

**RETHINKING REGIONS AND STATUS IN
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:
THE CASE OF INDIA**



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ABSTRACT

Do regions enable or constrain states' claims to status? Looking for answers in the regional power literature, current scholarship in International Relations remains divided. On one hand, regions enable the consolidation of power in a specific geographic space, making states regional hegemon, therefore strengthening their claims to status. On the other hand, regions involve troublesome neighbourhoods, or the spill-over effects of unresolved conflicts which can constrain claims to status. Based on this debate, states would be expected to either work hard at being regional powers, or, to disentangle themselves from the responsibility. It seems however, that states do neither and yet both. Drawing on the Indian case, this thesis establishes that states find regions to be potentially status-enabling, but not just as spaces in which they can achieve hegemony. As geographic collectives, they offer the important function of social recognition that allows them to be differentiated from others to global audiences. Anchored in a constructivist approach, this thesis argues that states find value in 'building' or 'framing' regions in specific ways to their claims to status at the global level. By mapping boundaries through the region-building process, states forge a sense of commonality and group membership allowing them to be recognised in a specific way by targeted audiences. Through its qualitative and historically informed study of Indian region-building across time, this thesis notes that since independence, Indian framings of its 'region' have shifted to include 'Asia', 'South Asia', 'Asia-Pacific' and most recently the 'Indo-Pacific'. It demonstrates how the changing notions of its region have informed its claims to status at the global level over time. It studies three cases Indian region-building: 'Asia' in the early Cold War

years and 'Asia-Pacific' in the Post-Cold War years and the 'Indo-Pacific' in recent years. Within these the first two cases, it investigates India's understudied role in Indonesian decolonisation struggle (1945-1949) and India's Look-East policy in 1991. Given the contemporary and evolving nature of its Indo-Pacific case, this thesis engages with it as whole to demonstrate how it informs Indian claims to higher status at the global level.

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For my grandfather:

Bhagwan Isardas Gidwani

(1934-2019)

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Locating the Argument

In the autumn of 1954, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru met Chairman Mao Zedong for the first time. After a brief exchange of greetings, the leaders engaged in what seemed to be a frank discussion of key international issues of the time. “Among Asian countries,” Nehru said to Mao, “China and India are the largest ones. Therefore, our two countries should play more important roles in Asia. In any case, the population of our two countries reaches one billion. This will lead to immense influence.” “But the United States does not recognise our two countries as great powers,” Mao protested. “They say that our two countries are small countries”. To this, Nehru replied, “The ruler that the United States uses to measure other countries will no longer be useful in the future. In addition to money, there are other factors. The human factor is the most important, and those who have a clear understanding of their future should not overlook it.”¹

Nehru’s intervention in this interaction captures a key insight on which this thesis leans. Referring to India and China as the largest countries of Asia with important roles within the region, he seemed convinced that they would inevitably gain immense influence. This was framed as an inescapable development that countries like the United States would have to recognise and come to terms with, even if in the latter’s eyes, they did not meet the traditional, material indicators of being great powers.

¹*Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong’s First Meeting with Nehru*, 19th October, 1954. *The Wilson Center Digital Archive* (Obtained by Chen Jian and translated by Chen Zhihong, 1954), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117825>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

Drawing on the Indian case, this thesis studies how regions inform states' claims to status at the global level.

International Relations (IR) scholarship offers contrasting views on the relationship between regions and status.² These arguments fall on either side of the 'region-as-enabling' or 'region-as-constraining' debate. On the enabling side of the debate, scholars argue that regions can be seen as spaces for great powers to consolidate their power and eventually become 'regional hegemons' or 'regional powers'. Regional hegemony, which is based on control over material resources, enables states to exercise leadership and gain the acceptance and followership of secondary states.³ This helps establish a power base for enhanced participation – and hence recognition – in global politics.⁴ Regional hegemony may also provide the important function of representativeness. A state may promote itself, or may be seen by others, as representative of a particular region that in turn might be defined geographically, linguistically or in cultural or civilizational terms.⁵ Given their role as regional representatives, they can demand a greater voice in international affairs and act as advocates of regional interests in interregional and global fora.⁶ Regions therefore,

² Adriana Erthal Abdenur and Danilo Marcondes de Souza Neto, 'Region-Building by Rising Powers: The South Atlantic and Indian Ocean Rims Compared', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 881, no. March (2014): 1–17.

³ Kindleberger cited in Miriam Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 20.

⁴ Stefan A. Schirm, 'Leaders in Need of Followers: Emerging Powers in Global Governance', *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2010): 199; Adrian Treacher, 'Europe as a Power Multiplier for French Security Policy: Strategic Consistency, Tactical Adaptation', *European Security* 10, no. 1 (2001): 22–44.

⁵ Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?', *International Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2006): 7.

⁶ Sandra Destradi, 'Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership', *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 04 (2010): 906.

provide the locus standi that enable aspiring powers to stake and protect their claims on the global stage.⁷

While it may indeed seem somewhat intuitively logical that regional powerhood should play an important role in claims to status at the global level, there are many reasons also undermine this seemingly smooth and logical progression.⁸ The constraining side of the debate highlights how regions can be a source of weakness either because of unresolved regional conflicts or regional instability and the sheer difficulty of maintaining influence.⁹ It may also be the case that states may see little to be gained from establishing regional hegemony simply because they think that their performance on a domestic or international scale far surpasses that of the other members of the region. In such cases, states may re-consider establishing their regional pre-eminence as it could only enmesh it locally and detract from its global image and interests.¹⁰ In fact, they may even engage in ‘leapfrogging’, that is, ignoring the neighbourhood in favour of a global perch like the G20.¹¹ As it currently stands therefore, the debate presents very different understandings of the role of regions and status – regions can help gain or constrain claims to status at the global level. While this literature makes for a rich understanding of what regions can *do* for claims to status, it is predominantly

⁷ Philip Nel and Detlef Nolte, ‘Introduction: Special Section on Regional Powers in a Changing Global Order’, *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 877–78.

⁸ Hurrell, ‘Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?’

⁹ Hurrell, 8.

¹⁰ See: Rajesh M. Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’, *International Studies* 47, no. 2–4 (2010): 267–84. For an argument along similar lines, see Miriam Prys, ‘India and South Asia in the World: On the Embeddedness of Regions in the International System and Its Consequences for Regional Powers’, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 13, no. 2 (2013): 267–99. On the difficulties of Brazil and South Africa in maintaining regional pre-eminence, see Andrés Malamud, ‘A Leader Without Followers? The Growing Divergence Between the Regional and Global Performance of Brazilian Foreign Policy’, *Latin American Politics and Society* 53, no. 3 (2011): 1–24; Chris Alden and Maxi Schoeman, ‘South Africa’s Symbolic Hegemony in Africa’, *International Politics* 52, no. 2 (2015): 239–54.

¹¹ Amitav Acharya, ‘Comparative Regionalism: A Field Whose Time Has Come?’, *The International Spectator* 47, no. 1 (2012): 10.

informed by the regional power framework. In other words, the debate is centred more on whether *being* a regional power enables or constrains claims to status. This pattern of inquiry relies on critical assumptions about what the region is, and who is its regional power. To determine the former, scholars usually rely on ‘conventional wisdom’, whereas to determine the latter, they identify countries which possess relative material preponderance within these ‘regions’.¹²

This thesis takes a different approach. It suggests that regional powerhood is certainly one, but not the only way in which states’ relationship to their regions can be conceptualised. As regional power approaches require taking into account fixed definitions of regions and how they are constituted, they remain limited in their ability to explain how states both within and beyond it come to regard certain spaces as regions in the first place. This study examines exactly this process to explore the relationship between regions and status in international relations. Located at the ‘enabling’ side of the region-status debate, it demonstrates that states find value in ‘building’ or ‘framing’ regions in specific ways (and not others) to their claims to status at the global level.

Examining how regions become regions has been the agenda of constructivist and critical geopolitics scholars in International Relations.¹³ Scholars within this group have

¹² See for instance: Miriam Prys, ‘What Makes a Regional Hegemon?’, *Paper Presented at ECPR Joint Session of Workshops* (Helsinki, 2007); Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations*.

¹³ Iver B Neumann, ‘A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe’, *Review of International Studies* 20, no. 01 (1994): 53–74; Mark Beeson, ‘Geopolitics and the Making of Regions: The Fall and Rise of East Asia’, *Political Studies* 57, no. 3 (2009): 498–516; Oliver Kessler and Jan Helmig, ‘Of Systems, Boundaries, and Regionalisation’, *Geopolitics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 570–85; Karoline Postel-Vinay, ‘The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the “Europe and the Rest” Divide’, *Geopolitics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 555–69; Abdenur and Marcondes de Souza Neto, ‘Region-Building by Rising Powers: The South Atlantic and Indian Ocean Rims Compared’; Anssi Paasi, ‘Region and Place: Regional Identity in Question’, *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 4 (2003):

long argued that regions are ‘imagined communities’ which are ‘cognitive construct[s] shared by persons in the region themselves’.¹⁴ In other words, regions do not just exist, but are made to exist through an active process of region-building. This suggests that regions are “preceded by the existence of region-builders” who are political actors who “give expression to specific ideas about the appropriate demarcation of geographic space” through combinations of discourse and practice. Through this, they transfer that spatialisation to others, outside the region.¹⁵ Furthermore, this scholarship attributes equal importance to the reading of the extra-regional by region-builders, and how this may affect the way in which they imagine and build the region.¹⁶ As the above interaction between Nehru and Mao demonstrates, membership in the ‘Asian’ region was seen to enable the way in which both countries would be esteemed by the great powers. By examining instances such as these, this thesis asks the following question: how do regions inform states’ claims to status at the global level?

In order to answer this question, the thesis engages in a qualitative, historical study of India and the changing notions of how it has framed ‘its’ regions across time. The Indian case suggests that this is being done not only because of the role it seeks within this region, but also through its reading of the extra-region – how it wants to be seen by members from the extra-region and where within it, it aspires to place itself. In other words, it establishes that India sees links between two notions of place: states’ sense of their geographic place (region and neighbourhood) and social place (status) in the world. By linking the concept of ‘regions’ and how they are built with that of

475–85; Mathias Albert and Paul Reuber, ‘Introduction: The Production of Regions in the Emerging Global Order – Perspectives on “Strategic Regionalisation”’, *Geopolitics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 549–54.

¹⁴ Neumann, ‘A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe’, 57.

¹⁵ Beeson, ‘Geopolitics and the Making of Regions: The Fall and Rise of East Asia’, 501. See also Neumann’s definition of region-builders in Neumann, ‘A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe’, 58.

¹⁶ Mark Beeson, ‘Re-Thinking Regionalism: Europe and East Asia in Comparative Historical Perspective’, *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, no. 6 (2005): 970.

‘status’, this analysis makes a case for shifting away from the analytical limitations of the ‘levels of analysis’ approach, familiar to the discipline.¹⁷ Instead, it locates itself at the intersection of the ‘regional’ and the ‘global’ levels of analysis and demonstrates the conceptual value of the ‘regional-global nexus’ in International Relations. The latter suggests that the norms, behaviour and institutions functioning at the regional level, impact and are impacted by forces of a global range and scope.¹⁸

This study proceeds alongside the following caveats: first, by focusing on India’s region-building is not to portray India as an original or sole author of a particular ‘regional’ frame. Rather, the study focuses on the processes by which India constructs and reconstructs what it considers as ‘its’ region and the extent to which it is able to convince others of the same. It, in effect, also unpacks how Indian region-building projects may support or contest other interpretations of the same regional frame. This also means that different framings of the region may compete and co-exist at the same time. When this thesis makes reference to changing notions of India’s regions, it does not necessarily imply that one regional frame replaces the other. For instance, India’s reference to its region as the Indo-Pacific in contemporary times does not mean it no longer sees itself as part of South Asia. The interest of this thesis lies more in understanding the emergence of region-building projects in the Indian case and how they inform claims to status at the global level. Second, to state that regions form through elite region-building projects is not to claim that domestic politics do not guide regional formation. There is tremendous merit in the argument of the bottom-up construction of regions which involve actors at the domestic level in driving and

¹⁷ See David Singer, ‘The Level-of-Analysis Problem in International Relations’, *World Politics* 14, no. 1 (1961): 77–92.

¹⁸ Brian L Job, ‘Grappling with an Elusive Concept’, in *Security Politics in the Asia-Pacific: A Regional-Global Nexus?*, ed. William T. Tow (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32.

recognising regional projects. The interest of this thesis, however, lies at the region-global level, and the fact that insufficient attention is given to regions in reflecting the which states aspire to be recognised at the global level. The Indian case reveals that there lies a much thicker explanation for the relationship between region-building and claims to status. It the study of this this process that the thesis focuses upon.

1.2 The Framework

This thesis is built on the ontological insight of social constructivism, that emphasises the notion that structures of international politics are ‘social’ and not ‘material’.¹⁹ In other words, they are not simply ‘out there’, existing independently of the thoughts and ideas of the actors involved in it.²⁰ In a world that is indeed socially constructed, objects are not independent of actors’ interpretations and language and are therefore ‘social facts.’²¹ These social facts depend, by way of collective understanding and discourse, on the attachment of collective knowledge to physical reality.²² This thesis studies the process by which regions become social realities. It proceeds from the assumption that regions are ‘social facts’ and products of certain discourses and practices that breathe them into life. Like other constructivist projects, this study acknowledges that generalizations of the social world that are highly contingent to historical, social and normative contexts.²³ Drawing on the Indian case, it develops a conceptual framework informed by insights from Sociology, Political Geography and

¹⁹ Alexander Wendt, ‘Collective Identity Formation and the International State.’, *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 71–72.

²⁰ Robert Jackson and Georg Sorensen, ‘Social Constructivism’, in *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164.

²¹ Emanuel Adler, ‘Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates’, *Handbook of International Relations*, 2013, 113.

²² John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* by John R. Searle (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 205.

²³ Adler, ‘Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates’, 214.

International Relations to theorise the relationship between regions and status in international relations. It establishes that the enabling role of regions to status claims emanates from their ability to enhance the social recognition of states that belong to them.

As states claim higher status at the global level, they are, in effect, communicating a claim to social place to which they feel entitled to belong. In order to establish themselves worthy of making that claim, they find it crucial to be recognised in a *specific way by certain audiences*. Regional membership is an important way to help ensure this as it conveys a set of distinctive of collective characteristics with which states can be socially recognised by certain audiences. In this way, regions take the form of social groups that convey certain meanings about their members. In spatialising geographies and mapping boundaries through the region-building process, states forge a sense of commonality and group membership, with which they can then differentiate themselves from others to targeted audiences.²⁴ Region-building therefore becomes an important opportunity for states to be recognised in a specific way, making it valuable part of establishing claims to status at the global level.

Audiences indeed play a crucial role in conferring status through region-building. They can be of different kinds and exist at different levels – local/domestic, regional and global. How states prioritise their key audiences in this regard, is based on the overall objectives of their status projects. While this thesis draws on Indian region-building projects targeted at audiences on all these levels, it identifies great powers as key

²⁴ See Geoffrey J. Leonardelli and Soo Min Toh, ‘Social Categorization in Intergroup Contexts: Three Kinds of Self-Categorization’, *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 9, no. 2 (2015): 70–71. On regions and group formation see Postel-Vinay, ‘The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the “Europe and the Rest” Divide’. See Postel-Vinay, 562.

audiences for its claims to status. This has not simply been determined based on the emphasis placed upon them as conferrers of status in International Relations literature, but also because – and this is seen in the empirical chapters - the importance the Indian foreign policy establishment has placed on great power perceptions of itself, across time.

While this study draws on the Indian case, its insights can travel across time and space in two ways. One, through the category of states India is a case of. This includes states that possess relative material and social power to claim status at the global level such as China, Russia, South Africa, Japan and Brazil. In this sense, it follows a single case study research design that involves an “intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.”²⁵ Two, through the phenomena it studies, which is region-building. This framework can be applied to cases *of* region-building to study and trace the possible status claims they may inform. This could include for instance the ‘Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere’ by Imperial Japan, the construction of ‘South America’ in Lula’s Brazil, the idea of ‘Eurasia’ in Post-Soviet Russia, Turkey’s claims to its membership in ‘Europe’ or even China’s regional connectivity projects through its ‘one belt one road’ initiatives, amongst others. Determining the scope conditions in this way, allows the framework to be opened up to a wider universe of cases. It also makes it both applicable and relevant to states that may not necessarily possess relative material power at the global level but have invested resources in region-building. This could include for instance the ‘small states’ that played a role in constructing ‘Southeast Asia’ through the framework of ASEAN.

²⁵ John Gerring, ‘What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?’, *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 02 (2004): 342.

1.3. Research Design

In studying how India has framed and re-framed spaces as ‘regions’, this thesis has selected cases based on the historical context or the specific moments in time, in which the process of construction is stimulated.²⁶ Given its interest in the discourses and practices in the making of social realities, the research design of this study follows the likes of Neta Crawford, Christian Reus-Smit, Jutta Weldes and Ted Hopf, in conducting empirical historical and interpretive research aimed at understanding how region-building informs claims to status at the global level in the Indian case.²⁷

In International Relations, the study of India and its region has predominantly focused on South Asia.²⁸ Basing its performance within this region, scholars have concluded that India is at best a ‘reluctant hegemon’ and a ‘detached regional power’.²⁹ This reading has led to the conclusion that the region has held India back from its wider, global ambitions and majorly constrained its claims to status.³⁰ A constructivist, ‘region-building’ reading of India’s regions reveals however that first, its conceptions of the region are not limited to South Asia but also include ‘Asia’, ‘Asia-Pacific’ and

²⁶ Christian Reus-Smit, ‘Reading History through Constructivist Eyes’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37, no. 2 (2008): 395–414.

²⁷ Neta Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); Adler, ‘Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates’.

²⁸ Kanti P. Bajpai, ‘Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia’, in *South Asia Approaches the Millennium: Reexamining National Security*, ed. C. Weinbaum, M.G; Kumar, 1995, 205–23.; David M Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?: Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: OUP, 2011).

²⁹ Subrata K Mitra, ‘The Reluctant Hegemon: India’s Self-Perception and the South Asian Strategic Environment’, *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 3 (2003): 399–417. On regional detached power, see: Miriam Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations: Indian and South African Perspectives*, Routledge Series on Global Order Studies (London: Routledge, 2012), 182.

³⁰ See for instance: Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’.

most recently, the ‘Indo-Pacific’. Second, the changing conceptions of its region have emerged in the context of transformations at the global level, that have stimulated a rethink of how India spatialises and builds its region.³¹

These transformations refer to “order transitions”, which involve “significant alterations in the common goals and values, rules of the game, and social structures.”³²

It is not of mere chronological coincidence that Indian framings of its region shift in the context of these transitions, and this thesis studies them as such. Over time, Indian framings of the region have shifted to include ‘Asia’ in the Post-War/early Cold War period, ‘South Asia’ through the middle to late Cold War period, ‘Asia-Pacific’ in the post-Cold War context with the emergence of American unipolarity, and most recently, the ‘Indo-Pacific’, as the American-led order comes under strain. This thesis studies Indian region-building in the context of the onset of three order transitions, the first brought on by the end of the Second World War, the second through the end of the Cold War, and third, the ongoing order transition as the post-Cold War order comes under strain.³³

The onset of the first transition brought about significant alterations in the social and material hierarchies of global order. European powers had significantly fallen from great power ranks, while Japan was no longer on the scale.³⁴ The Soviet Union and the United States were on their way to becoming superpowers, as British pre-eminence

³¹ Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³² Evelyn Goh, ‘Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies’ 32, no. 2 (2008): 16.

³³ Goh, 16.

³⁴ On Europe at the end of the Second World War, see Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Pimlico, 2007), 111–13. On Japan, see John W Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

was receding.³⁵ Moreover, the social organising principles of international society underwent substantial change.³⁶ The United Nations was established as the key post-war international institution acting at the supra-state level as a reformed and strengthened version of the League of Nations. In the context of these changes, India, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru undertook a project of building the ‘Asian region’ as a large group of mostly decolonising states in which foreign intervention would not be tolerated, and an ‘area of peace’ as the world was rapidly descending into the East-West politics of the Cold War. As one of the first countries to ‘peacefully’ decolonise in Asia, it framed itself as ‘naturally’ central and representative of this ‘region’. Building the Asian region on these terms, played an important role in informing its claims to higher status in this era. Instead of a primary focus on the pursuit of material power and alliance relationships with either of the United States and the Soviet Union, these claims rested on its ability to play the role of a global peacemaker. ‘Asia’ was seen as an important theatre to enact this role and augment its claims to higher status.

The second order transition this thesis studies, is the period emerging out of the Cold War. The abrupt demise of the Soviet Union pushed international order to work as a consequence of the ‘unipolar moment’, leaving the United States as the world’s sole superpower.³⁷ This also meant an ideological triumph of the American-led post-war order, whose watchwords were globalisation, integration, democratisation, and

³⁵ Yuen Foong Khong, ‘Negotiating “Order” during Power Transitions’, in *Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order*, ed. Charles A. Kupchan, Jason Davidson, and Mira Sucharov (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2001).

³⁶ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, ‘Twentieth Century Benchmark Dates in International Relations: The Three World Wars in Historical Perspective’, *Journal of International Security Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 46.

³⁷ Charles Krauthammer, ‘The Unipolar Moment’, *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 1 (1991): 23–33.

expansion of the liberal order.³⁸ The post-Cold War order was also underpinned by rise of China, which had undertaken a series of economic reforms in 1978. Most importantly, it marked an end of the ‘third world’ as a political project of the South.³⁹ By the late 80s and early 90s India reevaluated its political and economic policies and claims to higher status that were largely guided by a post-colonial outlook on international affairs, scepticism and distance from great power politics. It embarked on a process of integration with the dominant political and economic structures of the global system and pursuit of material power.⁴⁰ Part of this strategy was to frame itself as part of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ region, which, by the end of the Cold War had come to include some of the world’s largest, most populous and, in economic and military terms, most powerful nations. Inclusion in region presented India with an opportunity to be recognised as part of the economically dynamic Asia-Pacific – which it saw as crucial for enabling its claims to status as a rising power.⁴¹

The third order transition this thesis studies is currently ongoing at the time of writing and its underpinned by signs of decline in the American-lead post-Cold War order. In this context, Indian claims to higher status express conformity to the norms underpinning a liberal, rules-based order, but, at the same time, emphasise on inclusion and acknowledgment of the rise and role of other players – including China – that seek to have a greater stake in influencing a post-unipolar world. Informing this strategy is

³⁸ John G Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 154.

³⁹ Odd Arne Westad, ‘Two Finales: How the End of the Third World and the End of the Cold War Are Linked’, in *International Relations Since the End of the Cold War: New and Old Dimensions*, ed. Geir Lundestad (Oxford: Oxford Union Society, 2013).

⁴⁰ Rajesh Basrur and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 83.

⁴¹ Sinderpal Singh, ‘From “Asia” to “Asia-Pacific”’: Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India’s Regional Spaces’, *ISAS Working Paper* 113 (2010): 14. To understand how ASEAN-centred regionalisation was a strategy to manage China’s rise, see Goh, ‘Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies’.

its attempt to frame and capitalise on its inclusion in the ‘Indo-Pacific’ region, whose membership at the time of writing comprises of but is not limited to states such as the United States, Japan, Australia. India insists on building the region as an ‘inclusive’ one, through which it signals its key membership within a grouping of key democracies and strategic partners, but also, emphasises on inclusion of other regional and global stakeholders - with a particular signal to China - in it.

By focusing on the Asia project of the post-war/early Cold War years, the Asia-Pacific project of the post-Cold War years, and the Indo-Pacific project as the post-Cold War order comes under strain, this thesis studies three cases of Indian region-building. As the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate *how* regions inform states’ claims to status at the global level through the Indian case, for its first two cases, it has selected positive within-cases where the phenomenon is at work. In other words, in these cases, Indian attempts to claim higher status through region-building has involved some form of great power recognition. It studies India’s role in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle (1945-1949) and the form and content of India’s Look-East policy since 1991. Given the contemporary and evolving of the final case, the scope of narrowing into a within-case is limited. For this reason, this thesis engages with India’s Indo-Pacific project as whole, traces how it has informed its claims to the higher status and the extent to which it has been successful.

In choosing to engage with the Indian case in this way, it demonstrates how different region-building at different scales have informed India’s claims to status across time: as an intellectual project and a strategic space in the Nehru years (Chapter 3) as a framework for responding to regional crises demonstrated through its response to the Indonesian question from 1945-1949 (Chapter 4) a strategic and economic policy

through the launch of its Look East Policy in the post-Cold War context (Chapter 5) and finally as some form of balancing strategy in contemporary times (Chapter 6). By looking at the discourses and practices that surrounded both these region-building projects, it unpacks how, through very different moments of its foreign policy, Indian region-building featured into its claims to higher status at the global level.

Before proceeding, it must be noted that an intuitive and obvious way of studying India and the region is by looking at it in the context of South Asia, and the choice of focusing on its other region-building projects warrants explanation. While the case of South Asia is not by any means overlooked in this thesis and is in fact discussed in the Chapters 3 and 5, it is not central to this analysis and the reasons for this are twofold. First, and as discussed earlier, the interest of this thesis lies in Indian region-building in the context of the *onset* of global order transitions and how these played a role in encouraging India to rethink its regions. By the time India undertook in full force its South Asia project in the 70s and 80s, global order was arguably no longer in transition, but ‘fixed’ in accordance to the bipolar structures of the Cold War. In many ways therefore, the project, which involved building South Asia as space in which it was the preponderant power, was a response to those structures and involved fencing off this region by distancing it from the great powers. Second, and as discussed earlier, apart from a few exceptions, the dominant trend in the literature is to frame South Asia as a region as status-constraining for India at the global level.⁴² Focusing on the non-South Asian cases of Indian region-building, demonstrates a new and relatively untapped way of exploring its status-enabling ability. It is hoped that this analysis can, as the title of

⁴² The exceptions being, Sinderpal Singh, ‘Framing “South Asia”: Whose Imagined Region?’, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Singapore, 2001, 21, <http://hdl.handle.net/10220/4487>, accessed 6 October 2020; Kanti P. Bajpai, ‘The Origins of Association in South Asia: SAARC , 1979-1989’ (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1990), 87-.

the thesis suggests, push International Relations scholarship to ‘rethink’ the way in which the relationship between regions and status have been conceptualised in reference to India and South Asia, which can be explored in future research and work.

1.4 Sources

While both cases rely on a combination of primary and secondary material, the nature of the sources differ given the different time scales of the cases. The Indian sources include published and unpublished primary material containing speeches, diplomatic correspondence, memoirs and reports. In order to examine how Indian ideas were then perceived by the great powers, the cases dominantly rely on published and unpublished American and British sources.

For the study of the “Asia” project of the post-war/early Cold War years, the Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru has been a key published, primary resource. The unpublished sources data collected from the National Archives of India and the post-independence papers from the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi. For its study of the Indonesian case, it relies additionally on material collected from the United States State Department’s Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) papers, the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, United States, the National Archives of the Netherlands, the Hague, the United Nations Security Council Records and the Australian National Archives. In its study of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ project of the post-Cold War years and Indo-Pacific in contemporary times, it relies on published speeches, diplomatic memoirs, policy papers and think-tank reports. Most of the diplomatic memoirs for the Asia-Pacific case were sourced from the central library of the National University of Singapore. While the empirical chapters explain

more specifically how these sources are used to inform the study both theoretically and empirically, they are fully listed by category in the bibliography.

1.5 Structure

This thesis consists of four main chapters which are bookended by the introduction and conclusion. Chapter 2 establishes the conceptual framework of the thesis, while Chapters 3 to 6 remain empirically focused. Chapter 2 sets up the framework with which regions and status can be theoretically and conceptually linked in International Relations. It expands on the ideas discussed in section 1.2 and establishes that from a conceptual standpoint, regions and the way in which they are 'built' can serve to augment states' claims to status at the global level. The chapter reviews and presents a critique of the way in which prevailing literature in International Relations theorises the relationship between regions and status. It demonstrates how its over-reliance on the regional power framework, has, as discussed in section 1.1, overwhelmingly resulted in the conclusion that regions serve to constrain states claims to status. Additionally, this has contributed to a theorisation of regions from a top-down perspective, that is independent of studying how states themselves define and frame their regions. Drawing on constructivist and critical geopolitics literature, this chapter emphasises on relevance of studying how states 'build' regions and how this is seen to inform their claims to status at the global level. It argues that the status-enabling nature of regions lies in their ability to facilitate how states can be recognised by other actors, particularly by the great powers. This chapter ends with an overview of how the conceptual framework works in a study of the Indian case across time. In doing so, it sets the stage for the empirical chapters that zoom in on the specific cases of Indian region-building.

Chapter 3 studies the Indian region-building project of 'Asia' that took shape in the context of the order transition brought about by the end of the Second World War. It identifies the lead up to the project, its peak and its closing moments as it covers the final two decades leading to independence (which overlapped with the interwar years), the War and its immediate aftermath. It establishes that towards the end of the Second World War, with Japan no longer in the position it was before it, and, as the one of the first 'Asian' countries to free itself from European imperialism, a space was created for India to become the prime builder of the 'Asian' region. This chapter unpacks the political discourses and foreign policy practices of Nehru's India that shaped 'Asia' through this period. The Indian region-building project centred on constructing it as a space in which foreign intervention would not be tolerated, and, relatedly as an 'area of peace', as the world rapidly descended into the bipolar politics of the Cold War. The chapter argues that framing itself as the 'natural centre' and its 'representative' of Asia, enabled India to be recognised for what it believed was its role in world affairs – that of a global peacemaker. It was convinced that playing this role successfully would inevitably enable it claims to status. The chapter shows how in the early days of the project, the region and India were recognised at the global level in the way it intended. In the later years however, as East-West dynamics strengthened, India's region-building project was seriously challenged, and, with the border war of 1962, eventually declined. This, amongst other events in the 60s produced a fundamental change in beliefs in Indian self-conceptions as an international actor resulting a dramatic shrinking of India's regional imagination to South Asia. On examining the closing moments of its Asia project, the chapter ends by critiquing accounts of Indian foreign policy and international relations that tend to overemphasise this aspect of the project rather than the form and content of the project itself and its important moments of success.

Chapter 4 focuses on a key moment in which India's region-building project successfully informed and enabled its claims to status, by presenting a multi-archival study of its role in Indonesia's decolonisation struggle from 1945-1949. The crisis in Indonesia emerged as a consequence of renewed efforts by the Dutch to re-establish empire in the archipelago in 1945. Defining this as an "insult and a challenge to Asia" India framed the crisis as one of 'Asian' concern.⁴³ Identifying itself as the "torch-bearer in the liberation movement of Asiatic countries"⁴⁴ it believed it had an important role in representing the 'Asian' position on the Indonesian question. Indian activism took four main forms: first, direct action in favour of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of risky rescue operations for Indonesian leaders, giving them refuge in India and imposing limited sanctions against the Dutch. Second, by amassing and representing an 'Asian' position on the Indonesian question at global forums (the United Nations being the most important). Third, by exerting diplomatic pressure on Western great powers to use their influence to limit Dutch action in Indonesia and finally, by becoming a major diplomatic channel with which the former could communicate with leaders from Indonesian Republic and vice versa, hastening the return of peace in the archipelago. The chapter argues that the repetition and consistency of its discourses and practices associated with this 'regional' framing of the crisis made actors both within and beyond 'the region' to refer to it in these terms. In this way, through its activism on the Indonesian question, the chapter makes the case that given the audience recognition, India was successful in breathing the 'Asian region' into life. This enabled the recognition of India as representative of a group of

⁴³ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Interview to the Press, Delhi: The War in Indonesia (28 July, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvapalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 367–77.

⁴⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Address at South East Asia Day Meeting, Lucknow: India's Lead in Asian Liberation (28 October, 1945)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvapalli Gopal (Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1981), 459–60.

decolonising states that included a vast part of the world, increasing the way it was estimated by the Western great powers, especially the United States.

Chapter 5 studies the shift in Indian region-building from ‘South Asia’ to ‘Asia-Pacific’ that took shape in the context of the order transition brought on by the end of the Cold War. It unpacks the structural context which pushed India to rethink ‘its region’ as part of its strategy to claim status in a post-Cold War world. As India had remained absorbed in establishing itself as a ‘South Asian’ hegemon in the 70s and 80s, it was excluded from what had been built as the ‘Asia-Pacific’, a region that involved amongst other actors, the United States, Japan and ASEAN. With the end of the Cold War, recognition as part of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ region was seen as important in enabling its claims to status, especially as this ‘region’ had come to include the great powers on one hand and the small and the economically successful Southeast Asian tigers on the other. The chapter discusses the roll out of India’s Look East Policy (LEP) in 1991 and how, through the policy, it undertook a region-building project that re-cast the ‘Asia-Pacific’ as a geographic space that ‘naturally’ included India. In this way, this chapter has attempted to do a combination of what Chapters 3 and 4 do separately – provide an overview of the region-building project by discussing its opening moments, peak and limits and challenges, and delve into the specifics through its study of the LEP. The chapter argues that through the discourses and practices constituting LEP, India was eventually recognised as member of the Asia-Pacific both within and beyond the region. In the early 2000s, the ‘Asia-Pacific’ had slowly become to be understood as its ‘extended neighbourhood’, enabling its claims to status as a ‘rising power’. The chapter closes noting that despite these developments, there were important limitations that stalled India’s Asia-Pacific membership from reaching its full, status-enabling potential.

Chapter 6 studies how India's Asia-Pacific project has been subsumed into its Indo-Pacific project in contemporary times. As post-Cold War American-led order comes under strain, it witnesses the rise of several other players such as China, Brazil and even India that who have demanded a greater stake in informing a post-unipolar world.⁴⁵ The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a strategic maritime theatre that directly experiences the interactions and confrontations of a changing global order. Like the 'Asia-Pacific' concept, the origins of the 'Indo-Pacific' cannot necessarily be traced to the Indian foreign policy establishment, but much unlike it, India has been regarded as a *defacto* member of it. This chapter studies Indian discourses and practices surrounding its membership of the Indo-Pacific region and demonstrates how it has informed its claims to major power status. In recent years however, as the relations between the United States and China have further deteriorated alongside that of India's own relations with the latter, there are signs that India's Indo-Pacific project is becoming a subset of its China policy. As a result, Indian Indo-Pacific discourses and practices seem to reflect a balancing strategy at work. The chapter discusses this turn in India's Indo-Pacific project and the implications it seems to have on its claims to status at the global level.

Chapter 7 ties all these chapters together reiterating how by building from the Indian case, new theoretical and conceptual insights emerge concerning the relationship between regions and status in International Relations. This chapter reviews the three region-building projects studied in this thesis, 'Asia' of the post-war/early Cold War period, 'Asia-Pacific' of the post-Cold War period and the Indo-Pacific of the

⁴⁵ John G Ikenberry, ed., *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

contemporary era and reflects upon their continuities and changes vis-à-vis its claims to status at the global level.

1.6 Contributions

This introduction chapter has located and laid out the argument, framework research design and structure of the thesis. It, in essence, highlights the project's central premise which is to study how regions inform states' claims to status at the global level. By linking 'regions', to status in International Relations, this analysis sits at the interplay of the 'regional' and the 'global' levels of analysis and demonstrates the conceptual value of the 'regional-global nexus' in International Relations.⁴⁶

This thesis seeks to make contributions in three spheres: theoretical/conceptual, empirical and relevance to policy. Conceptually, it establishes the value of qualitative and historically grounded research to theory-building in International Relations. Through its study of the Indian case from bottom-up, this thesis has found crossovers between two hitherto unconnected bodies of literature: region-building and status. This framework can now, with appropriate contextual caveats help unpack these links in other cases across space and time. On the region side, it revives and takes forward the important contributions made by the region-building literature to understanding what this means at the global level. On the status side, it pushes the literature to think beyond the regional power framework to study regions. Moreover, it gives regions more agency than simply that of self-defined, theory-testing playgrounds.

⁴⁶For work on the region-global nexus, see: Job, 'Grappling with an Elusive Concept'; Samuel S Kim, 'Northeast Asia in the Local-Regional-Global Nexus: Multiple Challenges and Contending Explanations', in *The International Relations of Northeast Asia*, ed. Samuel S Kim (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 3–61; Rick Fawn, ed., *Globalising the Regional, Regionalising the Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Empirically, not only does the thesis expand the discussion of India and its region beyond South Asia, but it in chapters 3 to 5, highlights the insights coming out of the rich and underused data on Indian diplomatic history. The data collected for Chapter 4 that studies its involvement in the Indonesian decolonisation makes this most evident. The chapter is not only relevant for making the theoretical claims in this thesis, but also sheds light on the importance of “third world interventions” in the study of the Cold War. The analysis suggests that the Cold War in Asia had its roots much before the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. In chapter 5, despite all the research done on India’s Look East Policy in the post-Cold War world, scholars have hardly consulted the wealth and volume of published diplomatic memoirs by foreign policy elites who played a fundamental role in creating and implementing the policy.

From a policy perspective, the insights coming from this thesis shed new light the current dynamics underpinning India’s Indo-Pacific project. India has officially begun to refer to its region as the ‘Indo-Pacific’ in the context of maintaining of a ‘regional’ architecture and freedom of navigation in the oceans. For Indian foreign policy elites, membership and recognition as part of the Indo-Pacific alongside countries like the United States, Australia and Japan is reflective of the recognition of its status as a major power and consequential actor in world affairs. While India seems to be having its ‘Indo-Pacific’ moment, the extent to which it would be sustained depends upon certain important developments currently shaping the region-global nexus. This is of central focus in its final empirical chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Region-building and Status in International Relations

2.1 Introduction

This thesis studies how regions inform states' claims to status at the global level. The following chapter sets up the conceptual framework within which this process is empirically observed, by studying the Indian case. By focusing on the process of 'construction' of regions as its line of inquiry, this chapter invariably seeks to understand the processes with which spaces are framed and re-framed as 'regions', and how this becomes a part of its overall claims to higher status. It argues that the status-enabling nature of regions lies in their ability to influence the way in which states are recognised by other actors at the global level. As states claim higher status at this level, they are, in effect, communicating a claim to social place to which they feel entitled to belong. In order to establish themselves worthy of making that claim, they find it crucial to be recognised in a *specific way* by certain audiences. Regional membership is an important way to ensure this as it helps convey a distinctive set of collective characteristics with which states can be socially recognised at the global level. This chapter suggests that regions inform states claims to status based on what they are and what they do. Regions take the form of social groups that convey certain meanings about its members. This allows them to function as theatres or stages for states to enact a specific role to targeted audiences. For the reasons discussed in chapter 1, though these audiences can be of various forms, the focus here is on great powers conferrers of status.

Anchored in a constructivist approach, this chapter studies 'region-building' or the process by which regions become social realities. It proceeds from the assumption that

regions are ‘social facts’ and products of certain discourses and practices that breathe them into life. It demonstrates how in spatialising geographies and mapping boundaries through the region-building process, states forge a sense of commonality and group membership, with which they can then differentiate themselves from others to global audiences.⁴⁷ In studying how spaces are framed and re-framed as ‘regions’, this framework takes into account historical context or the specific moments in time, in which the process of construction is stimulated. In this way, it studies the notion of change – systems change which stimulate the making and re-making of new ideas.⁴⁸ It develops a conceptual framework informed by insights from Sociology, Political Geography and International Relations to theorise and rethink the relationship regions and status in International Relations by drawing on the Indian case.

In International Relations, the study of India and its region has predominantly focused on South Asia.⁴⁹ Having theorised India’s relations within South Asia, scholars have concluded that India is at best a ‘reluctant hegemon’ and a ‘detached regional power’.⁵⁰ This reading of India and its region has led to the conclusion that the latter has held India back from its wider, global ambitions and majorly constrained its claims to status.⁵¹ Instead of assuming and assigning South Asia as India’s region and working from there, this chapter highlights the analytical value of tracing the discourses and practices of Indian regional behaviour through a constructivist lens. This reading of India and its regions reveals first that South Asia was not an obvious or self-evident

⁴⁷ See Leonardelli and Toh, ‘Social Categorization in Intergroup Contexts: Three Kinds of Self-Categorization’, 70–71. On regions and group formation see Postel-Vinay, ‘The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the “Europe and the Rest” Divide’. See Postel-Vinay, 562.

⁴⁸ Reus-Smit, ‘Reading History through Constructivist Eyes’.

⁴⁹ Bajpai, ‘Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia’.; Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?: Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*.

⁵⁰ Mitra, ‘The Reluctant Hegemon: India’s Self-Perception and the South Asian Strategic Environment’. On regional detached power, see: Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations : Indian and South African Perspectives*, 182.

⁵¹ See for instance: Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’.

region but produced by actors who have been speaking and writing it into existence.⁵² Second, that its regional formulations may well include but are not limited to South Asia but also include ‘Asia’, ‘Asia-Pacific’ and most recently, the ‘Indo-Pacific’. Third the changing conceptions of its region have emerged in the context of transformations at the global level, that have stimulated a rethink of how India spatialises and builds its region.⁵³

While the aim of this this analysis is to demonstrate how regions inform India’s claims to status, it acknowledges that regions are not the only theatres through which it undertakes this process. As the growing scholarship on India and status highlights, these strategies are at work through its membership in a variety of spaces such as the G20 or claim to membership of key institutions of the non-proliferation regime or the United Nations Security Council.⁵⁴ This framework seeks to contribute to this literature by making the case that more needs to be said on Indian region-building over time, as a component of its strategies to claim and seek higher status at the global level.

This chapter is divided into the following sections. The first section reviews existing work on regions and status in International Relations and identifies the limitations of the way in which they have been dominantly linked in the discipline. It critiques this literature for its over-emphasis on the on regional power framework, which has led to the conclusion that regions only serve to constrain states claims to status. The second

⁵² Singh, ‘Framing “South Asia”’: Whose Imagined Region?’, Aminah Mohammad-Arif, ‘Imaginations and Constructions of South Asia: An Enchanting Abstraction?’, *Samaj: South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 10, no. March 2016 (2014): 1–28.

⁵³ Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*.

⁵⁴ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*; Rohan Mukherjee, ‘Statuspolitik as Foreign Policy : Strategic Culture and India ’ s Nuclear Behavior’, 2014, 1–28; Baldev Raj Nayar and T V Paul, *India in the World Order : Searching for Major Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

section focuses on defining the concepts of regions, region-building and status. It also specifies what the 'global' and the 'regional' mean as levels of analysis upon which these concepts have been theorised in the thesis. This sets the stage for the third section, which discusses the concept of social recognition, as a key link to regions and status. It establishes that regions possess 'recognitional value' making them important parts of states' claims to status at the global level. The final section establishes how this framework comes together in a study of the Indian case, followed by the conclusion that ties these sections together.

2.2 Linking Regions and Status in International Relations: Key debates and State of the Art

As the thesis situates itself between 'regions' and their construction and 'status', it builds on what is a sprawling literature of two major concepts in International Relations. Both bodies of literature approach the region-global nexus at different ways. Before unpacking these approaches, it must be specified that according to some dominant strands of mainstream International Relations, the very notion of a *nexus* might seem irrelevant. To scholars within this group, it is obvious that it is the forces of the global that come at the region from the outside-in. They proceed from the assumption that the global exists in the form of an international anarchic structure which is the principal force shaping the motives and actions of states.⁵⁵ Regions therefore, come as a consequence of states acting under the forces of this structure.

⁵⁵ Kenneth N Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 224–38; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading (Massachusetts): Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979), 79–128; Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), 6–10; Stanley Hoffmann, *The State of War: Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (London: Pall Mall, 1965), 27, 54–87.

For the offensive realist, regions function as ‘spheres of influence’ that great powers establish in their pursuit of power maximisation.⁵⁶ On achieving hegemony in a region, great powers will meddle in other regions so as to prevent other states from achieving a similar position their respective regions.⁵⁷ The neorealist variant of this group suggests regions form as a survival strategy in an international anarchic structure.⁵⁸ States form alignments when confronted with an external threat, where they may choose to either balance by allying with others against the threat, or bandwagon, by aligning with the source of danger.⁵⁹ Coming at the debate in a different way, the liberal cluster in International Relations explains how regions have more to offer than just being pawns in a great power scramble for influence or survival. Under conditions of globalisation, the region can be rewarding and beneficial to states both politically and economically, and it is for these reasons that states may choose to belong to them.⁶⁰ Though both the approaches have different takes on regions, they converge on the notion that the region-global is not so much a nexus than a one-way street – the global pushes and acts upon the region.

These overly structuralist accounts are countered by scholarship that establishes the ability of regions coming at the global from inside-out. This approach emphasises the importance of local factors in shaping the regional context.⁶¹ These can range from

⁵⁶ John J Mearsheimer, ‘Structural Realism’, in *International Relations Theories*, ed. S Dunne, T; Kurki, M; Simith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 71–88.

⁵⁷ John J Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 42–43.

⁵⁸ Stephen Walt, ‘Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning’, in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Robert J Art and Robert Jervis, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000).

⁵⁹ Stephen Walt, ‘Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning’, in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, ed. Robert J Art and Robert Jervis, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2000).

⁶⁰ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Fourth (Glenview: Longman, 2012), 255.

⁶¹ Bruce M Russett, *International Regions and the International System: A Study in Political Ecology* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967); Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification: A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965); Emanuel Adler and

cultural similarities to history of interactions within certain geographical spaces that seem to naturally encourage the formation of regions. The inside-out take on regions also includes some neo-functional accounts that suggest that regions in themselves play an important role in facilitating high and rising levels of interdependence which can spill-over beyond the region thereby transcending pressures of international anarchy.⁶²

As these approaches set the region-global debate upon the differences between outside-in or inside-out factors, regional security literature lies at the middle of this continuum.⁶³ This cluster of scholarship set out to theorise a framework for international security in a post-cold war world, where, in the absence of the East-West threat structures, regions became central to the international security landscape.⁶⁴ For regional security analysts therefore, regions function as geographically clustered sets of such units, formed on the basis of patterns of amity and enmity.⁶⁵ Regions may be zones based on internal perceptions of cultural, political or economic similarity as well as zones in which internal or external possibilities of geopolitical control, rivalry or integration are realised.⁶⁶ This cluster of scholarship evoked an emerging need to reconcile International Relations and Area Studies to combine the more specific contexts emerging out of regions with more generalisable approach of International Relations to make better sense of the security challenges in a post-Cold War World.

Michael N Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Paul D Williams and Jürgen Haacke, 'Security Culture, Transnational Challenges and the Economic Community of West African States', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26, no. 2 (2008): 119–36.

⁶² Ben Rosamond, *Theories of European Integration*, European Union Series (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

⁶³ Neumann, 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe', 55.

⁶⁴ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

⁶⁵ Bajpai, 'Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia'; Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*.

⁶⁶ Bajpai, 'Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia', 26.

Of this cluster, Buzan and Wæver's regionalist approach to international security is both dominant and overarching. It offers a general picture of security as "a conjunction of two levels: the interplay of global powers at the system level" and "clusters of close security interdependence at the regional level".⁶⁷ According to their framework international order consists of a hierarchy of "global powers" and "lesser powers". The former have the capability to project power across distances while the latter are limited to their "local regions".⁶⁸ Arguably, their approach sits on the middle of the outside-in continuum as it on the one hand acknowledges that "macro-system structures...shapes the nature, and even the possibility, of the regional level"⁶⁹ but on the other, recognises that the way in which issues are securitised within regions depends on the "actions and interpretations of local actors, and is not just a mechanical reflection of the distribution of power."⁷⁰ While structural forces shape and condition the region from the outside-in, their framework suggests that there are forces from within regions, that shape a reality from the inside-out which cannot be determined entirely by the systemic forces.⁷¹

Indeed, while much as been said and done about regions, one author notes that the "regionalist perspective of Buzan and Wæver provides the most ambitious and complete consideration of regional-systemic relationship in recent years."⁷² Despite the reasonable amount of time has passed since that insight was made, it continues to hold fairly true. To be sure, there is a great body of sophisticated analyses on dynamics

⁶⁷ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, 43.

⁶⁸ Buzan and Wæver, 3.

