policies towards the United States and the Soviet Union', in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.90, no.4 (1975-6), pp.648-9.

[52]   Joachim Glaubitz, 'Anti-Hegemony Formulas in Chinese Foreign Policy', in *Asian Survey*, Vol.16, no.4 (1976), p.205.

[53]   Victor Funnel, 'The Soviet Union and Vietnam: Bilateral Relations in a Great-Power Triangle', in Margot Light (ed.), *Troubled Friendships: Moscow's Third World Ventures* (London: British Academic Press, 1993), pp.82-109.

South China Sea.[54] An important domain of the Cold War military-strategic contest was thus clearly the 'Asia-Pacific'. In effect, the 'Asia-Pacific' became a regional microcosm, stretching from military bases in the Pacific, through Southeast and Northeast Asia and extending to Australia and New Zealand, of the global politics of the Cold War. The 'Asia-Pacific', in these representations, was a site of struggle and contestation between US, China and their allies in the 'region' on one hand, and the Soviet Union and its 'client states' like Vietnam on the other.

India and the Asia-Pacific – From Outside to Inside the 'Region'

Another important aspect of representations of the 'Asia-Pacific' during this period was the near total absence of a major 'Asian' state - India. Seemingly content at being represented as part of the regional space of 'South Asia', Indian political elites did not express much interest in staking a place or role in the 'Asia-Pacific' throughout the 1960s until the late 1980s. Similarly, countries belonging to the 'Asia-Pacific' at this point in time did not view India as part of this regional space. On the basis of the preceding discussion of this paper, this was hardly remarkable. India's closed economy, built and sustained by Indian political elites on notions of economic self-reliance and anti-imperialism, did not fit into the economic basis of 'Asia-Pacific' region-building. It lacked the export-driven capitalist ethos that countries in the 'Asia-Pacific' had embraced as part of their respective foreign economic policies. These political elites had also built a fairly strong consensus in their respective domestic spheres on the importance of embracing this particular market-oriented economic model. Indian political elites, in this sense, had not built a similar domestic consensus. In the words of 'Pacific Rim-speak', India lacked the economic 'dynamism' that would have qualified it as part of this 'Asia-Pacific' region.

In the military-strategic sphere, there was a somewhat similar narrative accounting for India's exclusion from this regional space. From the end of the Nehru era in 1962, right up till the late 1980s, Indian political elites saw their foreign policy interests largely anchored within the South Asian region. More specifically, Indian political elites sought to keep 'extra-regional' powers out of South Asia, while at the same time attempting to keep well clear of the bloc politics of the Cold War outside South Asia. In fact, Indira Gandhi, India's Prime Minister for three consecutive terms from 1966 till 1977 and then from 1980 till 1984, saw the demonstration of Indian predominance in the South Asia region as a central goal of Indian foreign policy during this period.[55] Even more significantly, Indian political elites, over this period, did not see India as a global power with global interests. The inverse was also true. The major powers of this time,

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[54]   Hiroshi Kimura, 'Soviet Policies in the Asian Pacific Region: A Japanese Assessment', in *Asian Affairs*, Vol.11, no.4 (1985), p.43.
[55]   Mohammed Ayoob, 'India in South Asia: The Quest for Regional Predominance', in *World Policy Journal*, Vol.7, no.1 (1989-90), pp.107-33.

the US, the Soviet Union and China (after 1972), viewed India as a mere regional power, with little to offer in terms of the global politics of the Cold War.[56] The other states in the Asia-Pacific, defined as much due to their participation in the bloc politics of the Cold War, also perceived no tangible role for India in this region. India, most definitely, was in Asia but not the 'Asia-Pacific' at the end of the 1980s. The new decade would usher in significant change to such representations.