⁶⁹ Buzan and Wæver, 28.

⁷⁰ Buzan and Wæver, 40.

⁷¹ Buzan and Wæver, 3.

⁷² Job, 'Grappling with an Elusive Concept', 33.

on the regional level per se, such as that on regional orders,⁷³ regional powerhood,⁷⁴ regionalism⁷⁵ regionalisation,⁷⁶ regionhood⁷⁷ and so on, but when more systems-focused scholarship (such as that on status) seeks to explore their theories in a “regional context” (and it is unclear what this entirely means) the Buzan and Wæver approach still remains dominant.⁷⁸ This can perhaps be attributed to the apparent conceptual neatness of their approach: the authors are very clear in establishing their scope conditions – that they are providing a framework to understand a post-Cold War global security order. When seen through the lens of security, some states are able to project power globally, and some not. On their reading therefore, there is an extremely clear “three-tiered scheme” that operates in a global security order, that includes “superpowers, great powers and regional powers.”⁷⁹

Based on these three tiers, Buzan and Wæver have stretched their framework to then include ‘status’.⁸⁰ Their scheme of global, great and regional powers which are based on these power projection capabilities, are also defined in the context of them being steps on a status ladder. This approach invariably reduces the discussion on the relationship between regions and status in international politics to one on material

⁷³ David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan, ‘Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World’ 43, no. January 1991 (1997): 406; Godehardt Nadine and Dirk Nabers, *Regional Powers and Regional Orders*, ed. Godehardt Nadine and Dirk Nabers (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

⁷⁴ Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations: Indian and South African Perspectives*; Destradi, ‘Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership’.

⁷⁵ Fredrik Söderbaum, *Rethinking Regionalism*, Rethinking World Politics (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Andrew Hurrell, ‘Regionalism in Theoretical Perspective’, in *Regionalism in World Politics: Regional Organization and International Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 37–73.

⁷⁶ Kessler and Helmig, ‘Of Systems, Boundaries, and Regionalisation’.

⁷⁷ Luk Van Langenhove, ‘What Is a Region? Towards a Statehood Theory of Regions’, *Contemporary Politics* 19, no. 4 (2013): 474–90.

⁷⁸ Kirssa Cline et al., ‘Identifying Regional Powers and Their Status’, in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics*, ed. Thomas J. Volgy et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 141.

⁷⁹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, 33–34.

⁸⁰ Buzan and Wæver, 31.

power. In doing so, it does not account for the fact that states make claims to higher status irrespective of material power.⁸¹ It also fails to explain what happens to those geographically fixed status clubs, when states themselves change the way they frame and define their geographies. With all these limitations, the Buzan and Wæver approach, has made a direct transition into the literature on status. Building on similar frameworks, the status literature identifies status clubs on the basis of the geographic limits of material power projection.⁸²

Status scholarship has worked with the levels of analysis approach in International Relations and identified major powers and regional power categories as status clubs within which states are attributed social standing.⁸³ This implies that states can only claim status within their respective geographic status leagues, leading to the conclusion that there are two distinct but related ways in which status is manifested in international politics: “as membership in a defined club of actors, and as relative standing *within* such a club.”⁸⁴ In their focus on the regional power club, Cline et. al, design a framework for studying status in the context of regional power clubs. The authors set themselves the task of identifying the thresholds of regional powerhood. They then calculate a regional power’s life span – from the time period when a state rises to regional power status as well as when it is no longer able or willing to actively structure the politics of its region.⁸⁵ Finally, they design these classifications with the aim of providing a framework for comparing members of what they identify as a regional power status club. On their reading, this includes Australia, Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa.

⁸¹ On the non-linear relationship between status and power see: Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*.

⁸² Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*.

⁸³ Cline et al., ‘Identifying Regional Powers and Their Status’.

⁸⁴ T V Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William Curti Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7.

⁸⁵ Cline et al., ‘Identifying Regional Powers and Their Status’.

Though the approach and method are indeed comprehensive and systemic, important limitations remain: first, since it leans on the levels of analysis approach of separating the region from the global, it struggles to explain interactions that occur at the intersections of these levels. The authors note that regional powers possess a “dual role” as global power aspirants and creators of regional governance, yet, their approach does not seem to capture the dynamics of how these roles interact.⁸⁶ Second, if at all they do interact, the approach seems to suggest that the only scope for making status claims at the global level, is via the regional power route. If, according to their framework only Australia, Brazil, India, Nigeria, and South Africa are uniquely regional powers that provide the set of potential rising powers from which a new global power could emerge,⁸⁷ the explanatory value that ‘status’ adds to what could have been explained by power-driven behaviour in international relations remains unclear. It is therefore uncertain what their study has yielded other than already uncovered by literature on regional powerhood on the one hand, and power transition on the other.⁸⁸

Third, it also fails to make sense of whether regions enable or constrain strategies to seek status. On one hand, their framework seems to suggest that being a regional power is the first step to any claim to major power status. While it may seem logically intuitive for this to be the case, the literature on regional powerhood also reflects on the challenges of becoming a full-blown regional power: regions can be a source of weakness because of unresolved regional conflicts or because of regional instability and the sheer difficulty of maintaining influence. Moreover, attempts to develop a

⁸⁶ Cline et al., 134.

⁸⁷ Cline et al., 151.

⁸⁸ Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations: Indian and South African Perspectives*; Destradi, ‘Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership’.

global role can stir animosity of regional neighbours.⁸⁹ It therefore seems that regional powers reach some sort of dead end with their claims to status at the global level – states must achieve region power status to move to the next rank, but since being a regional power is ever so challenging, they remain victims of the territorial trap of the region. It is for these reasons that scholars have argued that in order to claim status at the global level, states may consider ‘leapfrogging’ the region given deep-seated problems within their neighbourhoods.⁹⁰

On this reading therefore, to enable status, states would be expected either to work hard at being regional powers, or, to “disentangle itself from regional problems in order to stake a solid claim to global standing”.⁹¹ In reality however, states seem to do neither and yet both. What is demonstrated in this thesis is that regions can play a critical role in states claims to status and this includes but is not limited to achieving regional powerhood. For instance, drawing on the Nehru-Mao interaction that opened this thesis, the leaders were not necessarily thinking of themselves as ‘regional powers’, yet there was something critical about the way in which the leaders thought of themselves as ‘Asian nations’ that made them think of their states as potentially great powers. Existing approaches in International Relations literature are unable to capture these dynamics.

⁸⁹ Hurrell, ‘Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?’, 9. See also Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations : Indian and South African Perspectives*; Destradi, ‘Regional Powers and Their Strategies: Empire, Hegemony, and Leadership’.

⁹⁰ On the region as a possible constraint to global ambitions, see Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’; Ashok Kapur, *India: From Regional to World Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006); Acharya, ‘Comparative Regionalism: A Field Whose Time Has Come?’, 10; Hurrell, ‘Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?’, 8–9.

⁹¹ Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’.

A few reasons emerge as possibilities for why this is the case. The most obvious one is because ‘powerhood’ is an easy metric to capture states’ relationship to their regions as it relies on measurable material indicators.⁹² This becomes relevant to a large part of the status literature in International Relations, where status only matters to the extent that it can lead to war.⁹³ Similar to the literature on the power transition theory, it seeks to identify ‘status-situations’ for which tipping points are established to study when status driven behaviour is likely to turn violent, lead to conflict and change the power and the global status hierarchy as a consequence.⁹⁴ Their focus has been to study whether states have reached a ‘status-equilibrium’ – or the material means to back up their status claims – in which case they are a potential threat to the incumbent great-power status holders, and hence need to be ‘managed’.⁹⁵ In this literature therefore, regions only matter because they have ‘regional powers’ that are then capable of posing a threat to existing power hierarchies. Furthermore, since the status literature relies on the regional power framework, it incorporates its approach of taking certain regional conceptions as givens. In doing so, scholars consciously overlook the ways states go about constructing and re-constructing their regions. Unsurprisingly therefore, the literature has been unable to capture insights on status from studying how regions are ‘constructed’ in states foreign policies.

⁹² Cline et al. base their criteria of regional powerhood on material attributes and the willingness to use them. See Cline et al., ‘Identifying Regional Powers and Their Status’, 144–49.

⁹³ Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017); William C. Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War’, *World Politics* 61, no. 01 (2009): 28–57.

⁹⁴ Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics*; Thomas J Volgy et al., ‘Status Considerations in International Politics’, in *Status in World Politics*, ed. Paul, T.V, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 58–85; Wohlforth, ‘Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War’.

⁹⁵ On the point of ‘managing rising powers’, see Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, ‘Managing Rising Powers’, in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T.V Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 33–57.

2.3 Framing the Concept: Rethinking Regions and Status in International Relations

In its critique of the way in which the ‘regions’ and ‘status’ come together in International Relations, the previous section has problematised the assumptions upon which this literature stands, resulting in its inability to explain dynamics that occur at the region-global nexus.⁹⁶ This section explains what this thesis conceptualises as this nexus. It also explains what it means by the concept of ‘region-building’ and ‘status’ that underpin it.

In this thesis, the term ‘global’ has been chosen to describe what the ‘international’ has not been able to in International Relations. The ‘international level’ in the discipline is now synonymous with the ‘systemic level’ which concentrates on the structuring of the international state system and the polarity that has characterised it. As a consequence, it became largely occupied with the interaction among great powers across political, security, economic and social dimensions.⁹⁷ The global on the other hand, has broader connotations and implications. “It is employed as a holistic term encompassing humanity’s physical and social environment and the economic, political and social forces that effect change with global consequence”.⁹⁸ In this conceptualisation, international relations, or interactions between nation-states are a part of the ‘global’ whole.

⁹⁶ For a critique on the treatment of the various levels of analysis as distinct ontological realms and the value of considering their interrelationship and co-constitution in the study of International Relations, see Michael N Barnett and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘From International Relations to Global Society’, in *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Robert E. Goodin (Oxford University Press, 2011), 749–68.

⁹⁷ Job, ‘Grappling with an Elusive Concept’, 40.

⁹⁸ Job, 40.

Over the years, the global has come to mean several things in the discipline, three of which are most relevant to the inferences made in thesis: first, a shift away from the state-centrism and a cognisance of transnational networks, relations, and associations that affect inter-state relations. Second, a relaxation of the assumptions built around the anarchy narrative of textbook International Relations and sovereign equality amongst all states, and an emphasis on the hierarchies both legal and social that characterise international relations.⁹⁹ Third, an escape from the territorial trap of International Relations theorising, that carves up the world into geographic units such as states or regions, where the boundaries of the former are reinforced by the principle of sovereignty. Like the international level, therefore the ‘global level’ also refers to a one of planetary scale, but the term is used here in the context of what it has been able to account for and capture, versus the former. This thesis studies claims to status at this level.

Status in this thesis has been defined as a sense of social place, where states are recognised to belong (such as states recognised as great powers), seek to, or feel entitled to belong. It is a social resource possessed by states, which can serve as an end or a means to gain certain privileges.¹⁰⁰ For instance, since the end of the Cold War, the United States’ great power status has given it the privilege of possessing the world’s largest number of nuclear resources and (by and large) acceptance of doing so. This

⁹⁹ See Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 34.

¹⁰⁰ On status as an end and a means, see Basur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 8. This notion of status is drawn from Max Weber’s conception of status, defined as an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society, New York* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 305, 952. For this conception of status in IR literature, see Edward Keene, ‘The Standard of “Civilisation”, the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-Century International Social Space’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2014): 651–73; Carsten Andreas Schulz, ‘Hierarchy Salience and Social Action: Disentangling Class, Status, and Authority in World Politics’, *International Relations* 33, no. 1 (2019): 88–108.

implies that while it may involve a pursuit of material power, it is a step further as it involves the claim to a *privilege* to be recognised and accepted by targeted audiences for procuring, possessing or using that power for a particular purpose. Status is therefore attached to a sense of exclusivity, as it is “scarce in some absolute or socially imposed sense” and it is “subject to congestion or crowding through more extensive use”.¹⁰¹ This conceptualisation specifically rejects the notion that there is one global status-pot within which states must compete for relative portions. States indeed make claims to status of different types, on the basis of different criteria. For instance, by virtue of its membership in the nuclear weapons club or its membership on the Security Council, the United Kingdom seeks to retain its great power status, while through its troop contributions in international operations, Norway has long sought to claim status as a do-gooder state.¹⁰² More status to the United Kingdom does not mean less status to Norway – but both have earned their status of different forms. The example of Norway is an illustration of the more recent insight in the literature on status, in that it matters to states despite their size and material resources, pushing against the field’s predominant great-power focus.¹⁰³

Claiming status at the global level involves “influencing external perceptions of a state’s relative standing by acquiring status symbols”.¹⁰⁴ This means that audiences are critical to any claim to status. In their list of status symbols, Paul, Larson and

¹⁰¹ Deborah Welch Larson, T.V Paul, and Wiliam C. Wohlforth, ‘Status and World Order’, in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T.V Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and Wiliam C. Wohlforth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 9.

¹⁰² On Norway, see: Iver B Neumann and Benjamin De Carvalho, ‘Introduction: Small States and Status’, in *Small State Status Seeking: Norway’s Quest for International Standing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 1–22; William C. Wohlforth et al., ‘Moral Authority and Status in International Relations: Good States and the Social Dimension of Status Seeking’, *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (2018): 526–46.

¹⁰³ On status mattering despite ‘size’ see Neumann and Carvalho, ‘Introduction: Small States and Status’. On status mattering despite material resources, see Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*.

¹⁰⁴ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*, 11.

Wohlforth include “observable qualities and assets...such as space programs, acquisition of high-technology weapons, major diplomatic initiatives, promotion of a state’s soft power or culture, and efforts to surpass others’ economic growth rates.”¹⁰⁵

Missing from this analysis, however, is the notion of regions and regional membership, which functions not so much as a ‘symbol’ but a theatre to demonstrate and signal claims to higher status. This is perhaps because in International Relations, this is studied at the ‘regional level’ of analysis which is conceptualised as a “distinct level of analysis between the global and the local.”¹⁰⁶ There are however, more global elements to the region, which, theorising at the regional level is unable to sufficiently account for. The Indian case helps illustrate how regions are global in their very making. This is not simply in a neorealist sense of systemic structures pushing on the region from the outside in, but also observable through the processes that make them from the inside out. A closer reading of how regions are made or ‘built’ from the Indian case reflects that they emerge through a particular reading and interpretation of global order and inform where states seek or feel entitled to place themselves socially within it, in the form of status.

To examine how regions are made, or, how states come to understand certain spaces as regions, Political Geography and Critical Geopolitics provide useful tools of analysis. These approaches emphasise on the importance of examining the ways in which certain self-understandings interact with material incentives to form regions and the role of language and discourse through which these are expressed.¹⁰⁷ They

¹⁰⁵ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ Andrew Hurrell, ‘Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics’, *Review of International Studies* 21, no. 4 (1995): 331. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 2006). Key works on

therefore pay attention to the process of ‘region-building’, which implies that “the existence of regions is preceded by the existence of region-builders, political actors who, as part of some political project, imagine a certain spatial and chronological identity for a region, and disseminate this imagined identity to others”.¹⁰⁸ Within this literature Anssi Paasi’s framework is instructive, as it specifies the four stages through which combinations of discourse and practice breathe regions into life.¹⁰⁹ The first involves territorial shaping, which is essentially a boundary-making exercise that specifies the geographic limits of regions; the second concerns symbolic shaping that reinforces the territoriality of a region by giving it a name, associating it with certain symbols or icons; and third involves institutional shaping referring to the establishment of formal and informal institutions that consolidate the region.¹¹⁰ The effect of these three stages is that they are able to encode a shared reality of some kind and distinguish the members of one (regional) group from others, making this an important exercise in the establishment of collective identity. These stages follow no specific order, often occur simultaneously and help in contributing to the fourth stage, which includes the establishment of the region when it is accepted by others as part of the regional system and broader social consciousness.¹¹¹

region-building include - Postel-Vinay, ‘The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the “Europe and the Rest” Divide’; Van Langenhove, ‘What Is a Region? Towards a Statehood Theory of Regions’; Oleksandr Pavliuk and Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze, *The Black Sea Region: Cooperation and Security Building* (Armonk, N.Y. : Sharpe, 2004); Liam D. Anderson, ‘Searching for Security: India’s Role in the Post-War Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal’, *Himalaya* 33, no. 1–2 (2013); Kessler and Helmig, ‘Of Systems, Boundaries, and Regionalisation’; Prasenjit Duara, ‘Asia Redux: Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 04 (2010): 963–83; Duara Prasenjit, ‘The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism’, *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (2001): 99–130; Beeson, ‘Geopolitics and the Making of Regions: The Fall and Rise of East Asia’; Daniel H Levine and Dawn Nagar, *Region-Building in Africa* (Capetown: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

¹⁰⁸ Neumann, ‘A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe’, 58.

¹⁰⁹ Anssi Paasi, ‘The Resurgence of the “Region” and “Regional Identity”’: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Observations on Regional Dynamics in Europe’, *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009): 121–46.

¹¹⁰ Paasi, 135–36.

¹¹¹ Paasi, 136.

Paasi's four stage process very helpfully captures India's region-building experience. By focusing on the Indian state as the main gatekeeper of its region-building, this thesis studies how its foreign policy elites have been speaking and writing regions into existence turning them into political acts with internal and external audiences.¹¹² Based on the insights of the region-building approach, regions in this study are conceptualised rather broadly, to refer to political collectives that lie "somewhere between the national and the global [that make] references to territorial location and to geographical or normative contiguity. They usually include more than two countries and can be continental (Europe, Latin America), sub-continental (West Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia) as well as transcontinental (transatlantic area, Eurasia)."¹¹³ The aim of region-building projects, is to ensure that regions eventually come to exist as groups of countries that seem 'naturally' delimited by physical features such as mountain ranges, oceans and seas. Reference to 'natural' delimitation by geographic features is crucial for identifying regions as without it, the concept becomes both "diffuse and unmanageable".¹¹⁴ It is through its emphasis on geographic features that the thesis distinguishes 'regions' from other "less than global" groupings like the non-aligned group, G77, BRICs amongst others.¹¹⁵

Examining region-building processes draws attention to idea that regions are indeed not as natural as they may seem, but a consequence of political processes and

¹¹² On regions as political acts, see Neumann, 'A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe', 58. 'Region-builders' can range from states to regional and international organisations and think-tanks, but states and the political elite that represent them are the main 'gatekeepers of region-building' see Louise Fawcett, 'Region Building Debates in a Global Context', in *Region-Building in Africa*, ed. Daniel H Levine and Dawn Nagar (Capetown: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 32. On political elites being gatekeepers, see: Singh, 'From "Asia" to "Asia-Pacific": Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India's Regional Spaces', 54.

¹¹³ Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Regionalism*, ed. Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, 2016, 7.

¹¹⁴ Hurrell, 'Explaining the Resurgence of Regionalism in World Politics', 333.

¹¹⁵ Hurrell, 333.

contestations that require actors and audiences. This makes region-building a social process, where regions take the form of social groups that communicate something distinct about the states that partake in the process. By coming together to constitute regions, states become individually associated with certain meanings and group identity traits that underpin them. In certain contexts, and/or under certain conditions, this can serve as key theatres for states to enact roles that could augment its claims to status at the global level. These interactions of regions and status occur neither at the global or regional levels of analysis independently, but at the ‘nexus’ of the two. Informing this interaction is the critical process of social recognition.

2.4 Region-building and Social Recognition: The Key to Claiming Status

The importance of social recognition is anchored in the Hegelian theory that man must “impose the idea that he has of himself on beings other than himself: he must be recognised by the others (in the ideal, extreme case, by all others).”¹¹⁶ When applied to the realm of the international relations, recognition does two things: first, it brings things to life. “It represents the process through which actors come to exist as actors within the international system and take on a particular identity within that system.”¹¹⁷ For instance, the global recognition of Bangladesh in 1971 allowed the state to be treated as separate from Pakistan and therefore to enjoy the rights and benefits of independent statehood. Second – and less emphasised in the literature on recognition in International Relations – is the desire of states to be *recognised in a particular way*. To reiterate Hegel’s insight, this refers to the notion that man must impose “the idea he

¹¹⁶ Alexandre Kojève et al., *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel, Kojève, Alexandre, Raymond Queneau, Allan Bloom, and James H. Nichols* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), 11.

¹¹⁷ Brian Greenhill, ‘Recognition and Collective Identity Formation in International Politics’, *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 2 (2008): 344.

has of himself’ to others. It is more this second idea of recognition that this framework engages with. States find it important to impose their own conceptions of themselves externally, especially from those they perceive as more powerful than themselves. Hegel explained this in his metaphor of the ‘master’ and ‘slave’ – while the latter may denote respect to the former, the former seeks recognition from those who he in turn respects.¹¹⁸ Accordingly, this thesis defines recognition as a social act through which another actor is “constituted as a subject with legitimate social standing.”¹¹⁹ As a result of recognition, states are able to maintain a certain social status (or recognised place) within a political community and its claim to hold that place is secured.¹²⁰ While on the one hand recognition confirms states’ claims to a specific status, its second attribute – which is the desire to be recognised in a specific way – is critical to claims to status. Embedded within a claim to status is a desire to be recognised in a specific way so that states can then be seen as worthy of possessing that status.

Arguably, International Relations literature has downplayed the importance of recognitional dynamics within underpinning status. This is largely because it has placed more weight on conceptualising status as rank, based on “valued attributes” such as “wealth coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organisation, and diplomatic clout.”¹²¹ The possession of attributes, however, does not confirm one’s status or social standing – recognition is critical to this process. The mere aspiration for a given status is not enough to achieve it; claims involve

¹¹⁸ Kojève et al., *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 19. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ Alexander Wendt, ‘Why a World State Is Inevitable’, *European Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 4 (2003): 511.

¹²⁰ Michelle Murray, ‘The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations’, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations*, no. January 2020 (2018): 6.

¹²¹ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*, 7.

recognitional dynamics.¹²² Group membership plays an important role in this regard. In a hierarchised global order, status politics plays out through the existence of special clubs and groups that give states that belong to them certain privileges. States work towards forming boundaries between groups and outsiders, that help enhance a group's distinctiveness.¹²³ Struggles for status involve the processes by which actors gain admission into a group once members deem that the actor follows the rules of membership.¹²⁴ For instance, membership in the European Union or The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development depends on criteria such as human rights, democracy and economic liberalism.¹²⁵ These membership criteria keeps these institutions systematically closed to others, giving them a sense of social exclusivity.

When a state secures group membership, it is invariably recognised by members of the group and those beyond it as possessing the membership criteria for it, which can serve to augment its claims to a higher status. Some key illustrations of these dynamics in international relations are demonstrated through membership into high-status groups such as the 'family of civilised nations' of 19th century Europe, to G-summitry.¹²⁶ But, as the Indian case reveals, membership of high-status groups is one but not the only way in which status claims can be enhanced. The sheer act of joining a group – irrespective of where it stands in terms of status – provides an opportunity for states

¹²² Marina G Duque, 'Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach', *International Studies Quarterly*, 2018, 580. The author notes that the importance of recognition had been addressed by Paul et. al. in their earlier work, but this was not significantly developed. See Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*.

¹²³ Keene, 'The Standard of "Civilisation", the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-Century International Social Space'.

¹²⁴ Duque, 'Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach', 2018, 580. See also Murray, 'Struggl. Recognit. Int. Relations', 12.

¹²⁵ Marina G. Duque, 'Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach', *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2018): 580.

¹²⁶ Keene, 'The Standard of "Civilisation", the Expansion Thesis and the 19th-Century International Social Space'; Tristen Naylor, 'Social Closure and the Reproduction of Order in International Society', *Millennium*, no. Forthcoming (2018).

to be recognised in a specific way just by being conferred as a member of it.¹²⁷ The recognitional value of group membership lies in its ability to act as transmitters of collective characteristics that member states can be recognised by. This membership can be framed in a way to augment claims to status.

Referring back to the discussion in section 2.3, region-building is also a process of securing group membership. It involves states socially recategorizing themselves as a collective over and above ‘national’ collectives, creating new categories of the ‘regional-self’ vis-à-vis extra-regional others.¹²⁸ On securing membership, regions function as geographic theatres for them to enact a specific role to targeted audiences, which can serve to augment their claims to status at the global level. Great powers are key audiences in this regard.

The importance of great powers in a status project has been emphasised by the growing literature on status-seeking.¹²⁹ In their pioneering work, Deborah Welch Larson and Alexi Shevchenko followed by others such as Rohan Mukherjee draw on the Social Psychology’s Social Identity Theory (SIT) to argue that status-seeking states can adopt one of three strategies: social mobility by following what the international regime requires and not what it prohibits; social competition by violating or subverting

¹²⁷ Nicholas Onuf, ‘Acts of Recognition, Shades of Respect’, in *Recognition in International Relations*, ed. Christopher Daase, Caroline Fehl, and Georgios Kolliarakis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 271.

¹²⁸ Albert and Reuber, ‘Introduction: The Production of Regions in the Emerging Global Order – Perspectives on “Strategic Regionalisation”’, 551. On regional othering, see Alla Kassianova, ‘Russia: Still Open to the West? Evolution of the State Identity in the Foreign Policy and Security Discourse’, *Europe-Asia Studies* 53, no. 6 (2001): 821–39. On boundary-making and othering, see. Itty Abraham, *How India Became Territorial: Foreign Policy, Diaspora, Geopolitics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

¹²⁹ Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, *Status in World Politics*; Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, ‘Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy’, *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010): 63–95; Rohan Mukherjee, ‘Rising Powers and the Quest for Status in International Security Regimes’ (University of Princeton, 2016); Basur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*.

the regime's rules and third, social creativity by choosing to shape the rules to their advantage.¹³⁰ While there is considerable debate on how well these strategies drawn from social psychology map on to the study of international politics, insights from this scholarship express commonality with the status-seeking literature that does not explicitly specify its leanings on SIT.¹³¹ Randall Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu's analysis of status-seeking in the context of 'emerging powers' for instance, notes that the latter choose to be supporters, spoilers or shirkers of the international regime.¹³² Similarly, Richard Ned Lebow argues that in order to gain access "into the circle of great powers" rising powers can follow three strategies: emulation, deviance and challenge.¹³³ There is an overwhelming consensus in this literature that suggests that status-seeking states have "a common set of choices...with regard to the rules of global order. It can choose to follow the rules, break the rules or change the rules".¹³⁴ In other words, status-seeking strategies involves emulating the great powers or accepting the rules and norms that influences the nature of global order, rejecting these rules or, pursuing a creative or unconventional strategy that it may see as potentially status-enhancing.

In their analysis of the Indian case, Rajesh Basrur and Kate Sullivan de Estrada adopt a simpler classification that helpfully subsumes the above to reflect how status-seeking states undertake two strategies. First, conformity which includes emulation, but may also encompass competition as well as degrees of innovation within global order. Second, rejection, which includes either violation of existing systemic rules/norms;

¹³⁰ Mukherjee, 'Rising Powers and the Quest for Status in International Security Regimes', 46–49.

¹³¹ Steven Michael Ward, 'Lost in Translation: Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics', *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2017): 821–34; Jacques E. C. Hymans, 'Applying Social Identity Theory to the Study of International Politics: A Caution and an Agenda' (New Orleans, Louisiana, 2002).

¹³² Randall L Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, 'After Unipolarity', *International Security* 17, no. 4 (2011): 42.

¹³³ Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 542–45.

¹³⁴ Mukherjee, 'Rising Powers and the Quest for Status in International Security Regimes', 47.

and/or (b) creativity, which involves efforts to generate alternative rules/norms.¹³⁵ These strategies of conformity and rejection are also informed by the region-building projects that states undertake. For instance, in joining institutions such as the European Economic Community in the 1980s, Felipe González's Spain became firmly anchored in 'Western Europe' and the transatlantic West. This enabled it to be socially recognised as a member of regional group that subscribed to a particular vision of a political and economic future in the context of the bi-polar contest that characterised global order since 1945. In doing so, with important degrees of innovation, it joined a group that conformed to the dominant structures and norms that underpinned global order in the context of the Cold War era.¹³⁶ In contrast, the construction of the 'Eurasian Union' by Putin's Russia in the post-Cold War context represented a rejection of global order centred on American unipolarity that manifested in the form of the eastward expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).¹³⁷

While it is indeed possible to see status at work in these cases, it does put forth the question of whether these region-building behaviours inform the pursuit of status or security. As discussed earlier, in its conceptualisation of status, this thesis notes that while claims to higher status may involve a search for material power, it is a step further than security-seeking as it involves the claim to a *privilege* to be recognised and accepted by others for procuring, possessing or using that power for a particular purpose. In order to distinguish between status-seeking and security-seeking empirically therefore,

¹³⁵ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 8.

¹³⁶ For a transnational and multi-archival study on Spain and the reframing of its global identity in the context of the Cold War in the 80s, see Marina Pérez de Arcos, 'Redefining Leadership in International Relations: Spain, the European Community, and NATO (1982-1986)' (University of Oxford, 2017).

¹³⁷ Peter J.S. Duncan, 'Ideology and Interests in Putin's Construction of Eurasia', in *The Eurasian Project and Europe: Regional Discontinuities and Geopolitics*, ed. David Lane and Vsevolod Samokhvalov (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 102–13.

this thesis pays close attention to how Indian elites have framed its foreign policy behaviour and relies on evidence of status ambitions that Indian leaders themselves offer of these behaviours.¹³⁸ In particular, it observes how regions fit into and inform these discourses. For this reason, in the Nehru-Mao interaction discussed in the opening paragraphs of this thesis, it recognises status at work, and, specifically notes how membership in the Asian region was appearing to inform it.

Based on these concepts and conceptual caveats, through its analysis of the Indian case, this thesis demonstrates how region-building discourses and practices inform states' claims to higher status. It pays attention to how region-building fits into forms one component of its claims to status that may rest on conformity or rejection the dominant norms of global order. By examining the relationship between regions and status in this way, it encourages International Relations to rethink its theorisation of the relationship between regions and status in two ways. On the region side, by drawing on insights of the literature on status, it offers an alternative interpretation of regional behaviour in world politics from those provided by the outside-in and inside-out approaches discussed in section 2.1.¹³⁹ On the status side, it encourages a reconsideration of this literature's over reliance on the regional power framework for its analysis. As discussed in section 2.2, this requires scholars to take regional conceptions as givens, invariably overlooking the ways states go about constructing and re-constructing their regions. While the above sections have set up the framework based on which the relationship between regions and status have been conceptualised in this thesis, the following section studies how these come through in the Indian case.

¹³⁸ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 14.

¹³⁹ On alternative interpretations in IR, see Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism', *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (1998): 259–94.

2.5 Region-building, Status and the Indian Case

As established in section 2.1, the dominant theorisation of India and its region through the regional power framework has contributed a great deal of insight and analysis on India within its South Asian neighbourhood and the challenges it faced in establishing itself as a regional leader within it.¹⁴⁰ While this has played a major role in nuancing the study of regional power behaviour in International Relations, it has also resulted in a reading of its region as a static space in which Indian claims to status have been constrained. Unsurprisingly therefore, there is an oversight in the literature of the important moments in which India has seen its regions and regional membership as enabling its claims to status. While there is no specific volume dedicated to examining the enabling nature of the region and status relationship at the time of writing, the thesis sees itself as both drawing from and filling gaps in key contemporary work on Indian foreign relations on related themes. This section first discusses this work and second, presents an overview of the case by reflecting on the conceptual framework discussed above.

There are four contemporary volumes on Indian foreign policy, that, despite their differences in empirical focus, speak to the conceptual framework of this study. On the region side, Sinderpal Singh's *India in South Asia: Domestic Identity Politics and Foreign Policy from Nehru to the BJP* (2014) and Zorawar Dault Singh's *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War* (2019) and are particularly relevant. Sinderpal Singh's book analyses three periods of Indian foreign policy since independence that he

¹⁴⁰ See for instance Bajpai, 'Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia'; Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?: Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*; Prys, *Redefining Regional Power in International Relations*; Sandra Destradi, *Indian Foreign and Security Policy in South Asia: Regional Power Strategies*, Asian Security Studies (London: London : Routledge, 2012).; Malone, *Does the Elephant Dance?: Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*.

categorises as the Nehru (1947–62), Indira Gandhi (1966–77, 1980–4) and BJP (1998–2004) eras to explain its “continuities and disjunctures” vis-à-vis its regional role in South Asia.¹⁴¹ It argues that the answers lie in domestic identity politics. South Asia was an important stage, Singh contends, to demonstrate the ways in which Indian political elites have sought to represent its state identity over time.¹⁴² Similar to the approach taken in this study, it examines the evolution of India’s regional policy by tracing elite discourses and practices. At the same time however, it differs from it in two ways. As Singh taps into the understudied work on domestic sources of Indian foreign policy in its South Asian neighbourhood, his framework sits more at the important nexus of the local/domestic-regional than the region-global levels of analysis. Second it synonymises South Asia as India’s region, without accounting for the shifts in the ways in which the latter has defined its region over time.¹⁴³ For instance, Singh notes that origins of India’s South Asia policy lie in the Nehru years, but does not address the notion that over this period, the region was imagined in wider terms, often though the regional frame of ‘Asia’.

The changing notions of India’s region are better accounted for in Zorawar Dault Singh’s book that seeks to explain the shift in Indian foreign policy from its “extra-regional peacemaker role during the Nehru period, where India intervened in several crises in Asian high politics” to that of a “sub-continental security seeker in the Indira Gandhi period, with narrower conceptions of order and security.”¹⁴⁴ Singh’s study of

¹⁴¹ S Singh, *India in South Asia: Domestic Identity Politics and Foreign Policy from Nehru to the BJP* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁴² S Singh, *India in South Asia: Domestic Identity Politics and Foreign Policy from Nehru to the BJP* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 4.

¹⁴³ It must be noted that in other work, Sinderpal Singh does discuss India’s shifting regions. See for instance: Sinderpal Singh, ‘From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, “Indian-Ness” and “Pan-Asian-Ness”’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2011): 51–64; Singh, ‘Framing “South Asia”: Whose Imagined Region?’

¹⁴⁴ Zorawar Dault Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India’s Foreign Policies During the Cold War, Power and Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2.

Indian foreign policy sits distinctly at the region-global levels of analysis and draws on rich array of primary material to make the case that changing conceptions of its regional role, emerge from leaders' "self-images" which are defined as the ways in which "national leaders view and identify their own state in the international system."¹⁴⁵ While the book indeed relies on similar assumptions about regions and links this to how states see themselves at the global level, it differs from this study in three ways. First, its analysis of the 'global' is limited solely to perceptions leaders' worldviews. While an analysis of elite agency is obviously required and important, pinning the framework on what goes on insides their minds, or what Singh refers to as the "cognitive dimension which includes orientations relating to how national leaders understand fundamental aspects of international politics" begs the question that do regions disappear when leaders are unable to imagine them?¹⁴⁶ While changing regional conceptions have often times coincided with leadership change in the Indian case it has also been the case that the ideas that underpinned one region-building project, close but also resurface later. Singh's framework in unable to sufficiently account for these possibilities. Second, the book does not fully explore the responses of global audiences that India targets through its changing regional conceptions. Relatedly, it also does not map how region-building projects play out when they arrive at the global level, and the extent to which they are able to contest and compete with rival regional conceptions. It is therefore limited in its ability to give any indication of the extent of success of an Indian region-building project and the significance of it at the global level. Third and most important, the book alludes to but does not really deal with the concept of status. This may well have been beyond its scope of inquiry and it is indeed on this insight that this thesis makes its key contribution.

¹⁴⁵ Singh, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Singh, 23.

On the status side, two volumes exist with respect to India's foreign relations of key relevance to this thesis. First, Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul's book, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major Power Status* (2003) and, Rajesh Basrur and Kate Sullivan de Eastras's book, *Rising India: Status and Power* (2017). Framing India's 1998 nuclear tests as a critical juncture for claims to status at the global level, Paul and Nayar's book is an early entrant to the literature on India and status, making the claim that "India's foreign-policy behaviour has been driven by the desire to achieve major-power status."¹⁴⁷ It brings to light the key spaces in which its claims to higher status have been recognised or denied – such as in the United Nations and other international institutions, the nuclear non-proliferation regime or the global economy. The analysis, however, takes quite a materialist view of status and the authors fall short in fully unpacking the explanatory value of 'status' to a power political understanding of Indian foreign policy over time. Furthermore, and of more direct relevance to the focus of this thesis, Nayar and Paul's book emulates a large part of status scholarship in International Relations in treating South Asia as a constraining device for Indian claims to status. Using the term "regional containment", the authors argue how the major powers such as the United States and China have pursued policies such as "alignment with and arms supplies to India's smaller regional adversary, Pakistan, which have helped to balance and neutralise the Indian power position within South Asia."¹⁴⁸

Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada's work on the other hand explains in greater detail the complex relationships between status and material power. Problematising the linearity with which the status scholarship has analysed this relationship, the book provides an updated account of status-seeking strategies pursued in Indian foreign policy since

¹⁴⁷ Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order : Searching for Major Power Status*, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Nayar and Paul, 2.

independence. The authors in some parts acknowledge and note how Indian strategies to claim status play out in different regional theatres. In their analysis of the Nehru years for instance, they note India's role in "championing the Asian viewpoint in global forms", while in the post-Nehru years, they point out that India's "emergence as a regional power with military muscle" earned it "considerable respect", with the region being South Asia.¹⁴⁹ In this way, while the authors allude to India's changing regions vis-à-vis its claims to status, this thesis is entirely dedicated to explaining and unpacking this enabling side of this relationship. This section now proceeds by expanding on the discussion in section 2.1 to unpack how Indian region-building has informed its claims to status at the global level.

In the mid to late 40s, as India was on the cusp of independence, its entry into the international society of states coincided with the onset of the post-war world. With Japan no longer in the position it was before the War and, as the one of the first Asian countries to free itself from European imperialism, a space emerged for it to become the prime builder of this region. As global order shifted from a world pinned on European imperialism to one that was rapidly descending into the politics of the Cold War, India attempted to achieve higher status without only focusing on the pursuit of material power and alliance relationships with either of the dominant states of the time, the United States and the Soviet Union. Instead, it based its claims to higher status 'counter-order' efforts.¹⁵⁰ Its claims to status rested on two key ideas. First, through an emphasis on sovereignty not only of its own borders but sovereignty over its own international voice, and second, as a global peacemaker. This claim was tangibly enacted through its Asia project that took shape through this period. It centred on

¹⁴⁹ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 40; 70.

¹⁵⁰ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, 24–53.

building Asia as a group of geographically connected nations with intimate ties and common concerns, with India at its centre. ‘Asia’ would be a space in which foreign intervention would not be tolerated, and, relatedly become an ‘area of peace’, as a geographic space of resistance and rejection of the dominant structures and norms built around the East-West structures of the Cold War.

While this idea of Asia had its origins in the decades leading to independence, it was most evidently produced and reproduced through the foreign policy practices of India thorough the Nehru years. These were reflected through its roles in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle (Chapter 4), Korean War, the first Indo-China War, the 1954 Formosa crisis amongst others (Chapter 3, section 3.3). While chapters 3 and 4 discuss the Asia project in detail, the essence of this idea is best captured in Nehru’ own words in 1946: “whatever the present position of India might be, she is potentially a Great Power...whether we succeed in getting into the Security Council or not, I think we should take up the attitude at the beginning and throughout that India is the *centre of security in Asia* and that, therefore, India must have a central place in any council considering these matters.”¹⁵¹ Eventually however, the project and its related claim to status was undermined by the geopolitics of the Cold War – Pakistan joined the American-sponsored Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), bringing the Cold War to India’s doorstep.¹⁵² Furthermore, India’s war with China in 1962, Nehru’s death in 1964 and the India-Pakistan War in 1965 produced a fundamental change regarding its assessments of its region and relatedly its claims to status.

¹⁵¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘The United Nations: A Note (6 September, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 1*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 439–40. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵² Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India’s Foreign Policies During the Cold War*; Paul McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

The Indian foreign policy establishment came to the realisation that its Asia project centred on non-alignment had constrained its own pursuit of a self-centred balance of power policy.¹⁵³ For instance, despite the United States-Pakistan alliance in 1954, India was reluctant to take up the Soviet offer of purchasing weapons as this would mean a compromise on the key basis on which India sought status – as a global, non-aligned peacemaker. The setbacks of the late 60s caused it to fall to a “relatively low position in the international hierarchy of states,” which resulted in a status-seeking strategy that on the one hand, retained some of the counter-order features of the Nehru era through its rejection of great power politics and Cold War dynamics, but on the other hand, departed from it in terms of its relative neglect of material power.¹⁵⁴ This contributed to a reassessment of its international role from one of a peacemaker to one of a security seeker and urged a re-interpretation of the changing dynamics of the Cold War in the 60s in terms of their direct security impact on India and its immediate periphery.¹⁵⁵ It manifested into a region-building project centred around a narrower frame of South Asia as an Indo-centric region with India as its dominant power.¹⁵⁶ Soon India became known to have its own version of the Monroe doctrine, that opposed the presence of external powers in the Indian Ocean or South Asia, as this was framed as inimical to its national interests.¹⁵⁷ During the 1970s and 1980s India engaged in a series of military interventions to keep the South Asian regional landscape in line with its interests. This meant a shift in its strategy of seeking and claiming status on the basis of little or no material power, to one that involved actively procuring it.¹⁵⁸ As global order evolved

¹⁵³ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 210.

¹⁵⁴ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 51–84.

¹⁵⁵ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 194–221.

¹⁵⁶ Singh, *India in South Asia: Domestic Identity Politics and Foreign Policy from Nehru to the BJP*, 2013.

¹⁵⁷ Surjit Mansingh, 'Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?', in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 115.

¹⁵⁸ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 54–57; Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 212.

in the context of a bipolar world, intensely shaped by East-West dynamics that contained critical geographic dimensions in the form of regional treaty organisations, arcs of containment and iron curtains, India found value in being recognised as a member of a tighter geographic frame to its claims to status at the global level. This made it seem most evidently large and powerful vis-à-vis others in the region. While the strategy proved successful with the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971, it was challenged through its peacekeeping mission in Sri Lanka in the 80s that locked it into a two-year battle, eventually costing the life of its then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Eventually, claiming status on the basis of its role as a South Asian hegemon proved to be both economically and politically damaging, stimulating a rethink of its region. The change in strategy was also stimulated by shifts in the global context toward the late 80s and early 90s.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 left the United States as the only surviving superpower, alongside the rise of China. With global order centred on American unipolarity, whose watchwords were globalisation, integration, democratisation, and expansion of the liberal order,¹⁵⁹ Indian elites came to the understanding that India would no longer be able to successfully claim status on the basis of its scepticism and distance from great power politics, economic inwardness and unsuccessful record of South Asian hegemony. It now found value in being recognised as a liberal democracy and through its fuller integration into the global economy.¹⁶⁰ This urged it to redefine its region. Indian elites realised that as it remained absorbed in establishing itself as a South Asian hegemon in the 70s and 80s, it was excluded from what had been built as the 'Asia-Pacific', which included states like the United States, Japan, Australia,

¹⁵⁹ Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, 154.

¹⁶⁰ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 93.

ASEAN and other actors. They were of the understanding that membership in the Asia-Pacific was an opportunity for India to become socially recognised as a part of a dynamic geographic group that had come to include the world's major powers and the small but economically successful Asian tigers.

In knocking the doors of this region, with important degrees of innovation, it expressed conformity to the material structures of the post-Cold War era as it worked to secure membership in a space that accepted American unipolarity and simultaneously accommodated the rise of China. Furthermore, becoming a member of this region would signal its commitment to the liberal world order and globalisation – both of which underpinned the Asia-Pacific region. In 1991, India launched its 'Look East' policy under the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao which reflected its shifting orientations of regional space. Through the policy, it undertook a region-building project that re-cast the 'Asia-Pacific' as a geographic space that 'naturally' included India.

Its efforts bore fruit as it was eventually made its way into the ASEAN-centred intuitions that proliferated through the region, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit and so on. "Recreating its Asian identity" by being recognised as part of Asia-Pacific, was seen as valuable in enabling its claims to status as a rising power.¹⁶¹ While India it was largely successful in this regard, there were important limitations (discussed in chapter 5, section 5.6) that stalled this from reaching its full, status-enabling potential.

¹⁶¹ Salman Khurshid, 'Forward', in *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 9–10.

Unlike its Asia project of the Nehru years however, India's Asia-Pacific project has not had direct closing moments. Instead, it has been subsumed into a new regional project of the Indo-Pacific. Since the 2010s, India has joined the United States, Australia and Japan amongst others in referring to itself as part of the 'Indo-Pacific' region. While definitions are contested, in broad, geographic terms, it refers to an interconnected space between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The notion of an 'Indo-Pacific' region has emerged in the context of an ongoing, twenty-first century order transition. As the post-Cold War American-led order comes under strain it witnesses the rise of several other players such as China, Brazil and even India that who have demanded a greater stake in informing a post-unipolar world.¹⁶² Much like the Asia-Pacific, the term originated outside of India, but much unlike it, this region was framed to the inclusion of India from the very start. For Indian foreign policy elites, the very formulation of the 'Indo-Pacific' and de-facto recognition of its own presence within it has been seen as a growing recognition of its status as a major power and consequential actor in world affairs. In framing its region as such, India has joined, amongst others, three major countries - Japan, Australia, the United States, all of which possess tremendous social capital in a (now shifting) American-centred global order. The importance of India to the 'Indo-Pacific' is not only reinforced by the discourses and practices emerging out of India's own foreign policy establishment, but from other relevant audiences, including the United States.

India is indeed having its 'Indo-Pacific' moment as it has achieved membership in a high-status region. Furthermore, the region has been loosely defined giving it room to peruse multiple partnerships with United States and other major powers such as Japan

¹⁶² Ikenberry, *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*.

and Australia, while, at the same time, engaging with China.¹⁶³ The extent to which it would be sustained however, depends upon certain important developments currently shaping the region-global nexus. As tensions increase between the United States and China, the Indo-Pacific seems to increasingly take the form of a securitised club framed to exclude the latter. China explicitly rejects the concept as it is perceived as a strategy to contain its rise.¹⁶⁴ There is the possibility that with this, in addition to the deterioration of India's own relations with China, the Indo-Pacific project could become untenable – ultimately doing a disservice to its claims for status. India is yet to navigate these concerns.

This overview of Indian region-building over time demonstrates the importance of rethinking regions and status in International Relations. While region-building seems to have been an important component of Indian claims to status across time, each of its projects have been anchored in a specific historical context and had have had their own opening moments, peaks and closing moments. Moreover, each of its projects have reflected patterns of consistency and change. Its 'Asia' project of the Nehru years concentrated on building a region as a space to conduct an alternative mode of world politics centred on non-alignment and peacemaking, while its 'South Asia' project concentrated on building a region of which it would be globally regarded as its undisputed hegemon. Its 'Asia-Pacific' project on the other hand, concentrated on rebuilding this region to include itself, so it could be recognised as part of a globalising

¹⁶³ See Rajesh Basrur, 'Modi's Foreign Policy Fundamentals: A Trajectory Unchanged', *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (2017): 7–26.

¹⁶⁴ Kai He and Mingjiang Li, 'Understanding the Dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US-China Strategic Competition, Regional Actors, and Beyond', *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2020): 1–7; Feng Liu, 'The Recalibration of Chinese Assertiveness: China's Responses to the Indo-Pacific Challenge', *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2020): 9–27; Naná de Graaff and Bastiaan van Apeldoorn, 'US-China Relations and the Liberal World Order: Contending Elites, Colliding Visions?', *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 113–31.

and economically dynamic group of countries, while its Indo-Pacific project aims at building it as a space to demonstrate its rising power status and pursuit of multiple, strategic partnerships in a changing world order. While the thesis returns to a discussion on change and consistency of Indian region-building over time in its concluding chapter, the following chapters study these projects by analysing the discourses and practices that have underpinned them and the extent of their success. The Asia project remains the focus of chapters 3 and 4, while the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific projects are discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

2.6 Conclusion: Regions, Status and the Region-Global Nexus

This chapter has set up the framework with which regions and status can be theoretically and conceptually linked in International Relations. It has established that from a conceptual standpoint, regions and the way in which they are 'built' can inform states' claims to status at the global level. It argues that the status-enabling nature of regions lies in their ability to influence the way in which states are recognised by other actors at the global level. It has made this argument through four sections.

Through its review and critique of the prevailing literature in the International Relations (section 2.2), this chapter has established that it has dominantly relied on regional power frameworks to study the relationship between regions and status. These come with the inbuilt requirement of having to study regions as fixed entities, and, focus on explaining dynamics at the distinct, regional level of analysis. When studying regions, status literature has drawn directly from regional power frameworks which has resulted in first, overlooking important insights on status that emerge from examining how regions shift across space and time; second, a limited ability to theorise

interactions across the regional and global levels of analysis and third, the overwhelming conclusion that regions serve to constrain states claims to status. The chapter then goes on to make a case for rethinking the ways in which regions and status are conceptually linked in International Relations, to better account for how they interact at the nexus of the regional and global levels of analysis.

Sections 2.3 and 2.4 have directly dealt with the conceptual framework. It first unpacked its conceptualisation of the region-global nexus and what it means by the concept of ‘region-building’ and ‘status’ that underpin this nexus. It first established what this thesis means when it refers to the ‘global level’ and claims to status within it. Having defined status as sense of social place, where states are recognised, seek to, or feel entitled to belong, it has demonstrated that regions and the way in which they are framed inform claims to status. Relying on approaches from Political Geography and Critical Geopolitics, it has argued that through regions and the ways in which states ‘build’ them, they forge a sense of commonality and group membership, with which they can differentiate themselves from others.¹⁶⁵ On securing membership, regions function as geographic theatres for them to enact a specific role to targeted audiences, which can serve to augment their claims to status at the global level.

The chapter’s final section presents how the thesis’ conceptual framework comes through, in its study of the Indian case. By presenting an overview of India’s region-building experience over time, it has discussed how its conceptions of the region are not limited to South Asia’ and include many other formulations. Second, that the changing conceptions of its region have emerged in the context of transformations at

¹⁶⁵ See Leonardelli and Toh, ‘Social Categorization in Intergroup Contexts: Three Kinds of Self-Categorization’, 70–71. On regions and group formation see Postel-Vinay, ‘The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the “Europe and the Rest” Divide’.

the global level, that have stimulated a rethink of how India spatialises and builds its region.¹⁶⁶ It discusses its different projects of Asia, 'South Asia', 'Asia-Pacific' and most recently the 'Indo-Pacific'. By discussing the global context in which these projects emerged it has demonstrated how they have reflected its own reading of global order and where within it has sought to or felt entitled to place itself socially, in the form of status. In doing so, it has established that India has seen important links between its geographic and social place in the world.

¹⁶⁶ Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia*.

CHAPTER 3

“There can be no peace until Asia plays her part”

Region-building, Status and Nehru’s India¹⁶⁷

“[W]orld developments and common interests are forcing Asiatic countries to look at each other again. The period of European domination is passed over as a bad dream and memories of long ago remind them of old friendships and common adventures” - Jawaharlal Nehru, 1946¹⁶⁸

....

3.1 Introduction

On March 23, 1947 delegates from across what is today almost unquestionably understood as South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Central Asia arrived in New Delhi in the spirit of reviewing the “position of Asia in the post-war world.”¹⁶⁹ India was at the twilight of its “tryst with destiny” and attendees of the conference and the political entities they represented were all confronted by different realities – some were in the midst of civil war, some were on the brink of independence while for others, this was still a distant objective.¹⁷⁰ The post-war map of Asia and the

¹⁶⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘A United Asia for World Peace: Speech Delivered at the Plenary Session of the Asian Relations Conference (23 March, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 2*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 507.

¹⁶⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: The Signet Press, 1946), 148.

¹⁶⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Invitation to Inter-Asian Relations Conference, 7 September, 1946’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 1*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 482–83.

¹⁷⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘A Tryst with Destiny: Speech Delivered to the Constituent Assembly of India in New Delhi to mark Indian Independence’, *The Guardian*, 1947, <https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2007/may/01/greatspeeches>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

nations it would constitute was anything but self-evident.¹⁷¹ The idea behind the gathering in New Delhi, through the ‘Asian Relations Conference’, was to revive the ‘region’ as a connected space after centuries of fragmentation under colonial rule. Speaking at the plenary session of the conference, Jawaharlal Nehru, who was leader of India’s interim government at the time, stated, “all countries of Asia have to meet together on an equal basis in a common task and endeavour. It is fitting that India should play her part in this new phase of Asian development. Apart from the fact that India herself is emerging into freedom and independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of many forces at work in Asia.”¹⁷²

This chapter studies the ideas that emerge from these four lines. It studies the political discourses and foreign policy practices of Nehru’s India that underpinned its Asia project in the post-war world. The project centred on first, constructing it as a space in which, after centuries of fragmentation due to colonial rule, foreign intervention would not be tolerated. Second and related, was building it as an ‘area of peace’, as the world rapidly descended into the bipolar politics of the Cold War. The chapter argues that India found it valuable in framing itself as the ‘natural centre’ and its ‘representative’ this region, to its claims to status at the global level. The Asian Relations Conference of 1947 is an important temporal marker of the chapter. It studies the Indian ideas of Asian region in the interwar years that led up to that particular Asianist moment, and how they moved from there into the early decades of the Cold War.

¹⁷¹ Carolien Stolte, ‘Orienting India: Interwar Internationalism in an Asian Inflection, 1917-1937’ (Leiden University, 2013), 159.

¹⁷² Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘A United Asia for World Peace: Speech Delivered at the Plenary Session of the Asian Relations Conference (23 March, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 2*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 506.

In its previous chapters, this thesis has established that Indian region-building projects have shifted in the contexts of changes and transformations at the global level. Its Asia project emerged as global order was transitioning from one pinned on European imperialism to one that was increasingly being shaped by the bipolar structures of the Cold War. As Japan's Asianist project centred on "Asia for the Asiatics" began to reflect its own imperialist designs in the 1930s, a space emerged for India to become the prime builder of the 'Asian' region. Through its study of India's post-war Asia project, this chapter reflects on these region-global links and explains how it was informed by its reading and interpretation of global order, and, where within it, it sought or felt entitled to place itself socially, in the form of status. Furthermore, it speaks to the argument made in Chapter 2, that status-enabling nature of regions lies in their ability to influence the way in which states are recognised by other actors at the global level. This chapter finds that India found value in being socially recognised as the representative of this region and, its active peace broker. Association with both these attributes would ensure that its voice would be impossible to be silenced or overlooked by old and new great powers and this would inevitably enable its claims to status at the global level.

Through its study of India's Asia project in the post-war world, this chapter highlights how it underwent three stages of region-building: territorial, symbolic and institutional (Chapter 2, section 2.3). It notes that while the project was effective in establishing a form of collective identity and shared reality that would distinguish it from others, it discusses how at its fourth or 'establishment of the region stage', it met with mixed success. The challenges in part, lay in the very name of the region itself. 'Asia', as an

idea was a vast and contested one.¹⁷³ As the political entities that constituted ‘Asia’ decolonised over this period, it carried the visions, aspirations and interpretations of several new nations. This meant that different ideas and understandings emerged over how the region should take shape in a post-war world to best ensure the survival, not just in a geopolitical sense but also that of their identities and worldviews. While India’s region-building project intended to fill this construct/category of ‘Asia’ as a regional space (versus the ‘Europe’ or the ‘West’) in which foreign intervention of any form would not be tolerated, it fell short of being able to subsume alternative visions and navigate internal contestations sufficiently beyond that. As the project met indeed met important moments of success in the early Cold War years, it was also during this period that its limitations began to most evidently surface. It eventually declined as the United States and its allies sponsored military pacts in Pacific Asia, that sparked new region-building projects in the 1950s that served to undermine India’s own.

This chapter relies on the published, primary writings, speeches and correspondence of Jawaharlal Nehru. It studies how his discourses and the practices he endorsed as Prime Minister and leader of the External Affairs Ministry of independent India, built the region as a group of geographically connected nations with intimate ties and common concerns, with India at its centre. The chapter also provides historical evidence of the region being recognised by the great powers in the way that India intended, subsequently increasing the way India was esteemed by them.

It must be noted that the focus on Nehru is not to credit him as the sole architect of Indian Asianism. He was, in fact, a product of the Asianist ideas that emerged through

¹⁷³ Wang Hui, ‘The Idea of Asia and Its Ambiguities’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 04 (2010): 985–89; Duara, ‘Asia Redux: Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times’; Amitav Acharya, ‘Asia Is Not One’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 04 (2010): 1001–13.

the intellectual thought and writings of several Indian nationalists in the decades leading to independence.¹⁷⁴ As the chief articulator of Indian foreign policy in the later years of the independence struggle and position as Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister of Independent India, however, he played a critical role in the shape the region would take in a post-war world and the chapter seeks to bring this into focus. The study and analysis of Nehru in International Relations can at times present a methodological challenge, as he often took the role of scholar of the discipline himself spending vast amounts of time theorising the ways of the world. Resisting the temptation of slipping into an analysis of him as an international thinker is a challenging one and almost impossible to fully do. Yet, this chapter has sought to separate Nehru's thought from his discourse and authorised practice. It does not so much trace the genesis of his ideas of Asia, as much as how his discourses and practices contributed to the production of a particular reality of Asia.

The chapter is divided into two major sections that are largely informed by chronology. The first section concentrates on the early links that were forged between Nehru's understanding of Asia and how they featured into his claims of India's status in the world. It covers the final two decades leading to India's independence, which overlapped with the interwar years, the War and its immediate aftermath. It pays attention to how these realities informed the way in which the region was being framed over this period. The second section focuses on the early decades of the Cold War where, as an independent nation, India's road to higher status was seen as inevitable

¹⁷⁴ Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 1 (2012): 65–92; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (London, Minneapolis: Zed Books, 1993); T. A. Keenleyside, 'The Inception of Indian Foreign Policy: The Non-Nehru Contribution', *South Asia: Journal of South Asia Studies* 4, no. 2 (1981): 63–78.

so long as it adhered to its ideals of maintaining an independent, peace-making path to navigate a post-war world. It establishes how leading the path for a free and independent 'Asia' was considered invaluable to this vision. Consequently, the region was worked into and prioritised by India's foreign policy machinery and became the centre of India's diplomatic activity during this period. It is in this section where contestation of its region-building project is also discussed, highlighting therefore, its closing moments. The conclusion of the chapter ties these sections together, and revisits the arguments made in this introduction.

3.2 Asia as a Political Project: Origins

Formative ideas linking India's sense of its place and membership in the 'Asian' region to that of its status in the world had early origins. This particularly came together in the interwar years. During this period, serious shock waves struck the old order pinned on European Imperialism. One emerged most directly from the Great War, and the others emerged in the context of two historical inflection points beyond the imperial world - one coming out of the Bolshevik Revolution when Lenin called for the end of imperialism in all its forms and the other was underpinned by the Wilsonian moment that championed the rights of all peoples to self-determination.¹⁷⁵ As a rising tide of nationalism began to define and inform the foreign policy choices of the colonising world, internationalism had captured the world of the colonised.¹⁷⁶ Spaces were created for interwar activists from abroad to collectively mobilise against imperialist powers

¹⁷⁵Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Kalim Siddiqui, 'The Bolshevik Revolution and the Collapse of the Colonial System in India', *International Critical Thought* 7, no. 3 (2017): 418–37.

¹⁷⁶ Manu Goswami, 'Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms', *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 5 (2012): 1461–85.

and capitalist class.¹⁷⁷ Indian understandings of its links between its status and region was a product of this interwar moment.

In the decades leading to independence, discourses and ideologies of Asia as a homogenous space and India's place within it had swept different sections of Indian society. For several Indian nationalists, the "inherent unity of Asian countries," was a "persisting article of faith".¹⁷⁸ Yet, these ideas were not limited to the Indian political elite alone. It included for instance, members of the trade union movement, intellectuals and academics and self-exiled revolutionaries.¹⁷⁹ In the interwar years, following Japan's lead on the call for an 'awakening for the East', the political dimension of Indian Asianism received both form and content.¹⁸⁰ At the thirty-seventh session of the Indian National Congress in 1922, its president, CR Das advocated the necessity of establishing Congress agencies abroad and emphasised that "[e]ven more important than this is the participation of Indian in the great Asiatic Federation...it is the union of the oppressed nationalities of Asia."¹⁸¹ As a creation of the Asianist ideas that picked up in the interwar period, Jawaharlal Nehru, who would become India's longest standing Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister was the dominant articulator of India's international and Asianist identity till the end of his life in 1964.¹⁸² In 1927, he joined 170 delegates from across the world in Brussels, to participate in

¹⁷⁷ Louro, 1–5..

¹⁷⁸ T. A Keenleyside, 'Nationalist Indian Attitudes Towards Asia : A Troublesome Legacy for Post-Independence Indian Foreign Policy', *Pacific Affairs* 55, no. 2 (1982): 210–30.

¹⁷⁹ Stolte, 'Orienting India: Interwar Internationalism in an Asian Inflection, 1917-1937'; Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)'.

¹⁸⁰ On Japan and Pan-Asianism: Cemil Aydin, 'Japan's Pan-Asianism and the Legitimacy of Imperial World Order, 1931-1945', *The Asia Pacific Journal* 6, no. 3 (2008); Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*, Columbia Studies in International and Global History (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹⁸¹ C.R. Das, cited in Miroslav Krása, 'The Idea of Pan-Asianism and the Nationalist Movement in India', *Archiv Orientální* 40, no. 233–60 (1972): 246.

¹⁸² Keenleyside, 'The Inception of Indian Foreign Policy: The Non-Nehru Contribution'.

the first Congress of the League against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression, where he established lasting connections with other anticolonial nationalists, socialists, communists, civil liberties reformers, pacifists and antifascists.¹⁸³ Nehru's short term membership in the League Against Imperialism stimulated important ideas on India's similarities to those of other Asian countries. Reporting to the Indian National Congress on the Brussels Congress, Nehru stated that it familiarised him with many "Asiatic and other countries with problems not dissimilar to [India's own...]"¹⁸⁴ It was "highly desirable...for various Asiatic countries and their national organisations to develop contacts with one another."¹⁸⁵ At the time however, he reasoned that the setting up an "Asiatic organisation" seemed a slightly premature and seemed logistically impossible given that "various parts of Asia [were] more inaccessible to each other than they are to Europe..."¹⁸⁶

This inaccessibility to Asia was revisited and questioned almost a decade later. Noting that "Burma has recently been politically separated from [India] and Ceylon has long functioned as a separate unit of the British Empire,"¹⁸⁷ Nehru emphasised that this was a part of the "larger imperial policy" for "strengthening British power in the East" in "connection with naval base at Singapore" and "oil...which [was] so important for power and transport in times of peace and war."¹⁸⁸ As Empire had managed to challenge the 'natural' links between Asian nations and almost reconfigure the region's

¹⁸³ Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism : Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism*, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Report on Brussels Congress to the All India Congress Committee (19 February, 1927)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 2*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1974), 286.

¹⁸⁵ Nehru, 290.

¹⁸⁶ Nehru, 290.

¹⁸⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Burma and Sri Lanka: Statement to the Press, Allahabad (11 March, 1937)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1976), 646.

¹⁸⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Seperation of Burma: Speech at Rangoon (May 17, 1937)', in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi, 1976).

geography to best suit and serve it, it was reasoned that inter-Asian links had largely been impaired by the colonial encounter. The region - or rather, the lack of it – was increasingly being associated with the global project of imperialism.

In the late 1930s, Indian notions of Asianism based on anti-imperialist ideals, became more pronounced in the light of the loss of Japan's legitimacy in this regard.¹⁸⁹ Since Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, it had been acknowledged as the leader of Asia, as it proved to have overcome white racial supremacy and the backwardness of the East.¹⁹⁰ For several Indian nationalists, Japan had become the forerunner of Asian modernity and many found themselves in Tokyo appealing to pan-Asian solidarity to win Japanese support for the Indian independence struggle.¹⁹¹ By the 1930s however, Pan-Asianist discourses were re-appropriated by the Japanese militaristic government to frame its own imperial project through the 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.'¹⁹² It soon began emulating the aggressive imperial practices of European great powers and invaded Manchuria in 1931.¹⁹³ Strongly condemning Japanese aggression, the Indian National Congress demanded a boycott of Japanese goods and dispatched a medical unit to China.¹⁹⁴ Imperialism, was now

¹⁸⁹ Irving S. Friedman, 'Indian Nationalism and the Far East', *Pacific Affairs* 13, no. 1 (1940): 17–29.

¹⁹⁰ Cemil Aydin, 'Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism, and the Revolt against the West Cemil', in *Debates on Civilization in the Muslim World: Critical Perspectives on Islam and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 154; Ryoko Nakano, 'Beyond Orientalism and "Reverse Orientalism": Through the Looking Glass of Japanese Humanism', in *International Relations and Non-Western Thought*, ed. Robbie Shilliam (London, 2012), 125–36; Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', 70.

¹⁹¹ Stolte and Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', 70; Tilak Raj Sareen, *Indian Revolutionaries, Japan and British Imperialism: Including Other Historical Essays* (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1993); R. P. Dua, *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese (1905) War on Indian Politics* (Delhi: S. Chand, 1966).

¹⁹² Aydin, 'Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism, and the Revolt against the West Cemil', 161; Shogo Suzuki, 'Japan's Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society', *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 1 (2005): 137–64; Postel-Vinay, 'The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the "Europe and the Rest" Divide', 561.

¹⁹³ Suzuki, 'Japan's Socialization into Janus-Faced European International Society'.

¹⁹⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Boycott of Japanese Goods: Press Statement in Allahabad (30 September, 1937)', in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: B.R

framed not simply a ‘Western’ problem, but indeed a ‘world problem’¹⁹⁵ as “how [did] it fundamentally matter if the fascist brutality of Japanese imperialism were exchanged with the blood-sucking of British imperialism?”¹⁹⁶ With Japan proving capable of colonising Asian nations, a space was created for India to shape the Asianist moment on anti-imperialist ideals. Through this, Asianism was organically subsumed into India’s wider, political understandings of the global and its status within it.

As highlighted in the vast corpus of literature on India’s international relations, the basis of these understandings was a sense of its own distinctiveness in the world.¹⁹⁷ Through the large body of political thought that was reproduced in the nationalist discourses and social practices over the pre-independence period, a conviction emerged amongst Indian nationalist leaders of India’s “unique capacity” in shaping world affairs.¹⁹⁸ Nehru, a product of these ideas towards the latter end of that period, reflected on two notions that were significant in the way that they forged links between India’s geographic and social place in the world. First was that of India’s capacity in a material sense. He noted that since the “name and status” of the British Empire was based on resources drawn from India, it had the means to alter “the world position of

Publishing Corporation, 1972), 725; Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Despatch of Medical Unit to China (1 June, 1938)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1972), 747.

¹⁹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘India and the World: (6 January, 1936)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 7*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975), 54.

¹⁹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Why India Supports China: Printed in “Advance”, a Calcutta-Based Newspaper (21 August, 1938)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), 210.

¹⁹⁷ Itty Abraham, ‘The Future of Indian Foreign Policy’, *Economic & Political Weekly* 42, no. 42 (2007): 4209–12; Stephen P Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 31–65; Manjeet S. Pardesi, ‘Understanding the Rise of India’, *India Review* 6, no. 3 (2007): 213–17; Amrita Narlikar, ‘Peculiar Chauvinism or Strategic Calculation? Explaining the Negotiating Strategy of a Rising India’, *International Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2006): 59–76.

¹⁹⁸ Kate Sullivan, ‘Exceptionalism in Indian Diplomacy: The Origins of India’s Moral Leadership Aspirations’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asia Studies* 37, no. 4 (2014): 640–55. That these notions of exceptionalism also help explain recent trends in Indian foreign policy, see Manjari Chatterjee Miller and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, ‘Pragmatism in Indian Foreign Policy: How Ideas Constrain Modi’, *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (2017): 27–49.

Great Britain and...give a great impetus to the freedom movements of other colonial countries to shake up other imperialisms.”¹⁹⁹ With the passage of the Quit India Resolution of 1942, this idea was expressed more specifically in the context of the region, where the freedom of India was framed as a “symbol and prelude to this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination.”²⁰⁰ Second, was the notion of its capacity in a “moral sense”.²⁰¹ This was rooted in the idea of India’s historical, “underlying unity” over thousands of years, making it uniquely predisposed to shape modernity by bringing into harmony the ideals of the “scientific” and “materialist” West with that of the more “spiritually” grounded East.²⁰² There was an understanding, therefore, that India was in a position to foster a global, moral peace.²⁰³ Through these framings of India’s moral and material capacity in public speeches and press statements, Nehru’s articulations helped in associating the ‘region’ with freedom from foreign intervention (‘symbolic shaping’ as discussed in chapter 2, section 2.3). India as a “symbol and prelude” of this region’s freedom, made the notion of its inevitable impact more tangible which helped shape a sense of entitlement to status

¹⁹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘The World-Wide Struggle against Imperialism: Speech in Delhi (6 May, 1936)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 7*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1975), 266; Nehru, ‘India and the World: (6 January, 1936)’, 55.

²⁰⁰ All India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C), ‘Quit India Resolution (8 August, 1942)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 12*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1972), 455. The Quit India Resolution has been referred to as the most internationalist document of its national struggle. See Manu Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11.

²⁰¹ Sullivan, ‘Exceptionalism in Indian Diplomacy: The Origins of India’s Moral Leadership Aspirations’.

²⁰² On the point on underlying unity, see Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘The Unity of India’, *Foreign Affairs*, 1938. On the ideas of India paving the way for modernity based on a synthesis between the West and the East, see Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, 54–85. See Sullivan, ‘Exceptionalism in Indian Diplomacy: The Origins of India’s Moral Leadership Aspirations’, 644.

²⁰³ Sullivan, ‘Exceptionalism in Indian Diplomacy: The Origins of India’s Moral Leadership Aspirations’, 651.

based on this image: “[w]hatever happens [India] makes a difference and it is well that this should be realised.”²⁰⁴

The establishment of links between India’s geographic place and social place only strengthened in the context of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath. This can be inferred through a reading of two prominent outcomes over this period. First, through Nehru’s *Discovery of India*, written when in prison in 1942-1946 and second, through the hosting the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947, before the formal declaration of Indian independence.

Reflective of his journey of “self-making” Nehru’s *Discovery of India* has been widely understood as “an expression of the nationalist imagination.”²⁰⁵ At the same time however, it is also a solid campaign for India’s status at the global level. By framing India’s pre-colonial past as one premised on accommodation, acceptance and ceaseless cultural mixing, he marshalled history to make a case for what he thought India and the world should be like in the days to come.²⁰⁶ He devoted a large part of his book to reflecting on a broad sweep of the subcontinent’s history, from the Indus Valley Civilisation to the coming of the Raj. By situating India within these macro-scales of space and time, through what he described as a “panoramic view” of India, he was able to frame the existence of a recurring pattern Indian influence in the world through conquest, trade and art: “[o]ne has not only to go back in time but to travel, in mind if not in body, to various countries of Asia, where India spread out in many ways, leaving immortal testimony of her spirit, her power, and her love of beauty. How few of us

²⁰⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘On Framing India’s Foreign Policy: Reprinted in the Bombay Chronicle’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: B.R Publishing Corporation, 1938), 746.

²⁰⁵ Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (London: Penguin Books, 1997).

²⁰⁶ Khilnani; Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers*.

know of these great achievements of our past, how few realise that if India was great in thought and philosophy, she was equally great in action.”²⁰⁷

In *Discovery*, Asia was made to exist as a geographic manifestation of the scales of Indian influence in the pre-colonial period. The loss of those connections was attributed to the age of Empire: “[t]hen came the British and barred all the doors and stopped all the routes than connected us with our neighbours in Asia. New routes were opened across the seas which brought us nearer to Europe, and more particularly England...This sudden isolation from the rest of Asia has been one of the most remarkable and unfortunate consequences of British rule in India.”²⁰⁸ But global order was in the midst of a great transformation, setting in place a historical moment for the reawakening of the region: “[w]orld developments and common interests are forcing Asiatic countries to look at each other again. The period of European domination is passed over as a bad dream and memories of long ago remind them of old friendships and common adventures.”²⁰⁹

Through this particular reading of global order, Nehru described the current great power system, pinned on European imperialism, as one of the past and in decline. As a consequence, the Asian region that had been repurposed to serve this system would also inevitably change, allowing it to reconnect and re-establish historical links. While this was projected as a definite reality in the more immediate future, he also presented a picture of global order in a more distant future, in which India, along with China, would inevitably secure membership in the great-power club: “Forgetting present problems then for a while and looking ahead, India emerges as a strong united state, a

²⁰⁷ Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 200.

²⁰⁸ Nehru, 149.

²⁰⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: The Signet Press, 1946).

federation of free units, intimately connected with her neighbours and playing an important part in world affairs. She is one of the very few countries which have the *resources and capacity* to stand on their own feet. To-day probably the only such countries are the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Great Britain can only be reckoned as one of these if the resources of her empire are added to her own, and even then, a spread-out and disgruntled empire is a source of weakness. China and India are potentially capable of joining that group. Each of them is compact and homogeneous and full of natural wealth, manpower, and human skill and capacity...No other country, taken singly, apart from these four, is actually or potentially in such a position.”²¹⁰

Almost immediately after expressing these ideas of India’s potential great-power membership, Nehru reflected on the region and links this to India’s geographic place: “[t]he Pacific is likely to take the place of the Atlantic in the future as a nerve centre of the world. Though not directly a Pacific state, India will inevitably exercise an important influence there. India will also develop as the centre of economic and political activity in the Indian Ocean area, in south-east Asia and right up to the Middle East. Her position gives an economic and strategic importance in a part of the world which is going to develop rapidly in the future. If there is a regional grouping of the countries bordering on the Indian Ocean on either side of India—Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Ceylon, Burma, Malaya, Siam, Java, etc.—present day minority problems will disappear, or at any rate will have to be considered in an entirely different context.”²¹¹ Through this framing of the geographic scope of India’s neighbourhood, Nehru engaged in a process of territorial shaping (chapter 2, section 2.3) where he mapped Asia in a way that it would seem to surround India, making India its natural

²¹⁰ Nehru, 536.

²¹¹ Nehru, 536.

centre. As the centre and even connector of the vast region, he captured the image he tried to create of India's inevitable influence in the world. It was through this depiction of India's future he claimed India's entitlement to the "privilege of playing an important part in the development of the world situation."²¹²

Nehru's portrayal of India's inevitable influence in the region and the world was not limited to the Indian audiences entirely. The idea had indeed attracted international audiences through the post-war period. Most notably, he was approached by the Japanese press on his thoughts on how Japan should "regain the respect of other nations".²¹³ This was significant not only given Japan's position in the region and the world for decades before the War, but also that India was still a year short of achieving its own independence. At this stage already, Nehru was seen - although cautiously - speaking as a representative of the region, and, this seemed to legitimise his place and position in commenting on something as momentous as the future of post-war Japan. Conscious that India was not as yet in a position of speaking on "behalf of the United Nations as a whole or for the four Big Powers" he stated that based on his "insight into the mind of India and to a lesser extent into the mind of Asia", "India and other countries of Asia [would] outlive yesterday's anger and resentment and join hands with Japan in the furtherance of Asiatic freedom and cooperation within the larger

²¹² Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Bonds between India and China: Address to Sino-Indian Cultural Society, Santiniketan (23 December, 1945)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1981), 465.

²¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Japan's New Role in Asia: Undated Message to Japanese Newspapers, Republished in the Indian Newspaper, the Hindu (11th October, 1945)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1981), 453.

framework of world peace.”²¹⁴ Not long after, Nehru reflected on India as “the torch-bearer in the liberation movement of Asiatic countries”.²¹⁵

While, on his reading, the post-war global order would have a new hierarchy of great powers, he pinned possibilities of equality and diversity within this order on the formation of the United Nations. On his reading, it was the closest the world had come to establishing a world federation premised on the end of imperialism and domination in which all peoples would be equally represented.²¹⁶ With the United Nations as physical manifestation of the possibility of states being granted equal representation at the global level, the region was also defined to find meaning in this context.²¹⁷ Two main images of Asia emerged in Nehru’s discourse on the region in the vis-à-vis the United Nations. First, as a collective grouping for leverage at the global level. It was necessary, he argued, that the “long-oppressed nations of Asia inevitably seek to protect themselves by holding together as far as possible and presenting a joint front in the United Nations.”²¹⁸ Second, as a security and economic grouping with India at its natural centre: “it is clear from the point of defence and the future progress of industry, trade and communications that the mutual good relations of the countries of the Middle East as well as of South East Asia will largely depend on India. In this I include Australia and New Zealand. Geographically, India is so situated that any proper system of defence of this entire area or region must be based on India. Apart from this there are many cultural and sentimental bonds between us and our neighbours in the

²¹⁴ Nehru, 454.

²¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘India’s Lead in Asian Liberation: Address at Southeast Asia Day Meeting, Lucknow (28 October, 1945)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1981), 459.

²¹⁶ Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers*, 2.

²¹⁷ Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers*.

²¹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Real Peace Is Far Away: Interview to the Press in Delhi (14 January, 1945)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi, 1981), 472.

west and the east.”²¹⁹ This framing of the Asian region around Indian centrality began to feature in discourses pertaining to its own position in the United Nations and claims to higher status in the world: “whatever the present position of India might be, she is potentially a Great Power...whether we succeed in getting into the Security Council or not, I think we should take up the attitude at the beginning and throughout that India is the centre of security in Asia and that, therefore, India must have a central place in any council considering these matters.”²²⁰

While the above discussions highlight the territorial and symbolic shaping that underpinned the Indian Asia project, it was also marked by practices that helped encode a shared reality of the region, so that it could be distinguished from others (chapter 2, section 2.3). In August 1946, Nehru raised the idea of an Inter-Asian Relations Conference at the Bombay branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs. Recalling the networks established in 1927 at the League Against Imperialism in Brussels, the idea of India sponsoring an Asian conference was pitched as India was naturally in the “centre of it all.”²²¹ Nehru expressed a similar discourse that built the Asian region to surround the Indian nucleus: “nowadays, one hears a great deal about regions...whether one talks of the Middle East, or Middle West, or South East Asia, or China, they all impinge on India; all depend on India, economically politically and for defence purposes. They cannot help looking at India and we cannot help looking at them. There has been a great deal of talk about southern Asia and south eastern

²¹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘India as a Unit of the World State: Interview to the Correspondent of Reynold’s News, Allahabad (10 February, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 141*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1981), 477.

²²⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘The United Nations: A Note (6 September, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 1*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 439–40.

²²¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Inter-Asian Relations: Address to a Meeting Convened by the Bombay Branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs (22 August, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 15*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1982), 562.

Asia regions, in which of course India is included. Other people have talked about an Indian Ocean region and again India is included. India is also the centre viewed in terms of the defence of countries of Western Asia”²²²

The Conference took place in New Delhi in March 1947, by which time India was led by an interim government, with Nehru as its leader. For the conference to be regarded as an ‘Asian’ one, the framing of the region began at the invitation process. The conference settled on a definition of the region in the widest terms possible including delegates from the Middle East and the Soviet Republics of Central Asia and excluding only US-occupied Japan.²²³ At the same time however, representations at the conference had differed: strong delegations came from the southeast corner of ‘Asia’: Indonesia (32 – more on this particularly large delegation will be discussed in the next chapter), Burma (21), Ceylon (20) Malaya (14) and Philippines (10). Amidst its immediate neighbourhood, delegates came from – Afghanistan (7), Bhutan (2) and Nepal (8). The Chinese delegation constituted only 9 members, and there were 4 representatives from Tibet who walked for 21 days crossing plateaus and mountain passes to reach India. A 10-member delegation attended from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Egypt and Turkey were other countries from the western part of Asia.²²⁴ At the conference, echoing his ideas in *Discovery*, Nehru took to framing the conference as a moment in history that finally paved a way for the reawakening of the ‘region’: “The old imperialisms are fading away. The land routes have received, and air travel

²²² Nehru, 562.

²²³ In her historiography on the New Delhi conference, Stolte notes that US-occupied Japan was also invited, but General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers in Japan, had banned overseas travel for the Japanese. This resulted in a strong press offensive in India geared towards pressuring the United States to allow a Japanese delegation to travel to New Delhi. See Stolte, ‘Orienting India: Interwar Internationalism in an Asian Inflection, 1917-1937’, 161.

²²⁴ Vineet Thakur, ‘An Asian Drama: The Asian Relations Conference, 1947’, *International History Review* 41, no. 3 (2019): 678.

suddenly brings us very near to each other.”²²⁵ At the same time, Nehru sought to convince the delegates, that there was something that bound it together as homogenous space: “This Conference itself is significant as an expression of that deeper urge of the mind and spirit of Asia which has persisted in spite of the isolationism which grew up during the years of European domination. As that domination goes, walls that surrounded us fall down and we look at each other again and meet as long friends parted.”²²⁶

As the Asian Relations Conference institutionalised the idea of an Asian region based on India, it exemplified the three stages of region-building at work. The territorial and symbolic shaping of this region that took place at the conference helped encode a shared reality of the region that distinguished it from others. The latter was most evident though speeches at the conference in which the region was juxtaposed with ‘Europe’ and the ‘West’: “The countries of Asia can no longer be used as pawns by others, they are bound to have their own policies in world affairs. Europe and America have contributed very greatly to human progress... [b]ut the West has also driven us into wars and conflicts without number and even now, the day after a terrible war there is talk of further wars in the atomic age that is upon us. In this atomic age Asia will have to function effectively in the maintenance of peace. Indeed, there can be no peace until Asia plays her part.”²²⁷

In this way, the Asian Relations Conference of 1947 aimed at framing what ‘Asia’ and ‘Asian-ness’ stood for in a post-war world.²²⁸ India, as its host presented itself as a core

²²⁵ Nehru, ‘A United Asia for World Peace: Speech Delivered at the Plenary Session of the Asian Relations Conference (23 March, 1947)’, 505.

²²⁶ Nehru, 505.

²²⁷ Nehru, 507.

²²⁸ Singh, ‘From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, “Indian-Ness” and “Pan-Asian-Ness”’.

part of this region and, as a country, was not only in a position to understand this space, but also a pathfinder obligated to give Asia an extra-regional role and responsibility at the world stage.²²⁹ This fed into India's understandings of its importance at the global level. As Nehru had later reflected, "[t]he Conference has left an abiding impression in India and made large numbers of people in Asia conscious. It has broadened their horizon and made them feel that India is rapidly developing into a country which influences Asian and world politics."²³⁰

While the developments of this interwar and post-war period helped build a form of collective identity for the Asian region, the extent to which it was able to reach the fourth stage of region-building, in the form of being accepted by others as part of the regional system and broader social consciousness (chapter 2, section 2.3), is arguable. As a consequence of the region-building efforts discussed above, the idea of an 'Asian region' based on Indian ideas as a space free of foreign intervention, had surely come about. At the same time however, underpinning this overarching idea, were several others, that were not entirely sync. For one, contradictions existed at the very heart of the Asian project. As Wang Hui writes, "the idea is at once colonialist and anticolonialist, conservative and revolutionary, nationalist and internationalist, originating in Europe and, alternatively, shaping Europe's image of itself. It is closely related to issues of both nation-state and empire, a notion of a civilization seen as the opposite of the European, and a geographic category established through geopolitics."²³¹ The Indian region-building project did not provide a framework to navigate these contradictions or present an alternative that served to end them. It was

²²⁹ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 55.

²³⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Letter to KPS Menon (29th April, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 2*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 523.

²³¹ Hui, 'The Idea of Asia and Its Ambiguities', 987. See also: Acharya, 'Asia Is Not One'; Duara, 'Asia Redux: Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times'.

unsurprising therefore, that tensions surfaced at the Conference itself. Delegates disagreed on where the region would go from the conference. The formation of an Asian Relations Organisation for instance, raised sharp differences of opinion. In the end, New Delhi was established as the Head Quarters, as an uneasy compromise.²³² At the same time however, Indian Asianism of this period certainly did not end and therefore should not be understood as having failed. The idea was worked into the foreign policy machinery of independent India – and this is seen more directly in the following chapter – and was indeed vital to India’s claims to status in a post-war world. The success of its strategy is best reflected through the reception of its audiences. This includes not only those members as part of those framed as a part of Asia, but by those external to it, including what was on route to becoming a new great power of the post-war world, the United States. Three years after the Asian Relations Conference, Nehru would make his first official visit to the United States in 1949. In the background memoranda handed to President Truman prior to Nehru’s visit, it was noted that “a viable association in Asia can exist only if based upon an *indigenous* desire for regional co-operation”²³³ and that “Nehru should be told that [the United States is] fully aware of the growing importance of Asia and that it is and has been [its] desire to cooperate with the peoples of India.”²³⁴

3.3 India and Asia as the alternative: Navigating the Cold War

²³² Stolte, ‘Orienting India: Interwar Internationalism in an Asian Inflection, 1917-1937’, 181.

²³³ Department of State, Washington, ‘Memorandum for the President: Transmittal of Background Memoranda on Visit to the United States of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India’ *Papers of Harry S Truman, Box 158: President’s Secretary Files, Sub File: Foreign Affairs, ‘Nehru, Jawaharlal’* Harry S Truman Museum and Library, Independence city, Missouri, 37.

²³⁴ Department of State, Washington, ‘Memorandum for the President: Transmittal of Background Memoranda on Visit to the United States of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India’ *Papers of Harry S Truman, Box 158: President’s Secretary Files, Sub File: Foreign Affairs, ‘Nehru, Jawaharlal’* Harry S Truman Museum and Library, Independence city, Missouri, 38.

If the Asian Relations Conference gave helped determine what the future of a post-war Asia would look like on Indian terms, this would be challenged by the very nature of India's birth. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 led to a dissolution of British rule in India, bringing into existence the two new nation-states of India and Pakistan. British India was partitioned in one of the most violent boundary-making exercises in history, setting both nations on protracted conflict which continues to this day.²³⁵ As India attempted to slowly recover from the scars of partition, Nehru was deeply aware of the demotion of its status. Speaking in parliament in early 1948, Nehru stated, "owing to the events that have happened in India since the 15th August 1947, anything we did outside the world has suddenly lost weight for a time."²³⁶ At the same time however, notwithstanding this fractured status at the global level, he believed that India need not give up the policies of "standing up for certain ideals of oppressed nations", even if it displeased the great powers.²³⁷ Unlike other "smaller countries of Europe or Asia" India was not a "weak or mean country" he asserted, that needed to "align with this Great Power or that and becoming its camp-follower in the hope that some crumbs might fall from their table." Afterall, it had "in the past opposed, as a national movement, one of the greatest of world powers."²³⁸

Using the language of status, Nehru made the case that despite its limitations, India did not need to make do with a foreign policy strategy that was aligned with the great powers. Such a strategy – which would be tantamount to falling table crumbs – did not warrant a nation such as India, which was neither "small" nor "weak". Through

²³⁵ T.V Paul, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).e

²³⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'India's Foreign Policy: Nehru's Intervention in Budgetary Demands of the Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations (8 March, 1948)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 5*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi, 1987), 496.

²³⁷ Nehru, 498.

²³⁸ Nehru, 498.

its independence struggle, it had already proven to take down a great power on the basis of its own ideals, and it was therefore possible for India to pursue an alternative path in its foreign policy which differed from those being laid out as options by the new great powers, to navigate a post-war world. By adhering both “honestly and consistently to the policy,” he believed that India would “certainly gain the respect of most nations.”²³⁹ Non-alignment, as this policy became to be known, was framed as a policy worthy of India’s status, to a point where not pursuing it was fashioned as unwarranted humiliation for a country such as itself. As a policy, it stood as “a normative framework that critiqued prevailing patterns of aggression and injustice in world politics.”²⁴⁰ While the policy is often understood to have emerged in the context of the onset of the Cold War,²⁴¹ the section above helps illustrate that it was also rooted in the ideas that underpinned the interwar interactions years in the colonised world, as it was premised on the vision of an anti-imperialist and anti-racist global order.²⁴² It had been articulated as part of India’s foreign policy as early as 1946, when Nehru announced that “in the sphere of foreign affairs, India will follow an independent policy keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned [one] against another”.²⁴³

²³⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Guidelines for the Coming Session of the United Nations General Assembly: Extracts (12 September 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 7*, ed. Sarvapalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1988), 612.

²⁴⁰ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 34–35.

²⁴¹ See for instance Nataša Mišković, *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi – Bandung – Belgrade, The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi - Bandung - Belgrade* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

²⁴² Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, ‘The Non-Aligned Movement and International Relations’, *India Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (1977): 137–64; Itty Abraham, ‘From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65’, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 46, no. 2 (2008): 195–219; Stolte, ‘Orienting India: Interwar Internationalism in an Asian Inflection, 1917-1937’; Louro, *Comrades against Imperialism: Nehru, India, and Interwar Internationalism*.

²⁴³ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘An Independent Foreign Policy: Interview to the Press, New Delhi (26, September, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 1*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1984), 492.

Yet, group membership of a different kind would be critical to the pursuance of a non-aligned path. Through India's early interactions at the global level, such as that on the question of Indonesian decolonisation for instance, Nehru declared that at global forums such as the United Nations "things are done far from idealistically or morally or in terms of the underdog or in terms of the smaller nations or in terms of the Asian nations."²⁴⁴ Speaking in parliament in 1948, he stated that it was these nations who, in their search for someone, "who might perhaps give a lead in these matters, almost automatically their eye turns towards India,"²⁴⁵ and, it was in the "long run to the great advantage of India for it to attract [to] itself the sympathy and hope of millions of people in the world..."²⁴⁶ It is quite possible that in making this speech, Nehru was attempting to persuade the parliament in favour of extending itself globally despite glaring domestic concerns. In framing the India as the (larger) country that "smaller or Asian" nations would naturally turn to, Nehru not only implied its higher status, but by being recognised as 'giving a lead' to these states, he emphasised that it would serve it long-term advantages. That these advantages included being attributed higher status at the global level is not quite specified here per se, but he was clearly thinking on those terms over this period as the paragraphs above illustrate.

By the late 40s, though India had achieved independence, the institution of European imperialism was down, but certainly not out. European powers quickly found themselves trying to reclaim their empire in several parts of Pacific Asia.²⁴⁷ This time

²⁴⁴Nehru, 'India's Foreign Policy: Nehru's Intervention in Budgetary Demands of the Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations (8 March, 1948)', 500.

²⁴⁵Nehru, 500.

²⁴⁶Nehru, 500.

²⁴⁷ C A Bayly and T N Harper, *Forgotten Wars: Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007); Robert J McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

round however, the dynamics were different. With the iron curtain drawn across Europe, colonial powers found themselves in an alliance with the United States, who, though not an empire in itself, quickly became the arbiter of others.²⁴⁸ It was not long before their attempts to restore former imperial structures in the region became entangled in the East-West politics of the Cold War.²⁴⁹ By 1948-1949, the United States found itself somewhat reluctantly supporting former imperial powers, as part of their larger effort to contain the spread of communism in the region.

The foreign policy of newly independent India was being framed in the context of these new global-imperial dynamics and this directly influenced its region-building project. When briefing the Indian delegation to the United Nations in March 1948, Nehru suggested that Indian foreign policy priorities be divided into “Asian affairs” and “General world affairs”.²⁵⁰ In another act of territorially shaping this region, he divided Asian affairs into small geographic units to include: “South East Asia, China, and the Far East, the Middle East and Western Asia, and the Soviet part of Asia”.²⁵¹ He specified that India was most “intimately concerned with South East Asia” and that it “should particularly help in every way in the freedom of the countries of South

²⁴⁸ Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars : Freedom and Revolution in Southeast Asia*, 964; McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*.

²⁴⁹ Eminent historian of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis argues that the Cold War came to Asia with the Korean War in 1950. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). This is being challenged by new historiographies of the Cold War that focus more on its origins. The following chapter on India’s role in Indonesian decolonisation makes one such intervention. It was obvious that the politics of the Cold War influenced and shaped the nature of great power responses in Indonesia. See also: Jonathan Blackshear Chavanne, ‘Collision in Manchuria: Rescue, Intelligence , and the Cold War in Asia, August – September 1945 Collision in Manchuria’, *Intelligence and National Security* 32, no. 1 (2016): 26–36; Niu Jun, ‘The Birth of the People’s Republic of China and the Road to the Korean War’, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War: Origins*, ed. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 221–43; Mark Philip Bradley, ‘Decolonization, the Global South, and the Cold War, 1919-1962’, *The Cambridge History of the Cold War Volume I: Origins*, 2010, 464–85.

²⁵⁰ Nehru, ‘Guidelines for the Coming Session of the United Nations General Assembly: Extracts (12 September 1948)’, 610.

²⁵¹ Nehru, 610.

East Asia and their closer cooperation with India in political and economic matters, and ultimately defence.”²⁵² Furthermore, he asserted that India make it abundantly clear at the United Nations that it was “the natural leader of South East Asia if not some other parts of Asia and any foreign leadership will not be tolerated.”²⁵³ Finally, he specified that it would be “entirely wrong for any representative to talk in terms of India being the leader in any part of Asia or to discuss the formation of any Asian bloc...[as it would] merely irritate others and create suspicion.”²⁵⁴ Mapping the region as a strategic space within which India would actively resist imperial intervention, Nehru intended for this to be communicated to global audiences through Indian representatives at the United Nations. Envoys were strictly advised against representing the region in any way that would bear semblance to an imposition of an Indian Monroe doctrine.

As East-West dynamics intensified tensions in Asia across the 50s, India’s Asia project became progressively sharper, to reflect these changing realities.²⁵⁵ It soon transformed into a building a geographic core of what would become an ‘area of peace’. Nehru elucidated this policy in parliament in June 1952: “I should like an ever-widening area in this world, an ever-widening area of countries in Asia which decide they will not enter the war whatever happens. I should like the countries in Asia, to make it clear to those warring factions, those great countries who are so much exercised by passion against each other, that they will remain cool, and whatever happens they will not enter the arena of warfare and that they will try at least to restrict the war to other regions

²⁵² Nehru, 610.

²⁵³ Nehru, ‘Guidelines for the Coming Session of the United Nations General Assembly: Extracts (12 September 1948)’.

²⁵⁴ Nehru.

²⁵⁵ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India’s Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 59–60.

and save their regions and try to save the rest.”²⁵⁶ The onset of the Cold War and the nature of its influence in Asia officially meant that European colonialism had been replaced by another form of dominance.²⁵⁷ Associating the region with the symbol of ‘peace’ allowed it to retain its anti-imperialist meanings in the Indian imagination, in the renewed context of a global order that was being shaped by the Cold War. India had set itself to enact this symbolic association through its role as a non-aligned, global peacemaker.²⁵⁸ While this role was seen to empower it to “pass the ultimate test” of rising “in status in the councils of the world or international affairs,”²⁵⁹ upholding an area of peace would only enable that process: “suppose...the world was divided into peaceful spheres, with no danger of war. Well ultimately the policy that delivers goods is the one that will count, that will impress people.”²⁶⁰

The avenues to higher status that India associated with its non-aligned, global peace-making role, and Asia as a space for where this would start, adds an important layer of explanation to the flurry of Asia-centred diplomacy in the early Cold War years.²⁶¹ India played an important mediating role in the 50s through the Korean War, the first Indo-China War and the Formosa crisis. It was also over this period that India signed its treaty of friendship with China, and, along with the rest of the Colombo Powers –

²⁵⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Nonalignment in a Changing World: Parliamentary Debates (12 June, 1952)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 18*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1996), 446.

²⁵⁷ Swapna Kona Naydu, ‘The Nehru Years: Indian Non-Alignment as the Critique, Discourse and Practice of Security (1947-1964)’ (Doctoral Thesis. Department of War Studies, King’s College London, University of London, 2015), 93.

²⁵⁸ Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers*; Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India’s Foreign Policies During the Cold War*.

²⁵⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Foreign Policy: Statement in Parliament (28 March, 1951)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 16 (1)*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1994), 509.