The story of India's economic reforms in 1991 is frequently narrated with reference to the Indian government's 'unsustainable levels of foreign and domestic borrowing', with 'reserves down to two weeks of imports' in 1991.[57] In effect, although it is a narrative imbued with notions of reluctance on the part of Indian political elites in liberalising India's economy, it is largely agreed that in this instance, 'in a democracy there must be a sufficient body of influential opinion already convinced, or ready to be convinced, of the need for radical change'.[58] Despite this, the then Indian Finance Minister, Manmohan Singh, largely credited with devising and pushing through these reforms, had to strongly defend these reforms against wider domestic criticism that India's "new" reliance upon the Bretton Woods institutions' would 'lead to a form of dependent development that would exclude or even impoverish the mass of India's labouring poor'.[59]

In effect, beginning in the 1990s, Indian political elites began to dramatically renegotiate a central pillar of Indian state identity since independence – that of national sovereignty based on notions of economic self-reliance. Re-interpreting somewhat radically this notion of 'self-reliance', from 1991, political elites within the Congress Party, led by Prime Minister Narashima Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, began to reframe this pivotal notion of Indian state identity without 'surrendering some intact and mythical notion of sovereignty that had been handed down from Gandhi or Nehru'.[60] Between 1991 and 2004, despite India changing government six times, alternating between Congress and BJP-led coalition governments at the central government level, there has been a consensus, at least amongst political elites in the Congress and BJP parties, that economic liberalisation cannot be reversed and there is no going

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[56] This is not to imply that the Cold War did not impact India within the South Asian region, but that India remained largely peripheral to the global politics of the Cold War between the 1960s and the late 1980s. For a fuller discussion see: Robert McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[57] Vijay Joshi and I.M.D. Little, *India's Economic Reforms, 1991-2001* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), p.1.

[58] *Ibid*, p.2.

[59] Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.143.

[60] *Ibid,* p.144. As one scholar notes, the proponents of India's economic openness often make their case on the basis of 'a changed definition of the historically institutionalised meanings of Indian "self-reliance", tracing many of the problems in the Indian economy to what they see as an incorrect understanding of it'. See also: Himadeep Muppidi, *The Politics of the Global* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp.32-3.

back to the pre-1991 days.[61] The idea of India's development being based on outward-looking economic policies which entangles it in increasingly deeper ways with the global economy is increasingly the 'new' idea of India in this respect.[62]

The result of such dramatic changes within India led to significant transformations in the manner in which the world began to view India. The radical negotiation of a central pillar of Indian state identity did not go unnoticed by those observing India. It led to numerous works predicting the coming 'rise' of India as a global economic power, prompting Fareed Zakaria to proclaim India as the 'star' attraction the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2006.[63] Peripheral for long periods, India's economic reorientation now especially caught the attention of states within the Asia-Pacific region. As part of India's 'Look East' policy announced in 1992, India's political leadership, motivated, initially at least, primarily by economic considerations, sought to build closer links with member states of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). [64] As a result, in 1992, India became ASEAN's sectoral dialogue partner, leading to full dialogue partner status in 1995.[65]

This led eventually to a range of various bilateral Free-Trade Agreements (FTAs) with various ASEAN member states, as well as a range of economic agreements with other Asia-Pacific countries like South Korea and Japan.[66] Most recently, India has vigorously pushed for membership within APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), an 'Asia-Pacific economic forum…championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration'.[67] Presently, there is strong support for India's application especially from countries like the US, Japan and Australia although there is a moratorium on new membership

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[61] For a deeper discussion of the elite based nature of India's initial economic reforms, see: Ashutosh Varshney, 'Mass politics or elite politics? India's economic reforms in comparative perspective', in *Journal of Economic Policy Reform*, Vol.2, no.4 (1998), pp. 301-35.

[62] For an excellent examination of how a relatively 'new' and compelling narrative about 'nationalist globalism' was employed by Indian political elites in pushing and sustaining India's economic liberalisation, see Jalal Alamgir, 'Managing Openness in India: The Social Construction of a Globalist Narrative', in Linda Weiss (ed.), *States in the Global Economy: Bringing Domestic Institutions Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 225-44.

[63] Fareed Zakaria, 'India Rising', *Newsweek* (6 March 2006). Another example of such works is Tarun Das (et.al), *India Rising: Emergence of a New World Power* (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2005).

[64] Faizal Yahya, 'India and Southeast Asia: Revisited', in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.25, no.1 (2003).

[65] Rahul Sen, Mukul Asher and Ramkishen Rajan, 'ASEAN-India economic relations', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.39, no.29 (17-23 July 2004), pp.3297-308.

[66] For detailed information about the specific terms of these different economic agreements, see Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, 'International Trade (Trade Agreements)', http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_ta.asp?id=2&trade=I. Accessed on 17 August 2010.