²⁶⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Asia and the World: Interview to the New York Times (11 November, 1951)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 17*, ed. Saravapalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1995), 571.

²⁶¹ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 35.

Indonesia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Burma and Pakistan organised the Bandung Conference in 1955. The following paragraphs discuss these moments and establish how they contributed to the building of the Asian region as an 'area of peace'. They also discuss how, in doing so, India saw opportunities for social recognition that could be potentially status-enabling. While India intended for its region-building to successfully inform its claims to status, success on this front was mixed. It also was through this period that the limits of India's Asia project began to most dramatically reveal themselves.

On 25 June 1950, North Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel marking the beginning of the Korean War. While not directly concerned with Korean question, Nehru emphasised on the importance of India having its say in parliament in 1950: "whether we play a big part or small part, inevitably we have to play a part and in that totality of circumstances that arise, even that little part may count, and I believe it does count."²⁶² Framing India's policy as one that would "count" for something bigger, spoke first to its role as a mediator that it had set for itself as a global peacemaker, but also the status this would inevitably accord India as a consequence of that role. This comes through more directly in Nehru's correspondence to chief ministers in 1953: "the turn that international events have taken has brought India into the picture and cast a heavy responsibility upon her. The independent policy that we have pursued and our constant attempts to remain friendly have borne fruit. The Great Powers look upon us with respect and realize that what we say will be listened to by many. Hence, they have to listen to it also. We remain the principal link between these blocs."²⁶³ India's

²⁶² Jawaharlal Nehru, 'India's Korea Policy: Statement in Parliament (3 August, 1950)', in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 15 (I)*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1993), 334.

²⁶³ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Letter of 24 May, 1953', in *Letters to Chief Ministers, Volume 3* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1987), 303–16.

role in managing negotiations around the Korean War were crucial, particularly those pertaining to the repatriation of the prisoners of war, that allowed for the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement in July 1953.²⁶⁴ Recognising India's efforts on repatriation, President Eisenhower wrote to Nehru stating that it was his "earnest hope that [the] agreement [would] speedily lead to an armistice and just peace in Korea, and to a relaxing of world tensions," and that "India's participation in the work of the Repatriation Commission [marked] a further significant contribution toward these ends."²⁶⁵

Similar Asia-centred activism was evident in 1954, when two crises erupted in the region. The first was close to the Vietnam-Laos border in March 1954 when Viet Minh forces surprised French forces with heavy artillery, culminating in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. The great powers had scheduled a conference for April that year to discuss the crisis in Geneva. Secretly peeved that India was excluded from these great power meetings on Indochina, India had in parallel, orchestrated another conference in Colombo along with Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia and Pakistan in which discussion on the situation in French Indochina was paramount. The five countries had formed a new regionalist club known as the 'Colombo powers' consisting of that was set to represent "the new resurgent Asia"²⁶⁶ giving the region-building project further institutional shape.

²⁶⁴ Robert Barnes, 'Between the Blocs: India, the United Nations, and Ending the Korean War', *Journal of Korean Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 263–86; Naydu, 'The Nehru Years: Indian Non-Alignment as the Critique, Discourse and Practice of Security (1947-1964)', 85–125.

²⁶⁵ Dwight Eisenhower, 'Exchange of Messages Between the President and Prime Minister Nehru of India on the Prisoner of War Agreement Reached at Panmunjom (12 June, 1953)', The American Presidency Project, 1953, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/exchange-messages-between-the-president-and-prime-minister-nehru-india-the-prisoner-war>, accessed 7 August 2020.

²⁶⁶ Minutes of the meeting at the conference, cited in Cindy Ewing, 'The Colombo Powers: Crafting Diplomacy in the Third World and Launching Afro-Asia at Bandung', *Cold War History* 19, no. 1 (2019): 2.

By discussing the crisis at the Geneva conference, Ceylonese Prime Minister had later reflected that it would “demonstrate to the Geneva powers and the world that the only plan that would ensure peace in Asia would be the one formulated or approved by the leaders of free Asian countries.”²⁶⁷ From Geneva, British Prime Minister Antony Eden maintained near-daily correspondence with Nehru, believing that the support of Asian leaders was essential for the Geneva Conference’s success, even attempting to delay the Indochina agreements to after the end of the Colombo Conference.²⁶⁸ Moreover, the importance of India to the Geneva negotiations was highlighted through another critical development underpinned by its Asian ‘area of peace’ policy: the signing of its treaty of friendship with China. Known as *Panchsheel*, the treaty emphasised on the ‘five principles of peaceful co-existence’ which consisted of mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit and; peaceful co-existence.²⁶⁹ The signing of *Panchsheel* added new meaning to India’s role, as China had quickly become a major player in the shaping the reality of war or peace in the region. India assisted with managing the final phase of the resolutions of the first Indochina War leading to the Geneva Agreements, and its follow-up through the International Supervisory Commissions.²⁷⁰ The French Prime Minister later recalled that the Geneva conference was a “ten-power conference nine at the table and India.”²⁷¹ Eden, stating his agreement with the United States Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles noted that

²⁶⁷ Ceylonese Prime Minister John Kotelawala cited in Ewing, 8.

²⁶⁸ Ewing, 8.

²⁶⁹ Surjit Mansingh, ‘India-China Relations in the Post-Cold War Era’, *Asian Survey* 34, no. 3 (1994): 284; M. Bhalla, ‘Nehru’s Vision of Asian Identity: Implications for the Future’, *South Asian Survey* 19, no. 2 (2012): 283–301; Priya Chacko, ‘The Internationalist Nationalist: Pursuing Ethical Modernity with Jawaharlal Nehru’, in *International Relations and Non-Western Thought*, ed. Robbie Shilliam (London: Routledge, 2010), 192–93.

²⁷⁰ Gilles Boquérat, ‘India’s Commitment to Peaceful Coexistence and the Settlement of the Indochina War’, *Cold War History* 5, no. 2 (2005): 211–34.

²⁷¹ Sunanda K Datta-Ray, *Looking East to Look West : Lee Kuan Yew’s Mission India* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009), 77.

India's role in the Indochina crisis mattered not only as the Chairman of the International Supervisory Commissions, but also as an "Asian power."²⁷²

India's role as mediator was also vital to the second crisis that erupted in the region in September 1954, in Formosa. The United States strengthened its Seventh Fleet over thirty islands in Formosan possession, as a result of an exchange of artillery barrage and air attacks between the People's Liberation Army and the Kuomintang.²⁷³ India played a critical bridging role between the United States and China who were devoid of any direct communication channels.²⁷⁴ China's growth in both power and influence reinforced Nehru's vision of its inclusion to the Asian area of peace. Through the 50s, the vision of both India and China as members and leaders of Asia had increasingly come to shape the region-building project. Later that year, Nehru would meet Chairman Mao Zedong for the first time – an moment discussed in the introduction chapter of this thesis – where, linking their membership to the Asian region to that of their status at the global level, he declared both China and India as the largest countries in Asia which would "lead to immense influence", where "influence" was not limited to material factors but also human factors, which those "who have a clear understanding of their future should not overlook."²⁷⁵

Of all these instances of diplomatic activism in the first half of the 50s, the Bandung moment of 1955 was indeed a climatic one, where, with the rest of the Colombo

²⁷² Eden, cited in Boquérat, 'India's Commitment to Peaceful Coexistence and the Settlement of the Indochina War', 226.

²⁷³ For an analysis of India's role in both crises, see Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*. Boquérat, 'India's Commitment to Peaceful Coexistence and the Settlement of the Indochina War'.

²⁷⁴ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 144–90.

²⁷⁵ *Minutes of Chairman Mao Zedong's First Meeting with Nehru*, 19th October, 1954. *The Wilson Center Digital Archive* (Obtained by Chen Jian and translated by Chen Zhihong, 1954), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117825>, accessed 7 August 2020.

powers, India helped organise a conference of free states throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. Speaking at first session of Conference of Prime Ministers of the Colombo Powers that preceded Bandung, Nehru emphasised on the coming together of regions so as to pull “their weight together regarding their problems in world affairs” and it while “Asia has certainly been exercising influence...in the direction of peace” is was “important that the...subsequent bigger conference [at Bandung]...help place Asia and Africa in a proper perspective in the world, because old perspectives do not apply...”²⁷⁶ Crafting the region as some form of global peace-making machine, Nehru’s emphasis on the Bandung Conference as one that would “place” Asia and now Africa in their “proper perspective in the world”, suggested the importance that was attributed to it in re-instating the status positions of the region as a whole and the states within it. Conscious that “all the worlds eyes” would be turned to Bandung,²⁷⁷ Nehru was seen speaking at the conference in terms representing Asia and, to a lesser extent, Africa, to leverage claims for equality in status at the global level: “if there is anything that Asia wants to tell them it is this: No dictation there is going to be in the future; no ‘yes-men’ in Asia, I hope, or in Africa. We have had enough of that in the past. We value friendship of the great countries of the world as brothers, be it in Europe or America...we shall cooperate only as friends, as equals. There is no friendship when nations are unequal and when one nation has to obey another, and when one dominates over another.”²⁷⁸ While these excerpts suggest that status remained the overarching objective of the conference, the direct tasks included

²⁷⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Objective of the Proposed Conference (28 December, 1954)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 27*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal, Ravinder Kumar, and H.Y. Sharada Prasad (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 2000), 114.

²⁷⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘To B.F.H.B Tyabji, Indian Ambassador to Indonesia (20 February, 1955)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 28*, ed. Ravinder Kumar and Sharda H.Y Prasad (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 2001), 99.

²⁷⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘A Historic Milestone in Cooperation (24, April 1955)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 28*, ed. Ravinder Kumar and H.Y Sharda Prasad (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 2001), 126–27.

promoting co-operation among the new nations of Asia and Africa, and to further neighbourly relations; second developing strategies to manage common social, economic and cultural problems; third, to consider issues of special interest to Asian and African peoples, such as problems affecting national sovereignty, and of racialism and colonialism; and fourth, to review the position of Asia and Africa and their peoples in the world and the contribution they could make to the promotion of international peace and co-operation.²⁷⁹ It was at Bandung where the “Third World” was articulated as a position and a desire of non-European nations and eventually leading to the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement.²⁸⁰ The Conference indeed reflected the outcome of a decade of Nehru’s championing of the Asian viewpoint at the global level and in many ways marked the apex of India’s Asian leadership.²⁸¹

At the same time however, Bandung was where the underlying limitations of India’s Asia project began to most evidently surface. Like the Asian Relations Conference of 1947, strong differences emerged between delegates revealing gaps between the Indian conception of Asia as its representative and the realities of others within the ‘region’. Furthermore, at the conference Nehru was known to have committed several diplomatic *faux pas* which set to undermine its own claims to status on the basis of its representation of the ‘Asian sentiment’.²⁸² The insistence on China’s inclusion in the ‘Asian area of peace’ led it to inviting the Chinese premiere Zhou En Lai to the conference. Zhou made rather successful personal debut – to some extent at Nehru’s

²⁷⁹ George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference, Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), 3.

²⁸⁰ A. Appadorai, *The Bandung Conference* (Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1955); Singh, ‘From Delhi to Bandung: Nehru, “Indian-Ness” and “Pan-Asian-Ness”’; Siba Grovogu, ‘A Revolution Nonetheless: The Global South in International Relations’, *The Global South* 5, no. 1 (2011): 175–90.

²⁸¹ Gopal, cited in Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 41.

²⁸² Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, 47.

cost – on the global stage leading him to being nicknamed the ‘Bandung Gentleman’.²⁸³ Additionally, Nehru’s emphasis on non-alignment also served alienate several delegates at the conference.²⁸⁴ Smaller countries such as Philippines and Thailand stated that their countries had different needs than large ones like India, and Nehru’s denunciation of any kind of military alliance was insensitive to those needs.²⁸⁵ Reflecting on his experience at Bandung in a closed-door meeting of members of the Congress Parliamentary Party in New Delhi however, Nehru seemed to some extent, aware of the first of these concerns. He stated that it was, in fact, India’s “deliberate desire not to push [itself] in the front too much”.²⁸⁶ Moreover, being on the backfoot in his own understanding, did not necessarily amount to a reduction in India’s status, as its social place was not only secure, but both obvious and inevitable. He reflected that India could not “escape the fact that [it was] a big an important country” with a “certain inevitable role...a historic role” by virtue of its “geography” and that it was “developing a certain dynamism in [its] general economic life or psychologically.”²⁸⁷ The second concern however, served to more directly challenge Nehru’s region-building project of Asia as a non-aligned area of peace. We now know the United States had undertaken serious efforts to influence West-leaning delegates through

²⁸³ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, 47; Antonia Finnane, ‘Zhou Enlai in Bandung: Film as History in the People’s Republic of China’, in *Bandung 1955: Little Histories*, ed. Derek McDougall and Antonia Finnane (Monash: Monash University Press, 2010), 89–125. Finnane, ‘Zhou Enlai in Bandung: Film as History in the People’s Republic of China’.

²⁸⁴ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 47.

²⁸⁵ Abraham, ‘From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65’, 2017; Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 42; Robert Vitalis, ‘The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-Doong)’, *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4, no. 2 (2013): 270–71.

²⁸⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Recollections of the Conference: Speech at Close-Door Meetings of Members of the Congress Parliamentary Party (3 May, 1955)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru Volume, Series 2, Volume 28*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal, Ravinder Kumar, and H.Y. Sharada Prasad (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 2001), 156.

²⁸⁷ Nehru, 156.

propaganda, but Nehru's impatience and even arrogance with regard to the non-aligned position would have exposed these antagonisms nonetheless.²⁸⁸

These concerns, however, did not simply emerge at the conference. Contestations, as discussed in the previous section were at the heart of the region-building project. These took shape quite forcefully in events of the early 50s, when the United States and its allies rolled out a series of military pacts as part of its strategy to contain communism in Asia.²⁸⁹ The first major blow India's was the signing of a formal military alliance between the United States with Pakistan, which India perceived as bringing the Cold War to its doorstep.²⁹⁰ India framed this as a threat not only to its own security, but to the "whole of South East and South West Asia."²⁹¹ This was furthered through pacts that took the form of regional treaties modelled on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), based on areas that the United States and its Cold War allies saw as strategically crucial for its containment of communism. These included the Baghdad Pact, later renamed the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) covering Pakistan, Turkey, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran, the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) that included Australia, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States and the ANZUS linking the Western allies to Australia and New Zealand.²⁹² These treaties, in essence planted seeds of new, materially-backed region-building projects in Asia and served to more directly allay the threat perceptions of other Asian nations. That these region-

²⁸⁸ Eric D Pullin, 'The Bandung Conference Ideological Conflict and the Limitations of US Propaganda', in *Neutrality and Neutralism in the Global Cold War: Between Or Within the Blocs?*, ed. Marco Bott, Sandra Hanhimaki, Jussi M.; Schaufelbuehl, Janick; Wyss, 2016, 52–71.

²⁸⁹ Marvin L Kalb, *The Road to War: Presidential Commitments Honored and Betrayed* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 39–54.

²⁹⁰ McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965*, 9–55.

²⁹¹ Nehru cited in Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*.

²⁹² See Cornelia Navari, *Internationalism and the State in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 156–86.

building projects contested the one that India was trying to build was articulated by Nehru in parliament in 1954: “we thought that, perhaps one of the major areas of peace might be South-East Asia. Now, the Manila Treaty rather comes in the way of that area of peace. It takes up that very area which might be an area of peace and converts it into an area of potential war.”²⁹³ He stated that the expansion of NATO and its regional pacts to “distant countries which have nothing to do with the North Atlantic Community” was nothing but “maintenance and the continuation of the authority of colonial powers over dependent countries.”²⁹⁴ By the time delegates had met in Bandung in 1955, they had already become members of these treaty organisations and the vision of the area of peace had already been significantly weakened.

Since the Bandung conference, India’s response to international issues seemed to have undergone a shift.²⁹⁵ When a crisis broke out at the Suez Canal in 1956, Nehru had advised Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser against appealing to the United Nations until the very last phase of the crisis. When the United Nations finally did get involved, India contributed through troops.²⁹⁶ This was a marked difference from its previous responses which almost exclusively relied on international diplomacy.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, India’s ambivalence at the Hungarian Revolution in the same year reflected a greater deviation from this position and was regarded as the first failure of

²⁹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘The Broad Policies: Speech While Initiating Debate on the International Situation and Policy of the Government of India (29 September, 1954)’, in *Selected Works Of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 26*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal, Ravindar Kumar, and H.Y. Sharada Prasad (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 2000), 322. The Manila Treaty of 1954 created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation.

²⁹⁴ Nehru, 322.

²⁹⁵ Naydu, ‘The Nehru Years: Indian Non-Alignment as the Critique, Discourse and Practice of Security (1947-1964)’, 126.

²⁹⁶ Naydu, 126.

²⁹⁷ Naydu, 126.

Nehru's non-alignment.²⁹⁸ As India's stature began declining at the global level, the final blow to it was the outbreak of war at the Sino-Indian border in 1962. A week into war, when India's options seemed limited, Nehru appealed to the international community for sympathy and support. In private however, he brooded over the wider implications of internationalising the Sino-Indian conflict and that he had been left with no choice but to somewhat compromise on India's independence, and appeal for military assistance from abroad.²⁹⁹ The implications of the war on India's notion of the 'area of peace', its non-aligned position and non-alignment more generally were questioned, and status India sought on the basis of this position subsequently began to decline.³⁰⁰

In 1964, China conducted its first nuclear test in Lop Nor beginning a partnership between China and Pakistan. This added another layer of insecurity to India's relations with Pakistan, finally resulting in a cross border war with Pakistan 1965, where China not only provided diplomatic support for Pakistan but threatened to open a second front along India's Himalayan border.³⁰¹ The two wars, and Nehru's own death between them, produced a fundamental change in beliefs in Indian self-conceptions as an international actor resulting in a reassessment and remapping of its neighbourhood.³⁰² Drawing from the lessons of the late 50s and 60s, instead of carving a region a space to reform and transform power politics brought on by structural conditions of bipolarity, leveraging them for state survival became a legitimate means

²⁹⁸ Naydu, 126.

²⁹⁹ McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945–1965*.

³⁰⁰ See Michael Brecher, 'Non-Alignment Under Stress: The West and the India-China Border War', *Pacific Affairs* 52, no. 4 (1979): 612.

³⁰¹ Sumit Ganguly, 'The Origins of War in South Asia: 1947-1971' (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994).

³⁰² Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 200–201.

to advance India's national security and material interests. It would now be on a more material terms and the ability to manage security tensions on its own borders, that India would claim status. This influenced the dramatic shrinking of India's regional imagination, as a new and tighter neighbourhood came to surround India in the post-Nehru era. This came to be known as South Asia.³⁰³

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has studied the region-building project of 'Asia' that emerged in the context of a post-war world. It has revealed how the project was informed by an Indian reading and interpretation of global order, and, where within it, it sought to or felt entitled to place itself socially, in the form of status. The project centred on first, building Asia as a space in which, after centuries of fragmentation due to colonial rule, foreign intervention would not be tolerated. Second as an 'area of peace', as the world rapidly descended into the bipolar politics of the Cold War. The chapter has argued that India found value in being socially recognised as the representative of this region and, its active peace broker. Association with both these attributes would ensure that its voice would be impossible to be silenced or overlooked by old and new great powers and this would inevitably enable its claims to status at the global level. It has made this argument by primarily focusing on the region-building agency of Jawaharlal Nehru, as the chief articulator of Indian foreign policy through the period studied in this chapter. Through his discourses and the practices endorsed by his leadership, the region was made to exist as a group of geographically connected nations with intimate ties and common concerns, and India at its centre.

³⁰³ This is not to suggest that the term South Asia did not exist before this moment, but more that this became the new way with which India began to frame its own region.

The chapter was written in two parts. The first concentrated on the early links that were forged between Nehru's understanding of Asia and how they featured into his claims of India's status in the world. It covered the final two decades leading to independence, which overlapped with the interwar years, the War and its immediate aftermath. It unpacked how these realities informed the way in which the region was being framed over this period as a space in which imperialism in all its forms would be resisted and condemned. The second section focused on the early decades of the Cold War where, as an independent nation, India's road to higher status was seen as "inevitable" so long as it adhered to its ideals of maintaining an independent, peace-making path to navigate a post-war world. Consequently, the region was worked into and prioritised by its foreign policy machinery and became the centre of India's diplomatic activity during this period.

Through its study of India's Asia project in the post-war world, this chapter highlights how it underwent three stages of region-building (Chapter 2, section 2.3): territorial – through the discourses and practices that delimited the boundaries of the Asian region, symbolic – by associating as a space for freedom from foreign intervention and institutional through its conferences and sub-groupings. It notes that while the project was effective in establishing a form of collective identity and shared reality that would distinguish it from others, it discusses how at its fourth or 'establishment of the region stage', it met with mixed success. The idea of 'Asia' was indeed a contested one and constituted different ideas and understandings of several decolonising nations over how the region should take shape in a post-war world. While India's region-building project was able to fill this construct/category of 'Asia' as a regional space (versus the 'Europe' or the 'West') in which foreign intervention of any form would not be

tolerated, it fell short of being able to subsume alternative visions and navigate internal contestations sufficiently beyond that. As the project indeed met with important moments of success in the early Cold War years, it was also during this period that its limitations began to most evidently surface. It eventually declined as the United States and its allies sponsored military pacts in Pacific Asia, that sparked new region-building projects in the 1950s that served to undermine India's own.

In studying India's Asianist project in the Nehru years, the literature tends to place more emphasis on the limitations of project, focusing on its Bandung blunders or its humiliating defeat in its 1962 war with China, leading to the conclusion that its Asianist project failed and compromised the status it had attained at the global level.³⁰⁴ This chapter has aimed at nuancing this argument by using historical evidence to locate the project in a wider global context, taking note of its moments of success. In this way, it aimed at providing a fuller account of India's region-building journey, how it was seen to enable its claims to status and the extent to which it did. Such forms of analysis are only possible through a historically grounded research design, which unfortunately remain underemphasised in the discipline of International Relations. The next chapter narrows into a specific case that reflects India's success in building the Asian region as a collective, anti-imperial space, through its role in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle from 1945-1949.

³⁰⁴ See for instance: Sumit Ganguly and Manjeet S. Pardesi, 'Explaining Sixty Years of India's Foreign Policy', *India Review* 8, no. 1 (2009): 4-19; C Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Bharat Karnad, *Why India Is Not a Great Power (Yet)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).

CHAPTER 4

“Foreign armies are functioning on Asian soil”

India, Indonesian Decolonisation and the onset of the Cold War (1945-1949)³⁰⁵

“The mere presence of a colonial regime or of foreign troops in any Asian country is an insult and a challenge to Asia...It is necessary for the United Nations to take heed of this challenge to its Charter and to world peace and move with speed to meet it” –

Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947³⁰⁶

....

4.1 Introduction

This is an excerpt of a statement to the press made by Jawaharlal Nehru, the interim leader of the Government of India at the time, in the light of Dutch ‘police action’ against the Indonesian Republic in July 1947. A Dutch colony since 1819, Indonesia fell to Japanese occupation in 1942. With the surrender of Japanese forces in 1945, Indonesian nationalist leaders Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta quickly seized the opportunity to declare independence. It would, however, take four long years for this declaration to be fully respected. The Dutch sought to reclaim their possession over the Indonesian Republic and would not leave without a fight. The question of

³⁰⁵ Padmanabha Pillai, Second Year, No. 76, 192nd meeting, New York, 22 August 1947, United Nations Security Council Official Records, 2153-4. Pillai was the representative of the Indian delegation to the United Nations from July 1947-1948.

³⁰⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Interview to the Press, Delhi: The War in Indonesia (28 July, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 367–77.

Indonesian decolonisation emerged in the early stages of an irreversible order transition that would spell the end of European imperialism. The means by which the Dutch sought to re-establish empire in Indonesia was an indication of how that order attempted to persist with force. In a post-war world, with new order makers – the United States and the Soviet Union as ‘superpowers’ and the newly formed United Nations, the fate of empire could no longer be simply determined by the choices of European colonial powers. The United States in particular, became deeply involved in the diplomatic effort on the Indonesian decolonisation, but this was primarily due to its wider and rapidly developing ideological crisis with the Soviet Union. Very quickly therefore, the fate of Indonesian independence, became entwined with the emerging realities of the Cold War.

This chapter discusses India’s significant yet understudied role in pressuring the Dutch to cease attempts to restore empire in Indonesia. This chapter makes two overarching arguments. First, the crisis was prioritised by the Indian foreign policy establishment as Indonesia was regarded as fellow member of the ‘Asian’ region. Second, that the framing of the situation in Indonesia in regional terms and activism on this front, enabled its claims to status in a post-war world.

The Indonesian decolonisation struggle had coincided with the lead up to, recognition and immediate aftermath of Indian independence. It was through this period that core ideas of Indian foreign policy were being formed. A major part of these ideas was that through the colonial encounter, India had been separated from its ‘Asian neighbourhood’ (chapter 3, section 3.2). As the era of European imperialism was destined to pass, it was for Asian nations to look to each other and hasten the pace of this inevitability. Dutch attempts to re-establish empire in Indonesia was perceived in

the light of these ideas and had therefore become to be understood as an ‘Asian’ concern. While India had indeed perceived the crisis in these terms, it had to convince first, other nations of ‘Asia’ that the latter were a part of this grouping and second, those beyond the region -particularly the Western great powers in this case - of the same. As established in the previous chapter, through the Nehru years, India found value in being socially recognised as the representative of ‘Asia’ and, its active peace broker. This would ensure that its voice would be impossible to be silenced or overlooked by old and new great powers and this would inevitably enable its claims to status at the global level.

Through its analysis of the nature of India’s involvement in Indonesia’s decolonisation struggle, the chapter provides an empirically grounded understanding of how India established links between its ‘geographic place’ (region) and ‘social place’ (status) in the conduct of its foreign policy. By framing the Indonesian crisis in ‘regional’ terms the chapter unpacks how India facilitated the territorial, symbolic and institutional ‘building’ of Asia, intact with insiders and outsiders. The repetition and consistency of its discourses and practices associated with this ‘regional’ framing of the crisis made actors both within and beyond ‘the region’ refer to it in these terms. The chapter therefore makes the case that given the audience recognition, India was successful in establishing and breathing the ‘Asian region’ into life through its activism on the Indonesian question. This enabled the recognition of India as representative of a group of the decolonising states that included a vast part of the world, increasing the way it was esteemed by the Western great powers, especially the United States.

As discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.4), the chapter engages with primary material sourced from National Archives of India, New Delhi the National Archives of the

Netherlands, The Hague, the Harry S. Truman Library in Independence, Missouri and the papers and memoirs of P.R.S Mani, who entered the Indian Foreign service in 1947 and played a critical role in the Indian diplomatic effort on Indonesian question.³⁰⁷ It also relies on published primary material such as the United States State Department's Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) papers, the United Nations Security Council Records, Australian National Archives and the published - yet gravely underutilised – selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru. Based on these sources, it finds that Indian activism took four main forms: first, direct action in favour of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of risky rescue operations for Indonesian leaders, giving them refuge in India and imposing limited sanctions against the Dutch. Second, by amassing and representing an 'Asian' position on the Indonesian question at global forums (the United Nations being the most important). Third by exerting diplomatic pressure on Western great powers to use their influence to limit Dutch action in Indonesia. Fourth and finally, by becoming a major diplomatic channel through which it could communicate with leaders from Indonesian Republic and vice versa. These actions by India hastened the return of peace in the archipelago.

Before proceeding with the chapter, it is important to reflect upon the existing historiographies on Indonesian decolonisation, within which this one finds its place. At the time of writing, it has been over 70 years since the decolonisation of both India

³⁰⁷ PRS Mani was an Indian journalist embedded with the British Indian army in Indonesia and later a correspondent for the Indian English daily, Free Press Journal. After 1947, Mani entered the Indian Foreign service. On retiring, he gathered his papers and wrote his account of the Indonesian National Revolution, published by the University of Madras. This account has been used a primary source in this study. Mani's papers have been arranged by Professor Heather Goodall at the University of Technology, Sydney, with the advice and support of Professor Mushirul Hasan, Director and the staff of the National Archives of India. See Heather Goodall, 'P.R.S. Mani Collection' (University of Technology Sydney, 2014), <https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/research/handle/10453/28084>, <https://researchdata.edu.au/prs-mani-collection>.

and Indonesia, but very few accounts of the role of the former in the latter's decolonisation struggle have been documented. Work that focuses specifically on Indonesia, such as Robert McMahon's 'Colonialism and the Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence 1945-1949' makes very limited references to Delhi's diplomatic role in the struggle and makes little use of Indian archival material.³⁰⁸ Other accounts emphasise that India was prepared only to lend 'political' and not 'material' support to the region's independence movements.³⁰⁹ On the other end of the spectrum, some accounts of India and Indonesia that do lean on Indian sources is limited to a story of how one nation helped the other in its battle against imperialism.³¹⁰ While this is a welcome and important contribution to the historiography of Indonesian decolonisation, they do not unpack what these inter-Asian linkages meant at a global level, particularly to the calculations of great powers. This account lies somewhere between these narratives. It sees the Indian role in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle not only as representative of vital inter-Asian 'regional' linkages, but also particular moment in the "global Cold War" where Indian interventions influenced the way in which great powers were establishing order in a post-war world.³¹¹ This chapter is divided into four parts, each discussing a different period of Indian activism in the Indonesian struggle, followed by analytical discussion in the final section.

³⁰⁸ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*.

³⁰⁹ Amitav Acharya, *East of India, South of China : Sino-Indian Encounters in Southeast Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2017), 10.

³¹⁰ Bhaladas Ghoshal, 'India and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence', *Akademika* 54 (1999): 105–30; V Suryanarayan, *Together in Struggle: India and Indonesia 1945-1949* (Delhi: Prabhat Prakashan, 2018).

³¹¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4.2 “Torch-bearer in the liberation movement of Asiatic countries”: The Early Stages

Fifty-two days after the declaration of independence in Indonesia, allied troops arrived in Batavia.³¹² They had arrived as part of British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten’s Southeast Asia Command (SEAC), with the official aim of disarming Japanese forces.³¹³ While the initial plan was to have American forces to carry out this task, the Anglo-American Chiefs of Staff decided at the Potsdam Conference of July 1945, to transfer the Dutch East Indies along with Siam (Thailand) to the SEAC under Mountbatten.³¹⁴ The SEAC had three main responsibilities in the Dutch East Indies: to enforce the surrender and disarmament of Japanese armed forces; to release the Allied Prisoners of War and internees; and to establish and maintain law and order in the country until the Dutch Administration could function effectively.³¹⁵ The arrival of SEAC troops instead of American troops was an eerie indication of the post-war future of Indonesia.

In the months of September and October 1945, Nehru referred to the situation in Indonesia in multiple statements to the press, asserting that “Indian troops must not be used in for keeping down the peoples of colonial territories”³¹⁶ and expressed

³¹² Batavia was the name of the capital city of the Dutch East Indies and corresponds to the present-day city of Jakarta.

³¹³ During the Second World War, the entire Indonesian archipelago fell under the military jurisdiction of the United States’ Southwest Pacific Area Command (SPAC) under General Douglas MacArthur. At the Potsdam Conference of July 1945 however, the Anglo-American Chiefs of Staff decided to transfer the Dutch East Indies along with Thailand (Siam) to the SEAC under Mountbatten.

³¹⁴ Frances Gouda and Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), 54.

³¹⁵ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 86.

³¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Statement to the Press: The Use of Indian Troops in Indonesia (1 October, 1945)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series I, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1981), 447–48.

India's solidarity towards the Indonesian struggle.³¹⁷ Expressions of solidarity included Indian workers and seamen refusing to load ships that were carrying war material from India to Java.³¹⁸ Moreover, India also rallied other 'Asian' nations in support in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle. For instance, the King of Nepal was requested by India to exert pressure on the British Government to not use the Gurkhas against the Indonesians.³¹⁹ Declaring itself as a "torch-bearer in the liberation movement of Asiatic countries", at a Southeast Asia Day meeting in Lucknow, Nehru reflected that the members of this region "look up to India for assistance and guidance."³²⁰ That India should be 'looked up' to was an important indication of where India saw in terms of its position vis-à-vis other nations within the region. But this was beyond a self-aggrandising discourse alone. The response of Indonesian leaders to the message and ensured that India could rapidly turn this into demonstrable action. Sutan Sjahrir, Prime Minister of the Indonesian Republic, offered to send half a million tons of rice to India to revive the latter's famine conditions in 1946. India was to arrange its own ships to procure it. This would not only have the effect of gaining Indian goodwill, but the arrival of Indian ships would challenge the Dutch-imposed economic blockade on the Republic.³²¹ The Dutch termed this as an "interference in their internal affairs" and issued a statement that the rice crop in Indonesia had in fact been declining from

³¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Statement to the Press: Solidarity with Indonesia (15 October, 1945)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1981), 455.

³¹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Press Interview, Lucknow: A Test for the United Nations (17 November, 1945)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1981), 460–61.

³¹⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Address at South East Asia Day Meeting, Lucknow: India's Lead in Asian Liberation (28 October, 1945)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1981), 459–60.

³²⁰ Nehru.

³²¹ P.R.S Mani, *The Story of the Indonesian Rev* (Chennai: Univeristy of Madras, 1986), 67–68.

1943.³²² The offer of rice was a prelude to the events of the next four years of India's commitment to the Indonesian Struggle.

India's support to the Indonesian struggle, Indonesia's offer of rice to India and the latter's resentment towards the use of its troops in the SEAC increased pressure on the British Government to bring the Dutch and the Indonesians to the table. In 1946, Britain had been trying to re-open formal talks between the two parties.³²³ These efforts barely came to fruit, only resulting in a series of impasses. Much to the anger of the Dutch, the British had announced a phased withdrawal of Indian troops by the end of 1946.³²⁴

On receiving reports of aerial battles in Java, Nehru officially declared India's recognition of the Indonesian Republic on 11 August 1946. In a statement to the Indian Press he said, "while we are inevitably concerned with our own struggle of independence, our brothers and sisters in Indonesia are fighting to *retain* their independence and to protect their new-born Republic. The 17th of August is the Independence Day of Indonesia and...large numbers of people in India would like to send their greetings and good wishes to the people of Indonesia to express their solidarity in the cause of Asian freedom...the unity of Asian freedom from the east,

³²² Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Statement to the Press, Delhi: Dutch Apathy to India's Food Security (27 April, 1946)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 15*, ed. S Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1982), 527–228; 'Letter to Soetan Sjahrir from Lt. Gen Montagu Satopford (16 April, 1946)', *National Archives of India* MEA Files, no. 185–FEA/47; Acting Governor of the Netherlands East Indies Hubertus van Mook referred to the rice deal as an 'unfortunate offer made by Dr Sjahrir to Pandit Nehru' at the Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia Conference in Singapore on May 25 1946. See Oey Hong Lee, *War and Diplomacy in Indonesia, 1945-50* (Townsville: James Cook University of North Queensland, 1981).

³²³ Richard McMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia, 1945-1946: Britain, the Netherlands and the Indonesian Revolution*, Royal Asiatic Society Books (London: Routledge, 2005), 77.

³²⁴ Aiyaz Husain, *Mapping the End of Empire: American and British Strategic Visions in the Postwar World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Richard McMillan, *The British Occupation of Indonesia, 1945-1946: Britain, the Netherlands and the Indonesian Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2005).

south-east and west of this great continent becomes ever more evident”.³²⁵ In the same statement, the proposal of a “conference of representatives from Asian countries” was announced to “ensure this unity and develop closer relations”.³²⁶ This statement was an early indication of the region-building project India was undertaking through its position on the Indonesian decolonisation. In referring to the region in geographic terms and specifying “the east, south-east and west of [the] great continent” Asia was given some -if not a fixed- form of territorial shape. Furthermore, Asia also came to overarchingly symbolise global decolonisation and the freedom of all peoples. Moreover, Nehru’s proposal for a conference of Asian nations, promised the region of a solid institutional thrust.³²⁷ On 2 September 1946, the Interim government of India was formed, with Nehru as the Vice-President who was also in charge of External Affairs. In a letter to Sokarno, Nehru declared that India was anxious to translate her goodwill into something more effective.³²⁸ Shortly after, Dutch-Indonesian talks had reopened through another effort of British diplomacy. Under the chairmanship of Lord Killearn, Britain’s special commissioner for Southeast Asia a major step was taken by both parties to conclude a truce agreement, which provided for the stabilisation of existing military positions.³²⁹ A truce commission composed of Dutch, Indonesian and British representatives was appointed to supervise the cease-fire. This concluded in an agreement signed in the mountain resort of Linggadadjati,

³²⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Statement to the Press, Wardha: Aerial Battles over Java (11 August, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 1, Volume 15*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1982), 553–54.

³²⁶ Nehru.

³²⁷ The stages of region-building have been discussed in chapter 2.

³²⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Letter to I.R. Soekarno (25 October, 1946)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 1*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1984), 530.

³²⁹ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 133–34. For a detailed account of Lord Killearn’s role in negotiating Indonesian affairs during this time, see Hong Lee, *War and Diplomacy in Indonesia, 1945-50*, 87–110. Killearn’s role helped paved the way for the Linggadadjati Agreement. Hong Lee’s account relies on Killearn’s papers to the British Foreign Office.

which proved to be a diplomatic victory for both the Dutch and the Indonesians.³³⁰

The situation eased temporarily.

In early 1947, contacts between India and Indonesia significantly increased. Most significantly, the Asian Relations Conference (ARC), which Nehru had alluded to at Wardha was held in Delhi from 23rd March to 2nd April 1947, under the auspices of the Indian Council of World Affairs.³³¹ At the conference, Nehru spoke for the region: “[t]he countries of Asia can no longer be used as pawns by others; they are bound to have their own policies in world affairs.”³³² He further stated in his speech at the plenary session: “Europe and America have contributed very greatly to human progress...[b]ut the West has also driven us into wars and conflicts...[t]he whole spirit and outlook of Asia are peaceful, and the emergence of Asia in world affairs will be a powerful influence for peace.”³³³ Through Nehru’s opening remarks, ‘Asia’ became associated with more than the freedom movements of the contemporary era, but a timeless peace that was disrupted by the Western ‘other’. As a collective whole, it had a lot to offer the post-war world this experience of peace.

While the conference gave institutional shape to its Asia project, the Indonesian question became its first task. The ARC was the venue that turned the Indonesian decolonisation struggle into one of ‘regional’ concern. Through Indian arrangements,

³³⁰ Justus M van der Kroef, ‘Dutch Policy and the Linggadjati Agreement: 1946-1947’, *The Historian* 15, no. 2 (1953): 163–87.

³³¹ According to Robert McMohan, the United States recognised the Republic’s de facto jurisdiction over Java and Sumatra on 3rd April. This was one day after the conference.

³³² Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Speech Delivered at the Plenary Session of the Asian Relations Conference: A United Asia for World Peace’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 2*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1984), 503.

³³³ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Speech Delivered at the Plenary Session of the Asian Relations Conference: A United Asia for World Peace’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 2*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1984), 503.

a large Indonesian delegation was present at the conference.³³⁴ The head of its delegation, Abu Hanifah remarked that “[t]he presence of the Indonesian delegation here is significant not only because we have the fullest opportunity of introducing our people and ourselves to other Asian countries, but also because it is the first Inter-Asian conference in which Indonesians can participate without being accompanied by *alien advisors*.”³³⁵ Hanifah’s comments indicated that the regional and extra-regional others were indeed being framed. The extent of Indian investment on the Indonesian question was further exemplified when, with the special efforts of Nehru and his pilot friend Biju Patnaik, Sjahrir was flown and personally received Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi at the airport.³³⁶ The ARC yielded several immediate results in favour of the Indonesian cause. Soon after, Agoes Salim, the chairman of the Indonesian delegation set up a Republican Office in India.³³⁷ A day after the conference, and in accordance with one of the main clauses in the Linggadjati Agreement, the United States recognised the de facto jurisdiction of Republic of Indonesia in Sumatra, Java and Madoera.³³⁸ By the middle of 1947, Egypt, Syria, and Iran also gave the Republic de-facto recognition.³³⁹

³³⁴ Arrangements for the aircraft to be flown and number of delegates are found in the National Archives of the Netherlands. See ‘Correspondence between the Director General of Civil Aviation in India and the Netherlands Consul General in India (20 March, 1947)’, *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00193.

³³⁵ ‘Speech by Dr. Abu Hanifah, leader of the Indonesian Delegation at the Asian Relations Conference’, *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00193. Emphasis added.

³³⁶ Rudolf Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 335.

³³⁷ Mrázek, 335–36.

³³⁸ ‘The Acting Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia (3 April, 1947)’, *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 713, (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d713> accessed 11 September 2018.

³³⁹ Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia*, 335–36.

While the conference was an important phase of regional activism over the Indonesian question, key issues that divided the Dutch and the Republicans continued to persist.³⁴⁰ Due to increasing pressure by the Americans and the British, the Dutch presented a set of proposals to Sjahrir. These called for the earliest possible formation of the United States of Indonesia bound by co-operation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands through what would become the Netherlands-Indonesian Union. During this transition, sovereignty of the Kingdom of Netherlands was to be maintained over Indonesia.³⁴¹ While Sjahrir realised that proposals were more in the form of an ultimatum, these terms were not considered acceptable by the civilian and military leaders in the Republican Party.³⁴² Between the Dutch and his political base back home, Sjahrir's position was untenable and he resigned on June 27. Amir Sjarifuddin was appointed as the new Prime Minister.³⁴³ On the same day of his appointment Sjarifuddin reached out to Nehru. Nehru hesitated to give him advice on the situation in Indonesia, without having "full knowledge of the facts" and suggested that international arbitration and appealing to the great powers.³⁴⁴ The next stage, he recommended, would involve raising the matter before the United Nations Organisation and then the General Assembly.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ The Linggadjadi Agreement was open to conflicting interpretations. See the section on the 'Linggadjadi Agreement' in Kahin's landmark work – George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), 196–98. See also McMahan, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 152.

³⁴¹ The Dutch proposals were written in the form of a note by Van Mook and are re-printed in appendix B of David Wehl, *The Birth of Indonesia* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1948), 191–97.

³⁴² Wehl, 168; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 206–7.

³⁴³ Tuong Vu, *Paths to Development in Asia: South Korea, Vietnam, China, and Indonesia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 169.

³⁴⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Letter to Amir Sharifoeddin (6 July, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 355–58.

³⁴⁵ Nehru.

It seemed however, that India had already been using its diplomatic machinery on the Indonesian question to move the great powers. In addition to corresponding with Indonesian leaders during the tense days of 1947, Nehru appealed to Lord Listowel, the British Secretary of State for India, informing him of the Indian government's position on the situation in Indonesia. In one of his cables to Listowel, Nehru wrote, "as provided in article 17(2) of the Linggadjati Agreement all matters in dispute arising out of the agreement should be referred to arbitration...[T]his has been ratified by both countries and in the view of grave consequences of an outbreak of hostilities it seems to be duty of both parties to resort to an agreed and peaceful method of settlement such as arbitration by an impartial body".³⁴⁶ A similar note was sent to the United States. That Nehru believed that it was in India's capacity to inform the great powers on how states should act in international issues is a critical insight into where he conceived India's place in the world. He believed India was in a rightful position to call on the great powers if it believed justice was being denied to decolonising nations and peoples. The great powers, however, would not readily acknowledge India's status in this regard. Both responded indifferently, and the United States, seemed to dismiss India's knowledge of the situation as dated. In response to Indian correspondence, officials in the United States pointed out that, "Indonesian and Dutch positions were almost reconciled if not entirely so [and] there was less danger than before of an attempt to settle the issue by force" and that it was hoped that their "information was more recent than that of India's."³⁴⁷ In reality however, the situation in Indonesia only

³⁴⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Cable to Lord Listowel (18 July, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 360–61.

³⁴⁷ 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs (9 July, 1947)', *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 776 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d776>, accessed 11 September 2018.

worsened, pushing India to take more active steps to exert international pressure for the Dutch retreat from the Republic.

4.3 “An Insult and a challenge to Asia”: India moves the Security Council³⁴⁸

On the 21st of July 1947, the Dutch launched a large-scale offensive against the Republic. Armoured Dutch columns with full aerial support slashed through Republican territory, encountering slight resistance. The Netherlands now had a modern army of over a hundred thousand troops that quickly realised its military objectives.³⁴⁹ Through Krishna Menon, who was the secretary of the London India League and a close confidant of Nehru, and Girija Shankar Bajpai, the first Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), India wrote to officials in the United Kingdom and United States regarding its concern on the state of affairs in Indonesia.

Menon was instructed to urge Listowel and the British Foreign Secretary Ernst Bevin that “His Majesty’s Government should consider immediate reference of the whole background to the Security Council” and if not, “India would probably take the matter to the United Nations, independently.”³⁵⁰ Its preparedness to summon the United Nations elaborates a point made in the previous chapter (section 3.3) that for India at the time, the institution was seen as the only global platform within equal reach of all

³⁴⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Interview to the Press, Delhi: The War in Indonesia (28 July, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 367–77.

³⁴⁹ McMahan, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 168. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 213; Hong Lee, *War and Diplomacy in Indonesia, 1945-50*, 145.

³⁵⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon (22 July, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 362–63.

states, even semi-independent ones such as itself. The United Nations was crucial to India's own pursuit of possessing an independent voice in international affairs and this deeply underpinned its claims to status in post-war world. India's plans to approach the Security Council independently had reached the United States via its ambassador to India, Henry Grady. Once Grady's letter reached the State Department, officials considered strategies to dilute the effect of the Indian cable to the United Nations, in the hope perhaps that it would save them the embarrassment of approaching the United Nations over a matter concerning their Western allies before they did. A confidential meeting with the newly appointed Netherlands Ambassador to the United States and the Chief of the Division of Northern European Affairs of the United States was held. The former was entreated to note the possible reaction of the Government of the Netherlands were the Indonesian question brought before the Security Council, "by a friendly state in order to forestall such action by one of the Soviet or Asiatic states unfriendly to the Netherlands."³⁵¹ To this, the Dutch Ambassador stated that it would not be advantageous to the Netherlands if this were brought to the Security Council "by Western democracies" and if it were to be raised by "the Soviets, India or the Philippines, the Netherlands would simply stand upon its record as it had done heretofore."³⁵²

On the second day of police action, Dutch soldiers raided the private residence of Sutan Sjahrir. Sjahrir was not to be found as he had made a narrow escape to Delhi via

³⁵¹ 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Associate Chief of the Division of Northern European Affairs (24 July, 1947)' *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 776 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d789>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁵² 'Memorandum of Conversation, by the Associate Chief of the Division of Northern European Affairs (24 July, 1947)' *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 776 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d789>, accessed 11 September 2018.

Singapore by efforts of Patnaik, who was also in Jogjakarta at the time.³⁵³ Sjahrir arrived in India with letters from Soekarno and Amir Sjarifuddin, the Prime Minister of Indonesia of the time, confirming media reports about the state of affairs in Indonesia. According to these reports, the Dutch Airforce had bombed The Republic's Air Fields without warning.³⁵⁴ Unsatisfied with the response of the great powers, and on receiving first-hand information from the Indonesian leaders in Delhi, India was determined to bring the Indonesian question to the Security Council to rouse the "moral consciousness of the of the world."³⁵⁵ Nehru instructed Menon to inform the British government that India would lodge its complaint with Secretary General or President of the Security Council "unless Anglo-American mediation proved fruitful before that date."³⁵⁶ In explaining the rationale behind India's activism on the Indonesian cause to domestic audiences, the Indonesian situation, was framed in Asian context: "India has been and is specifically interested in the freedom of the peoples of Asia. The recent Asian conference held in Delhi was symbol not only of the resurgence of Asia, but also of the cooperation of the different countries of Asia, for peace and freedom... The mere presence of a colonial regime or of foreign troops in any Asian country is an insult and a challenge to Asia... Any change brought about by the aggression of a country over another must not be recognised. It is necessary for the United Nations to take heed of this challenge to its Charter and to world peace and move with speed to meet it..."³⁵⁷

³⁵³ Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia*, 349.