[67] APEC, 'Mission Statement', www.apec.org/apec/about_apec/mission_statement.html. Accessed on 2 August 2010. For an incisive treatment of the birth and evolution of APEC, see: John Ravenhill, *APEC and the Construction of Pacific Rim Regionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

till 2012.[68] From the perspective of Indian political elites, engaging in and being part of this Asia-Pacific economic space was and is essential in sustaining and pushing further their domestic re-articulation of Indian state identity. On a fundamental level, Indian political elites represented India's need for economic liberalisation on the premise of emulating specific economic policies of the various East Asian 'dynamic' economies within the 'Asia-Pacific' countries which had earlier seemingly left India 'behind' and which India had to 'catch up' with. In important policy documents, the Indian government rehearsed this theme of India learning lessons in economic openness from like-sized countries within East Asia like China and Indonesia.[69] As such, economically engaging with these countries in the Asia-Pacific, and thus becoming an important part of this Asia-Pacific space was crucially tied to the domestic re-construction of 'Indian-ness' and the 'new' role of the Indian state.[70]

The 'Look East' policy, initially driven by economic imperatives, also came to embody a clear shift in the strategic outlook of Indian political elites. More significantly, following on from its economic liberalisation measures domestically, Indian political elites began to increasingly articulate a specific discourse about India's role within global politics in the 1990s. The Indian nuclear test of 1998 was, in a sense, the strategic-military equivalent of India's domestic economic reforms of 1991.[71] The BJP-led government's decision to conduct nuclear tests enjoyed wide domestic support, exhibiting a rare cross-party consensus within Indian politics.[72] These series of tests were represented by Indian political elites as evidence of a 'new' India, an India that had tired from playing the part of a self-restrained 'moral' actor within international politics and to one that saw nuclear weapons and the great-power status they conferred as India's due. As Jaswant Singh, then Indian External Affairs Minister, argued in an article in *Foreign Affairs* just a few months after the nuclear tests:

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[68]   For a review of the debate over India's possible admission to APEC, see: Yuen Pau Woo, 'A Review of the APEC Membership Debate and Prospects for India's Admission after 2007', in Charan Wadhva and Yuen Pau Woo (eds.), *Asian Regionalism: Canadian and Indian Perspectives* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2005), pp.101-16.

[69]   'General Review', *Economic Survey 1995-96* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1997), p.16.

[70]   The latest Indian *Economic Survey* makes the claim that 'India is now completely a part of the world's fastest growing economies… (with economic figures that) fall comfortably within the range of figures one traditionally associated with the East Asian economies'. 'Prospects, Short Term and Medium Term', *Economic Survey 2009-2010* (New Delhi: Government of India), p.19.

[71]   As one scholar points out, the 1998 nuclear tests can be better understood by discerning the relationship between Indian state identity – what she calls the 'the post-colonial identity logic'- and the global economy. Latha Varadarajan, 'Constructivism, Identity and Neoliberal (In) Security', in *Review of International Studies*, Vol.30, no.2 (2004), pp.319-41.

[72]   Itty Abraham, *The Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb: Science, Secrecy and the Postcolonial State* (London & New York: Zed Books, 1998), pp.1-3.

Nuclear weapons remain a key indicator of state power. Since this currency is operational in large parts of the globe, India was left with no choice but to update and validate the capability that had been demonstrated 24 years ago in the nuclear tests of 1974.[73]

The Indian state, as this discourse asserted, had arrived as a 'great power' within global politics. As much as such discourse was meant for foreign consumption, such re-articulation of the identity of the Indian state vis-à-vis the outside world was still contested within India, even though such voices of dissent appeared to be on the periphery.[74]

An important and associated facet of this discourse of India's 'arrival' as a global or great power also hinged on forging a closer relationship with what Indian political elites saw as the sole superpower after the end of the Cold War – the US. In this there was clear continuity between both BJP and Congress political elites. As compared to the Nehru era, where, as observed earlier in this paper, Indian self-representations were dependent, in important respects, with keeping the US at a safe distance, from the 1990s onwards, Indian political elites from both the major parties began to view a closer relationship with the US as a central part of defining a 'new' India.[75] An important illustration of this sentiment appears in the aftermath of the Indian nuclear tests of 1998. Despite the huge (initial) criticism from the US as a result of the Indian nuclear tests, in 1998, then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared that 'India and the US are natural allies in the quest for a better future for the world in the 21st century'.[76]

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[73]   Jaswant Singh, 'Against Nuclear Apartheid', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.77, no.5 (2008), p.44.