³⁵⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon (25 July, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 364–66.

³⁵⁵ Nehru, 'Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon (22 July, 1947)'.

³⁵⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon (28 July, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 366–67.

³⁵⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Interview to the Press, Delhi: The War in Indonesia (28 July, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 367–77.

With its continuous projection of the Indonesian question onto the larger canvas of the 'European country' in 'Asia', India's framing of the regional self versus the European other, was beginning to gain recognition by the great powers, who also began seeing the 'Asian' region in such terms. India's support to Indonesia was seen as a fellow Asian nation supporting the other in what seemed like a second bout of European imperialism. At the same time however, key differences in their conceptions of Asia remained, given their divergent positions in the context of the global Cold War. American policy makers feared that were India to bring the Indonesian question before the United Nations, it would invite "the support from the Soviet Union [which would] divide it into a Russian-Asian bloc against the Anglo-American Governments and Governments of Western Europe."³⁵⁸ Given the large number of 'Asian' countries that had now rallied behind the Indonesian cause, the United States, now working through its Cold War lens, realised its response involved questions of its own status and power. At a confidential meeting between the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs and the Counsellor of the United States Department of State, it was discussed that "American indifference or opposition to Indonesian cause will strengthen the move toward Asiatic federation which might be detached from or even antagonistic toward the western democracies."³⁵⁹ Given that Dutch action had been condemned by other "Asian countries" such as "Egypt, Syria, Iran, Ceylon and the Philippines" indifference could do "immeasurable damage to American prestige in the

³⁵⁸ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 180–82.

³⁵⁹ 'Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs to the Counselor (29 July, 1947)' *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 795 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d795>, accessed 11 September 2018.

Near, Middle and Far East.”³⁶⁰ It was decided that in the event that talks between the Dutch Ambassador and the United States continued to be unproductive, officials within the United States would begin preparing for the possibility of an Indian cable to the Security Council.³⁶¹

Preparations had indeed proved fruitful, as India brought the Indonesian dispute before the Security Council later that day: “during the last few days Dutch forces have embarked without warning on large-scale military action against the Indonesian people...In the opinion of the Government of India, this situation endangers maintenance of international peace and security which is covered by Article 34 of the Charter.”³⁶² Within hours of the Indian cable, Australia also referred to the Indonesian question to the Security Council as a breach of peace under article 39.³⁶³ The United Nations immediately adopted a cease-fire resolution and called for a cessation of hostilities and settlement through arbitration or other peaceful means.³⁶⁴ Through the month of August, the Indonesian question was discussed and debated at the Security Council and India began preparing to present its case.³⁶⁵ Menon was instructed to travel to New York, while arrangements were made in India to send Sjahrir from India to join Menon.³⁶⁶ Menon was strictly reminded that in conformity with India’s declared

³⁶⁰ ‘Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs to the Counselor (29 July, 1947)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 795 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d795>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁶¹ *Ibid*

³⁶² Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to the President of the Security Council, 29 July, 1947’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 378.

³⁶³ Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press in association with Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1980), 84.

³⁶⁴ Alastair MacDonald Taylor, *Indonesian Independence and the United Nations* (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1960), 50.

³⁶⁵ For a detailed analysis on the UNSC debates in August and November, see Alastair MacDonald Taylor, *Indonesian Independence and the United Nations* (London: Stevens & Sons Limited, 1960, 46-65.

³⁶⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to Sjahrir (8 August, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 381.

policy of nonalignment with the Western or Eastern Bloc, it was especially important that he, as the spokesperson of the Indonesian case, should avoid any appearance of bias.³⁶⁷

Despite Dutch objections, on August 12, the Security Council voted to invite the Indonesian Republican delegation to present their case.³⁶⁸ Sjahrir, delivered a passionate speech explaining the plight of the Republic, in the light of the wave of decolonisation now sweeping the Asian region. “Long after we as a people had, so to speak, disappeared from the face of the earth, the general political awakening of Asia, the rebirth of the Orient, affected us also. At the end of the nineteenth century we began to regain our soul and gave birth to a national movement which aimed at freedom from Dutch colonial rule. From that time on, it has been our constant desire, our one ideal, our strife and struggle, to become a nation again.”³⁶⁹ The Indian representative at the Security Council, Padmanabha Pillai who described Dutch tactics has a “prelude for a renewed offensive” against the Republic also framed the Indonesian question in the context of the region: “[t]he fact that foreign armies are functioning on Asian soil is itself an outrage against Asian sentiment. The fact that they are bombing defenceless people is scandalous. If other Members of the United Nations tolerate this or remain inactive, then the United Nations Organization ceases to exist. This is the general feeling, not only in India, but throughout the whole of Asia.”³⁷⁰

³⁶⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to V.K. Krishna Menon (11 August, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 3*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1985), 382.

³⁶⁸ Mrázek, *Sjahrir: Politics and Exile in Indonesia*, 352.

³⁶⁹ Second Year, No. 76, 183rd and 184th meetings, New York, 14 August, 1947, United Nations Security Council Official Records, 1995-6.

³⁷⁰ Second Year, No. 76, 192nd meeting, New York, 22 August, 1947, United Nations Security Council Official Records, 2153-4.

At the same meeting, the Dutch ambassador to the United States proposed before the Security Council that both “The Netherlands and the Republic designate a state which is considered by them to be completely impartial. This impartial state would then send a number of its nationals to Indonesia to enquire into the situation, to supervise the cease fire, and to see what conditions obtain there.”³⁷¹ A compromise proposal on similar lines was adopted by the United Nations on August 26, which brought into being the Good Offices Committee (GOC) of the Security Council. It composed of three-member states which would represent each party. The Netherlands appointed Belgium and the Indonesia appointed Australia. The United States was designated to be the third party.³⁷² In India, the offer for American mediation was seen as “scotched” and “partial to the Dutch”. Despite this, India urged Indonesian leaders to take advantage of the proposal as it would be “helpful in the long run.”³⁷³

Through the month of September and early October however, it had become noticeable that the ceasefire had not been effective.³⁷⁴ In October 1947, the Indian Government decided to set up a Mission in Batavia and appointed TN Raghavan, an

³⁷¹ ‘The Acting United States Representative at the United Nations to the Secretary of State (16 August, 1947)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, The Far East VI, ed. John G Reid, Document 833 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d833>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁷² Second Year, United Nations Resolution no. S/525II, 195th meeting, 25 August, 1947, United Nations Security Council Official Records.

³⁷³ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Proposal for Mediation by the United States (25 August, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 4*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1986), 628; Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Offer of Mediation by the United States (19 August, 1947)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 4*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1986), 627.

³⁷⁴ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (22 September, 1947)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States*, The Far East VI, ed. John G Reid, Document 849 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d849>, accessed 11 September 2018. See also ‘Confidential Telegram from India Delegation in New York to the Ministry of External Affairs in Delhi on the Indonesian Case in the Security Council (5 October, 1947)’, *National Archives of India* MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

able lawyer who practiced in Penang, Malaya (Malaysia) as the Consul General. He was accompanied by Mohammad Yunnus,³⁷⁵ who was a member of the Indian Foreign Service and a friend of Nehru's, and P.R.S Mani, as his Press Attache.³⁷⁶ The main purpose of sending Raghavan to Indonesia was to establish "close contacts with the Indonesian Republic and people" and eventually set up a Consulate-General in Batavia.³⁷⁷ This hastened the pace and volume of diplomatic correspondence on political developments in Indonesia. Raghavan kept Delhi informed of the progress of the GOC.³⁷⁸ Frank Porter Graham, the American representative of the GOC played a critical role in the negotiations. He requested his government to make available a public ship of the United States as a meeting place between the Committee and both parties at which the substantive aspects of their dispute could be discussed.³⁷⁹ Graham also informed his Government of the ceasefire violations by the Dutch, intensification of blockades and food shortages as a consequence of police action.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Letter to T.N. Raghavan (8 October, 1947)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 4*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1986), 629–30.

³⁷⁶ P.R.S Mani, *The Story of the Indonesian National Revolution: 1945-1950* (Chennai: Univeristy of Madras, 1986), 83.

³⁷⁷ Nehru, 'Letter to T.N. Raghavan (8 October, 1947)'.

³⁷⁸ 'Memorandum from the Indonesian Delegation to the Security Council's Committee of Good Offices on the Indonesian Question (3 November, 1947)', *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁷⁹ 'The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (7 November, 1947)' *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 865 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d865>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁸⁰ 'The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (1 December, 1947)' *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 869 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d869>, accessed 11 September 2018; 'The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (1 December, 1947)' *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 870 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d870>, accessed 11 September 2018.

By mid-December rifts in the Good Offices Committee began developing.³⁸¹ As negotiations seemed to be reaching a stalemate, Indonesian Prime Minister Sharifuddin approached India to independently ascertain British and American attitudes.³⁸² India responded that in the light of the increasing tension between the United States and Soviet blocs, it seemed unlikely that the United States, the United Kingdom or Belgium would be prepared to act against the Netherlands.³⁸³ At the same time it had also become known to the United States through Frank Porter Graham, that their balancing act on the Indonesian question was increasingly untenable. It had to either support the sovereignty of the Netherlands over Indonesia or that of the Republic. If the aim was the former, then its role would simply be to “tell the world what happened”, if it were to be the latter, then “maximum pressure [would need to be] exerted on the Netherlands...”³⁸⁴

As the Dutch-Indonesian impasse persisted, a ‘Christmas Message’ was drafted by the GOC, in which the Republic was to accept the Netherlands’ position on the military issues in return for a fair and peaceful determination of political issues. Militarily, it called for a truce line to be set at Dutch forward positions and politically, it called for the restoration of the Republican civil administration.³⁸⁵ The Dutch, still dissatisfied with some of the suggestions of the Christmas message, presented a counter-proposal

³⁸¹ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (6 December, 1947)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 873 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d873>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁸² ‘Secret Correspondence from Raghavan to Nehru (20 December, 1947)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114-FEA/47.

³⁸³ ‘Secret Correspondence from Bajpai to Raghavan (11 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114-FEA/47.

³⁸⁴ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (20 December, 1947)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 881 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d881>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁸⁵ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 119. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 224.

to the GOC, eliminating all references to the restoration of Republican civil administration, withdrawal of troops and any mention of the Republic of Indonesia.³⁸⁶ In meetings with the GOC, the Dutch asserted that this was their final offer and if it was rejected by the Republic, they would “reserve liberty of action”.³⁸⁷ The counter-proposal was presented to the GOC on 5th January 1948. It demanded that the Republic should accept them within three days.

During these intense days in early January, daily top-secret correspondence transpired between Batavia and Delhi. To India, it seemed evident that the Dutch were employing tactics to “show the world that the Indonesian Republic has ceased to be representative of Indonesia as a whole”.³⁸⁸ According to Raghavan, “Dutch policy [was] military encirclement by police action, economic encirclement by blockade and political encirclement by creation of puppet states and formation of a federation called United States of Indonesia without the Republic.”³⁸⁹ As it seemed increasingly unlikely that Dutch attitudes were to change, Indian diplomats encouraged the Republican leaders to adopt a “conciliatory and moderate attitude”³⁹⁰ and give hearing to Graham and the GOC.³⁹¹

Just before Republican leaders Vice Premier Satiajtt, Prime Minister Shariffudin, Shjarir, Mohammad Hatta and Soekarno were to meet with the GOC on final

³⁸⁶ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 224.

³⁸⁷ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (5 January, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VI*, eds. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 39 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d39>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁸⁸ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from GS Bajpai to TN Raghavan (4 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁸⁹ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from GS Bajpai to TN Raghavan (4 January, 1948)’.

³⁹⁰ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from Bajpai to Raghavan, (11 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India* MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁹¹ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from Bajpai to Raghavan, (11 January, 1948)’.

discussions at Jogjakarta, Raghavan, in strict confidence and on his own accord, advised the Vice Premier “against rejection [of proposals] and suggested alterations to their draft and further course of action”.³⁹² Recognising the sway India had over the Republic, Graham and T.G Narayanan of the United Nations Secretariat, wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru.³⁹³ Nehru’s response was communicated to Batavia, in which he advised the Republican government against rejecting Dutch proposals as, on India’s reading, this was the best possible option under the circumstances.³⁹⁴ That India was called upon to convince the Republicans to accept proposals was brought to the knowledge of the United States State Department, in confidence.³⁹⁵ On receiving the Indian message in secret, the Republic sought an Indian guarantee that the Dutch would respect these proposals so that it “may not treated like the Linggardjati agreement.”³⁹⁶ Nehru responded by stating that the GOC must assure the Republic that not doing so would out them in the wrong of “enlightened world opinion.”³⁹⁷ It was later recounted that though this particular telegram did not reach the Republic in time, it was soon after the receipt of Nehru’s first message to the Republic it accepted the proposals.³⁹⁸ This, in conjunction with Graham’s assurances that the agreement

³⁹² ‘Top Secret Correspondence from GS Bajpai to TN Raghavan, (10 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India* MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁹³ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from TN Raghavan to Jawaharlal Nehru, (13 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47; ‘Top Secret Correspondence from TG Narayanan to Nehru via TN Raghavan (13, January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁹⁴ ‘Secret Correspondence from Bajpai to Raghavan (13 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁹⁵ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (12 January, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VI*, eds. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 53 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d53>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁹⁶ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from TN Raghavan to Jawaharlal Nehru (14 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 114–FEA/47.

³⁹⁷ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from Jawaharlal Nehru to TN Raghavan (14 January, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 185–FEA/47.

³⁹⁸ ‘Top Secret Correspondence from Jawaharlal Nehru to TN Raghavan (14 January, 1948)’. In his correspondence to the Secretary of State, Graham echoes the content of Raghavan’s message to Nehru. See ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (19 January, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VI*, eds. John G Reid and David H.

would not affect the Republican's status,³⁹⁹ the Republic of Indonesia officially accepted the final proposals.⁴⁰⁰ On January 17, 1948, the agreement was signed between the Dutch and the Republic aboard the USS Renville.⁴⁰¹ India's position and role in making this possible was acknowledged by all parties. Reporting his visit to Jogjakarta on Nehru's orders, Raghavan expressed how "India's prestige [had] gone up tremendously" and that Graham had expressed the great appreciation of the GOC to India, so much so that India seemed to have "stolen all the thunder".⁴⁰² Though the Renville Agreement prevented another Dutch military action, its success was short-lived.

4.4 "Anxiety to Lovers of Peace and Freedom": Second Police Action and Renewed Indian Commitment

It was well known by all parties that the Renville Agreement was at best a compromise proposal signed under pressure of a Dutch threat. Initial signs were hopeful. In accordance with the agreement, under the leadership of Mohammad Hatta the Republic began the immediate withdrawal of troops from pockets of resistance they occupied behind Dutch lines.⁴⁰³ Policymakers in the United States had also come to recognise that Republican leaders did "respond to acts genuine friendship by Dutch,

Stauffer, Document 57 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d57>, accessed 11 September 2018.

³⁹⁹ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 204.

⁴⁰⁰ It must be noted that in many accounts decolonisation in Indonesia, the Indian role in the signing of the Renville agreement has not been emphasized. Knowledge of its subtle role is available on consultation of the National Archives of India in Delhi.

⁴⁰¹ Taylor, *Indonesian Independence and the United Nations*, 95; McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 203-4.

⁴⁰² Secret correspondence from Raghavan to Nehru, *National Archives of India*, File No 185-FEA/47.

⁴⁰³ Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia*, 234; McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 211.

and the courtesies and respect shown them.”⁴⁰⁴ They believed that for a new atmosphere to be created, The Republic needed reassurance of Dutch, since they had the upper hand.⁴⁰⁵ Dutch action however, followed a familiar pattern. By mid-March, it moved unilaterally to form new states in areas seized from The Republic.⁴⁰⁶

While negotiations had resumed under the GOC, Graham – with whom the State Department was aware the Dutch had objections – was replaced by Coert DuBois a retired member of the American foreign service who served as a Consul General in the Dutch East Indies in the 30s.⁴⁰⁷ Fundamental issues of interpretation of the Renville Agreement persisted, and The Republic approached the Security Council to charge the Netherlands with “sabotaging the Renville Peace Agreement” given its imposition of naval blockades, efforts to delay negotiations, establishment of puppet governments and suppression of free speech and assembly.⁴⁰⁸ While the United States initially warned The Republic against its own delaying tactics and refusal to join the Dutch-created interim government, they soon also became disillusioned with Dutch policies. There seemed to be “ample evidence” of Dutch plans to form a “super-state” through the creation of the United States of Indonesia.⁴⁰⁹ At the same time, a

⁴⁰⁴ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (20 February, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VI*, eds. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 76 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d76>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁰⁶ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 211; George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution*, 100.

⁴⁰⁷ McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence, 1945-49*, 213. See also Gouda and Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia: US Foreign Policy and Indonesian Nationalism, 1920-1949*, 31.

⁴⁰⁸ ‘The Secretary of State to the Consulate General at Batavia (30 April, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States 6, The Far East and Australasia*, eds. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 125 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d125>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁴⁰⁹ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (29 May, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VI*, eds. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 147 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d147>, accessed 11 September 2018.

communist insurgency began gathering momentum in Indonesia, which began challenging the Soekarno-Hatta leadership.⁴¹⁰ Trotskyist leader Tan Makala appealed to the population to reject their leadership, which according to him, relied heavily on Western countries and ended in futile negotiations with the Dutch. He declared that independence could only be attained through revolutionary activity. The movement for Indonesian decolonisation seemed to be losing a sense of control and weakening.⁴¹¹

On September 21, the Indonesian representative to India, BA Ubani approached Nehru, informing him of this turn of events. He requested for India to use its good offices to draw the attention of the United States to the conditions of the Republic as any delay in reaching an agreement with the Dutch could strengthen the communist insurgency.⁴¹² Sensing the “substance” in Ubani’s message, Nehru, via the Ministry of External Affairs alerted the United States and the United Kingdom to the dangers of another Dutch police action.⁴¹³ The following day, chargé d'affaires of India to the United States, RK Nehru, had called upon the Director of the Office of Far East Affairs and others to express India’s concern on Indonesian affairs in the United States, only to receive nothing substantial from the meeting.⁴¹⁴ By November, the possibility of another police action significantly increased. Mohammad Hatta reached out to Nehru requesting him if members of the Republican Government could be flown to New Delhi in such an event. He also requested if a provisional Republican

⁴¹⁰ Hong Lee, *War and Diplomacy in Indonesia, 1945-50*, 185.

⁴¹¹ Mani, *The Story of the Indonesian National Revolution: 1945-1950*, 86.

⁴¹² For more on the 1948 insurgency, see Ann Swift, *The Road to Madiun: The Indonesian Communist Uprising of 1948* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1989).

⁴¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Note to Secretary General, Ministry of External Affairs: Communist Revolt of Indonesia’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 7*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1987), 648–49.

⁴¹⁴ ‘Memorandum of Conversation, by the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (22 September, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States* 6, The Far East, ed. John G Reid, Document 274 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d274>, accessed 11 September 2018.

Government could function out of New Delhi. India responded to say that it was prepared to make arrangements to give Indonesian leaders refuge in New Delhi, and also sanctioned financial aid to the Republic in the form of a loan.⁴¹⁵ It, however, drew the line at having a provisional Government in New Delhi on the grounds that this would involve international ramifications and “would depend on the attitude of the United Nations”.⁴¹⁶

As the situation in Indonesia deteriorated, India again reached out to the great powers against Dutch action in the Republic, resorting to a much stronger discourse. Writing to Noel Baker, the Secretary of State in Commonwealth Relations of the United Kingdom, Nehru stated that by preventing the GOC from functioning, the Dutch indicated a clear desire to impose military/colonial rule.⁴¹⁷ Indian envoys in both United Kingdom and the United States were instructed to inform the respective host governments that the Indian position on the situation in Indonesia was viewed “in the larger context of developments in China and the whole of Southeast Asia...[and] the whole of this vast region will be powerfully affected not only by the failure of negotiations and what might follow, but also the attitude of the Netherlands government”.⁴¹⁸ The letter also made reference to India’s understanding of the wider geopolitics of the Cold War and how this was contributing to the maintenance of

⁴¹⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Note to Finance Minister: Financial Aid to Indonesia (18 November, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1989), 376–77. See also ‘Top Secret Note from the Prime Minister’s Secretariat (18 November, 1948)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1179–FEA/48.

⁴¹⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to the Government of Indonesia (Undated: Sent before November 8, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1989), 375.

⁴¹⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to P.J. Noel-Baker (30 November, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1989), 380.

⁴¹⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to Indian Envoys in United States and Britain (15 December, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1989), 381–82.

“colonial domination.”⁴¹⁹ Like the French in Indo-China, the Dutch in Indonesia were associated with the Western Union and being helped by other powers through instruments such as the Marshall Plan.⁴²⁰

While it seemed clear to India through its backdoor correspondence with the Western great powers that the dynamics of the Cold War were preventing them from taking serious action against the Dutch, it was towards the end of 1948 that India communicated this to them in such blatant terms. The message was clear - India along with the entire Asian region was conscious of the wider politics of the Western great powers, the international behaviour they were legitimising and the order they seemed to be setting in place. By linking Dutch and French action in Indonesia and Indochina to the Western Union and Marshall Plan, the Asian self, versus the Western other was most evidently framed. At a plenary session of the Indian National Congress, Nehru took this a step further and referred to the end of imperialism in Asia as the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy: “Our Foreign Policy is that no foreign power should rule over any Asiatic country. The reaction to Dutch will be heard soon over all the Asiatic countries and we will have to consider what we will have to do in these circumstances.”⁴²¹

It is indeed also possible that the intensity of India’s discourse on the Indonesian question in December 1948 was attributed to the intelligence coming directly from

⁴¹⁹ Nehru.

⁴²⁰ Nehru. The Western Union or the Brussels Treaty Organisation (BTO) was the European military alliance established between France, the United Kingdom (UK) and the three Benelux countries in September 1948.

⁴²¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Address at the Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress, Jaipur: Imperialism Has to End (19 December, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1989), 383–84.

Mohammad Hatta to Nehru, in secret. Hatta had explained that the main motive of the Dutch was to “break [the] strength of [the] Republic while simultaneously going about the erection of puppet-state-organisations.”⁴²² As India prepared for its plane to bring Sukarno and other Republican leaders to Delhi, unlike in 1947, news of these plans did not escape Dutch intelligence.⁴²³ In fact, the Dutch had already made it known to the United States that the Indian plane would not be permitted to proceed to Jogjakarta from Singapore.⁴²⁴ Close to midnight on the 18th of December, representative of the UN Good Offices Committee was informed that the Netherlands would no longer abide by the Renville Truce Agreement on the grounds that the Republic had failed to prevent breaches of the truce.⁴²⁵ Half an hour later, Dutch forces launched a large-scale military offensive from land, sea and air against the ill-equipped defenders of the Republic.⁴²⁶ Republican leaders were captured. It was recounted in the Dutch Ambassador’s aide memoire that police action was undertaken due to intelligence that President Soekarno was to visit India.⁴²⁷

P.R.S Mani, who was stationed in Batavia, was taken on a mission to Bangka where the Republican leaders were held. Through him, a memorandum signed by Soekarno

⁴²² ‘Correspondence between Mohammad Hatta to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (16 December, 1948)’ *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.21.100, inventory no. 338.

⁴²³ News of Soekarno’s visit, though confidential travelled to the External Affairs departments of various countries through secret channels. See for instance correspondence between Australian Official Secretary to India and the Australian Department of External Affairs, available in *Australia and Indonesia’s independence: documents*, 426.

⁴²⁴ ‘The Consul General at Batavia to the Secretary of State (18-19 December, 1948)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VI*, eds. John G Reid and David H. Stauffer, Document 437 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1948v06/d437>, accessed 11 September 2018.

Additionally, the letter between Hatta and Nehru was found in the papers of PJ Kotes in the National Archives of the Netherlands. See correspondence between Mohammad Hatta to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (16 December, 1948)’ *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.21.100, inventory no. 338.

⁴²⁵ Mani, *The Story of the Indonesian National Revolution: 1945-1950*, 92–93.

⁴²⁶ Mani, 92.

⁴²⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to C.R. Atlee (20 December, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1990), 143–44; Mani, *The Story of the Indonesian National Revolution: 1945-1950*, 93., PRS, 93

and Hatta was delivered to Nehru. In his personal account of the Indonesian revolution, Mani noted that the leaders requested Nehru for support given the absence of military, economic and diplomatic resources, and expressed their full trust in his capacity and ability to activate international opinion in support of Indonesian freedom.⁴²⁸ As a second police action had been officially launched against the Republic, India continued to intensify its position on the Indonesian question. It indicated its desire to break relations with Holland to the British Prime Minister and the American State Department⁴²⁹ and placed sanctions on the Dutch by restricting their travel and flight transits over Indian airspace.⁴³⁰ In an interview with an American journalist in London, Nehru stated that the fact that “a member of the United Nations should thus procrastinate and ultimately defy the authority of the United Nations is a great blow to the prestige of the Organisation.”⁴³¹ He also emphasised that “since Holland is a member of the Western Union and clearly dependent for its military rehabilitation upon U.S.A, and to a less extent United Kingdom aid, these Powers can do a great deal to bring about the result...if it is not stopped the whole of Asia will feel that European imperialism still seeks to keep the people of the East in political and economic subjection and the struggle for Asian freedom will take on a new intensity which cannot but be a source of anxiety to lovers of peace and freedom.”⁴³² Prospects of help from the Security Council were bleak and it was adjourned till January 6th, 1949

⁴²⁸ Mani, *The Story of the Indonesian National Revolution: 1945-1950*, 97–98.

⁴²⁹ Philip Dorling and David Lee, eds., ‘Top Secret Correspondence between Australian Official Secretary to India and the Australian Department of External Affairs (21 December, 1948)’, in *Australia and Indonesia’s Independence: The Renville Agreement: Documents 1948* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996).

⁴³⁰ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to Lilaquat Ali Khan (21 December, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1990), 146–47.

⁴³¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to Charles Smith (22 December, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1990), 144–45.

⁴³² Nehru.

without taking any firm action against the Dutch. This was when India launched a major initiative in institutionalising the ‘Asian’ position on the situation in Indonesia.

4.5 “From the Mediterranean to the South Pole”: Institutionalising Asia through the Indonesian Cause⁴³³

Writing to Indian representatives in Cairo, Ankara, Tehran, Kabul, Nanjing, Rangoon, Bangkok, Colombo, Karachi and Canberra, Nehru suggested that that it would greatly help the Indonesian cause if “like-minded nations were to consider amongst themselves actively and as soon as possible, what action they should take to help the Security Council to deal effectively with Dutch persistence in defiance or evasion of proposals for a prompt and just settlement of the Indonesian problem.”⁴³⁴ He proposed that a conference of ministerial level be held in Delhi, as a means to lend ‘Council Support’ to the Security Council on the basis of a united understanding among themselves.⁴³⁵ As preparations were being made for the conference in Delhi, India demanded to know of the “nature of the action contemplated by the United States”, urging it to stop ECA (European Cooperation Administration) aid to the Netherlands.⁴³⁶ The New Delhi Conference seemed to incur a mixed response from the United States. On the one hand, they believed it would “become an anti-Western

⁴³³ ‘Broadcast on All India Radio by H Dayal (25 January, 1949)’ *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00184.

⁴³⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Cable to Indian Representatives in Cairo, Ankara, Rangoon, Nanking, Tehran, Kabul, Karachi and Colombo: Appeal to United Nations by Asian Countries (30 December, 1948)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1991), 151–52.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid*

⁴³⁶ ‘Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Assistant Chief of the Division of South Asian Affairs (3 January, 1949)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States* 6, The Far East and Australasia VII, Part 1, ed. John G Reid, Document 97, (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p1/d97>, accessed 11 September 2018.

bloc causing a split between East and West”.⁴³⁷ On the other, they saw it as an opportunity to rally the support of other countries in favour of a Security Council Resolution that was being drafted, which would put pressure on the Dutch. An attempt was made to send the text of the resolution to “New Delhi, for possible use at the Asian conference.”⁴³⁸

In expressing its rationale for the conference, India emphasized that it was not meant to challenge but to support existing global mechanisms that were working to resolve the crisis in Indonesia. Speaking to the Indian Journalists Association in Calcutta on January 13, 1949, Nehru stated, “the Security Council passed certain resolutions. These resolutions were not implemented...now I felt that the situation was drifting in a dangerous direction...when even the Security Council’s decisions and recommendations are being flouted, it would be desirable for us that those countries which are intimately connected by geography and otherwise should move together and take counsel not in any way intending to by-pass the UNSC but to strengthen it”.⁴³⁹ The Conference gathered representatives from Pakistan, Iran, Nepal, Siam, China, Ceylon, Burma, Philippines, Syria, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Ethiopia and New Zealand.⁴⁴⁰ As the Secretary of the Conference later recounted, the nineteen governments that attended the conference represented more

⁴³⁷ ‘The Chargé in the Philippines (Lockett) to the Acting Secretary of State (15 January, 1949)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VII, Part 2*, eds. John G Reid and John P. Glennon, Document 308, (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p2/d308>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁴³⁸ ‘The Secretary of State to the Embassy in the Netherlands (22 January, 1949)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VII, Part 1*, ed. John G Reid, Document 139, (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p1/d139>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁴³⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Speech in a Public Meeting, Allahabad: Resistance to Imperialism in Asia (2 January, 1949)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1991), 153–55.

⁴⁴⁰ ‘List of Representatives attending the Delhi Conference on Indonesia (17 January, 1949)’ *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00184.

than half of the world's population, spread over an area extending from the Mediterranean to the South Pole.⁴⁴¹ The list of attendees had indicated the scope of this region in the Indian imagination. This was most directly specified in Nehru's opening remarks: "[a]lthough we meet to consider a vital problem of immediate importance; my mind is filled with the historic significance of this unique gathering. Here we are, representatives of the free nations of Asia and other friends of Australia and New Zealand as well of Egypt and Ethiopia meet together for the first time to consider a matter of common concern to us."⁴⁴² Through the forum of the Delhi Conference, India had enabled an early yet important step of institutionalising the region – while the Indonesian question was always framed as an 'Asian' concern, there was now a conference to show for it.

In a record time of two days, three resolutions were adopted at the conference. The first recommended, among other things, that the detained Indonesian leaders should be immediately released and that the Republican Government in Indonesia given permission to function freely. The second called upon participating governments to keep each other informed over matters pertaining to the first resolution. The resolution urged them to "explore ways and means of establishing suitable machinery, having regard to the areas concerned, for promoting consultation and co-operation within the United Nations."⁴⁴³ This resolution was communicated to the United Nations. India's contribution to making this regional moment possible was

⁴⁴¹ 'Broadcast on All India Radio by H Dayal (25 January, 1949)' *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00184.

⁴⁴² Nehru's speech along with those made by other representatives are located in *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00184.

⁴⁴³ A.K George, 'Asian Regionalism and India's Early Initiatives: The Two Asian Conferences', *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 27, no. 3 (1971): 238–43.; Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Towards Indonesia's Freedom (January, 1949)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 9*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund, 1990), 165–73., 150–82;

acknowledged by members within the region. The Ceylonese Prime Minister R.D Bandaranaike for instance stated, “[t]his is the second occasion on which India has afforded us, the countries of Asia and of this particular region, the opportunity of meeting and discussing problems of common interest.”⁴⁴⁴ Most importantly however, it increased the way in which India was esteemed by the United States. It had convinced American leaders that there could be “no fully effective regional grouping in Asia without Indian participation and leadership”.⁴⁴⁵

Two days after the Delhi conference China, Cuba, Norway, and the United States jointly submitted a resolution to the Security Council. Despite Dutch objections, a resolution was passed on January 28, 1949 calling for an immediate cease fire; unconditional release of all political prisoners arrested since December 17, 1948 and for the immediate return of the Republican Government with its officials to Jogjakarta. It also recommended that the parties should enter negotiations at the earliest with the assistance of the United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCI), a transformed version of the GOC.

As progress seemed to be made on the Indonesian cause, top secret reports from Alagappan, who was appointed the Indian Counsel General in Batavia indicated that the Federalists (pro-Dutch Indonesians) were being pressured by the Dutch to reject the Resolution.⁴⁴⁶ Using Delhi as a secret channel, Republican representatives

⁴⁴⁴ ‘Speech by S.W.R.D Bandaranike of Ceylon at the opening session of the Delhi conference on Indonesia (20 January, 1949)’, *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00184.

⁴⁴⁵ Papers of Harry S Truman, Box 158: President's Secretary Files, Sub File: Foreign Affairs, ‘Nehru, Jawaharlal’ *Harry S Truman Museum and Library*, Independence city, Missouri. This particular quote was present in Truman’s briefing papers prior to Nehru’s visit in the United States October 3, 1949. It made particular mention of the role of Nehru’s government in the Indonesian Conference.

⁴⁴⁶ ‘Top Secret Telegram from Dr S Alagappan to GS Bajpai (2 February, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1142–IANZ/49.

informed their colleagues in Batavia that the United States did not have a clear attitude towards the Dutch attitude vis-à-vis the Security Council Resolution.⁴⁴⁷ It seemed that they were refraining from providing conclusive statements until the American Representative on the UNCI, Merle Cochran visited Batavia.⁴⁴⁸ Cochran was to fly to Batavia via India, where he met with the United States ambassador to India, Loy Henderson at New Delhi airport. He informed the latter that frank discussions were being held with The Hague.⁴⁴⁹ Running out of patience with the pace of negotiations, India decided to make known to the great powers that their status was being called to question. Indian representatives in the United States and the United Kingdom were instructed to inform the respective governments that “unless they substitute for persuasion and advice, action which would ensure compliance by Dutch...their prestige no less that of the Council [would] suffer greatly in the estimation of the nations of Asia.”⁴⁵⁰ The region had now become a powerful grouping of nations that India could now leverage when engaging with the great powers on the Indonesian question. Keeping with its commitments at the Delhi conference, countries attending it were made aware of this correspondence and informed that efforts such as these were essential to lift the Indonesian Question from its dangerous state of stagnation.⁴⁵¹ India had also raised the possibility of placing sanctions on the Dutch with Delhi conference members.⁴⁵² Indeed, India’s pressure tactics had proved successful to the

⁴⁴⁷ ‘Top Secret Telegram from Republican Representative Dr Palar to Sjahrir, Supmo and Hatta, via the India Delegation in New York (2 February, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1142-IANZ/49.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ ‘Top Secret Telegram from GS Bajpai to Rama Rau (16 February, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1142-IANZ/49.

⁴⁵⁰ ‘Secret Telegram from GS Bajpai to Rama Rau and Menon (22 February, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, no. 1142-IANZ/49.

⁴⁵¹ ‘Secret Telegram from GS Bajpai to Rama Rau and Menon (22 February, 1949)’.

⁴⁵² ‘Secret Telegram from GS Bajpai to the Indian Embassy Kabul, Rangoon, Cairo, Tehran Nanking, Khantmandu, Bangkok and High Commission of India in Canberra, Colombo, Karachi, London and Indian Delegation in New York (22 February, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1142-IANZ/49.

overall efforts in negotiating with the Dutch. When confronted with further attempts by the Dutch to bypass the Security Council, Cochran stated that doing so would cause either Australia or India to register “strong objections to this plan with the Indonesian Republicans and the Security Council”.⁴⁵³

The Security Council met in the second week of March, 1949 and after discussing Indonesia for two weeks, passed a Canadian resolution directing preliminary talks in Indonesia on the restoration of Republican authority in Jogjakarta and the convening of a Round Table Conference in the Hague aimed at creating an independent Indonesian Federation.⁴⁵⁴ Even with this apparent progress, Delhi was receiving constant reports that the Dutch were blowing up buildings in Batavia making them impossible to use⁴⁵⁵ and that prominent Republican leaders were also being arrested.⁴⁵⁶ India’s dissatisfaction with the Canadian proposal was directly communicated to the United Nations Secretary General, stating that there was “no reason why [it] should support it in any way...”⁴⁵⁷ In early April, Australia and India jointly placed the Indonesian Question on the General Assembly agenda, but given a reported agreement between the Dutch and Republican delegation in Batavia, it was postponed to the fourth session of the Assembly to meet in September 1949.⁴⁵⁸ Simultaneously, India

⁴⁵³ ‘Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Southeast Asian Affairs (25 February, 1949)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East and Australasia VII, Part 1*, ed. John G Reid, Document 184, (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1949v07p1/d184>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁴⁵⁴ See Taylor, *Indonesian Independence and the United Nations*, 204.

⁴⁵⁵ ‘Top Secret Telegram from Indian Ministry of External Affairs to Indian High Commission in the United Kingdom and Indian Delegation in New York (18 March, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, 1142-IANZ/49.

⁴⁵⁶ ‘Secret Telegram from S Alagappan to GS Bajpai (18 March, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1142-IANZ/49; ‘Secret Telegram from S Alagappan to G Bajpai (19 March, 1949)’, *National Archives of India*, MEA Files, no. 1142-IANZ/49.

⁴⁵⁷ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Note to Secretary-General on the Canadian Proposal in the UNO (18 March, 1949)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 10*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1991), 381–82.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘Review of Events in Indonesia Prepared by PRS Mani for the Government of India from 23 January to 7 May 1949’, *National Archives of India* MEA Files, no. 893-IANZ/49.

also hosted an informal meeting of Delhi Conference members.⁴⁵⁹ It was decided that, in case no settlement was reached in Batavia, governments should instruct their delegations to the United Nations General Assembly to condemn the failure of the Dutch to comply with the Security Council's resolution of January 28. The question of recommending to the Security Council that sanctions should be placed on the Dutch was also raised.⁴⁶⁰

Between April and May, formal and informal talks had begun between the Republic and the Dutch on May 7, delegations from the Republic and the Netherlands met under the auspices of the United Nations Commission on Indonesia. Amongst other terms, both parties agreed to issue ceasefires, restore Jogjakarta to the Republic and to schedule a Round Table Conference at The Hague to facilitate unconditional transfer to real and complete sovereignty to the United States of Indonesia in accordance with Renville principles. The Round Table Conference was scheduled for August 1949. The Conference began on a hopeful note, but issues emerged between the Dutch and Republican leaders that risked the break-up of the conference completely. This was prevented by Cochran who offered to mediate some of the key issues in his personal capacity. The conference closed on November 2 and despite leaving some major issues unresolved, it had achieved its overarching goal of paving the way for complete and unconditional transfer of sovereignty to the independent state of Indonesia.

⁴⁵⁹ Nehru conveyed his desire to host the informal conference to the UN Secretary General. See Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Note to Secretary-General on Indonesia in the Security Council (31 March, 1949)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 10*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1991), 383–84.

⁴⁶⁰ 'Review of Events in Indonesia Prepared by PRS Mani for the Government of India from 23 January to 7 May 1949'.

4.6 Conclusion: Rethinking Regions and Status in International Relations – India’s role in Indonesia’s Decolonisation Struggle

The Indonesian decolonisation struggle from 1945-1949 was one of the first tests of global diplomacy in a post-war world. It occurred as global order transitioned from one centred on European imperialism to one determined by the logics of the Cold War. With Japan no longer in the position it was before the Second World War, and, as the one of the first ‘Asian’ countries to free itself from European imperialism, a space was created for India to build and represent the region at the global level, of which Indonesia was a part. This chapter discusses India’s significant yet understudied role in pressuring the Dutch to cease attempts to restore empire in Indonesia. Given its multi-archival approach, it has been able to trace how Indian involvement impacted the management of the crisis at the global level. Four main forms of Indian activism have been identified: first, through direct action in favour of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of risky rescue operations for Indonesian leaders, giving them refuge in India and imposing limited sanctions against the Dutch. Second, by amassing and representing an ‘Asian’ position on the Indonesian question at global forums (the United Nations being the most important). Third, by exerting diplomatic pressure on Western great powers to use their influence to limit Dutch action in Indonesia and fourth, by becoming a major diplomatic channel with which the former could communicate with leaders from Indonesian Republic and vice versa, hastening the return of peace in the archipelago.

Through its analysis of the nature of India’s involvement in the Indonesian question, this chapter has made two overarching arguments. First, the crisis was prioritised by the Indian foreign policy establishment as Indonesia was regarded as fellow member

of the 'Asian' region. Second, that the framing of the situation in Indonesia in regional terms and activism on this front, enabled its claims to status in a post-war world. By framing the Indonesian crisis in 'regional' terms the chapter unpacks how India facilitated the territorial, symbolic and institutional 'building' of Asia, intact with insiders and outsiders. The repetition and consistency of its discourses and practices associated with this 'regional' framing of the crisis made actors both within and beyond 'the region' refer to it in these terms. The chapter therefore makes the case that given the audience recognition, India was successful in establishing and breathing the 'Asian region' into life through its activism on the Indonesian question. This enabled the recognition of India as representative of a group of the decolonising states that included a vast part of the world, increasing the way it was esteemed by the Western great powers, especially the United States.

In the initial stages, when the SEAC was commissioned to the archipelago in 1945, India declared that its own troops would not be used for "keeping down the peoples of colonial territories."⁴⁶¹ Even in these early stages, it defined itself as "torch-bearer in the liberation movement of Asiatic countries", and encouraged neighbouring countries to follow suit.⁴⁶² With the formation of its interim government, India's 'regional' activism on the Indonesian question gathered momentum. The Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in March 1947 saw the representation of a large Indonesian delegation, which was made possible through Indian arrangements. This gave them a platform amongst other 'Asian' nations to make known their struggle against the Dutch. The Conference therefore became a venue that turned the Indonesian decolonisation struggle into one of 'regional' concern.

⁴⁶¹ Nehru, 'Statement to the Press: The Use of Indian Troops in Indonesia (1 October, 1945)'.

⁴⁶² Nehru; Nehru, 'Address at South East Asia Day Meeting, Lucknow: India's Lead in Asian Liberation (28 October, 1945)'.

Indian activism peaked after the first Dutch police action against the Republic in July 1947. On receiving first-hand reports on the situation in Indonesia, Nehru remarked: the “presence of a colonial regime or of foreign troops” was “an insult and a challenge to Asia.”⁴⁶³ Soon after the first police action, India raised the possibility of bringing the Indonesian question before the Security Council in the event that Anglo-American mediation would fail. At this stage, it seemed that even the United States had bought into the regional framing of the Indonesian crisis. American policy makers reasoned that as Dutch action had been condemned by ‘Asian’ countries, indifference on Dutch action in Indonesia, it would possibly cause “immeasurable damage to American prestige” in the region.⁴⁶⁴ India eventually brought the Indonesian question to the Security Council and made arrangements for the Indonesian Republic to present its case before the United Nations. At this platform, India’s ‘regional’ framing of the crisis was reproduced by the Indian representative to the United Nations Padmanabha Pillai, who asserted that “[t]he fact that foreign armies are functioning on Asian soil is itself an outrage against Asian sentiment... This is the general feeling, not only in India, but throughout the whole of Asia.”⁴⁶⁵

Later that year, in order for it to receive on ground information in Indonesia, New Delhi put a system in place through the setting up of its Counsel General in Batavia. In addition to feeding the Ministry of External Affairs with updates, it played a critical role in the facilitating diplomatic efforts to negotiate a truce between the Dutch and

⁴⁶³ Nehru, ‘Interview to the Press, Delhi: The War in Indonesia (28 July, 1947)’.

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Memorandum by the Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs to the Counsellor (29 July, 1947)’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Far East VI*, ed. John G Reid, Document 795 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v06/d795>, accessed 11 September 2018.

⁴⁶⁵ Security council Official Records (SCOR), 2nd year, 192nd meeting, 22 August 1947, p. 2153-4.

the Indonesian Republic.⁴⁶⁶ This was specifically notable through India's role in the signing of the important – yet temporary - Renville Agreement between the Republic and the Dutch in early 1948.

As the situation in Indonesia failed to improve after Renville, it had become clear to India that the dynamics of the Cold War, through instruments such as the Western Union and Marshall Plan were preventing the Western great powers from taking serious action against the Dutch. By the end of 1948, this was communicated to the United States and United Kingdom through its envoys in these countries, in the most blatant terms.⁴⁶⁷ It was also emphasised in this correspondence that India was watching their response to the Dutch in the context of developments of the entire 'Asian region'.⁴⁶⁸ It took this a step further when it declared the end of imperialism in 'Asia' as the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy when addressing a plenary session of the Indian National Congress in December 1948.⁴⁶⁹ As India kept the pressure on the United States and the United Kingdom during this period, similar to its response to the first police action in Indonesia, it was prepared to undertake another risky rescue operation for Indonesian leaders in late 1948.

In 1949, given its disappointment with Anglo-American diplomacy, India hosted two conferences – a 'formal' and 'informal' one that gathered members of the 'region' that were "intimately connected by geography" to assist United Nations-led international

⁴⁶⁶ Secret correspondence from Raghavan to Nehru, National Archives of India, File No 185-FEA/47.

⁴⁶⁷ Nehru, 'Cable to Indian Envoys in United States and Britain (15 December, 1948)'.

⁴⁶⁸ Nehru.

⁴⁶⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Address at the Plenary Session of the Indian National Congress, Jaipur: Imperialism Has to End (19 December, 1948)', in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series 2, Volume 8*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Fund and Oxford University Press, 1989), 383–84.

diplomatic efforts on the Indonesian question.⁴⁷⁰ Nineteen nations gathered in New Delhi in January 1949, “representing more than half of the world's population, spread over an area extending from the Mediterranean to the South Pole”⁴⁷¹ to establish a “prompt and just settlement of the Indonesian problem.”⁴⁷² The New Delhi Conference on Indonesia played an important part in institutionalising the ‘region’, as, in addition to India’s efforts to frame the Indonesian question as an ‘Asian’ one, it now had a conference to show for it. Most importantly, the conference encouraged the formation of a regional network through the ‘Delhi conference members’ that kept each other informed over the situation in Indonesia and agreed to collectively keep diplomatic pressure on the Western great powers.⁴⁷³

The repetition and consistency of its discourses and practices associated with this ‘regional’ framing of the Indonesian question from 1945-1949 made actors both within and beyond ‘Asia’ to refer to in these terms. Indonesian leaders constantly reached out to India for diplomatic and material support, ‘Delhi Conference members’ responded positively to India’s regionalising efforts and the United States also began thinking of the Indonesian crisis in terms of the Asian region. These were all indications that the ‘region’ that India sought to build through its activism on the Indonesian question had indeed been recognised. As discussed in the previous chapter, for India through the Nehru years (especially the early part of this period), its claims to status were centred on its entitlement to an independent voice in world affairs.⁴⁷⁴ Being seen as

⁴⁷⁰ Nehru, ‘Speech in a Public Meeting, Allahabad: Resistance to Imperialism in Asia (2 January, 1949)’.

⁴⁷¹ ‘Broadcast on All India Radio by H Dayal (25 January, 1949)’ *National Archives of the Netherlands*, box no. 2.05.290, inventory no. 00184.

⁴⁷² Nehru, ‘Cable to Indian Representatives in Cairo, Ankara, Rangoon, Nanking, Tehran, Kabul, Karachi and Colombo: Appeal to United Nations by Asian Countries (30 December, 1948)’.

⁴⁷³ ‘Secret Telegram from GS Bajpai to Rama Rau and Menon (22 February, 1949)’.

⁴⁷⁴ Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘Bonds between India and China: Address to Sino-Indian Cultrual Society, Santiniketan (23 December, 1945)’, in *Selected Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, Series I, Volume 14*, ed. Sarvepalli Gopal (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1981), 465.

representative of the 'Asian voice' that included a vast 'region' of the decolonising world, was considered vital to that strategy. India's regional activism on the Indonesian case increased the way it was esteemed by the Western great powers, especially the United States. Given the progress made at the Delhi Conference, the Truman Administration was convinced that an Asian grouping would not survive without Indian participation and leadership.⁴⁷⁵ Furthermore, later in 1949, Nehru was to visit the United States for the first time. In the lead up to the visit, United States Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote to Truman stating that "Mr. Nehru is today and probably will be for some-time the dominant political force in Asia."⁴⁷⁶

Through its study of India's role in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle, this chapter has aimed at providing an empirically grounded understanding of how India established links between its 'geographic place' (region) and 'social place' (status) in the conduct of its foreign policy. It has established that the way in which India defined the region and its discourses and practices associated with that process, was informed by its claims to status. By establishing itself as the centre of the 'Asian' region enabled it to be recognised as a voice of a decolonising Asia. This increased the way it was esteemed at the global level.

⁴⁷⁵ Papers of Harry S Truman, Box 158: President's Secretary Files, Sub File: Foreign Affairs, 'Nehru, Jawaharlal' Harry S Truman Museum and Library, Independence city, Missouri. This particular quote was present in Truman's briefing papers prior to Nehru's visit in the United States October 3, 1949.

⁴⁷⁶ Dennis Merrill, 'Indo-American Relations, 1947-50: A Missed Opportunity in Asia', *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 3 (1987): 219.

CHAPTER 5

“To Recreate an Overarching Asian identity”

Region-building and Status-seeking in a Post-Cold War

World⁴⁷⁷

“Mr Chairman, India has already taken steps to liberalise its currency regime, open the economy to more imports and investment, and educate its people to the benefits of exposure to the outside world. The Asia-Pacific could be the springboard for our leap into the global market-place” - P.V Narasimha Rao, 1994⁴⁷⁸

....

5.1 Introduction

On the 9th of November 1989, millions celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Cold War began to thaw across Europe. Two years later, the Soviet flag lowered from the Kremlin for the last time only to be replaced by the Russian Tricolour. While many in the West were quick to realise the ‘end of history’,⁴⁷⁹ India had little to celebrate. It was plodding through a series of strategic and economic disasters during this period. Its peacekeeping mission in Sri Lanka was a dubious failure and this culminated in the assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by a member of the Tamil militant outfit, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Domestically, its

⁴⁷⁷ Khurshid, ‘Forward’.

⁴⁷⁸ Narasimha Rao, *India and the Asia-Pacific: Forging a New Relationship (24 September, 1994)*, *Singapore Lecture Series* (Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, 1995), 16.

⁴⁷⁹ Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest*, 1989.

economy was in shambles, leading to a balance of payments crisis in July of 1991. At the global level, the collapse of the Soviet Union left India with almost no friends at the high table and without an important (though flawed) model of centralised economic planning.⁴⁸⁰ “It was obvious” noted Preet Malik, former Ambassador and Secretary of New Delhi’s Ministry of External Affairs, “that a country like India had to take a fresh look at its strategic and security requirements and see how it would best be able to realise its potential in a rapidly changing world.”⁴⁸¹ While this manifested in different ways, it encouraged a revised understanding of its region from ‘South Asia’ to the ‘Asia-Pacific’. Drawing on published diplomatic accounts, speeches of Indian foreign policy elites and policy reports on this period, this chapter studies how India implemented a region-building project to rebuild the existing ‘Asia-Pacific’ region into one that included India. It argues that India found value in being recognised as part of this region, to its search for status in a post-Cold War world.

As discussed in the end of Chapter 3, in the post-Nehru era, India had changed its strategy of navigating the bipolar world of the Cold War. Setting its priorities on increasing its material power and managing security at its periphery, it undertook a project to ‘build’ its region as ‘South Asia’, as a space in which it would be recognised as a preponderant power. To that end, it invested resources in the project and engaged in a series of military interventions within South Asia to keep it in line with its interests. As its failed peacekeeping mission in Sri Lanka revealed however, the project was evidently coming at a heavy cost. Indian leaders came to the understanding that recognition as an economically inward and not entirely successful South Asian

⁴⁸⁰ Christophe Jaffrelot, *India’s Look East Policy: An Asianist Strategy in Perspective*, *India Review*, vol. 2, 2003, 45.

⁴⁸¹ Preet Malik, ‘India’s Look East Policy: Genesis’, in *Two Decades of India’s Look East Policy*, ed. Amar Nath Ram (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 32. Malik was a former Ambassador and Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

hegemon would hardly win India favour in the context of a new world order. The latter was characterised by the global primacy of the United States and was organised around open markets, security alliances, multilateral cooperation, and democratic community.⁴⁸² This order was also underpinned by the rise of China, which was showing signs of rapidly becoming a major global economy. Given these shifts at the global level, the Indian foreign policy establishment worked to rethink “the manner [in which India] could come to influence the new international order,”⁴⁸³ and it was reasoned that an important way of doing this was, as former Minister of State in India’s Ministry of External Affairs Salman Khurshid recounted, to “recreate an overarching Asian identity” by looking to the Asia-Pacific.⁴⁸⁴

As India turned to this region, the latter had come to include some of the world’s largest, populous and, in economic and military terms, most powerful states including the United States, Japan, China and Australia. These were enmeshed in webs of American-led alliances and multilateral institutional arrangements, most of them hosted by ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations).⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, the Asia-Pacific was known for surge in its economic growth and carried with it the transformative, success stories of the ‘Asian Tigers’. With the end of the Cold War, Indian foreign policy elites realised that collaboratively, the region had managed to

⁴⁸² G. John Ikenberry, ‘Power and Liberal Order: America’s Postwar World Order in Transition’, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005): 133; Hal Brands, *Making the Unipolar Moment: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Rise of the Post-Cold War Order* (Ithaca, New York, London: Cornell University Press, 2016).

⁴⁸³ Malik, ‘India’s Look East Policy: Genesis’, 32. Malik was a former Ambassador and Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

⁴⁸⁴ Khurshid, ‘Forward’, 9. Salman Khurshid was the former Union Minister of State for External Affairs (1993–1996).

⁴⁸⁵ See Seng Tan, ‘Introduction: From “Pacific Asia” to “Asia Pacific”’, in *The Making of the Asia Pacific: Knowledge Brokers and the Politics of Representation* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2013), 87. On Southeast Asia and enmeshment in the post-Cold War world, see Goh, ‘Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies’.

amass critical economic and strategic weight in the world. Engaging with this region had the potential to enhance its status at the global level. Consequently, India launched its Look East Policy (LEP) in the early 1990s. While, as the name suggests, LEP involved a turn to and prioritisation of the Asia-Pacific in its foreign policy, this chapter establishes that the policy reflected an effort to rebuild this region as a geographic space that would include India. By examining the discourses and practices that underpinned LEP, this chapter identifies that three stages of region-building were at work through its implementation: territorial shaping through an emphasis on India's geographical presence in the Asia-Pacific region through time; symbolic shaping through a constant emphasis on its agreement and execution of the key economic ideas that came to define and symbolise the region; and, institutional shaping by investing diplomatic resources to work its way through the hierarchy of ASEAN-centred institutions in the region. Having undertaken these efforts over two decades, India was, to a large extent, recognised as a member of the Asia-Pacific and this boded well for its status. This, however, was not entirely seamless and the project was constantly contested and constrained.

This chapter proceeds in four sections. Section one expands on the strategic backdrop that marked India's exclusion from the Asia-Pacific region in the context of the Cold War. It traces in particular, India's decisions to anchor itself in South Asia during this period, and, to build it as a region in which it would be seen as the preponderant power. It establishes that while this initially worked to enhance its status, by the 80s, it began to prove otherwise. Section two discusses India's turn to the Asia-Pacific towards the end of the Cold War and the roll out of its project to rebuild this region through LEP. Section three reviews the development of its LEP over two decades and elaborates on the successful yet contested nature of India's membership in the

region. The final section ties these sections together by reflecting on the region-global links that underpinned its Asia-Pacific project over this period. It further discusses that the term 'Asia-Pacific' is being replaced by that of the 'Indo-Pacific' at the time of writing. While the latter also has its origins outside India, much unlike it, Indian membership within it has been welcomed and considered vital to it. It suggests that this in itself is a reflection of the long-term success of the Asia-Pacific project that it pursued as part of its strategy to navigate a post-Cold War world.

5.2 From South Asia to the Asia-Pacific: Origins of the Shift

As established in Chapters 3 and 4, with the onset of the post-war order in 1945, one of the ways with which India mapped its route to higher status, was through its role as a global peacemaker, spatialising its region an Asian 'area of peace' where foreign intervention and great power politics would be actively resisted. As this project was challenged by its foreign policy setbacks of late 60s, it reassessed its role from that of a peacemaker, to one of a security-seeker.⁴⁸⁶ This change of strategy urged a re-interpretation of the dynamics of the Cold War in the 60s in terms of their direct security impact on India and its immediate periphery.⁴⁸⁷ Its periphery was framed as 'South Asia' and this set into motion a region-building project that involved constructing a geographic space, centred on Indian preponderance. This project was predominantly associated with the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and it was under her leadership that India became known to have its own version of the Monroe doctrine, known as the 'Indira doctrine' that opposed the presence of external powers

⁴⁸⁶ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 194–221. See also: Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 55–81.

⁴⁸⁷ Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies During the Cold War*, 212.

in the Indian Ocean or South Asia, as this would be considered inimical to its national interests.⁴⁸⁸

India's 1971 War with Pakistan that resulted in the formation of the independent state of Bangladesh, was an early demonstration of the status enabling potential of its South Asia project. Prior to the War, India had signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. Concerned how this would be perceived in the United States, India decided to pursue the Treaty once it was certain that the former would be unable to help India should China intervene in the War.⁴⁸⁹ Having met its objectives met through a short war and displaying clear signs of military restraint, India emerged victorious with its status enhanced. At the end of the war, a memorandum was prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency in Washington, recognising India as the "dominant power in South Asia."⁴⁹⁰ The report even made reference to its Treaty with the Soviet Union and stated that "no longer faced by a strong and hostile Pakistani military machine [India] would feel less beholden to the Soviets than today, less amenable to Soviet requests which offend its sense of dignity or sovereignty."⁴⁹¹ In this way, despite the Treaty, India was not perceived as a Soviet satellite, and the United States sought to improve bilateral relations at the aftermath of the 1971 war.⁴⁹² Writing to Indira Gandhi after the war, President Nixon noted that the United States "recognise[s] that India is a major Asian power and that...[n]o

⁴⁸⁸ Mansingh, 'Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?', 115.

⁴⁸⁹ Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*, *Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 127.

⁴⁹⁰ 'Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, (9 December 1971)' *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Documents on South Asia 1969–1972, ed. Louis J. Smith, Document 170 (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 2005), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve07/d170>, accessed March 18, 2020.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹² Rudra Chaudhuri, *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 170.

act has been taken with a desire to damage the relationship between [the] two great countries.”⁴⁹³ The President had in fact, intended for this be released to the press.⁴⁹⁴

In the aftermath of the war, elite discourses helped legitimise India’s position as a regional hegemon. In her article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1972 for instance, Indira Gandhi elaborated that though India had no part in the internal and external developments of East or West Pakistan, Bangladesh belonged to *its* subcontinent and this was something India could not ignore.⁴⁹⁵ She emphasised that the “subcontinent” was of India’s “special concern” and had “significance beyond geographical frontiers.”⁴⁹⁶ Furthermore, she stated that India’s policies vis-à-vis “some major powers”, were “intimately connected with their attitudes to the subcontinent as a whole.”⁴⁹⁷ By framing Indian foreign policy priorities through the lens of the subcontinent, discourses such as these contributed to producing the reality that South Asia could not escape Indian preponderance. The region was delimited on Indian terms (Gandhi used the term “geographic frontiers”) and its extra-regional engagement would not be isolated from it. In line with these discourses, India undertook a range of policies post-1971 that established itself as the only legitimate state to intervene in the region.⁴⁹⁸ This included its absorption of the protectorate of Sikkim in 1975, conducting a military exercise code-named Operation Brasstacks in the 1980s,⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹³Letter from President Nixon to Indian Prime Minister Gandhi’ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XI, South Asia Crisis, 1971* ed. Louis J. Smith, Document 326, (Washington, D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 2005), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v11/d326>, accessed March 18, 2020.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, footnote 1.

⁴⁹⁵ The article read: “Bangladesh, however, was a part of *our* subcontinent. How could we ignore a conflict which took place on our very border and overflowed into our own territory?” See Indira Gandhi, ‘India and the World’, *Foreign Affairs* 51, no. 1 (1972): 70. Emphasis added.

⁴⁹⁶ Gandhi, 76.

⁴⁹⁷ Gandhi, 76.

⁴⁹⁸ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 69.

⁴⁹⁹ Kanti P Bajpai, *Brasstacks and beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995); Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’.

carrying out military interventions in Sri Lanka (1987–90) and the Maldives (1988) and its economic blockade of Nepal (1989–90). Over this period, India came to be recognised as “a regional superpower” that was rapidly “emerging” as “a global military power.”⁵⁰⁰

At the same time however, the ability of its South Asia project to enable its status at the global level were also limited. Pakistan’s procurement of arms from the United States and China and subsequent acquisition of nuclear weapons presented a strong challenge to India as the region’s central power with unfettered influence. Similarly, as discussed above, its involvement in the Sri Lankan civil war, dragged it into a long and costly war with the militant Liberation of Tamil Tigers Elam (LTTE). These failures called into question India’s larger strategy of ‘building’ an Indo-centric South Asia, by “fencing off” the region from outsiders.⁵⁰¹ Furthermore, the establishment of SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) in 1985 as a forum to promote economic and regional integration in South Asia was unable to survive the enduring rivalry between India and Pakistan, and remained unsuccessful in its aspiration of creating the conditions for a diplomatic climate within which the conflict between the two could be ameliorated.⁵⁰² As scholars have attributed the “Indo-centricity”⁵⁰³ or the “geographical structure”⁵⁰⁴ for the failure of regionalisation of

⁵⁰⁰ Munro and Hagerty in Manjeet S. Pardesi, ‘Is India a Great Power? Understanding Great Power Status in Contemporary International Relations’, *Asian Security* 11, no. 1 (2015): 1–30.

⁵⁰¹ Bajpai, ‘Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia’, 218. For more work on the

⁵⁰² Partha S Ghosh, ‘An Enigma That Is South Asia : India versus the Region’, *Asia-Pacific Review* 20, no. 1 (2013): 100–120; Partha S Ghosh, ‘Region without Regionalism’, *Economic and Political Weekly* 32 (2016); Destradi, *Indian Foreign and Security Policy in South Asia : Regional Power Strategies*; Bajpai, ‘Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia’; Mitra, ‘The Reluctant Hegemon: India’s Self-Perception and the South Asian Strategic Environment’; Mohammed Ayoob, ‘The Primacy of the Political: South Asian Regional Cooperation (SARC) in Comparative Perspective’, *Asian Survey* 25, no. 4 (1985): 443–57.

⁵⁰³ Ghosh, ‘An Enigma That Is South Asia : India versus the Region’, 106.

⁵⁰⁴ Bajpai, ‘Regions, Regional Politics and the Security of South Asia’, 221.

South Asia, it can also be argued that the region-building project of *generating* an Indo-centric region that did not entirely work.

This project was also quite directly undermined in light of the power-political reality of its rising, north-eastern neighbour. Alongside the overtures made by both India and China to forge diplomatic relations since the late 70's and 80s,⁵⁰⁵ strategic partnerships between China and many of India's neighbours began emerging.⁵⁰⁶ In November 1985 for instance, a 3000-ton guided missile destroyer and Chinese ship headed by a commander of China's Eastern Fleet, called at Colombo for a friendly visit. This came only a week after ships had visited Karachi.⁵⁰⁷ Furthermore, an arms' deal of \$20 million was struck between Nepal and China's North China Industrial Cooperation.⁵⁰⁸ In the late 80s, high-profile visits were made by Chinese Premier Li Peng to Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan, assuring them of China's support in safeguarding their independence and sovereignty and developing their economies.⁵⁰⁹ For Indian elites, China's rise and growing relations with its neighbours was indeed a concern to both its security and status.⁵¹⁰ As former Indian Prime

⁵⁰⁵ From 1962-64, China-India relations had collapsed as a consequence of the China-India border war of 1962. For an insight into China-India Rapprochement of the 80s, see John W Garver, 'Sino-Indian Rapprochement and the Sino-Pakistan Entente', *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 2 (1996): 323-47.

⁵⁰⁶ This is not to suggest that China's strategic relations with all of India's neighbours only began in the 80s. China-Pakistan strategic relations were formally established in the 1960s, not long after the China-India War of 1962. What is implied here is the scale and of these relations with India's neighbours increased. See Andrew Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 32.

⁵⁰⁷ John W Garver, 'China and South Asia', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 519 (1992): 74.

⁵⁰⁸ Garver, 76.

⁵⁰⁹ Garver, 77.

⁵¹⁰ In his memoirs, former foreign secretary (1991-1994) JN Dixit notes that India should remain cautious of evolving Chinese strategies in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. See J.N. Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1996), 252. For an overview of how China's rise and relations with India's neighbours were perceived by India in the late 80s and early 90s, see J. Mohan Malik, 'Sino-Indian Relations and India's Eastern Strategy', in *India Looks East: An Emerging Power and Its Asia-Pacific Neighbours*, ed. Sandy Gordon and Stephen Henningham (Canberra: Australian National University, 1995), 119-63.

Minister Narasimha Rao had once recounted, while joint Sino-Indian projects would benefit South Asian prosperity, it would enhance the growth of Chinese influence in South Asia, much to India's detriment.⁵¹¹ Indeed, India perceived China's rise not only as security threat, but one that directly undermined its South Asian hegemony.

The challenges to India's status-seeking project came not just from China's rise in South Asia, but also in the world. Since the late 70s, China began pursuing an aggressive foreign direct investment strategy overseas, in tune with its national strategic interests.⁵¹² The increase of wealth in Chinese state coffers in the 80s was also accompanied by an intensive build-up in its naval modernisation.⁵¹³ While concerns of China's rise were expressed globally, it seemed that world had come around to acknowledge – if not fully accept – the increase in China's material wealth and status. By 1989, China was a member of several elite global clubs and groupings. It was a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, the opening up of its economy gained it observer status within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and despite the Tiananmen Square incident of 1989, the United States was working towards 'renormalising' its relations with the People's Republic and relaxing or lifting the sanctions imposed on it.⁵¹⁴ While China seemed to be having its global moment, India was simply not in that league. Indian foreign policy elites

⁵¹¹ Vinay Sitapati, *Half Lion: How P.V. Narasimha Rao Transformed India* (New Delhi: Viking, 2016), 266.

⁵¹² Hsiu Ling Wu and Chien Hsun Chen, 'An Assessment of Outward Foreign Direct Investment from China's Transitional Economy', *Europe - Asia Studies* 53, no. 8 (2001): 1235–54.

⁵¹³ Since the end of the 70s, China had embarked on its journey of economic liberalisation. This initially took the form of subsidised export-led growth that was then followed by concerted efforts to increase foreign direct investment. While this transition meant a withdrawal of the Chinese State from the operation of its economy, it was distinct in the sense that the State still maintained majority shares in many industries that had a national security and social service (oil, electricity, water and so on). See You Ji and You Xu, 'In Search of Blue Water Power: The PLA Navy's Maritime Strategy in the 1990s', *Pacific Review* 4, no. 2 (1991): 137.

⁵¹⁴ Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1992), 247.

became aware of how remarkably low India's social position seemed at the end of the Cold War, especially when compared to China. As a former diplomat Prabhakar Menon recounted, China was seen as the "hefty bodybuilder that has markedly stripped his Asian counterpart's (India's) comparatively harum-scarum appearance..."⁵¹⁵

With the end of the Cold War, shifts in the global strategic landscape engineered a rethink in its strategy to navigate a new world order. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, India had lost its crucial anchor of its foreign policy expressed in the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Alliance Cooperation. India found itself in a global order centred around the United States.⁵¹⁶ Indeed, its relations with the sole superpower were certainly nothing to write home about. Until 1991, Indian affairs fell under the Near East and South Asian bureau of the State Department, that resisted having a separate bureau for the latter. As a result, relations with India were handled by an assistant secretary four levels removed from the Secretary of State.⁵¹⁷ This was replicated in the House of Representatives which lumped South Asia with the 'Near East' where it was overshadowed by Arab-Israeli affairs or with 'Asia and the Pacific' where the Vietnam War and relations with China and Japan were prioritised.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore, in the eyes of the United States, India's regional aspirations needed to be curtailed. Its Defence Planning Guide that was leaked to the New York Times in March 1992, revealed that the United States had a long-term goal of curbing India's

⁵¹⁵ Prabhakar Menon, 'India and the World East of It - Past and Present: An Impressionistic Account', in *Two Decades of India's Look East Policy*, ed. Amar Nath Ram (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 120. Menon was a former ambassador (1982-89) and Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (1989-1996)

⁵¹⁶ James Chiriyankandath, 'Realigning India: Indian Foreign Policy after the Cold War', *Round Table* 8533, no. 374 (2004): 199.

⁵¹⁷ Arthur G. Rubinoff, 'Missed Opportunities and Contradictory Policies: Indo-American Relations in the Clinton-Rao Years', *Pacific Affairs* 69, no. 4 (1996): 501.

⁵¹⁸ Rubinoff, 501.

'hegemonic aspirations' in South Asia.⁵¹⁹ In many ways therefore, India's strategy of establishing the South Asian region proved to win it less favour with the surviving global superpower by the end of the Cold War.

With these shifts at the global level, it had started to become apparent to foreign policy elites that India had missed several opportunities to partake in the regionalising trends of the mid 80s and 90s. The (new) regionalism of this period was not centred on protectionist trading schemes or security cooperation. Instead, it boasted of a multidimensional and pluralistic nature with varied institutional designs, in which business and civil society actors played an active role.⁵²⁰ Though this was not entirely overlooked with the formation of SAARC in 1985, Indian foreign policy elites believed that the institution struggled through the "fetters of its past" and it simply could not escape the shadow of the Indo-Pak relationship.⁵²¹ For them, SAARC "resembled a multi-coloured kite that could lift itself only a few inches above the ground because its fabric had holes in it."⁵²² Despite its establishment therefore, it did not capture the dynamism and opportunities that underpinned regionalism of the late Cold War period. In a world beyond SAARC, there had been the growth of region-to-region relations or 'interregionalism' that that came to exist in this period which took the form of North-South and East-West relationships.⁵²³ Moreover, this form

⁵¹⁹ Department of Defence, 'Context of 'February 18, 1992: 'Wolfowitz Doctrine:' Proposal Advocates US as World's Lone Superpower', History Commons , 1992, http://www.historycommons.org/context.jsp?item=us_international_relations_41, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁵²⁰ Fredrik Söderbaum, *Rethinking Regionalism*, Rethinking World Politics (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 27.

⁵²¹ Menon, 'India and the World East of It - Past and Present: An Impressionistic Account'. Menon was a former ambassador (1982-89) and Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office (1989-1996)

⁵²² Menon.

⁵²³ In 1977, the European Union had become a dialogue partner of ASEAN. This was formally institutionalised in 7th March 1980, with the signing of 'The ASEAN-EEC (European Economic Community) cooperation agreement'. See ASEAN.ORG, 'Overview of ASEAN-EU Dialogue Relations', ASEAN Secretariat's Information Paper, 2018, <https://asean.org/asean/external-relations/european-union/>, accessed 7 August 2020. On interregionalism, see Hettne Bjorn;

of 'open regionalism' was seen as a means to contribute to the process of global liberalisation and multilateralism rather than detracting from it.⁵²⁴ Exclusion from these regionalising moments therefore, in many ways also meant isolation from the global. Indian elites came to the realisation that as "[r]egional combinations had...proliferated around the world...India could not afford to remain isolated."⁵²⁵ With this in mind, Indian leaders were aware of the need to construct a new geography and carve out a new regional home for India in a post-Cold War world. India looked to the 'Asia-Pacific'.

While the term Asia-Pacific has a long and unique history, during the course of the Cold War, there were two key representations that had dominantly come to define this regional space: military-strategic and economic.⁵²⁶ The role of the United States was critical in establishing the shaping the former representation of the Asia-Pacific. It had its origins in the establishment of its 'San-Francisco System', which was designed as a post-war framework covering the region of Japan and its former colonies, to curb the possible re-emergence of Japanese militarism and offer reassurance to neighbouring countries against it in the form of security alliances with the United States.⁵²⁷ As the post-war order rapidly descended into one shaped by the Cold War, strategic interests of the United States shifted from one keeping Japan in check to the threat posed from the Chinese-Soviet alliance and the communist movements they inspired and possibly

Soderbaum Frederik, 'The New Regionalism Approach', *Politeia* 17, no. 3 (1998): 1149–61; Fredrik Söderbaum and Luk Van Langenhove, 'Introduction: The EU as a Global Actor and the Role of Interregionalism', *Journal of European Integration* 27, no. 3 (2005): 249–62.

⁵²⁴ Hettne Bjorn; Soderbaum Frederik, 'The New Regionalism Approach'.

⁵²⁵ Menon, 'India and the World East of It - Past and Present: An Impressionistic Account', 111.

⁵²⁶ Singh, 'From "Asia" to "Asia-Pacific": Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India's Regional Spaces', 15–17. On the history and genealogy of the term 'Asia-Pacific' see: Arif Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure', *Journal of World History* 3, no. 2 (1992): 55–79.

⁵²⁷ Kimie Hara, 'Rethinking the "Cold War" in the Asia-Pacific', *Pacific Review* 12, no. 4 (1999): 515–36; Leszek Buszynski, 'The San Francisco System: Contemporary Meaning and Challenges', *Asian Perspective* 35, no. 3 (2011): 315–35.

sponsored in that part of the world.⁵²⁸ It therefore sought to legitimise its interest in this region by framing this space as not just ‘Asia’ but the ‘Asia-Pacific,’ a geographic group which it was itself a part.⁵²⁹ This region-building project was given further impetus with the Sino-Soviet ‘split’ by the mid-to late 60s, in the course of which, President Lyndon Johnson made a 17 day trip to what was framed as the “Asian-Pacific Area”⁵³⁰ and the State Department’s “Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs” was renamed “East Asia and Pacific Affairs” not long after.⁵³¹ As the United States and China signed the Shanghai communiqué in 1972, signalling normalisation, both countries viewed each other as uneasy partners, seeking to retard the military-strategic aims of the Soviet Union within the ‘Asia-Pacific region’.⁵³² Consequently, the region came to be understood as the space that stretched from the United States military bases in the Pacific, to include its allies in Southeast and Northeast Asia, extending up to Australia and New Zealand.⁵³³

The economic representations of the Asia-Pacific on the other hand were, to a large extent, the result of region-building strategies of Japan. The Asia-Pacific had become a geographic frame of reference for Japanese and Australian intellectuals, who sought to foster a new economic dialogue between the nations of Asia and those of the Pacific in a post-war world.⁵³⁴ As Japan grew to become the third largest national economy in

⁵²⁸ Hara, ‘Rethinking the “Cold War” in the Asia-Pacific’, 519.

⁵²⁹ Singh, ‘From “Asia” to “Asia-Pacific”’: Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India’s Regional Spaces’, 15–17.

⁵³⁰ United States Department of State, ‘The Department of State Bulletin’, *The Official Weekly Record of United States Foreign Policy* 55, no. 1423 (1966): 806.

⁵³¹ Office of the Historian, ‘Administrative Timeline of the Department of State 1960-1969’, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/timeline/1960-1969>, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁵³² Singh, ‘From “Asia” to “Asia-Pacific”’: Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India’s Regional Spaces’, 15–17.

⁵³³ Renato D E Castro, ‘U.S. Grand Strategy in Post-Cold War Asia-Pacific’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 16, no. 3 (1994): 342–53.

⁵³⁴ Oba in Tadahiro Yoshida, ‘East Asian Regionalism and Japan’, *IDE APEC Working Paper Series 03/04*, no. 9 (2004): 1–27.

the world after the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1960s, a conversation around Pacific integration gained momentum the country, initially taking the form of a Free Trade Area proposal. Miki Taeko, who was the Foreign Minister at the time, took up the idea as his main foreign political platform and made use of the expression of the 'Asia Pacific age'.⁵³⁵ Miki believed that Pacific integration would be a solution to the 'North-South divide' in Asia. In this context, Japan's role was conceived as that of a bridge between Asia and the Pacific based on the idea that it was necessary for the 'haves' of the Pacific to give assistance to the 'have nots' of Asia.⁵³⁶ It was unsurprising therefore, that Miki's initiative was helpful in backing regionalising trends benefitting Japanese and Australian businesses, such as the Pacific Basin Economic Council (PEBC), which subsequently opened the participation of businesses from other Asian states.⁵³⁷ This evolved into policies of regional integration that involved tying Pacific advanced countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, to Japan and other Pacific Asian countries into mutually beneficial economic relationships so that a feeling of community would develop as they caught up with the advanced countries.⁵³⁸

By the late 70s, words and phrases like the 'Pacific region', 'Pacific basin' and 'Pacific Community' were frequently used at regional conferences.⁵³⁹ In 1977, the then Prime Minister of Japan Takeo Fukuda announced the 'Fukuda Doctrine' in the Philippines, after a very successful tour of Southeast Asia. He announced that Japan would officially become an 'equal partner' of Southeast Asian nations and walk hand-in-hand

⁵³⁵ Pekka Korhonen, *Japan and Asia Pacific Intergration: Pacific Romances 1968-1996* (London: Routledge, 1998), 104.

⁵³⁶ Takashi Terada, 'The Origins of Japan's APEC Policy: Foreign Minister Takeo Miki's Asia-Pacific Policy and Current Implications', *Pacific Review* 11, no. 3 (1998): 342.

⁵³⁷ Yoshida, 'East Asian Regionalism and Japan', 2.

⁵³⁸ Korhonen, *Japan and Asia Pacific Intergration: Pacific Romances 1968-1996*, 107.

⁵³⁹ Korhonen, 112.

with ASEAN.⁵⁴⁰ ASEAN provided institutional capital to the Asia-Pacific region. Established in 1967 out of a common fear of indigenous communist insurgencies, it had proven its ability as an institution to provide political solutions to regional problems such as the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. It had been able to demonstrate its own way – ‘the ASEAN way’ of resolving disputes following a code of conduct for inter-state behaviour as well as a decision-making process based on consultations and consensus.⁵⁴¹ This framework of regional cooperation was promoted by it as the organising framework of multilateralism institution-building at the wider level of the Asia-Pacific.⁵⁴²

With the economic growth of ASEAN countries in the late 70s in conjunction with the advent of NICs (Newly Industrialised Countries) or the ‘Asian Tigers’, comprising of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan it became possible to imagine the differences between ‘Asia’ and the ‘Pacific’, decrease.⁵⁴³ At the same time, there was also a campaign in the United States by economists and other influential persons connected with Pacific matters.⁵⁴⁴ Much was made of the fact that during the 1970’s, American trade with Pacific countries had far surpassed its trade with Western Europe, in order to ignite American interest in Pacific affairs.⁵⁴⁵ Lastly, despite being originally left out of this region, even China post-1978 (with Deng Xiaoping’s economic ‘reforms’) began to be accepted as part of this economically dynamic regional space.

⁵⁴⁰ William W Haddad, ‘Japan, the Fukuda Doctrine and ASEAN’, *Contemporary, Source Asia* 2, no. 1 (1980): 10.

⁵⁴¹ Amitav Acharya, ‘Ideas, Identity, and Institution-building: From the “ASEAN Way” to the “Asia-Pacific Way”?’’, *Pacific Review* 10, no. 3 (1997): 328.

⁵⁴² See Acharya, ‘Ideas, Identity, and Institution-building: From the “ASEAN Way” to the “Asia-Pacific Way”?’’

⁵⁴³ Korhonen, *Japan and Asia Pacific Intergration: Pacific Romances 1968-1996*, 114–15; Singh, ‘From “Asia” to “Asia-Pacific”: Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India’s Regional Spaces’, 16.

⁵⁴⁴ Congress research service 1979, cited in Korhonen, *Japan and Asia Pacific Intergration: Pacific Romances 1968-1996*, 126.

⁵⁴⁵ David G. Timberman, ‘In Search of a Pacific Community’, *Asian Survey* 21, no. 5 (1981): 584.

By the 1980s, the term 'Asia-Pacific' was no longer unfamiliar in both the policy and academic discourses on international regionalism. The region was intact with insiders and outsiders. The insiders were the countries that "sought export-led capitalist development" and the outsiders were those that chose to follow the economic policies of 'self-reliance' or 'socialist development' (Burma, North Korea and even India).⁵⁴⁶ The formation of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum in 1989 would be a key expression for what came to be understood as the Asia-Pacific.

Consistent in these formulations of the Asia-Pacific, was India's absence from this regional space. On the military-strategic side, those who became to be members of the Asia-Pacific, were indeed involved in the bloc politics of the Cold War. India, that had chosen to stay out of these systems, was therefore not seen as part of the strategic mapping of the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁴⁷ On one hand, its exclusion from the Asia-Pacific can be seen as reflective of the success of its own 'South Asian' region-building project in the 70s and 80s, that firmly located it in the centre of that regional space. Furthermore, India's choices of economic self-reliance and anti-imperialism, prevented it from embracing the market-orientedness that came to characterise membership in Asia-Pacific since the 70s and 80s.⁵⁴⁸ Given the domestic and international shocks of 1991 however, India was provided with several incentives to turn to this region. Moreover, as the Asia-Pacific became a model for open regionalism and given its loose geographic delimitations, India was provided with the

⁵⁴⁶ Bruce Cummings, 'What Is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea', in *What Is in a Rim? Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. Arif Dirlik, 2nd ed. (Laham, Boulder, Oxford & New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 55.

⁵⁴⁷ Singh, 'From "Asia" to "Asia-Pacific": Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India's Regional Spaces', 19.

⁵⁴⁸ Singh, 19.

opportunity to seek and claim membership within this space. A key incentive for doing so was status. As former diplomat Prabhakar Menon stated: “India’s quest to enlarge its self-protective salutary options into Southeast and East Asia was an expression of the two basic instincts governing relations among nations: self-preservation and self-promotion”.⁵⁴⁹ While recent status scholarship makes the important point of “disentangling security-seeking and status-seeking behaviour”⁵⁵⁰, elite accounts during this period suggest that India’s status-seeking strategy fell alongside its pursuit of political and economic security.⁵⁵¹

5.3 Rethinking the Region vis-à-vis the Global: Asia-Pacific as a Status Ticket

Under the leadership of P.V Narasimha Rao, India turned to the Asia-Pacific through its ‘Look East Policy’ (LEP). Indian diplomats have defined the policy in several ways. Some stress its economic dimensions. India’s 1991 financial crisis necessitated significant reforms to stabilise the Indian economy. Since then, the economic dimensions of India’s external relations were given a greater thrust. In line with LEP, New Delhi looked to the countries of the ‘Asia-Pacific’ that recorded staggering economic growth rates and offered investment opportunities for India to capitalise on.⁵⁵² “The [Asia-Pacific] region” as former diplomat Amar Nath Ram recorded in his memoirs, “had emerged as one of the fastest growing group of countries in the

⁵⁴⁹ Menon, ‘India and the World East of It - Past and Present: An Impressionistic Account’, 111. Menon was a former ambassador (1982-89) and Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office (1989-1996)

⁵⁵⁰ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 117.

⁵⁵¹ While Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada do point out the importance of disentangling security-seeking and status-seeking, in their chapter on India in the post-Cold War world, the authors note that “it is not easy to separate...their pursuit of power from status-seeking motives” See Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, 86.

⁵⁵² Andrew Kelly, ‘Looking Back on Look East : India ’ s Post- Cold War Shift Toward Asia’, no. December (1991): 87.

world.”⁵⁵³ As the LEP was driven “first place by economic considerations,” former diplomat Rajiv Sikri noted that, “India was was now keen on plugging into the dynamic ASEAN region that was rapidly evolving into a critical mass of global economic strength.”⁵⁵⁴

In addition to the economic dimensions, Indian foreign policy elites had also noted that, that it had become an “[area] of influence in politico-strategic terms.”⁵⁵⁵ As India launched its LEP, the Asia-Pacific had included some of the world’s most powerful nations such as the United States, Japan and China to name a few. These were enmeshed in webs of American-led alliances and multilateral institutional arrangements, most of them hosted by ASEAN.⁵⁵⁶ Furthermore, the region had developed a unique ordering mechanism of major power presence that involved the superpower predominance of the United States and China as a regional great power tier below the United States.⁵⁵⁷ Closer links to the region therefore offered India the opportunity to reframe its own relations with the major powers by resetting its relationship with the United States on one hand, and responding to China’s rise on the other. The importance of the latter was emphasised by former Ambassador and Secretary of India’s Ministry of External Affairs Preet Malik, who reflected that when devising LEP, “the most important issue was the China factor and what would be a

⁵⁵³ Amar Nath Ram, ‘The First Decade of India’s Look East Policy’, in *Two Decades of India’s Look East Policy*, ed. Ambassador A.N .Ram (Manohar, 2012), 64. AN Ram was a former Ambassador and Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (1992).

⁵⁵⁴ Rajiv Sikri, ‘India’s “Look East” Policy’, *Asia-Pacific Review* 16, no. 1 (2009): 132. Sikri was Secretary (East) in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), handling East Asia, ASEAN, Pacific region, Arab world, Israel, Iran, and Central Asia (2004-06).

⁵⁵⁵ Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, 265. Dixit was the former Foreign Secretary of India (1991–1994).

⁵⁵⁶ Tan, ‘Introduction: From “Pacific Asia” to “Asia Pacific”’, 87. On Southeast Asia and enmeshment in the post-Cold War world, see Goh, ‘Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies’.

⁵⁵⁷ Evelyn Goh, ‘Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia’, *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2008): 113–57.

good way to bring a greater sophistication to dealing with China by giving the approach not only a bilateral content but move the relationship into a greater regional context that would involve a closer relationship not only with the ASEAN countries but also the Far East.”⁵⁵⁸

While diplomatic accounts reflect the key drivers of India’s LEP, a dominant notion that underpinned them was that of status. In perceiving the region as “critical mass of global economic strength” or “[area] of influence in politico-strategic terms”⁵⁵⁹ foreign policy elites had come to the realisation that the developing countries belonging to the Asia-Pacific region had been able to transform themselves and speak from a position of economic and strategic strength in a changing world order. From New Delhi’s perspective therefore, the region had become a high-status club that Indian foreign policy found value in becoming a part of to enhance its own status. As the former Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh noted, “the economic policies of India take into account the dynamism of this region, which shall soon be the *tiger economy of the world*. We want to participate in this process.”⁵⁶⁰ In order to launch LEP, ASEAN was seen as a critical starting point. From a strategic perspective, the post-Cold War environment had obliterated a range of factors that pulled India and ASEAN apart. On the Indian side, this involved the perception of ASEAN as a de-facto mechanism to serve American interests in Southeast Asia. ASEAN on the other hand, was concerned by the growth in India’s material capability in the 80s and the

⁵⁵⁸ Malik, ‘India’s Look East Policy: Genesis’, 33–34. Malik was a former Ambassador and Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

⁵⁵⁹ Ram, ‘The First Decade of India’s Look East Policy’, 64; Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, 265.

⁵⁶⁰ Manmohan Singh cited in, Thongkholal Haokip, ‘India’s Look East Policy: Its Evolution and Approach’, *South Asian Survey* 18, no. 2 (2011): 247. Emphasis mine.

possibilities of India projecting it in Southeast Asia.⁵⁶¹ As the strategic distrust on both sides had sufficiently reduced in the 1990s, a space was created for India to reframe its relations with ASEAN, by leveraging on certain factors that would help establish a sense of collective identity with the members states of the institution. These included notions of a deep and shared past with the countries in the grouping. This not only included the pre-colonial ties that fed into Asia project of the Nehru years (Chapter 3, section 3.3) but also included evidence of the decades of political and diplomatic activism during that period (Chapter 3, section 3.3). Second, a shared post-colonial experience of social and economic development. Both these notions of commonality and collectiveness featured into bridging its ties with ASEAN.

In the year 1992-3, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs reported its “special policy thrust to its relations with ASEAN” and it was marked with a range of bilateral visits and exchanges between India and Southeast Asia.⁵⁶² ASEAN’s positive response to India’s overtures created steady ground for the launch of India’s Asia-Pacific project. At the same time however, the project itself, would be a difficult one to manoeuvre. Much unlike India’s Asia project of the early Cold War years or the South Asia project that followed it, India was not a *key* or *founding* region-builder. Instead, it had to ‘woo’ the region as an outsider, but at the same time leverage on notions of commonality and a shared past to indicate that has always been an insider to the region through time. In a promising attempt to navigate these contradictions, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao spoke at the Institute of South Asian Studies in Singapore in 1994 to

⁵⁶¹ Tan Tai Yong and See Chak Mun, ‘The Evolution of India–ASEAN Relations’, *India Review* 8, no. 1 (2009): 25–26.

⁵⁶² Indian Ministry of External Affairs, ‘Annual Report 1992-93’, Government of India, 1993, <https://mealib.nic.in/?2521?000#South-East Asia and the Pacific>, accessed 7 August 2020.

make a case for India's renewed relationship with the Asia-Pacific in a post-Cold War world.

In his lecture, 'India and the Asia-Pacific: Forging a New Relationship', Rao echoed the view of the Indian foreign policy establishment in reflecting on the status that the region had achieved at the global level. Noting how the region's progress enabled its developing members particularly ASEAN countries to transcend the material and status hierarchies underpinning global order, he stated, "the creation of wealth in this region, particularly in those countries which were eclipsed for two to three centuries by colonial rule is, an example for mankind everywhere."⁵⁶³ Their success and progress made the developed world to recognise that "a partnership with Asia is not only desirable but inevitable"⁵⁶⁴ and that they could now "speak from a position of strength at the same table with the United States, Russia, China and Japan."⁵⁶⁵ This, he asserted, was an advantage that should not be bartered unless developing countries were given full assurance of being treated as "equal partners with equal say in the eventual codification of international laws and regulations that [would] govern international political, economic and social activity in the next century."⁵⁶⁶

Having set up the status position of the Asia-Pacific, Rao's speech made a case for India's membership within it. History became an important tool for this purpose as it enabled him frame India's links to the region across space and time. While he noted India was an outsider to the Asia-Pacific, that observed the region "objectively", he made reference to India's civilizational links to the nations of East and Southeast Asia.

⁵⁶³ Rao, *India and the Asia-Pacific: Forging a New Relationship* (24 September, 1994), 15.

⁵⁶⁴ Rao, 15.

⁵⁶⁵ Rao, 10.

⁵⁶⁶ Rao, 15.

Ample evidence of this resided in “the temples of Java, Indochina and Thailand, in the manifestations of the great religions of Buddhism and Hinduism that spread across [the] vast continent, and more aptly today, in the physical origin of ASEAN and other countries of the Asia-Pacific region,” he emphasised.⁵⁶⁷ In this way, Rao’s speech subtly shifted India from being a geographic outsider to an insider of the Asia-Pacific. Further strengthening the historical basis of India’s links to the region, Rao spoke of India’s Asia project of the Nehru years in the context of Asian ‘regionalist moments’ such as the Asian Relations Conference of 1947 and the Bandung Moment of 1955. Drawing on these images, he indicated that while India may well be outside the Asia-Pacific, the man who had the “intuition of the Asia-Pacific”, was the first Indian Prime Minister.⁵⁶⁸ Reflecting on the present, he emphasised that membership in the Asia-Pacific was determined less by “geographic criteria” and more on the basis of “political and economic imperatives.”⁵⁶⁹ This was in reference to India’s potential eligibility for regional membership, which was related to India’s contemporary position and choices.

Rao highlighted how India had “already taken steps to liberalise its currency regime, open the economy to more imports and investment and educate its people on the benefits of exposure to the outside world.”⁵⁷⁰ Its naval modernisation, he maintained, was to be seen as a natural consequence of the “magnitude of its territory” and not in any way associated with “alleged expansionist designs.”⁵⁷¹ While India would adapt itself to fit the contemporary dynamics of the Asia-Pacific, he also specified the limits of the extent it would do so: “India has a self-respecting GDP and technological base

⁵⁶⁷ Rao, 9.

⁵⁶⁸ Rao, 10.

⁵⁶⁹ Rao, 8.

⁵⁷⁰ Rao, 16.

⁵⁷¹ Rao, 12.

which is the envy of many countries. But as the second most populous country in the world, India's special problems need to be noted carefully, before prescriptions of unsuitable models of development are accepted without adequate forethought."⁵⁷² In this way he seemed to suggest that though India would enter the Asia-Pacific as junior partner, it would do so on the basis of its uniqueness, independence and with a great deal of status already intact.

As the name suggested, LEP quite literally meant a turn to the Asia-Pacific, but Rao's speech was an illustration of how the policy involved an effort to rebuild the region in a way that it would include India. His speech was a discursive illustration of some of the key phases of region-building at work: territorial shaping by making reference to India's geographical presence in the Asia-Pacific region through time; symbolic shaping by associating India with the key economic ideas that came to define and symbolise the region by referring to its economic reforms; and, institutional shaping by recognising ASEAN's vital role in informing the region's institutional architecture. In an early victory for LEP, in the year 1995, India achieved full dialogue status with ASEAN.⁵⁷³

5.4. India's Asia-Pacific Project: Progress and Constraints

As a full dialogue partner of ASEAN, India was eligible to participate in a wider range of sectors, including infrastructure, civil aviation, and computer software, as well as

⁵⁷² Rao, 12.

⁵⁷³ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 'Celebrating 25 Years of the ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership', MEA Media Center, 2017, <https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/27970/Celebrating+25+years+of+the+ASEANIndia+Dialogue+Partnership>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

in the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Meetings.⁵⁷⁴ By building its relations with ASEAN, the Indian diplomatic effort demonstrated a range of practices that worked to strengthen the institutional dimensions of its region-building project. Over the years, ASEAN had set up a complex regional institutional architecture that differed in their own levels of exclusivity and status. In the first decade of the LEP, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), was regarded as exceptionally prime as it was the first inclusive security arrangement of the Asia-Pacific.⁵⁷⁵ The ARF engaged great powers such as China, Japan, Russia, the United States into regional security dialogue. It, in effect, institutionalised a multilateral security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific, despite America's preference for bilateral structures and China's suspicion of multilateralism.⁵⁷⁶ As pointed out by Singapore's foreign minister S. Jayakumar in 1998, the ARF was established as "a means of encouraging the evolution of a more predictable and constructive patterns of relations between major powers with interests in the region."⁵⁷⁷

For Indian elites, the ARF was indeed "unique" given its exclusive membership: "it had all the nuclear powers represented in it," former Indian Foreign Secretary Sudhir Devare noted.⁵⁷⁸ Moreover, in being able to get China to dilute to some degree its levels of assertiveness with regards to its territorial claims to islands in the South

⁵⁷⁴ Amitav Acharya, 'India's Look East Policy', in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. Raja Mohan, Srinath Raghavan, and David M Malone (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), 460.

⁵⁷⁵ See Ralf Emmers, 'Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific: Evolution of Concepts and Practices', in *Asia-Pacific Security Cooperation: National Interests and Regional Order*, ed. See Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), 36–51.

⁵⁷⁶ Emmers, 16.

⁵⁷⁷ S Jayakumar, 'Opening Statement by Professor S Jayakumar, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law at the Republic of Singapore at the 31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on 24 July 1998', ASEAN.org, 1998.

⁵⁷⁸ Sudhir Devare, 'India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence' (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 76. Devare served as Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs from 1998 till retirement in 2001.

China Sea,⁵⁷⁹ the ARF had proven to be a successful forum to manage its rise and “turning it more and more from a bogeyman to an admired hopefully benevolent, elder.”⁵⁸⁰ Joining the ARF had the potential to provide India with a voice in the region’s domain of high politics and “share its opinions on Asia-Pacific strategic issues,” former diplomat Suryakanthi Tripathi recounted.⁵⁸¹ Furthermore, Devare stated that it provided India with “a valuable chance to act and project itself on a wider Asia-Pacific scene. Diplomatically, India was thus seeking to break out of the limited South Asian confines where it had remained most of the time.”⁵⁸² Most importantly however, the possibility of membership in high-status security grouping was seen as providing opportunities to seek status or a “a vehicle to strengthen [India’s] own credibility.”⁵⁸³ But India’s entry into the ARF was initially stalled. Devare noted two reservations of some ASEAN members had against India’s entry into the ARF: “First, they felt that geographically India was outside the Asia-Pacific region. Second, they feared that inclusion of India would bring in contentious issues of South Asia within the ambit of this body and dilute its primary objectives. It was a challenging diplomatic task to overcome these apprehensions. For nearly six months the process of negotiations continued in which I remained fully engaged.”⁵⁸⁴ In these circumstances, Singapore came to India’s aid and played a major role in lobbying for

⁵⁷⁹ China signed the Manila Declaration that called for restraint and the creation of a positive climate for the resolution of territorial disputes in the South China Sea in 1992.