[74]   For example, the leftist Communist Party of India (Marxist) urged the BJP government not to 'weaponise' its nuclear capability. For details of its position on this issue, see Communist Party of India (Marxist), 'Party Programme', http://cpim.org/content/party-programme1. Accessed on 14 August 2010. More strident criticisms came from public intellectuals like Arundhati Roy, 'The End of Imagination', in *Frontline*, Vol.15, no.16 (1-4 August1998), http://hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1516/15160040.htm. Accesssed on 14 August 2010. See also: P.R. Chari, 'India's Nuclear Doctrine: Confused Ambitions', *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol.7, no.3 (2000), pp.123-35.

[75]   Some date the start of improving ties between India and the US to the Rajiv Gandhi period, with his official visit to the US in June 1986. Maya Chadda, 'India and the United States: Why Détente Won't Happen', in *Asian Survey*, Vol.26, no.10 (1986), p.118.

[76]   The remarks were made at the Asia Society, New York, in September 1998. K.P. Nayar, 'Vajpayee describes India and US as Natural allies', *The Telegraph* (Calcutta) (29 September 1998). Interestingly, more than ten years later, in January 2009, President Obama used the same phrase to describe US-India relations saying 'that obviously, the US and India are natural friends and natural allies. 'India, US are Natural Friends and Allies: Obama', *Indian Express* (29 January 2009), www.expressindia.com/latest-news/India-US-are-natural-friends-and-allies-Obama/416486. Accessed on 18 August 2010. Before 1990, nothing about that phrase was natural and is evidence of the manner in which India-US relations have come to be significantly re-represented since 1990.

Such declarations of close ties with the US persisted even with the replacement of the BJP-led government by a Congress-led coalition after the 2004 general elections.[77] In fact, these affirmations of close ties with the US, as an integral part of representing India as a great power, came to the forefront as a result of the debate surrounding the proposal for a US-India civilian nuclear deal, first mooted in 2005 in a joint statement by George W. Bush and Manmohan Singh.[78] By mid-2008, as the Congress-led government sought to 'operationalise' the civil nuclear agreement, it faced tremendous political opposition from the its main alliance partner, the Left Front, the latter eventually withdrawing support for the Congress-led government at the Centre. Crucially, an important element of this fierce debate pivoted on the notion of the identity of the Indian state.[79] Indian critics of the civilian nuclear deal with the US saw the signing of the deal as a development that 'will only lead to India's surrender to America's dictates and will have implications and bearing beyond the nuclear deal'.[80] The familiar link between closer relations with the US and India surrendering its autonomy, and thus its very identity, was a central part of this particular strand of criticism. Countering such criticism, the Congress Party, and especially Prime Minister Singh, in a robust defence of the agreement in parliament, linked the 1991 economic reforms and the civilian nuclear agreement as historical milestones, both of which would enable India to finally emerge as a great power. As Prime Minister Singh saw it:

> In 1991, while presenting the Budget for 1991-92, as Finance Minister, I had stated: No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come. I had then suggested to this august House that the emergence of India as a major global power was an idea whose time had come… Both the Left and the BJP had then opposed the reform. Both had said we had mortgaged the economy to America and that we would bring back the East India Company. Subsequently both these parties have had a hand at running the Government. None of these parties have reversed the direction of economic policy laid down by the Congress Party in 1991… The cooperation that the international community is now willing to

[77] For an analysis of the possible factors for the largely unexpected Congress victory, see: Steven Wilkinson, 'Elections in India: Behind the Congress Comeback', in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.16, no.1 (2005), pp.153-67.

[78] Ministry of External Affairs, India, 'Joint Statement, India-US' (18 July 2005), http://meaindia.nic.in/. Accessed on 17 August 2010.

[79] This is not to suggest that the debate was all about 'identity'. A related part of this debate also focussed on the material benefits the agreement would deliver to India's energy generation levels via nuclear power use. For a discussion of this issue, see: Anshu Bharadwaj et al., 'Whither Nuclear Power?', in *Economic and Political Weekly* (25 March 2006), pp.1203-12. For an official statement on the benefits of nuclear power production for India, see: 'Nuclear Power Alone Can Fulfil Energy Requirement: Vasan', in *The Hindu*, (11 August 2008), www.hindu.com/2008/08/11/stories/2008081165290800.htm. Accessed on 19 August 2010. G.K. Vasan, then Union Minister of State, made the above observation at a public forum on 10 August 2008 in Chennai, India.