⁵⁸⁰ Menon, ‘India and the World East of It - Past and Present: An Impressionistic Account’, 122. Menon was a former ambassador (1982-89) and Joint Secretary in the Prime Minister’s Office (1989-1996)

⁵⁸¹ Suryakanthi Tripathi, ‘India’s Relations with ASEAN’, in *Two Decades of India’s Look East Policy* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 145. The author is a former ambassador and additional secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs of India.

⁵⁸² Devare, ‘India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence’, 76. Devare served as Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs from 1998 till retirement in 2001.

⁵⁸³ Devare, 78. Devare served as Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs from 1998 till retirement in 2001.

⁵⁸⁴ Sudhir T. Devare, ‘India’s Look East Policy’, in *Two Decades of India’s Look East Policy*, ed. Ambassador A.N .Ram, 2012, 91.

its membership in the ARF and convinced reluctant ASEAN members of the benefits of Indian participation.⁵⁸⁵ The latter was made a member of the ARF in 1996.

While Indian membership in the ARF marked a great leap forward, not only in its relevance to the security architecture of the Asia-Pacific,⁵⁸⁶ constraints to India's integration in this region continued to persist. In 1997, India was denied membership in the region's premier economic institution APEC. This was significant because in the same meeting that India was denied membership, Russia, Vietnam and Peru were accepted.⁵⁸⁷ Despite this setback, India engineered several sub-regional initiatives within as part of its Asia-Pacific project. In 1997, it became a founding member of BIMSTEC (The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), which brought together the countries around the Bay of Bengal, namely Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand. Through this, it was able to demonstrate its ability to build and strengthen connectivity between South and Southeast Asia.⁵⁸⁸ Similarly, it participated in the formation of Mekong–Ganga Cooperation (MGC), a sub-regional organisation with the aim of building cooperation in the fields of education, culture, tourism, and transport and communications. Through these practices, the Indian foreign policy establishment hoped to strengthen and reshape India's links to the Asia-Pacific. As former secretary (east) of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, Ambassador Sikri noted, “the MGC provided a valuable

⁵⁸⁵ David Brewster, *India as an Asia Pacific Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 107. For a diplomat's account on Singapore's role in lobbying India's membership in the ARF, see Malik, 'India's Look East Policy: Genesis', 36.

⁵⁸⁶ Yong and Mun, 'The Evolution of India–ASEAN Relations', 27.

⁵⁸⁷ G.V.C Naidu, 'India and APEC', IDSA, 1998, <https://www.idsa-india.org/an-mar-2.html>.

⁵⁸⁸ Faizal Yahya, 'BIMSTEC and Emerging Patterns of Asian Regional and Interregional Cooperation', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 3 (2005): 391–410.

framework that India could use to come closer to the CLMV countries of ASEAN that are geographically and culturally the closest to India’.⁵⁸⁹

Two years after joining the ARF, India risked upending its Asia-Pacific project when it conducted nuclear tests in Pokhran in May 1998. In a letter to President Clinton, the then Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee explained India’s tests in the light of the atmosphere of distrust given the growing ties of its two adversaries – China and Pakistan. While the initial response to the tests were negative and United States had initially imposed sanctions on India, eventually they served to gain India greater attention from the major powers.⁵⁹⁰ On the one hand the tests enhanced India’s security, on the other, it also helped “endow it with the symbols of power that convinced Washington that New Delhi would be a reliable partner for hedging against a rising China.”⁵⁹¹

Ultimately, the 1998 tests did not terminate its Asia-Pacific project. While most ASEAN nations disapproved of India’s nuclear tests, as an organisation, ASEAN’s response was relatively mild.⁵⁹² Soon after the tests, India participated in the 31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Manila on July 24-25, 1998, where two views on the tests emerged: one that wanted to impose sanctions on India (Japan, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) and those who wanted a more benign attitude (Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia). Through the text of the joint communique of the summit however, it was obvious that the latter school prevailed. It read, “[t]he Foreign

⁵⁸⁹ Sikri, ‘India’s “Look East” Policy’, 137. Sikri was Secretary (East) in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), handling East Asia, ASEAN, Pacific region, Arab world, Israel, Iran, and Central Asia (2004-06).

⁵⁹⁰ Basrur, ‘Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia’, 270.

⁵⁹¹ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 83.

⁵⁹² Prakash Nanda, *Rediscovering Asia: Evolution of India’s Look-East Policy* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers and Distributors, 2003), 464.

Ministers deplored the series of nuclear tests conducted recently in South Asia that exacerbated tension in the region and raised the spectre of a nuclear arms race. They called on all countries which have not done so to adhere to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in recognition of the overwhelming interest to establish a nuclear free world. In this connection, the Foreign Ministers strongly urged the nuclear-weapon states to take concrete and timely measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons in compliance with the provisions of the NPT.”⁵⁹³ The AMM therefore, only provided a mild condemnation of the tests and in effect, shielded India from sanctions.⁵⁹⁴ This response indicated that India’s membership could not be denied and an acceptance of its possession of strong material capability. As Devare later recounted, “realistically speaking, the nuclear tests raised India’s standing in the Asia-Pacific as a credible power with a capacity to contribute meaningfully to the stability of the region.”⁵⁹⁵ India now pursued its Look East Policy as an emerging power.⁵⁹⁶

While the first decade of India’s LEP focused more on ASEAN, with the coming of the 21st century, “the geographical scope of the ‘East’ was extended to cover other countries in East Asia and the Pacific”⁵⁹⁷ and the Indian Ocean was viewed as a

⁵⁹³ ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, ‘Joint Communique of the 31st ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) Manila, Philippines, 24-25 July 1998’, ASEAN.org, 1998, https://asean.org/?static_post=joint-communique-the-31st-asean-ministerial-meeting-amm-manila-philippines-24-25-july-1998 accessed 7 August 2020.

⁵⁹⁴ Jaffrelot, *India’s Look East Policy: An Asianist Strategy in Perspective*, 2:53.

⁵⁹⁵ Devare, ‘India and Southeast Asia: Towards Security Convergence’, 77. Devare served as Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs from 1998 till retirement in 2001.

⁵⁹⁶ See Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*.

⁵⁹⁷ Rajiv Sikri, ‘A Personal Perspective on India’s Look East Policy’, in *Two Decades of India’s Look East Policy*, ed. Amar Nath Ram (New Delhi: Manohar, 2012), 166. Sikri was Secretary (East) in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), handling East Asia, ASEAN, Pacific region, Arab world, Israel, Iran, and Central Asia (2004-06).

“geography of opportunity for India.”⁵⁹⁸ This marked a shift in the discourses surrounding India’s Asia-Pacific project. From making a case for its membership in the Asia-Pacific region in the 1990s, India referred to this region in possessive terms and defined it as *its* ‘extended neighbourhood’. Though the term was first officially used by in 1997, it was pushed in the 2000s.⁵⁹⁹ The Indian foreign policy establishment publicly boasted of the expanse of this ‘neighbourhood’ echoing the territorial shaping discourses that had surrounded the Asia project of the Nehru years. In 2003, the former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha remarked, “if you look at the geography of this continent, you will find, India is at the heart of it. Not merely must we be geographically in the centre of things, but in our engagement also, we must be in the centre of things. Because India has this advantage geographically and otherwise, to become the lynchpin in engagement of various countries. Therefore, in recent years, India has put emphasis on, if I could borrow this expression of ‘rediscovering Asia’.”⁶⁰⁰ Indian leaders expressed this growing conception of its region as part of its rising status at the global level. As former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee explained, “as we grow in international stature, our defence strategies should naturally reflect our political, economic and security concerns, extending well beyond the geographical confines of South Asia. Our security environment ranges from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca across the Indian Ocean, including Central Asia and Afghanistan in

⁵⁹⁸ David Scott, ‘The Indian Ocean as India’s Ocean’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, ed. David M Malone, Raja C. Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 467.

⁵⁹⁹ Scott, 467.

⁶⁰⁰ Yashwant Sinha, ‘Remarks on Occasion of Release of Book “Rediscovering Asia, Evolution of India’s Look East Policy” by Prakash Nanda’, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2003, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/5538/remarks+by+shri+yashwant+sinha+external+affairs+minister+on+occasion+of+release+of+book+rediscovering+asia+evolution+of+indias+look+east+policy+by+prakash+nanda>, accessed 7 August 2020.

the North-West, China in the North-East and South East Asia. Our strategic thinking also has to extend to these horizons.”⁶⁰¹

This expanding vision of its region was institutionalised through India’s participation and membership in the East Asia Summit.⁶⁰² In what became a core club of ASEAN-centred institutions, the EAS was designed as a forum for heads of states and governments to debate and respond to security issues.⁶⁰³ While on one hand, Indian leaders framed the support given to India’s membership in the EAS as a “testament to [its] rising stature,” accounts by former diplomats suggest that this was not entirely seamless. Like the attempts to seek membership in the ARF in the 1990s, India’s admission into the EAS was neither obvious nor guaranteed. Former diplomat Rajiv Sikri notes, “while some countries were very supportive, others wanted a future East Asia community [to] be confined to the APT (ASEAN Plus Three – namely China, Japan and Korea).”⁶⁰⁴ “My colleagues and I in the Ministry of External Affairs, together with our missions abroad...put in sustained hard work with all the countries involved to underscore India’s credentials in this regard,” Sikri stated. “These efforts paid off...the ASEAN foreign ministers eventually reached a consensus at their Cebu meeting to invite India to the first EAS.”⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰¹ Atal Bihari Vajpayee, ‘Shrug off the Cold War, This Is a New World’, Ministry of External Affairs, 2003. <https://www.mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/13051/Shrug+off+the+Cold+War+this+is+a+new+world>

⁶⁰² Indian Ministry of External Affairs, ‘India at the East Asia Summit’, 2018, <http://mea.gov.in/aseanindia/about-eas.htm>, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁶⁰³ Frédéric Grare, *India Turns East: International Engagement and US-China Rivalry*, *India Turns East: International Engagement and US-China Rivalry*, 2017, 188.

⁶⁰⁴ Sikri, ‘A Personal Perspective on India’s Look East Policy’, 167. Sikri was Secretary (East) in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), handling East Asia, ASEAN, Pacific region, Arab world, Israel, Iran, and Central Asia (2004-06).

⁶⁰⁵ Sikri, 167. Sikri was Secretary (East) in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), handling East Asia, ASEAN, Pacific region, Arab world, Israel, Iran, and Central Asia (2004-06).

For Indian foreign policy establishment, membership in the EAS was indeed a diplomatic victory. It had, according to them, “in a psychological, political and strategic sense...bridged the gap between India and East Asia.”⁶⁰⁶ India began gaining recognition as part of this wider region in global foreign policy and think tank circles. Writing for *Contemporary Southeast Asia* in 2008, the then director of the East Asia Programme of the Australian think-tank the Lowy Institute, Malcom Cook commented that India’s membership in EAS “socialise[s] [it] in the world of Asian regionalism” and that the expansion of India’s strategic footprint in the Malacca Straits and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands “place it in maritime Southeast Asia”.⁶⁰⁷ Furthermore, his report specified that “India’s foreign policy is increasingly orienting itself towards the United States, ASEAN and Northeast Asia. Mirroring this, India’s growing global role is deepening interest in the States, ASEAN, Northeast Asia and Australasia in engaging India (but not South Asia as a whole)”.⁶⁰⁸ A year after joining the EAS, India was described as “a rising global power that can be a pillar of stability in a rapidly changing Asia”, by the Former United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.⁶⁰⁹ To that end, the United States invited Delhi to post a liaison officer to its Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii and regarded India as a “key strategic partner” in its the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review - both privileges that had previously been confined to traditional Asia-Pacific allies.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁶ Sikri, 168. Sikri was Secretary (East) in India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), handling East Asia, ASEAN, Pacific region, Arab world, Israel, Iran, and Central Asia (2004-06).

⁶⁰⁷ Malcolm Cook, ‘The United States and the East Asia Summit: Finding the Proper Home’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 304.

⁶⁰⁸ Cook, 305–6.

⁶⁰⁹ Condoleezza Rice, ‘U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement’, United States Department of State, 2005, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/64146.htm>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

⁶¹⁰ Walter C. Ladwig III, ‘Delhi’s Pacific Ambition: Naval Power, “Look East,” and India’s Emerging Influence in the Asia-Pacific’, *Asian Security* 5, no. 2 (2009): 102.

As former Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, noted, India's efforts during the LEP "firmly embedded in the region and [played a] role in shaping its emerging economic and security architecture."⁶¹¹ With over two decades of engaging with and securing membership key institutions within the region, India had largely succeeded in being recognised as part of the Asia-Pacific and this was directly linked to its rising status at the global level. At the same time however, as the review of this period has also revealed, the project encountered hurdles and constraints. The above discussion highlights several moments where its project was resisted and membership to institutions were either denied or required diplomatic negotiations and politicking. Furthermore, the project was also undermined by the pace of its activism within it. Writing from this perspective, India has been critiqued for its "track record of poor defence planning, coordination and a lack of follow-through in developing capabilities to meet strategic ambitions,"⁶¹² or its "slow pace of the promised economic reforms...and India's tendency to take a defensive approach during trade negotiations, [that have been] largely out of step with APEC's embrace of openness."⁶¹³ This suggests that though its Asia-Pacific project helped reframe the region to account for India's membership within it, it secured membership of a limited kind which constantly subject to review and reconsideration.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has studied the Indian region-building project of 'Asia-Pacific' that took shape in the context of the order transition brought on by the end of the Cold War. It has argued that based on its reading of the changing world order, India found value

⁶¹¹ Shyam Saran, *How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century* (New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2017), 49. Saran served as the Foreign Secretary of India (2004-2006).

⁶¹² Brewster, *India as an Asia Pacific Power*, 160.

⁶¹³ Grare, *India Turns East: International Engagement and US-China Rivalry*, 194.

in reframing its 'region' from 'South Asia' to the 'Asia-Pacific' to its quest for status in post-cold war world. Drawing on published diplomatic accounts and speeches of Indian foreign policy elites, the chapter has established how, with the end of the Cold War, they had come to recognise the growing economic and strategic weight of the 'Asia-Pacific' region in the world. The region had come to include some of the world's most powerful states both militarily and economically. Moreover, from New Delhi's perspective, it had become a space in which the developing countries of the region had been able to transform themselves and speak from a position strength in a changing world order. Given its strategic and economic outlook during the Cold War, India had been excluded from this regional space. With its foreign policy interests seen as confined in South Asia from the 60s and desire to stay clear of the bipolar politics of the Cold War, it was not factored into strategic considerations that went into building this region during this period. Similarly, in economic terms, it lacked the capitalist and export-driven outlook of the Asia-Pacific. The end of the Cold War and its economic crisis in the 1990s, forced Indian elites to rethink India's strategies to navigate the new world order and they began seeing the strategic, economic and status-enabling potential of the Asia-Pacific.

Under the banner of its Look East Policy (LEP), India turned to the Asia-Pacific. While this implied a prioritisation of its engagement with this region in its foreign policy, the chapter has established that the policy reflected an attempt to re-build the Asia-Pacific in a way that it could include India. By examining the discourses and practices that underpinned LEP, the chapter identified three stages of region-building at work: territorial shaping by making reference to India's geographical presence in the Asia-Pacific region through time; symbolic shaping by associating India with the key ideas that came to define and symbolise the region by referring to its economic

reforms; and, institutional shaping by working its way through the hierarchy ASEAN-centred institutional structure of the region. Overall, the region welcomed India's efforts to claim membership within it. Through decades of implementing its LEP, India has, to a large extent been able to establish itself as part of the Asia-Pacific. At the same time however, its journey was not been without hurdles. Its pursuit of securing membership in many of the region's institutions encountered resistance. This was furthered by frustrations over the pace of its economic and strategic progress to keep up with the rest of the Asia-Pacific. In this way, though LEP helped reframe the region to account for India's membership within it, it secured membership of a limited kind which constantly subject to review and reconsideration.

Contemporary dynamics are however, increasingly putting reservations against stronger Indian membership and participation to rest as the notion of the 'Asia-Pacific' is progressively being replaced by that of the 'Indo-Pacific.' The term has entered the lexicon of policymakers and strategists since the 2010s to refer to a region spanning eastwards from India to the United States, and southwards from Japan to Australia.⁶¹⁴ For the same reasons as the Asia-Pacific before it, it can also be seen as a high-status region given the strategic and economic weight it carries. While India has not been its 'key' or 'founding' region-builder, its membership within it – much unlike the Asia-Pacific – remains uncontested. In their discourses of their Indo-Pacific strategies, states have specified the importance and inevitability of the Indian role. The 2018, the United States State Department held that the term “acknowledges the historical reality and the current-day reality that South Asia, and in particular India,

⁶¹⁴ Manjeet S. Pardesi, 'The Indo-Pacific: A "New" Region or the Return of History?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 2 (2020): 124–46.

plays a key role in the Pacific and in East Asia and in Southeast Asia. That's been true for thousands of years and its true today."⁶¹⁵

The recognition of its central role and value to the Indo-Pacific, is to some extent, allowing it to overcome the hurdles it encountered through its Asia-Pacific project, such as the denial of its membership in the APEC. In recent years, given the growing significance of the Indo-Pacific, there has been a push for India's APEC membership at the Track 2 level.⁶¹⁶ Most notably, a recent think-tank report commissioned a project to seek views from the Indo-Pacific on India's membership in the APEC. Despite some challenges and reservations, the report seemed to encourage and support Indian membership. The strongest case was made from the Australian view on the grounds that India met the five prerequisites to join APEC, which includes its *location within the Asia-Pacific region*, considerable economic ties with APEC economies, adoption of a market oriented economy and free trade policy, adoption of economic parameters as enunciated in the APEC statements, and demonstration of an ability to work on an individual plan of action to meet membership criteria, and focused plans of actions to satisfy APEC's programmes.⁶¹⁷ Though this does not in any way imply the inevitability of India's APEC membership, it would be difficult to envision this level of enthusiasm and conviction surrounding this possibility, had it not invested decades in pursuing its Asia-Pacific project since the early 1990s.

⁶¹⁵ Alex N. Wong, 'Briefing on The Indo-Pacific Strategy', United States Department of State, 2018, <https://www.state.gov/briefing-on-the-indo-pacific-strategy/> accessed 7 August 2020.

⁶¹⁶ See for instance Asia Society Policy Institute, 'India and APEC: Charting a Path to Membership Asia Society', 2015, <https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/india-and-apec-charting-path-membership>; H. Seymour, ed., 'India in APEC: Views from the Indo-Pacific' (2019), <https://perthusasia.edu.au/getattachment/Our-Work/India-in-APEC-Views-from-the-Indo-Pacific/PerthUSAsiaCentre-India-in-APEC.pdf.aspx?lang=en-AU> accessed 7 August 2020; Council on Foreign Relations, 'APEC 2018 Is Missing a Major Asian Economy', 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/apec-2018-missing-major-asian-economy>, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁶¹⁷ Seymour, 'India in APEC : Views from the Indo-Pacific'.

CHAPTER 6

“The Centre of Gravity has moved Westward to include India”: India, the Indo-Pacific and the claim to Major Power Status⁶¹⁸

“For thousands of years, Indians have turned to the East...human-kind now looks to the Rising East, with the hope to see the promise that this 21st century beholds for the whole world, because the destiny of the world will be deeply influenced by the course of developments in the Indo-Pacific region...The Indo-Pacific is a natural region...I am increasingly convinced with each passing day that the destinies of those of us who live in the region are linked...India does not see the Indo-Pacific Region as a strategy or as a club of limited members... And by no means do we consider it as directed against any country. A geographical definition, as such, cannot be. India's vision for the Indo-Pacific Region is, therefore, a positive one.”

Narendra Modi, Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, 2018.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁸ Nirupama Rao, ‘America’s “Asian Pivot”: The View from India | Watson Institute’, The Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Brown University, 2013, <https://watson.brown.edu/events/2013/honorable-nirupama-rao-americas-asian-pivot-view-india>, accessed 29 December, 2020. While the speech itself is no longer available online, it was sourced directly from the former Ambassador via email correspondence. For full speech, see appendix.

⁶¹⁹ Narendra Modi, ‘Keynote Address at the Shangri-La Dialogue’, Ministry of External Affairs, India, 2018, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

6.1 Introduction

This excerpt has been drawn from the current Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi's keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, in June 2018. As an annual track-one inter-governmental security forum attended by defence ministers, permanent heads of ministries and military chiefs across 28 nations of Asia and the Pacific, the Indian leader's role as the keynote speaker of the dialogue was a marker of recognition for India's importance in the evolving economic and security architecture of the region, defined as the 'Indo-Pacific'. Reflecting continuity with previous Indian region-building projects, Modi's speech emphasised on the 'naturalness' of the Indo-Pacific. He marshalled India's historical links to the region as evidence for what promised to be a lasting relationship in the future.⁶²⁰ His reference to the Indo-Pacific as a centre of gravity for the world at Shangri-La, meant that India's part and presence in this region now received global audience. In emphasising that "the destiny of the world [would] be deeply influenced by the course of developments in the Indo-Pacific" and that it was not a "club of limited members", Modi's speech carried important signals to different sets of great power audiences at the global level – to those who were members of the region – and those who were not. To the former group, the speech hoped to communicate India's embrace of the Indo-Pacific concept, while to the latter group it aimed to suggest that its membership within it was not in any way targeted against it. This chapter studies how Indian discourses and practices

⁶²⁰ On continuity of Indian foreign policy in the Modi years, see: Miller and de Estrada, 'Pragmatism in Indian Foreign Policy: How Ideas Constrain Modi'.

surrounding its membership in the Indo-Pacific regional grouping have informed its claims to status at the global level.

As with the other region-building projects examined in this thesis, the Indo-Pacific, and particularly, Indian attempts to inform it, has emerged in the context of a global order transition. As post-Cold War American-led order comes under strain, it witnesses the rise of several other players such as China, Brazil and even India that who have demanded a greater stake in informing a post-unipolar world.⁶²¹ As the Indian foreign policy establishment has recognised that there will be an inevitable shift “towards a more multipolar world,” it has pursued strategies to claim higher status in what appears to be a changing world order.⁶²² These strategies express conformity to the norms underpinning a liberal, rules-based order, but, at the same time, emphasise on inclusion and acknowledgment of the rise and role of other players – including China – that seek to have a greater stake in influencing a post-unipolar world.

Drawing on published diplomatic accounts, speeches of foreign policy elites, news and policy reports, this chapter demonstrates how Indian framings of its membership in the Indo-Pacific have informed its claims to higher status at the global level, in the context of a changing world order. It illustrates how Indian elites have perceived the emergence of this region as a key theatre for India to enact its role and be socially recognised as a major power. India’s Indo-Pacific project centres on building the region in a way that on the one hand signals its membership in a high-status region that includes the world’s leading democracies, but also, as indicated in Modi’s speech

⁶²¹ Ikenberry, *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*.

⁶²² S Jaishankar cited in, Press Trust of India, ‘Quad Is in Keeping with Times and Rise of India Is Good for the World, Says S Jaishankar’, *The Print*, 2020, <https://theprint.in/diplomacy/quad-is-in-keeping-with-times-and-rise-of-india-is-good-for-the-world-says-s-jaishankar/530007/>, accessed 29 December, 2020.

above, emphasises on inclusion of other regional and global stakeholders - with a particular signal to China - in it. As a result, the Indian project echoes the values-based framing of the Indo-Pacific with reference to the rule of law and freedom of navigation, emphasised upon by countries such as the United States and Japan but at the same time, distinguishes itself from a definition or interpretation of the region that appears exclusive.⁶²³

By tracing the discourses and practices that underpin India's Indo-Pacific project, this chapter identifies three stages of region-building that have been at work through its implementation: territorial shaping through an emphasis on India's geographical presence in the region through time; symbolic shaping through its constant emphasis on the key ideas that came to define and symbolise the region such as the freedom of navigation and a respect for international law amongst others; and, institutional shaping by continuing to emphasise on its membership in ASEAN-centred institutions. In addition to examining Indian sources, the chapter has also traced how other states, particularly the United States, have responded to India's Indo-Pacific project to demonstrate the extent to which it has enabled Indian claims to higher status at the global level. The chapter notes that while the Indo-Pacific project has contributed to important status-enabling moments for India, recent trends suggest that the space for India to build the region as an inclusive space appears to be closing on two grounds – first as the rivalry between the United States and China intensifies at

⁶²³ On values-based framing in the Indo-Pacific see Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, 'India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad', *Survival* 60, no. 3 (2018): 181–94. On distinguishing India's Indo-Pacific project from the others, see Huma Siddiqui, 'India's Concept of Indo-Pacific Is Inclusive and across Oceans', Media Centre of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2019, https://www.mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/32015/Indias_concept_of_IndoPacific_is_inclusive_and_across_oceans, accessed 3 December 2020. In her article on the Indo-Pacific that has been republished by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs website, Huma Siddiqui writes that "while the US does not consider China a part of its Indo-Pacific construct, India has gone to great length to highlight it as an inclusive construct for the whole region."

the global level and second, as its own relations with China take a conflictual turn. These developments have contributed to India's Indo-Pacific project appearing both contradictory and unclear, casting doubts on the extent to which it can continue to enable its claims to status.

This chapter proceeds in two sections. The first section traces the evolution of India's Indo-Pacific project from the early 2000s to 2014. It demonstrates that in the early days of the project's emergence, the Indian strategic community saw it as a status-enabling opportunity for India at the global level. Noting the success of the project in this regard, the second section discusses the project's evolution post-2014 and takes note of its challenges and limitations. The chapter eventually concludes by reflecting on India's Indo-Pacific project in summary and discusses key concerns that India would need to navigate to ensure that the project retains its status-enabling value.

6.2. India in the Indo-Pacific: Recognition of Major Power Status

In August 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe addressed the Indian parliament and spoke of Japan's "discovery of India" and recognition of a "broader Asia."⁶²⁴ Playing on the ideas and phrases that underpinned the Asia project of the Nehru years, the Prime Minister stated, "we are now at a point at which the Confluence of the Two Seas is coming into being... The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity... I feel that it is imperative that the democratic nations located at opposite edges of these seas deepen the

⁶²⁴ Shinzo Abe, 'Confluence of the Two Seas: Speech by Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>, accessed 30 December, 2020.

friendship among their citizens at every possible level.”⁶²⁵ While thinking of the region in terms of a ‘wider Asia’ with a focus on the Indian Ocean region is certainly not new to Indian foreign policy, Abe’s famous “confluence of the two seas” speech has been widely recognised as an early utterance of the ‘Indo-Pacific’ as a strategic space. In India however, the Indo-Pacific concept, was prefigured in naval circles in the early part of that decade.⁶²⁶ In 2004, the Indian navy formalised its first ever doctrine, where it was noted that “the shift in global maritime focus from the Atlantic–Pacific combine to the Pacific–Indian Ocean region.”⁶²⁷ It was noted that the doctrine would “match the emerging prospects of India as a major power” and be “in tune with India's new potentials on the world stage.”⁶²⁸ Even in these early days of articulation, Indian discourses surrounding the Indo-Pacific concept were linked to its status at the global level. There was a call in the Indian navy “for [Indian] diplomats to take a stand and suggest through regional and international forums that the Indian Ocean is now significant enough to be hyphenated with the Pacific, in order to create a new term, ‘Indo-Pacific.’”⁶²⁹

The call from naval circles for Indian foreign policy to re-define its regional horizons to include the Indian and Pacific oceans did not come unexpectedly. Instead, as discussed in the previous chapter, it had roots in its ‘extended neighbourhood’ concept that evolved as part of its Asia-Pacific project in the early 2000s. Since then, India had already been engaging in practices that spoke to the territorial and institutional shaping

⁶²⁵ Abe.

⁶²⁶ David Scott, ‘India and the Indo-Pacific Discourse’, in *New Directions in India’s Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis*, ed. Harsh V. Pant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 198.

⁶²⁷ Scott, 198.

⁶²⁸ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, ‘India’s New Naval Doctrine’, MEA Media Centre, 2004, <https://www.mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/15458/Indias+new+naval+doctrine>, accessed 30 December, 2020.

⁶²⁹ Cited in David Scott, ‘The “Indo-Pacific”—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence’, *Asia-Pacific Review* 19, no. 2 (2012): 198.

of the Indo-Pacific. Since the year 2000, Indian naval deployments were sent to the South China Sea and then into the Western Pacific since 2007.⁶³⁰ By 2006, its multilateral naval exercise, MILAN, that began in 1995 with a modest start to include Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand, had expanded to include Australia, Bangladesh and Malaysia. Institutionally, it had become a member of the rich alphabet soup of ASEAN-centred institutions that surpassed the boundaries of Southeast Asia, such as the East Asia Summit, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus). Additionally, in an initiative to combine naval and institutional practices, India's National Maritime Foundation (NMF) a think-tank supported by the Indian Navy, launched the Indian Ocean Symposium in 2008, inviting the littoral navies of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to address regional security challenges multilaterally.⁶³¹ The symposium received the support of the Ministry of Defence and the Navy and by 2008, had become an important forum to discuss maritime issues at the Track 1 and Track 2 levels.⁶³²

Indian attempts to frame the Indian Ocean region as a vital part of its 'extended neighbourhood' was not lost on the major powers. While Abe's speech externally endorsed India's geographic position at the "confluence of the seas," similar validations came from the United States. Speaking in Honolulu in 2010, former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton noted "India's growing engagement and integration into East Asia" and its role as a "key player in this region and on the global stage."⁶³³

⁶³⁰ Scott, 'India and the Indo-Pacific Discourse', 196–97; Harsh V Pant and Yogesh Joshi, 'The American "Pivot" and the Indian Navy', *Naval War College Review* 68, no. 1 (2015): 9.

⁶³¹ Pant and Joshi, 'The American "Pivot" and the Indian Navy', 56.

⁶³² P. K. Ghosh, 'Indian Ocean Naval Symposium: Uniting the Maritime Indian Ocean Region', *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 3 (2012): 353.

⁶³³ Hilary Rodham Clinton, 'America's Engagement in the Asia-Pacific', U.S. Department of State Archive, 2010, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/10/150141.htm>, accessed December 30, 2020.

Clinton made note of the United States expanding its work with the Indian navy in the Pacific, given the importance of “the Indo-Pacific basin...to global trade and commerce.”⁶³⁴ While Clinton’s speech was titled “America’s Engagement in the Asia-Pacific,” her mention of the “Indo-Pacific” in the context of the Indian navy was indeed an important one. As discussed in the previous chapter, since the end of the Cold War, India had been working to seek status in a world centred on American unipolarity. One of the strategies with which India attempted to do so was by conforming to the dominant norms underpinning the post-Cold War world, that included a commitment to a rules-based, liberal world order. In this context, the Secretary of State’s acknowledgement of India’s rise in relation to the Indo-Pacific, was enough to set off discussions within the Indian foreign policy establishment on the use of this term and how this signalled a recognition of its status as a major power.

Writing for the *Indian Express* in 2011, former Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran drew on Secretary Clinton’s speech at Honolulu to note “the categorical American acknowledgement that the Asia-Pacific fully encompasses the Indian subcontinent...[and]...that the Indian and Pacific Oceans constitute an inter-linked geopolitical space, not only because it is important to global trade and commerce but also because they impact on strategy.”⁶³⁵ Saran also stated that the Indo-Pacific was “a reflection of the concept of the Asia-Pacific, which hitherto excluded India, expanding westwards to encompass the subcontinent as its integral part.”⁶³⁶ Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific, and India’s role within it, was framed using the language of status: “as India’s regional and global profile increases, it will inevitably gravitate towards the

⁶³⁴ Clinton.

⁶³⁵ Shyam Saran, ‘Mapping the Indo-Pacific’, *The Indian Express*, 2011, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/mapping-the-indopacific/867004>, accessed December 30, 2020.

⁶³⁶ Saran.

centre of this expanded geopolitical and geo-economic space. The concept of an Indo-Pacific theatre fits in neatly with this evolving trend.”⁶³⁷

Later that year, former president of the United States Barack Obama made a visit to Asia which included a stopover in India. Much in line with Saran’s interpretation of the United States’ acknowledgement of India’s importance at the world stage, in his address to the Indian parliament, President Obama emphasised that it was no coincidence that India was his first stop on a visit to Asia, or that this had been his longest visit to another country since becoming President.⁶³⁸ “For in Asia and around the world,” Obama noted, “India is not simply emerging; India has emerged.”⁶³⁹ Since 2011, the Obama-Clinton administration emphasised its prioritisation of the Asia-Pacific region and desire to work with “allies and partners, from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean.”⁶⁴⁰ Affirming its own membership in this geographic space, Obama stated that “the United States is a Pacific power, and is here to stay.”⁶⁴¹ These discourses were later seen as part of the American ‘pivot’ to the Asia, which entailed the ‘rebalancing’ of its foreign and defence policies to the region.⁶⁴² While the ‘pivot’ may well have been a continuation of American policy in Asia since 1972, the discursive push of America’s (re)turn to this region was reflective of the wider patterns of order transition underway. As American unipolarity had its run since the

⁶³⁷Shyam Saran, ‘Mapping the Indo-Pacific’, *The Indian Express*, 2011, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/mapping-the-indopacific/867004>, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁶³⁸ Barack Obama, ‘Remarks by the President to the Joint Session of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, India’, The White House Archives | President Barack Obama: Office of the Press Secretary, 2010, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/08/remarks-president-joint-session-indian-parliament-new-delhi-india>, accessed December 30, 2020.

⁶³⁹ Obama.

⁶⁴⁰ Barack Obama, ‘Remarks By President Obama to the Australian Parliament’, The White House Archives | President Barack Obama: Office of the Press Secretary, 2011, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>, accessed December 30, 2020.

⁶⁴¹ Obama.

⁶⁴² Nick Bisley and Andrew Phillips, ‘A Rebalance to Where?: US Strategic Geography in Asia’, *Survival* 55, no. 5 (2013): 95–114.

end of the Cold War, there was both a realisation and recognition that it would seriously need to come to terms with the possibility of sharing its great power status with China that had been rapidly rising since. Discourses surrounding its pivot to Asia, acknowledged perceptions of American strategic rivalry with China but expressed both the intention and possibilities of cooperation. As Secretary Clinton stated in her famous piece in *Foreign Affairs*: “we all know that fears and misperceptions linger on both sides of the Pacific...[but]...the fact is that a thriving China is good for American and a thriving America is good for China.”⁶⁴³ With its eye on China, framing itself as a “Pacific power” and then widening the frame of this region to include the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the United States was able to amplify the breadth and depth of its network and partnerships across the region – particularly to include India, that had been actively looking east since the 1990s.

While elements of strategic competition between the United States and China was informing the Indo-Pacific concept, it came with tremendous recognitional value for India’s claims to status as it inadvertently called attention to the country’s rise. India’s inclusion in global discourses on the Indo-Pacific not only from the United States but Japan and Australia, helped place it along-side other economic powerhouses of Asia. Discourses in the Obama-Clinton administration surrounding its pivot to Asia, frequently clubbed India and China together, emphasising on its interest in deepening its relationship with the former.⁶⁴⁴ Similarly, India found its way into the Australian Defence White Paper in 2013, which not only articulated the Indo-Pacific as a “single strategic arc” but acknowledged India for its emergence as an important strategic, diplomatic and economic actor, and its “growing trade, investment and energy flows

⁶⁴³ Hillary Clinton, ‘America’s Pacific Century’, *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (2011): 59.

⁶⁴⁴ Obama, ‘Remarks by the President to the Joint Session of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, India’; Clinton, ‘America’s Pacific Century’.

across the broader region.”⁶⁴⁵ It grouped India with Asian countries such as China, Republic of Korea and Indonesia that had witnessed “unprecedented growth” and “transformed within a generation.”⁶⁴⁶ Furthermore, while it discussed “China’s continued rise as a global power” and “the increasing economic and strategic weight of East Asia” it took stock of the “emergence over time of India as a global power [as] key trends influencing the Indian Ocean’s development as an area of increasing strategic significance.”⁶⁴⁷ Unlike the Asia-Pacific, where India was seen in more peripheral terms as a country that ‘looked east’ to an ASEAN-centred region, the Indo-Pacific concept allowed it to, in some ways, be re-centred in the region. The Indo-Pacific formally entered Indian government discourses in 2012 as the former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh spoke of “a stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region” at the 12th Indian-ASEAN Summit.⁶⁴⁸

As the Indo-Pacific was quickly coming to exist as a space, or - as described in a recent analysis – a “theatre of opportunity” in which India’s rise and the promise of its emergence as a major power was quickly turning into fact, Indian foreign policy elites framed its practices within this region in a way that was seen as natural for a state that was acquiring this status, would.⁶⁴⁹ Speaking at the Indian Council of World Affairs’ Asian Relations Conference Series, former Minister of External Affairs, Salman Khurshid declared the Indo-Pacific “as a natural corollary of [India’s] modern version

⁶⁴⁵ Rory Medcalf, ‘In Defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia’s New Strategic Map’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 4 (2014): 471.

⁶⁴⁶ Government of Australia, *Defence White Paper*, 2013, 1.

⁶⁴⁷ Government of Australia, 2.

⁶⁴⁸ Manmohan Singh, ‘Opening Statement at Plenary Session of India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit’, Official Website of the former Prime Minister of India: Dr Manmohan Singh, 2012, <https://archivepmo.nic.in/drmanmohansingh/speech-details.php?nodeid=1259>, accessed 30 December, 2020.

⁶⁴⁹ See Darshana M Baruah, ‘India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi ’ s Theater of Opportunity’, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* 30 (2020): 1–29, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/30/india-in-indo-pacific-new-delhi-s-theater-of-opportunity-pub-82205> accessed 30 December 2020.

of the Look East Policy” that aimed at “deepening India’s traditional relations with Southeast and East Asia and beyond and increasing the country’s interests and presence between the Malacca straits.”⁶⁵⁰ Khurshid further noted that “there can be no two views about the fact that India’s future lies in its ability to harness the power of the Indian Ocean and the extended Indian-Pacific Ocean region” and that “maritime supremacy is the hallmark of a great power.”⁶⁵¹ The Indo-Pacific had indeed become an important theatre for India to enact the role of a major power, by giving it the space to acquire the symbols associated with that status, such as that of achieving greater naval capability. Other sections of India’s strategic community, particularly those in the think tank community, pushed the idea of the Indo-Pacific as “a new geopolitical reality” or a new “maritime theatre” which would face the “impact of a rising China and emerging India.”⁶⁵² In this way, the notion of the Indo-Pacific helped generate a perception of a shrinking power asymmetry with China.

Speaking to this narrative, in 2013, former Indian Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the United States, Nirupama Rao, expressed how “the term Indo-Pacific encompass[ed] the [Indian] subcontinent as an integral part of this eastern world...[and that]...the mental map of the Asia-Pacific has changed and that the centre of gravity has moved westward to include India.”⁶⁵³ Rao also outlined the Indian version of the Indo-Pacific region or, as it will be referred to as henceforth, its Indo-Pacific project. Defining the region as “cultural, economic, political and security

⁶⁵⁰ Salman Khurshid, ‘Keynote Address’, in *Indo Pacific Region: Political and Strategic Prospects*, ed. Bhatia Rajiv K and Vijay Sakhuja (Indian Council of World Affairs, 2013).

⁶⁵¹ Khurshid, xi.

⁶⁵² Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, ‘Indo-Pacific Is the New Geopolitical Reality’, IDSA Press Release, 2012, <https://idsa.in/pressrelease/IndoPacificistheNewGeopoliticalReality>, accessed 30 December 2020; Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*.

⁶⁵³ Rao, ‘America’s “Asian Pivot”: The View from India | Watson Institute’.

continuum that straddle[d] the Indian and the Pacific Ocean regions,” Rao noted that it was “fast becoming a geo-strategic construct to comprehend the common opportunities, the intersecting maritime and security interests, and challenges confronting this region.”⁶⁵⁴ She emphasised that in the “the present era of interdependence, the security and economic prosperity of nations is vitally linked to safety and security of sea lanes of communication. States [would] need to work together to address common threats to maritime security” and that “India supports freedom of navigation and access to resources in accordance with principles of international law and believes that these principles should be respected by all.”⁶⁵⁵

Holding office as the Indian ambassador to the United States at the time of making this speech, Rao’s words illustrate how the discourses underpinning India’s Indo-Pacific project informed its strategies to seek status through an expression of its commitment and subscription to the values of a rules-based order.⁶⁵⁶ Rao also provided another crucial insight of India’s Indo-Pacific project, when she emphasised on the Indian commitment to an “open, inclusive and transparent architecture of regional cooperation.”⁶⁵⁷ She spoke of the possibility of “inclusive balancing” in the Indo-Pacific, “where the US simultaneously engages all the regional powers like China, India, Japan and Russia working to see a multipolar order that reduces the risk of military confrontation.”⁶⁵⁸ While the Indian foreign policy establishment celebrated its membership in the Indo-Pacific region and its role in enabling the recognition of its status especially by the United States, it saw the Indo-Pacific evolving as an inclusive

⁶⁵⁴ Rao.

⁶⁵⁵ Rao.

⁶⁵⁶ On values-based framing in the Indo-Pacific, see Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada, ‘India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad’.

⁶⁵⁷ Rao, ‘America’s “Asian Pivot”: The View from India | Watson Institute’.

⁶⁵⁸ Rao.

region with several stakeholders, as global order would inevitably shift from its centrality on American unipolarity.

While Indian elites sought to build the Indo-Pacific on these terms, the latter half of 2013 encountered a new development which would compete with the Indian Indo-Pacific project. Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which incorporated a vast collection of development and investment initiatives which would stretch from East Asia to Europe.⁶⁵⁹ BRI involved a two-pronged approach of developing land and sea corridors that included creating a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways, and streamlined border crossings, both westward—through the mountainous former Soviet republics—and southward, to Pakistan, and the rest of Southeast Asia.⁶⁶⁰ Most evidently, the maritime dimension of BRI, overlapped with what was being framed as the Indo-Pacific, not only by India, but other major powers, most notably, the United States. For India, a key concern of the BRI emerged from its flagship China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which passed through disputed territory in Kashmir. By the summer of 2014, the management of its Indo-Pacific project and the navigation of the contestations was left to India's new government led by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) under the stewardship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

⁶⁵⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 'President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries', Official Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2013, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtfhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml, accessed 30 December, 2020.

⁶⁶⁰ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, 'China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative', Council on Foreign Relations, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative> accessed 30 December, 2020.

6.2. The Indo-Pacific Post-2014: Progress and Constraints

Having come to power with a sweeping majority in 2014, the BJP-led government arrived at a unique global moment where the world's leading liberal democracies such as the United States, Australia and Japan welcomed India's rise and emerging status as a major power. The party, which had prided itself on a more 'active' foreign policy on entering government, had plenty to work with, capitalise and take forward in Indian foreign policy.⁶⁶¹

Giving India's Indo-Pacific project an apparent thrust, the BJP-led government announced its 'Act East Policy' (AEP) in Singapore in November 2014. Framed as a renewed and upgraded version of the LEP of the 1990s, the AEP aimed at promoting "economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship[s] with countries in the Asia-Pacific region,"⁶⁶² and renewing engagement with other regional fora such as the "Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)."⁶⁶³ While the terminology used in some instances continued to be 'Asia-Pacific', a key feature of AEP was its focus on maritime affairs, with a focus on the Indian Ocean Region.⁶⁶⁴ In this way, the AEP contributed to the territorial and institutional shaping of India's Indo-Pacific project. Taking note of the AEP, the Indian Maritime Security Strategy

⁶⁶¹ For an analysis on the promise of the BJP and its role in Indian foreign policy see: Amrita Narlikar, 'India's Role in Global Governance: A Modification?', *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (2017): 93–111.

⁶⁶² Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 'Rajyasabha: Question No.26 Act East Policy', Media Centre of the Ministry of External Affairs, 2017, <https://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/27982/question+no26+act+east+policy>, accessed December 31, 2020.

⁶⁶³ Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

⁶⁶⁴ Isabelle Saint-Mézard, 'India's Act East Policy: Strategic Implications for the Indian Ocean', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 12, no. 2 (2016): 177–90; Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*.

released in 2015 highlighted its expanding “engagement and relations to its East, across the Indo-Pacific”, emphasising that India’s primary areas of interest were “the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, and their littoral regions”, as well as the “South-West Indian Ocean, including IOR (Indian Ocean Region) island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions.”⁶⁶⁵ Furthermore, as part of AEP, in March 2015, Modi visited the Seychelles (the first ministerial visit in 34 years), Sri Lanka (the first in 28) and Mauritius.⁶⁶⁶ He became the first Indian Prime Minister to unveil an Indian Ocean vision, which, he declared was “rooted in advancing cooperation in [the] region; and, to use [its] capabilities for the benefit of all in our common maritime home.”⁶⁶⁷ Centred on shared maritime-security capabilities and mutual economic development, joint action in response to emergencies, and adherence to international maritime rules and norms, Modi spoke of a future for an Indian Ocean that would live up to the name of “SAGAR or Security and Growth for All in the Region.”⁶⁶⁸ This regional vision expressed and advanced the open and inclusive approach present in early Indo-Pacific discourses.

By the end of 2015 however, there were traces of a shift in India’s Indo-Pacific project. The project seemed to have incorporated a willingness to take on a more confrontational tone vis-à-vis China. With the launch of BRI, India saw the project as China’s attempt to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean – the very ‘region’ that was informing its claims to higher status at the global level. Furthermore, while Sino-

⁶⁶⁵ Cited in Saint-Mézard, ‘India’s Act East Policy: Strategic Implications for the Indian Ocean’.

⁶⁶⁶ Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada, ‘India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad’.

⁶⁶⁷ Narendra Modi, ‘Text of the PM’s Remarks on the Commissioning of Coast Ship Barracuda’, Official website of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, 2015, <https://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-the-pms-remarks-on-the-commissioning-of-coast-ship-barracuda-2954>, accessed 31 December, 2020. See also Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada, ‘India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad’.

⁶⁶⁸ Modi, ‘Text of the PM’s Remarks on the Commissioning of Coast Ship Barracuda’. See also Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada, ‘India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad’.

Indian relations had been managed through a careful mix of rivalry and engagement since 1962,⁶⁶⁹ with the coming of the Modi government, the competitive elements had been intensified.⁶⁷⁰ In December that year, Prime Minister Modi invited Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to India and the leaders issued a joint statement on their “special strategic and global partnership working together for peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the world.”⁶⁷¹ The statement expressed the leaders’ commitment to maintaining a “peaceful, open, equitable, stable and rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond” and that “India and Japan uphold the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity; peaceful settlement of disputes; democracy, human rights and the rule of law; open global trade regime; and freedom of navigation and overflight.”⁶⁷² The statement included the leaders’ agreement to enhance strategic ties, transfer of defence technology and “stronger capabilities to deal with maritime challenges in the Indo-Pacific region” and emphasised on strengthening “reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructures that augment connectivity within India and between India and other countries in the region.”⁶⁷³

The language of the India-Japan joint statement around the Indo-Pacific reflected a strong security-focus. The reference to a “rules-based order”, “democracy” and

⁶⁶⁹ Francine R Frankel and Harry Harding, *The India-China Relationship: Rivalry and Engagement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); Kanti P. Bajpai, Jing Huang, and Kishore Mahbubani, *China-India Relations: Cooperation and Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2015); Kanti P. Bajpai, Selina Ho, and Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Routledge Handbook of China-India Relations*, 1st ed. (London, 2020); T. V. Paul, *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era*, South Asia in World Affairs Series (Washington, DC, 2018).