[80] Statement made to the press by Communist Party of India –Marxist (CPI-M) Politburo member Sitaram Yechury (28 September 2008). 'N-Deal Passage a Diplomatic Feat: Congress', in *Indian Express* (29 September 2008), www.expressindia.com/latest-news/ndeal-passage-a-diplomatic-feat-congress/367201/. Accessed on 10 August 2010.

extend to us for trade in nuclear materials, technologies and equipment for civilian use will be available to us without signing the NPT or the CTBT. This I believe is a measure of the respect that the world at large has for India, its people and their capabilities and our prospects to emerge as a major engine of growth for the world economy… Our critics falsely accuse us, that in signing these agreements, we have surrendered the independence of foreign policy and made it subservient to US interests. In this context, I wish to point out that the cooperation in civil nuclear matters that we seek is not confined to the USA. Change in the NSG guidelines would be a passport to trade with 45 members of the Nuclear Supplier Group which includes Russia, France, and many other countries. We appreciate the fact that the US has taken the lead in promoting cooperation with India for nuclear energy for civilian use. Without US initiative, India's case for approval by the IAEA or the Nuclear Suppliers Group would not have moved forward. [81]

Singh was recasting an important aspect of Indian state identity. More specifically, Singh sought to demonstrate the crucial link between growing international recognition of India's place within international politics and the role of the US-driven civil nuclear agreement. In this re-casting of the Indian state's foreign policy 'interests', India's close relationship with the US did not result in any type of "surrendering' of Indian autonomy; however, 'without US initiative', India's claim to great power status would at best be delayed if not perpetually retarded.

Conversely, in the Asia-Pacific, things had begun to change since the early 1990s as well. Strategically, countries that were part of the Asia-Pacific had also begun to re-order the role that this regional space played within global politics in the post-Cold War world. Led by the ASEAN states, and supported by countries like Japan and the US, the Asia-Pacific became a realm within which China's growing military and strategic presence could be 'managed' peacefully. The exact manner of 'managing' this rise is however contested. For example, the ASEAN member-states view 'socialising' China as getting the latter to habitually engage in the process of 'develop(ing) norms' within regional multilateral institutions as an important way of managing China's rise.[82] Another strand views balancing strategies as central in 'managing' China's rise – this usually translates into policy positions that prescribe continued military-strategic predominance of the

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[81] 'PM's reply to the debate on the Motion of Confidence in the Lok Sabha', (Prime Minister's Office: New Delhi, July 2008), www.pmindia.nic.in/speeches.htm. Accessed on 12 August 2010.

[82] Evelyn Goh, 'Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies', in *International Security*, Vol.32, no.3 (2007-8), pp.113-57. See also a discussion of the 'ASEAN approach' in William Tow & Brendan Taylor, 'What is Asian Security Architecture?', in *Review of International Studies*, Vol.36, (1), 2010, pp.95-116.

US within the Asia-Pacific regional space.[83] In the post-Cold War era, the Asia-Pacific has therefore become a venue for managing China's rise as a great power. Notwithstanding differences on how exactly to cope with China's rise, for the majority of countries in the Asia-Pacific, an important part of negotiating this phenomenon of China's rise involves promoting the necessity of continued US military presence in this regional space.[84]

This need to 'negotiate' the rise of China has, of course, been a fundamental aspect of Indian self-representations since the 1962 border war with China.[85] More recently, at the time of its 1998 nuclear tests, the Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee cited China as one of the major reasons for India's decision to declare itself a nuclear-weapons state.[86] In the post-Cold war period, this Indian anxiety, however, was also coupled with the recognition that relations with China needed to be upgraded, with the result that by 2005, India and China announced a 'strategic partnership'.[87] This posture of anxiety and engagement over China's rise similarly characterised the range of attitudes across the various countries of the Asia-Pacific. As such, India began to gradually emerge, given such a commonality of outlook, as a useful addition to the Asia-Pacific strategic space.[88] Thus, from the 1990s onwards, the countries of the Asia-Pacific began to gradually include India within Asia-Pacific regional institutions. India became part of the ARF in 1996 and then participated in the East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2005.[89]

In recognising India's shared apprehensions about China's rise both militarily and politically, as well as grasping India's position on the need for a continued US military presence in the Asia-Pacific, several Asia-Pacific member states began to represent India's participation within the region as central to its future trajectory. An example of this is the 2005 Update to its Defence White Paper where the Australian government saw India as one of the region's 'major powers', who together with China, Japan, Russia and the US, 'have the power – actual or potential – to influence events throughout the Asia-Pacific region'.[90] More specifically, in relation to the

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[83] For a recent articulation of this view, see: Benjamin Schwarz, 'Managing China's Rise', *The Atlantic* (29 July 2010), www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/06/managing-china-apos-s-rise/3972/. Accessed on 14 August 2010. For an overview of the various strands of this 'China threat' thesis, see Emma V. Broomfield, 'Perceptions of Danger: The China Threat Theory', in *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol.12, no.35 (2003), pp.265-84.

[84] For an Australian view of this imperative, see: Anthony L. Smith, 'Still Great Mates: Australia and the United States', in *Asian Affairs: An American Review*, Vol.30, no.2 (2003), pp.114-21.

[85] Very often, the 1962 war is represented, from Indian accounts, as an example of Chinese 'betrayal' and Indian naivety. For example see: B.N. Mullik, *My Years With Nehru: The Chinese Betrayal* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1971). Mullik was the head of India Intelligence Bureau (IB) during the Nehru era.

[86] This he did in a letter to US President Clinton justifying India's nuclear tests. See 'India's Letter to Clinton on the Nuclear Testing', *New York Times* (13 May 1998), p.A14.

[87] 'India, China Hoping to Reshape the World Order Together', *Washington Post* (12 April 2005), p.A16.

[88] C. Raja Mohan, 'India and the Balance of Power', in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.85 (2006), p.25-6.

[89] Rajiv Sikri, *Challenge and Strategy: Rethinking India's Foreign Policy,* (New Delhi: Sage, 2009), pp.115-9.

[90] Australian Government, Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: Defence Update,* (2005) p.IX, www.defence.gov.au/update2005/. Accessed on 18 August 2010.

particular point being made here, the 2005 Update saw 'the nature of the relationships' between India and these states as 'the most critical issue for the security of the entire region'.[91] In this re-articulated representation of the 'Asia-Pacific' as a space in which China's rise needs to be 'negotiated', India is seen increasingly as an integral part of this region.

Conclusion

An important part of the argument made in this paper concerns the manner in which Indian political elites have articulated and framed India's regional space and role within the context of domestic politics. A comparative study between the Nehru era and the post 1991 period demonstrates how Indian political elites, located across two distinct historical periods, negotiated India's changing conceptions of its own regional space and the role it expected to play therein. From 1947 till the 1955 Bandung Conference, Nehru sought to represent 'Asia' in ways that were related to his own articulations of Indian state identity. Although initially relatively successful, by the end of the Bandung Conference, India's foreign policy was characterised by a failed regional project.

This paper then traced the initial modes of representing the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War and the reasons why such representations resulted in India being excluded from this regional space. In the post-Cold War period, two changes were taking place. Firstly, Indian political elites were significantly reframing Indian state identity, first with India's economic reforms and then with India's nuclear tests. Secondly, specific representations of the Asia-Pacific region were also changing in the post-Cold War era. In this regard, the manner in which countries in the Asia-Pacific perceived 'negotiating' China's rise as a global power in the Asia-Pacific is a fundamental feature of this regional space. One way of 'negotiating' this rise of China has been to enmesh China, the US and emerging powers within the regional institutions and processes of the Asia-Pacific region. Indian political elites' articulation of India as a great power and its desire to similarly manage China's rise in international politics has increasingly facilitated the representation of India as a vital player in this Asia-Pacific space. Resulting thus far, compared to the 'India' in 'Asia' regional project, the 'India' in 'Asia-Pacific' venture seems to have been more successful. This is, however, still an ongoing enterprise. Gazing into the future, some of the more complicated issues Indian political elites will face in navigating the Indian state's role in the 'Asia-Pacific' will be domestic, in terms of state identity negotiation, as it would convincing the 'region' of India's rightful place and role in this regional space.

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[91]   *Ibid*, p.17.