⁶⁷⁰ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, ‘India’s Perspective towards China in Their Shared South Asian Neighbourhood: Cooperation versus Competition’, *Contemporary Politics* 24, no. 1 (2018): 105.

⁶⁷¹ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, ‘Joint Statement on India and Japan Vision 2025: Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World’, Media Centre of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2015, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26176/Joint_Statement_on_India_and_Japan_Vision_2025_Special_Strategic_and_Global_Partnership_Working_Together_for_Peace_and_Prosperty_of_the_IndoPacific_R accessed 31 December, 2020.

⁶⁷² Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

⁶⁷³ Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

“peaceful settlement of disputes” was an indirect affront to China which was criticised for its disregard of all these attributes especially in relation to its activities in the East and South China Seas, while the mention of infrastructure connectivity was also an obvious counter to China’s BRI.

While India’s Indo-Pacific project demonstrated signs of evolving on more confrontational lines, it was not willing to compromise entirely on its emphasis on inclusivity. In 2017, senior Indian leaders met with counterparts from the United States, Japan and Australia at the side lines of the ASEAN Summit in Manila, resulting in parallel though differently worded commitments to maintain a free and open order in the Indo-Pacific.⁶⁷⁴ This meeting was said to have revived the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) between the 4 the nations, that was originally initiated by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. The meeting addressed seven core themes: the rules-based order in Asia, freedom of navigation and overflight in the maritime commons, respect for international law, enhancing connectivity, maritime security, the North Korean threat and non-proliferation, and terrorism.⁶⁷⁵

On one level, India’s membership in the revived QUAD, meant its entrance and acceptance into an ultimate status club of the Indo-Pacific, comparable to membership of the ARF of the Asia-Pacific in 1990s. But preventing it from being seen and celebrated as such was the nature and constitution of QUAD membership. Unlike the ARF, the QUAD was and continues to be a grouping of major powers and advanced democracies that exclude China. Though India’s Indo-Pacific project was already

⁶⁷⁴ Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada, ‘India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad’, 184.

⁶⁷⁵ Ankit Panda, ‘US, Japan, India, and Australia Hold Working- Level Quadrilateral Meeting on Regional Cooperation: The Quad Is Back’, *The Diplomat*, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/us-japan-india-and-australia-hold-working-level-quadrilateral-meeting-on-regional-cooperation/>, accessed 31 December 2020.

showing signs of taking an anti-China course, overt enthusiasm over its membership in the QUAD and subscription to the Indo-Pacific vision articulated by its members, could invite the perception of India's willingness to a join a grouping that excluded it and possibly sought to contain its rise.⁶⁷⁶ India therefore, displayed cautious enthusiasm about its membership in the QUAD grouping. Differing in tone from its 2015 joint statement with Japan and those released by the other QUAD members, its official statement post the Manila meeting emphasised on an 'inclusive' Indo-Pacific and refrained from making a direct reference to freedom of navigation, a rules-based order or respect for international law.⁶⁷⁷

Despite India's lukewarm enthusiasm of the QUAD, both individually and collectively, QUAD members continued to express the value of India in the Indo-Pacific. In 2018, the United States issued a statement to the press stating that there were two main reasons that it "adopted" the Indo-Pacific frame, both of which pertained to India. First, that the term accounted for "the historical reality and the current-day reality that South Asia, and in particular India, [played] a key role in the Pacific and in East Asia and in Southeast Asia."⁶⁷⁸ Second, that it was both in "U.S. interest, as well as the interests of the region, that India play an increasingly weighty role in the region."⁶⁷⁹ It was further emphasised that "India is invested in both a free and open order and that it is a democracy, it is a nation that can bookend and anchor the free and open order

⁶⁷⁶ It must be noted that it was indeed only a few months before the Manila meeting that that Indian and Chinese troops engaged in a military standoff in the disputed region of Doklam.

⁶⁷⁷ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 'India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Consultations on Indo-Pacific', Media Centre of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2017, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/IndiaAustraliaJapanUS_Consultations_on_IndoPacific_November_12_2017, accessed 31 December, 2020; Panda, 'US, Japan, India, and Australia Hold Working-Level Quadrilateral Meeting on Regional Cooperation: The Quad Is Back'. It must be noted that in various bilateral statements and declarations with each of the other quadrilateral participants – such as its 2015 joint statement with Japan discussed earlier in the chapter - India has voiced support for these principles, but the fact that it was missing from this statement is telling.

⁶⁷⁸ Wong, 'Briefing on The Indo-Pacific Strategy'.

⁶⁷⁹ Wong.

in the Indo-Pacific region, and [it was] [U.S.] policy to ensure that India does play that role [and] become over time a more influential player in the region.”⁶⁸⁰ A few months after this briefing, the United States gave its vision of the Indo-Pacific – the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) institutional legs and renamed its Pacific Command the ‘Indo-Pacific Command’.⁶⁸¹

As the United States, along with other members of the QUAD expressed the importance and celebrated an Indian presence in the Indo-Pacific region in official channels using what can only be seen as a status-enabling discourse, India continued to express a cautious approach. In June 2018, Prime Minister Modi provided the keynote address as the 2018 Shangri-La dialogue. The speech, discussed briefly in the introduction of this chapter was, arguably, India’s first official vision statement on the Indo-Pacific, which Modi described, would be a “free, open, inclusive region” premised on “common prosperity and security”, a “common rules-based order” and “ASEAN centrality.”⁶⁸² Modi ensured to highlight that the region would not take the shape of a “club of limited members” that was “directed against any country.”⁶⁸³ The emphasis on the Indo-Pacific as an inclusive space was most certainly aimed at putting China at ease about its membership in this region and that India saw China as part of the its framing of the Indo-Pacific region. It is notable however, that ten days later, at his address at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Qingdao, Prime Minister Modi refrained from endorsing China’s Belt and Road Initiative, expressing instead India’s preference and acceptance of connectivity projects that were “inclusive,

⁶⁸⁰ Wong.

⁶⁸¹ Scott Neuman, ‘In Military Name Change, U.S. Pacific Command Becomes U.S. Indo-Pacific Command’, NPR, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/05/31/615722120/in-military-name-change-u-s-pacific-command-becomes-u-s-indo-pacific-command?t=1552495112292>, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁶⁸² Modi, ‘Keynote Address at the Shangri-La Dialogue’.

⁶⁸³ Modi.

sustainable and transparent, and respect countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity.”⁶⁸⁴ Modi’s almost consecutive speeches at Shangri-La and Qingdao reflected an adoption of the somewhat contradictory attempt at both targeting yet reassuring China. This meant that its Indo-Pacific project was gradually becoming a subset of its relationship with China, which, as a result contributed to it seeming convoluted, contradictory and unclear.⁶⁸⁵

While its Indo-Pacific project had proved have informed Indian claims to higher status, in recent years, it has begun to make India seem an uncertain, evasive balancer.”⁶⁸⁶ The possibility of an Indian region-building project to construct an inclusive Indo-Pacific has been challenged not only by its own internal contradictions, but its competition with a stronger and materially backed region-building project by the United States. Shifting from the more relaxed balancing discourse around the pivot prevalent during the Obama-Clinton administration, the United States under Trump has articulated an exclusivist vision of the region through its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) concept.⁶⁸⁷ The FOIP has been instrumentalised in its trade war with China and included in its effort to reduce a huge annual trade deficit with the latter.⁶⁸⁸ Recent American discourses around FOIP quite evidently resembles a counterbalance against

⁶⁸⁴ Narendra Modi, ‘English Translation of Prime Minister’s Intervention in Extended Plenary of 18th SCO Summit’, Media Centre of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2018, https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29971/English_translation_of_Prime_Ministers_Intervention_in_Extended_Plenary_of_18th_SCO_Summit_June_10_2018, accessed 31 December 2020.

⁶⁸⁵ Kanti P Bajpai, ‘India and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)’, in *The New International Relations Template and Japan’s Indo-Pacific Vision Organized by Hiroshima Peace Institute and Konrad-Adenauer- Stiftung (KAS)* (Tokyo, 2019), 1–8.

⁶⁸⁶ See Derek Grossman, ‘India Is the Weakest Link in the Quad’, *Foreign Policy*, 23 July 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/23/india-is-the-weakest-link-in-the-quad/>, accessed 31 December 2020; Rajesh Rajagopalan, ‘Evasive Balancing: India’s Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy’, *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2020): 75–93.

⁶⁸⁷ See Seng Tan, ‘Consigned to Hedge: South-East Asia and America’s “free and Open Indo-Pacific” Strategy’, *International Affairs* 96, no. 1 (2020): 134.

⁶⁸⁸ Tan, 134.

the Chinese.⁶⁸⁹ Tensions around the FOIP concept were evident at the 2019 Shangri-La Dialogue. In declaring the American commitment to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, the United States Acting Secretary of Defence Patrick Shanahan's speech noted China as the region's aggressor implementing a "toolkit of coercion" that included "deploying advanced weapons systems to militarise disputed areas", "destabilising the peaceful status quo" and "engaging in predatory economics and debt sovereignty deals."⁶⁹⁰ In response, China's Wei Fung He, the first high-level Chinese representative to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue since 2011, declared the United States as a regional spoiler. Choosing to use the term "Asia-Pacific" instead of "Indo-Pacific" he stated that "in recent years some countries outside the region come to the South China Sea to flex muscles in the name of freedom of navigation. The large-scale force projection and offensive operations in the region are the most serious, destabilising and uncertain factors in the South China Sea."⁶⁹¹ The FOIP has led China to synonymise it with the 'Indo-Pacific', resulting in its rejection of the term altogether. A recent analysis points out that so far, no Chinese official document has used the term and in its latest defence white paper, released in July 2019, China continued to use 'Asia-Pacific' to describe its geographical region.⁶⁹² This has been a direct blow to the Indo-Pacific as an inclusive region.

While in official channels India has continued to emphasise that its "concept of Indo-Pacific is inclusive and across oceans" recent discourses seem to echo a securitised

⁶⁸⁹ Tan, 134.

⁶⁹⁰ Patrick M Shanahan, 'The US Vision for Indo-Pacific Security', IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2019 - Asia's premier defence summit, 2019, <https://www.iiss.org/events/shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2019>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

⁶⁹¹ Wei Fenghe, 'China and International Security Cooperation', IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2019 - Asia's premier defence summit, 2019, <https://www.iiss.org/events/shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2019>, accessed 7 August 2020.

⁶⁹² He and Li, 'Understanding the Dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US-China Strategic Competition, Regional Actors, and Beyond', 1-2.

framing of the Indo-Pacific as espoused by America's FOIP.⁶⁹³ While discussing the Indo-Pacific as an integrated maritime space at East Asia Summit at Ha Noi in November 2020 for instance, Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar expressed concern over “actions and incidents” that “erode” trust in the South China Sea, and underlined the importance of adhering to international law, respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty – comments most directly targeted at China.⁶⁹⁴ As India's Indo-Pacific project veers into this direction, it appears to shift from being one that takes stock of Indian centrality and rise as a major power on the global stage, to one that joins the wider strategy to counterbalance China at the global level. In this way, it has inadvertently signed up to a version of the Indo-Pacific that amplifies its weaknesses and its strategic limitations in navigating its membership in this region, given the involvement of its more powerful, Northern neighbour. In following this strategy, India appears an evasive balancer, as it seeks to target yet reassure China through its Indo-Pacific project.⁶⁹⁵ The prospects of this strategy being effective have been questioned on the grounds that it might not be able to achieve either of these objectives successfully.⁶⁹⁶ This means that its Indo-Pacific project, once verifiably status-enabling, is also showing signs of proving otherwise.

6.4 Conclusion

⁶⁹³ As recently as June 15, 2020 Indian and Chinese forces engaged in a brutal brawl in the Galwan Valley, claiming the lives of 20 Indian soldiers. Moreover, under its current leadership of the National Democratic Alliance, there has been a revitalisation of discourses pertaining to the ‘China threat’. See Priya Chacko, ed., ‘Introduction: The Rise of the Indo-Pacific’, in *New Regional Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Drivers, Dynamics and Consequences* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 1–8.

⁶⁹⁴ Press Trust of India, ‘East Asia Summit 2020: India Expresses Concern over Actions That Erode Trust in South China Sea’, *The Hindu*, 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/east-asia-summit-2020-india-expresses-concern-over-actions-that-erode-trust-in-south-china-sea/article33100778.ece>, accessed 31 December 2020.

⁶⁹⁵ Rajagopalan, ‘Evasive Balancing: India's Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy’.

⁶⁹⁶ Rajagopalan.

Pre-figured as a “broader Asia” that existed at the “confluence of the seas” thirteen years ago, the Indo-Pacific is well on its way of being recognised as a geographic region by small states and major powers alike.⁶⁹⁷ At the time of writing, that a hyphen connects two oceans to reflect and describe a geopolitical and geo-economic space in which states interact, is widely acknowledged and accepted.⁶⁹⁸ By examining Indian discourses and practices underpinning the Indo-Pacific, this chapter has demonstrated how it informed Indian claims to status at the global level in the context of a changing global order. It unpacks how the project’s emphasis on a ‘rules-based’ and ‘inclusive’ Indo-Pacific informed its claims to higher status at the global level through an expression of normative conformity of an American-led world order, but, at the same time, emphasised on inclusion and acknowledgment of the rise and role of other players – including China – that seek to have a greater stake in influencing a post-unipolar world. This chapter has argued that the Indian foreign policy establishment found value in the Indo-Pacific to enable claims to status at the global level. It demonstrates how it

⁶⁹⁷ Shinzo Abe, ‘Confluence of the Two Seas: Speech by Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>, accessed 7 August, 2020.

⁶⁹⁸ That the Indo-Pacific exists is not only acknowledged in policy spaces but also media and academic circles. On academic writing, amongst others are: Kai He, ‘Three Faces of the Indo-Pacific: Understanding the “Indo-Pacific” from an IR Theory Perspective’, *East Asia* 35, no. 2 (2018): 149–61; Scott, ‘The “Indo-Pacific”—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence’; Priya Chacko, ‘India and the Indo-Pacific’, in *New Regional Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Drivers, Dynamics and Consequences*, ed. Priya Chacko, Routledge Contemporary Asia Series (Routledge, 2016), 43–59; Mark Beeson and Jeffrey Wilson, ‘The Indo-Pacific: Reconceptualizing the Asian Regional Space’, *East Asia* 35, no. 2 (2018): 79–84; Dennis Rumley, Timothy Doyle, and Sanjay Chaturvedi, ‘“Securing” the Indian Ocean? Competing Regional Security Constructions’, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 8, no. 1 (2012): 1–20. On media articles, see for instance: Udayan Das, ‘What Is the Indo-Pacific?’, *The Diplomat*, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/what-is-the-indo-pacific/> accessed 7 August 2020. On policy writing see: Niranjan Chandrashekhara Oak, ‘India’s Place in the Altering Indo-Pacific Construct | ORF’, Observer Research Foundation, 2016, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-place-in-the-altering-indo-pacific-construct-47863/> accessed 7 August 2020; Rear Admiral K Raja Menon (Retd), ‘The Indo-Pacific as a Security Construct’, in *Indo-Pacific Region: Political and Strategic Prospects*, ed. Vijay Sakhuja and Rajiv Bhatia (Delhi: Vij Books, n.d.), 28–35; Rajiv K Bhatia and Vijay Sakhuja, *Indo-Pacific Region: Political and Strategic Prospects* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2014).

capitalised on the emergence of this region as a key theatre to enact its role and enhance its social recognition as a major power.

The chapter has established that in its formative days, India's Indo-Pacific project met with many status-enabling moments. This was evident not just through the discourses emerging from India's foreign policy establishment, but also through those emerging from states such as the United States, Japan and Australia, that recognised India's rise and emergence on the world stage vis-à-vis its place and position in the Indo-Pacific. While the first part of the chapter has highlighted how India's Indo-Pacific project played a role in successfully enabling its claims to higher status, the second part delves into the trends and factors that have impeded the process. It discusses in particular, the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative and the conflictual turn in China-India relations that have turned its Indo-Pacific project into a subset of its China policy. It also explains how these complications have been furthered as these dynamics interact with the wider strategic rivalry between the United States and China at the global level. These factors appear to undermine the notion of an inclusive Indo-Pacific region, which India has claimed as a key feature of its Indo-Pacific vision. As a result, in recent years, India's Indo-Pacific project appears to have adopted the somewhat contradictory attempt at both targeting yet reassuring China, making the project seem both contradictory and unclear.⁶⁹⁹

Given the results of the recent American election, it is possible that the United States' confrontational discourses underpinning Indo-Pacific region might diffuse. At the same time, analysts suggest certain elements of its strategy will continue to remain –

⁶⁹⁹ Bajpai, 'India and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)'.

particularly on the strategic challenge posed by China.⁷⁰⁰ Irrespective of how this proceeds, India must reassess its Indo-Pacific project in the context of current trends to ensure the project retains its ability to successfully enable its claims to higher status at the global level.

⁷⁰⁰ Sebastian Strangio, 'Is Biden Preparing to Tweak the Indo-Pacific Strategy? – The Diplomat', *The Diplomat*, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/is-biden-preparing-to-tweak-the-indo-pacific-strategy/>, accessed 31 December, 2020.

Conclusion

7.1 Key Claims

This thesis has put forth the claim that regions inform states' claims to status at the global level. It has examined how this takes place, through its study of the Indian case across time. Resting on the ontological standpoint of social constructivism, regions have been examined here as 'social facts' that emerge through the combination of discourses and practices that breathe them into life. This study has established that the status-enabling nature of regions lies in their ability to facilitate how states are socially recognised by other actors. As states make claims to higher status, they are, in effect, communicating a claim to social place which they feel either entitled to or seek to belong. In order to establish themselves worthy of making that claim, states find it crucial to be recognised in a specific way by certain audiences. Regional membership is an important way to facilitate this as it helps convey a distinctive set of collective characteristics with which states can be socially recognised at the global level.

Audiences play a crucial role in conferring status through region-building and exist at different levels – local/domestic, regional and global. How states prioritise their key audiences in this regard, is based on the overall objectives of their status projects. While this thesis has drawn on Indian region-building discourses and practices targeted at audiences on all these levels, it has identified great powers as key audiences for its claims to status. This has not simply been determined by drawing on the assumptions in International Relations that attributes great powers as gate keepers of higher status at the global level, but also because – and this has been demonstrated in the empirical

chapters - the importance the Indian foreign policy establishment has placed on great powers as conferrers of India's status across time.

While this study has drawn on the Indian case, its claims can be generalised in two ways. One, through the category of states India is seen as a case of. This includes states that possess relative material and social power to claim status at the global level such as China, Russia, South Africa, Japan and Brazil.⁷⁰¹ Two, through the phenomena it studies, which is region-building. This framework can be applied to cases *of* region-building to study and trace the possible status claims they may inform. This would allow the framework to be opened up to a wider universe of cases, also making it both applicable and relevant to states that may not necessarily possess relative material power at the global level but have invested resources in region-building.

Like other constructivist projects, this study notes that generalizations of the social world that are highly contingent to historical, social and normative contexts.⁷⁰² It has therefore, set forth the important caveat that the ability of regions to enable claims to status is subject to a historical context or 'moments of time' which makes this possible. For the Indian case, these have been moments of global order transition. The latter involves "significant alterations in the common goals and values, rules of the game, and social structures."⁷⁰³ This study has established that order transitions, and, India's reading of them, have encouraged its foreign policy establishment to rethink its regions and the possibilities they offer to augment its claims to higher status. It is not simply a chronological coincidence that dominant framings of India's region have shifted to include 'Asia' in the Post-War/early Cold War period, 'South Asia' through the middle

⁷⁰¹ Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?', 342.

⁷⁰² Adler, 'Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates', 214.

⁷⁰³ Goh, 'Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies', 16.

to late Cold War period, 'Asia-Pacific' in the post-Cold War context with the emergence of American unipolarity, and most recently, the 'Indo-Pacific', as the American-led order threatens to decline, and the intensity and assertiveness of China's rise increases. This thesis has studied Indian region-building in the context of the onset of three order transitions, the first brought on by the end of the Second World War and the second through the end of the Cold War and the third as the post-Cold War order experiences increasing strain.

In making its claims, this study aimed at challenging the argument in International Relations that regions *predominantly* serve to constrain states' claims to status. This literature emphasises on how regions can be a source of weakness either because of unresolved regional conflicts or regional instability and the sheer difficulty of maintaining influence.⁷⁰⁴ It argues that states may see only little to be gained from regions, given that their performance at the domestic or global level may surpass that of the other members of the region. For these reasons, it suggests that states may reconsider establishing their regional pre-eminence as it could only enmesh it locally and detract it from its global image and interests.⁷⁰⁵ These arguments have been challenged in this study by showing how they have been overwhelmingly developed in the context of regional powerhood. In other words, rather than examining the relationship between regions and status, they seem to more specifically explore the relationship between *being* a regional power and claims to status. Drawing on constructivist and

⁷⁰⁴Hurrell, 'Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?', 8.

⁷⁰⁵ See: Basrur, 'Global Quest and Regional Reversal: Rising India and South Asia'. For an argument along similar lines, see Prys, 'India and South Asia in the World: On the Embeddedness of Regions in the International System and Its Consequences for Regional Powers'. On the difficulties of Brazil and South Africa in maintaining regional pre-eminence, see Malamud, 'A Leader Without Followers? The Growing Divergence Between the Regional and Global Performance of Brazilian Foreign Policy'; Alden and Schoeman, 'South Africa's Symbolic Hegemony in Africa'.

critical geopolitics literature on regions, this study has demonstrated that by rethinking regions and how they have been conceptualised in the literature, new paths and trends become visible, that demonstrate how regions and status come together through the conduct and practice of international relations.

Having summarised the key claims made in this study, the rest of this conclusion reviews the chapters of the thesis and discusses them in relation to the other, to extract the key insights they provide on Indian region-building and how they have informed its claims to status across time. Despite some overlaps, section 6.2 highlights how each chapter provides distinct and unique insights on Indian region-building individually, whereas section 6.3, examines these chapters collectively to examine patterns of change and consistency.

7.2 Region-building and Status: Building from the Indian case

This thesis has engaged with the Indian case through five main chapters. While Chapter 2 has set up the overall conceptual framework of the thesis and how this is visible in a study of Indian region-building through time, Chapters 3 and 4 have discussed Indian region-building in Nehru's India, Chapter 5 studied in the phenomena in the post-Cold War context and Chapter 6 in contemporary times as the post-Cold War order comes under strain. In choosing to engage with the Indian case in this way, it has demonstrated that region-building operates as part of states' foreign policies at different scales. The breakdown of its empirical chapters have reflected different forms or manifestations of region-building at work: as an intellectual project and a strategic space (Chapter 3), as a framework for responding to regional crises (Chapter 4) and as a strategic and economic policy (Chapter 5) and as some form of

balancing strategy in contemporary times (Chapter 6). The consistencies that emerge from these forms of region-building link them back to the framework in Chapter 2, which explains how regions become vehicles for social recognition and the potential this offers to enable status.

Chapter 3's study of Indian region-building in the Nehru era, reveals how 'Asia' manifested first as an intellectual project in the years leading up to Indian independence. Having reasoned that 'Asia' become a part of the "larger imperial policy" for "strengthening British power in the East,"⁷⁰⁶ the region was re-imagined as a space with timeless pre-colonial links that had been impaired by the imperial encounter. These ideas fed into the framing of this region as a place in the post-war world, in which foreign intervention would be actively resisted. This image of the region strengthened and sharpened with the onset of the Cold War, as India began to see through it a new form of imperial dominance in global order. As a form of resistance to these patterns, the Asian region was framed as a strategic 'area of peace,' or "an ever-widening area of countries in Asia which [would] not enter the war whatever [happened]."⁷⁰⁷ By investing its diplomatic resources in building Asia as a peace area, it was hoped that this would enhance the possibility of it being recognised as a global peacemaker – a role it believed would earn it higher status.

Chapter 4's multi-archival examination of India's role in the Indonesian decolonisation struggle from 1945-1949 demonstrated region-building at work through a crisis response mechanism. India referred to Dutch attempts re-establish empire in Indonesia as an 'Asian' concern, and, actively sought to represent the 'Asian' position

⁷⁰⁶ Nehru, 'Separation of Burma: Speech at Rangoon (May 17, 1937)'.

⁷⁰⁷ Nehru, 'Nonalignment in a Changing World: Parliamentary Debates (12 June, 1952)', 446.

the crisis. Its activism on the Indonesian question also included placing limited sanctions on the Dutch, rallying other ‘Asian’ nations on the Indonesian cause and, most importantly hosting two conferences – a ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ one in 1949 that gathered members of the ‘region’ that were “intimately connected by geography” to assist United Nations-led international diplomatic efforts on the Indonesian question.⁷⁰⁸ In this way, the discourses and practices that surrounded its response to the Indonesian crisis from 1947-1949 enabled it to build the region as a space in which foreign intervention would be actively resisted and on that India would take a lead in representing at the global level. Indian activism on the Indonesian question increased the way it was estimated by the Western great powers, especially the United States and had convinced the latter that an Asian grouping would not survive without Indian participation and leadership.⁷⁰⁹

Chapter 5’s focus on India’s Look East Policy (LEP) in 1991 has showed how region-building worked through the formation and implementation of a strategic and economic policy. LEP was framed as India’s turn to and prioritisation of the Asia-Pacific region towards the end of the Cold War. At the time, India was excluded and unintegrated into the Asia-Pacific, given the foreign policy choices it made in the post-Nehru era that anchored it firmly into South Asia. As India began to turn to this region, the Asia-Pacific included some of the world’s largest and powerful nations in economic and military terms. Engaging with this region offered India opportunities to enhance its status and optimise its relevance in a post-Cold War world. This chapter has

⁷⁰⁸ Nehru, ‘Speech in a Public Meeting, Allahabad: Resistance to Imperialism in Asia (2 January, 1949)’.

⁷⁰⁹ Papers of Harry S Truman, Box 158: President’s Secretary Files, Sub File: Foreign Affairs, ‘Nehru, Jawaharlal’ *Harry S Truman Museum and Library*, Independence city, Missouri. This particular quote was present in Truman’s briefing papers prior to Nehru’s visit in the United States October 3, 1949.

demonstrated how through the discourses and practices that underpinned LEP, India was not just turning to this region, but, rebuilding it as a geographic space that would include India. Being recognised as part of the ‘Asia-Pacific’, would mean that it was part of an economically dynamic region that was transforming itself by engaging in the processes of globalisation. This was seen as crucial in enabling its quest for status in the post-Cold War world.

Chapter 6 has examined how India’s Asia-Pacific project has been subsumed into its Indo-Pacific project in contemporary times. As post-Cold War American-led order comes under strain, it witnesses the rise of several other players such as China, Brazil and even India that who have demanded a greater stake in informing a post-unipolar world.⁷¹⁰ The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a strategic maritime theatre that directly experiences the interactions and confrontations of a changing global order. This chapter has studied Indian discourses and practices surrounding its membership of the Indo-Pacific region and demonstrates how it has informed its claims to major power status. It has established how India has sought to build the Indo-Pacific as an ‘inclusive’ region, which, on the one hand signals its membership in a club of high-status democracies but does not, on the other hand, imply that it has joined a grouping that seeks to contain China. The chapter has established that while India’s Indo-Pacific project has important status enabling moments, it is slowly beginning to reflect a balancing strategy at work. It has discussed this turn in India’s Indo-Pacific project and the implications it appears to have on its claims to status at the global level.

⁷¹⁰ Ikenberry, *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics*.

7.3 From 'Asia' to 'Asia-Pacific' to 'Indo-Pacific': Change and Consistency

While the previous section explains how the chapters of this thesis individually shed light on different forms of Indian region-building at work, this section revisits the empirical chapters to explain the differences and similarities in India's Asia, Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific projects and how they have informed its claims to status over time. In doing so, it aims to reflect on the patterns of change and consistency in the relationship between regions and status in Indian foreign policy, in order to demonstrate how a study of these cases can help inform an analysis of current and future trends.

First, the differences. In the Asia project of the Nehru years, India was the key region-builder. With the end of the Second World War, the fall of the Japanese Empire and the blow to the British Empire with the independence of India, 'Asia' as a regional unit awaited a new ideational imprint. A space emerged for India to re-build map of Asia in a post-war world. As established in Chapter 3 (section 3.2), India's call for the Asian region in its early days was based on the idea that over the centuries of European imperialism, links between Asian nations had been severed, as the 'region' had been geographically reconfigured to suit and serve Empire. Based on this understanding, the Indian regional project was centred on building Asia on the basis of two main ideas. First, as a space in which foreign intervention would be resisted in all its forms, and second – as Cold War dynamics seemed to penetrate this 'region' – as an 'area of peace' that would "not enter the war whatever happens"⁷¹¹ (section 3.3). In this way, its Asia project informed its claims to status that, in this period, centred on the pursuit of a range 'counter-order' efforts that included a resistance to great power intervention

⁷¹¹ Nehru, 'Nonalignment in a Changing World: Parliamentary Debates (12 June, 1952)', 446.

in the decolonising world and alliance relationships with either of the dominant states of the time, the United States and the Soviet Union.⁷¹² While the project had important status-enabling moments especially in the early Cold War years (section 3.3, chapter 4), the project proved difficult to sustain (section 3.4).

Its Asia-Pacific project on the other hand, emerged in the context of a post-Cold War world, centred on American unipolarity, the triumph of the liberal world order and global capitalism. Unlike its Asia project of the Nehru years, India was not building the Asia-Pacific, off a blank slate, but rather turning to a pre-existing 'region' and making a case for its membership within it. In other words, its project did not involve ideational heavy lifting, but rather ideational renovation to an existing 'region' so that it could possibly include it. These differences could be interpreted in two ways. A critical reading suggests that through its Asia-Pacific project, it was building a region on the cheap by free-riding on the benefits of the region-building efforts undertaken by countries such as Japan, Australia, the United States or ASEAN. Another reading however, suggests that this was in fact the consequence of having learned from the errors and failures from its wide Asia project of the Nehru years and comparatively narrow South Asian regional hegemon project (Chapter 5, section 5.2) of the post-Nehru era, both of which came at heavy status costs. Its Asia-Pacific project informed its strategies to seek status in a post-Cold War world, that focused on 'normative conformity rather than counter-order innovation'.⁷¹³ Its membership in the Asia-Pacific helped signal its commitment to the liberal world order and globalisation – both of which underpinned region. With its emphasis on integration within the global economy, ability to enmesh the United States as a security guarantor in this region and

⁷¹² Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 24–53.

⁷¹³ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, 82.

manage China's rise, membership in the Asia-Pacific was seen to have tremendous status-enabling potential by the Indian foreign policy establishment. Though the project possessed constraints, it met with several successful status-enabling moments (Chapter 5, section 5.4).

India's Indo-Pacific project has emerged in the context of an ongoing order transition informed by the relative decline of the American-lead global order. While the origins of the Indo-Pacific concept cannot be directly traced to India, unlike the Asia-Pacific concept, Indian membership within it has been undisputed. It has been included as an important member of this region in Japanese, Australian and American articulations of the region. This is possibly attributed to the region-building efforts that underpinned its Asia-Pacific project, through which it expressed its interest in extending its neighbourhood to include the Indian Ocean Region. In this way, the project itself has involved less ideational innovation than the preceding projects and, in many ways, seems to be an outcome of efforts undertaken through them. Given the shift underpinning the post-Cold War order centred on American unipolarity, India's Indo-Pacific project informs its strategies to seek status, which express conformity to the norms underpinning a liberal, rules-based order, but, at the same time, emphasise on inclusion and acknowledgment of the rise and role of other players – including China – that seek to have a greater stake in influencing a post-unipolar world. In this context, it has attempted to build the region as an 'inclusive' one that signals its membership within a grouping of key democracies and strategic partners, but also, emphasises on inclusion of other regional and global stakeholders - with a particular signal to China - in it. At the same time however, India's ability to shape the region on these terms is increasingly contested and its subsequently impacting the status-enabling value of its Indo-Pacific project.

Second and related, the projects have differed in their framing of India's great power relationships. The Asia project focused more on keeping great powers out of the region. Dutch efforts to recolonise Indonesia in the 40s for instance, was framed as "an insult and challenge to Asia" (Chapter 4, section 4.3).⁷¹⁴ Moreover, through its Asia project, India pursued on a policy for "standing up for certain ideals of oppressed nations", even if it displeased the great powers (Chapter 3, section 3.3).⁷¹⁵ With its Asia-Pacific project on the other hand, India was seeking membership in a region that enmeshed the great powers (Chapter 5, section 5.5). The great power strategy driving the Asia-Pacific was to keep the United States and a rising China involved in the regional architecture in a controlled competition, which could serve to benefit the other countries of the region (Chapter 5). With its Indo-Pacific project, India appears to have joined a regional grouping that marks and, in some ways, acknowledges the existence of strategic competition between the United States and China (Chapter 6).

Third, the nature of dominant practices underpinning each project. Through its Asia project, India framed itself as a 'natural centre' of this region (Chapter 3, section 3.1). This region was made a foreign policy priority and became the centre of its diplomatic activity during this period. Through its efforts to represent the Indonesian cause at the United Nations (Chapter 4), role in facilitating key negotiations during the Korean War (1950-1953), mediation through its invisible presence at the Geneva Conference on Indochina and the Formosa crisis (Chapter 3, section 3.3) it produced and reproduced its idea of Asia. In its Asia-Pacific project on the other hand, instead of a 'natural centre', India had to signal that it was 'turning to' an existing region, by 'looking East'. Through the launch of its Look East Policy, this project concentrated on seeking

⁷¹⁴ Nehru, 'Interview to the Press, Delhi: The War in Indonesia (28 July, 1947)'.

⁷¹⁵ Nehru, 'India's Foreign Policy: Nehru's Intervention in Budgetary Demands of the Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations (8 March, 1948)', 498.

institutional membership within the regional organisations that had been established to its exclusion. Building relations with ASEAN was seen as a critical starting point. It was through its achieving dialogue status with ASEAN, that India made its way into formal security groupings in the region such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) (Chapter 5, section 5.5). While India still insists on ASEAN centrality in its Indo-Pacific vision, the project seems to take shape beyond the institutional framework of ASEAN. India sees the Indo-Pacific as a theatre to enable its claims to status as a major power. It therefore involves a range of practices befitting that objective that include developing and projecting its naval capabilities strategic partnerships with other major powers (Chapter 6, section 6.1).⁷¹⁶

Lastly, the projects have differed in the nature of their closing moments. India's Asia project of the Nehru years did not last incredibly long. As discussed in Chapter 3 (section 3.3), the geopolitics of the Cold War began to close in on its project, exacerbating many errors India made in pursuing the project. These were most evident at the Bandung Conference and its China strategy. The project, however, was most directly undermined by the arrival of military pacts sponsored by the United States and its allies in Pacific Asia, that began to initiate new sub-regional projects within Asia in the 1950s. It finally ended when India clashed with Chinese forces on its disputed border in 1962 (section 3.3). The Asia-Pacific project, however, did not 'close' in the way that the Asia project did (section 5.4). Instead, it expanded and stretched into that of the Indo-Pacific, a new regional construct that – unlike the original Asia-Pacific project – included India from the start (Chapter 6, section 6.1).

⁷¹⁶ Basrur, 'Modi's Foreign Policy Fundamentals: A Trajectory Unchanged'; Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 90.

In terms of consistencies, the most evident one is the key argument on which this thesis is pinned – regions and their abilities to inform claims to higher status at the global level. Despite the differences in the three projects, the thesis has presented evidence to suggest that in making decisions to engage and invest in region-building, Indian elites factored in the opportunities they provided for social recognition which could potentially enable India's claims to higher status at the global level. Second, the discourses and practices that underpinned the Asia Project of the Nehru years created a solid and substantial foundation on the basis of which it could “re-create its Asian’ identity by pursuing its Asia-Pacific project several decades later.⁷¹⁷ In Narasimha Rao’s famous Singapore speech for instance (Chapter 5, section 5.3), he built an image of the region building based on Nehru’s own, emphasising on ‘regionalist’ moments of India’s Asia project such as the Asian Relations Conference (1947) or the Bandung moment of 1955. Moreover, he highlighted India’s deep civilizational links to the ‘region’ echoing Nehru’s ideas in the *Discovery of India* (Chapter 3, section 3.2). Traces of these ideas were also seen in Narendra Modi’s speech in Shangri-La in 2018 (Chapter 6, section 6.1). In this way, though India’s Asia project closed in the 1960s, marking a serious setback of its claims to status at the time, its ideational heavy-lifting proved to make India’s case for entering the Asia-Pacific and making it an indisputable member of the Indo-Pacific, much stronger.

Third, despite both projects differing in the ways they framed and valued India’s great power relationships, there remained strains of consistency. While the discussion above explains that through its ‘Asia-Pacific’ project, India sought to embrace rather than challenge structures of global order, it did not entirely constrain its foreign policy

⁷¹⁷ Khurshid, ‘Forward’.

practices for this purpose and continued to keep its distance from the norms that underpinned the American-centred order. This was most evident in 1998, where despite its recent success in gaining an entry point into the ASEAN Regional Forum, it conducted a series of nuclear tests in 1998. Though there was initial criticism and sanctions imposed on India, the United States relented and the response it evoked from ASEAN was mild. This implied that even though India engaged in a region-building project that was not entirely of its own making, it took to this region some of its own terms, keeping the great powers at bay. Eventually, Indian diplomats noted that its 1998 tests increased its credibility within the region and India was officially recognised as an emerging power (Chapter 5, section 5.4). Similar patterns are noticeable in India's Indo-Pacific project. Despite seeing its inclusion in this region as a marker of its rising status, India has, to a large extent attempted to differentiate its vision of this region from one that might resemble any form of great power alliance that seeks to contain China. In doing so, India's vision of the Indo-Pacific has differed from other key Indo-Pacific members, particularly those of the QUAD grouping (Chapter 6, section 6.2).

7.4 Summing Up:

By drawing on the Indian case, this thesis has demonstrated how regions inform states' claims to higher status at the global level. Relying on approaches from Political Geography and Critical Geopolitics, it has argued that through regions and the ways in which states 'build' them, they forge a sense of commonality and group membership, with which they can differentiate themselves from others.⁷¹⁸ On securing membership, regions function as geographic theatres for them to enact a specific role

⁷¹⁸ See Leonardelli and Toh, 'Social Categorization in Intergroup Contexts: Three Kinds of Self-Categorization', 70–71. On regions and group formation see Postel-Vinay, 'The Historicity of the International Region: Revisiting the "Europe and the Rest" Divide'.

to targeted audiences, which can serve to augment their claims to status at the global level. Within the Indian case, the thesis has explored three instances of region-building: a post-imperial, post-1945 'Asia'; a post-Cold War 'Asia-Pacific'; and an incipient 'Indo-Pacific'.

As this thesis has sought to demonstrate *how* regions have informed its claims to status at the global level, it is important to consider alternative ways in which this story could be told. Was Indian region-building necessarily informing its claims to status or was it just a pursuit of security? As established in recent work on Indian status-seeking, distinguishing between status and security is indeed difficult, given that – and this is especially relevant in the post-Cold War context – both have involved the pursuit of material power.⁷¹⁹ For these reasons, this thesis has not aimed to invalidate the explanation that Indian region-building has informed its security interests. Instead, it offers an alternative interpretation of what Indian region-building appears to inform.⁷²⁰ It makes the case that a purely security-centred analysis of region-building overlooks how the process has informed its claims to status. It has done so by demonstrating how region-building discourses and practices have been embedded into a language of status in Indian foreign policy, and how they have contributed to the recognition of India's status by the great powers. In this way, this thesis has attempted to bridge between the International Relations literature on regions and status and provide fresh interpretations of key Indian foreign policy endeavours.

⁷¹⁹ Basrur and Sullivan de Estrada, *Rising India: Status and Power*, 14.

⁷²⁰ Price and Reus-Smit, 'Dangerous Liaisons? Critical International Theory and Constructivism'.

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APPENDIX

America's 'Asian Pivot': The View from India

Ambassador Nirupama Rao, Brown University, Feb 4, 2013

"We are of Asia and the peoples of Asia are nearer and closer to us than others. India is so situated that she is the pivot of Western, Southern and Southeast Asia" Jawaharlal Nebru at the Asian Relations Conference, New Delhi, March 1947.

Dr. Christina Paxson, President, Brown University

Dr. Ashutosh Varshney, Director, Brown-India Initiative

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this opening seminar of the Spring 2013 "Brown-India Initiative Seminar Series". It is always a privilege to be associated with Brown University and the Watson Institute for International Studies. I am particularly thankful for your efforts in developing closer intellectual and academic linkages with India through the "Brown India Initiative".

I recall my visit here last September with the then External Affairs Minister of India, Mr. S.M. Krishna, who spoke on India's foreign policy at the launch of the Brown India Initiative. You have been engaged in wonderful work in developing academic research and discourse on India, and bringing together experts from academia, civil society and public policy from both India and the United States.

President Paxson, with your distinguished record of academic research and work on public health issues in the developing world, you bring great value to this focus on India in Brown. I have no doubt that the India Initiative will benefit immensely from your leadership.

Professor Varshney is well known in both our countries for his excellent and trenchant scholarship on contemporary India. I am particularly privileged that our friendship dates back to over two decades.

President Paxson and Professor Varshney, I compliment your efforts. They will surely go a long way in building a robust, comprehensive and textured understanding between our two countries.

Indeed, one of the most important aspects of the recent transformation in India-U.S. relations is the extraordinary discourse and debate that happens through academic channels between both our countries. Undeniably, this has helped us in developing a

deeper appreciation of each other's positions and a shared vision for the future of our partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The subject I have been asked to speak on is relevant to both India and the United States since it is reflective of the global dimension of our strategic engagement.

It is a truism that the centre of gravity for global opportunity has shifted towards Asia and the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean world with its spectacular and continued economic growth. According to the IMF, over the last three decades, Asia's share of global GDP grew from 10 percent to 30 percent, its standard of living rose six times, and half a billion people were brought out of poverty. In the last decade alone, emerging Asia has grown by an average annual rate of over 7 percent.

Today, Asia has by far the greatest share of rising middle classes and a young population. With the economies of this region growing and integrating with the global economy, the region can be expected to continue to contribute significantly to global growth, trade, prosperity and innovation, and thereby, play a vital role in the moulding of the 21st century.

Given the extraordinary change that is underway in the Asia-Pacific as well as in India, there seems to be a natural interest in the U.S. in understanding India's role in Asia and its expanding engagement with the region, just as there is interest in India to understand the vision and the workings of U.S. policy towards Asia and the Asia-Pacific.

While the contours of this U.S. policy variously described as "pivot" or "rebalancing" towards Asia, are still unfolding, there is no denying that the U.S. seeks to engage with that region much more robustly than it has in the recent past. But before I come to the U.S. role in the region, let me talk about India's own engagement with that region.

Our engagement with the Asia-Pacific is not new. We are part of the Asia-Pacific and an Indian Ocean world that traditionally lived in peace, pursuing the traffic of ideas, the peaceful absorption of different religions without proselytization, pursuing trade and commerce in a non-polarized, peaceful, common economic space. In our view, more than geopolitical, or geo-economic, this was a geo-civilizational paradigm – a creative space with revolving doors where civilizations coalesced and did not clash. One has only to visit the caves of Ajanta in western India or see the murals of Dunhuang in China's West to see this vision of unity that marked our past – I refer to the depiction of various nationalities thronging royal processions or expressing their grief before a dying Buddha. This is the region where we hear the muffled footsteps of historical travellers and thinkers like Boddhidharma of India and Xuan Zang of China beat in our blood, to use a phrase from Rabindranath Tagore. These were lives

mortgaged to pilgrimage, and voyages of intellectual discovery. We see that past as a rough guide to our future.

Though these interactions faded during India's colonial existence, we strove to re-establish these linkages soon after our independence. This was the vision that India, together with China, sought to create when we moved a level beyond Westphalian concepts of statecraft to the definition of the Panchashila or the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, principles that explain India's foreign policy in a fundamental manner. In fact, these principles also define the core beliefs of ASEAN in a post-Panchashila world as scholars like Prasenjit Duara have pointed out.

Not just history, but the trade winds and our geography in India also dictate our close bonds with the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean world. We share land and maritime borders with Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand. The southernmost tip of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal is just 90 nautical miles away from Indonesia and the northern most tip less than 10 nautical miles from Myanmar.

Some observers say Indo-Pacific Asia, or the Indo-Pacific for short, is a "more credible and contemporary name" than the Asia-Pacific. They see it as an "emerging Asian strategic system that encompasses both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, defined in part by the reach of China and India, and the continued strategic role and presence of the United States in both (these oceans)". Apparently, the term Indo-Pacific has been used to define a precise bio-geographic region in marine science for over a century now.

It has also been observed how the geographical subtext of India's engagement in the Asia Pacific is also manifest in the term "Indo-Pacific" which is increasingly defining the cultural, economic, political and security continuum that straddles the Indian and the Pacific Ocean regions and is fast becoming a geo-strategic construct to comprehend the common opportunities, the intersecting maritime and security interests, and challenges confronting this region.

We Indians come from a tradition of sun worshippers. And, therefore, we have always looked East. The history of Peninsular India, particularly its East Coast is tied intricately and profoundly, to Southeast Asia. Indeed, for Peninsular India, the lure of the sea around it, has moulded and set the course of our history. We have a vantage location, with the Indian Ocean literally at our feet.

Even before the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the stage was set for closer cooperation between India and East and Southeast Asia. During the Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi there was a spurt of diplomatic exchanges with Southeast Asia. And in 1992, we formally launched our "Look East" policy, or rather, a renewed Look East policy, the fulcrum of which was our relations with ASEAN. This was also the period when we embarked upon a pragmatic and result-oriented policy of

economic reform that further facilitated closer relations with the countries of the region.

As a result of more than two decades of a sustained engagement based on common developmental and strategic interests, our relationship with ASEAN has grown in strength and substance.

Today, there is a regular high-level interaction both with ASEAN, with whom we have had annual summits since 2002, as also with individual countries of ASEAN and East Asia. We joined the East Asia Summit in 2005 at its inaugural summit, and greatly value our regular and active participation in its deliberations.

Guided by the strong economic rationale of our “Look East” policy, ASEAN and East Asian countries – including Japan, China and South Korea – have emerged as large trading and investment partners of India. The richness of this engagement is visible in wide-ranging cooperation in areas as diverse as science and technology, tourism, human resource development, transport & infrastructure, health and pharmaceuticals. Indeed, the strategic footprint of our relations with China and Japan, particularly, will exert a major impact on the future of the region.

Conscious of our collective Asian heritage, we are working on the revival of Nalanda University – an ancient seat of learning which once was the wellspring of scholarly and cultural exchanges between India, and East and Southeast Asia.

In December last year, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the ASEAN-India dialogue partnership and the 10th anniversary of ASEAN-India Summit-level partnership, by hosting in New Delhi a Commemorative Summit with the theme ‘ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace and Shared Prosperity’.

A Vision Statement adopted at the Summit lays out a comprehensive roadmap for political, security, economic, socio-cultural and development cooperation between India and ASEAN leading up to 2020. It recognizes ASEAN’s centrality and its role as the driving force of both economic and security structures and institutions currently emerging in the region in pursuit of its stability, peace and development. The markers we have set at this Summit for the future of India-ASEAN engagement are meant to transform our policy of “Looking East” into one of “Engaging the East”.

We have set a trade target of 100 billion dollars by 2015 stemming from opportunities presented by the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement signed in 2010. We are also committed to realizing an ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (FTA), which will be an economic space of huge opportunities, with a combined market of almost 1.8 billion people and a combined GDP of 3.8 trillion dollars.

Connectivity is a big focus of our engagement with ASEAN and the region, which we will enhance through the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.

We will step up our assistance in the completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and its extension to Lao PDR and Cambodia. We will also help develop a new highway project connecting India-Myanmar-Lao PDR-Viet Nam-Cambodia as well as the Mekong-India Economic Corridor (MIEC) connecting Southeast Asia to South Asia through India's eastern region. These connectivities will add new impetus to trade and investment linkages and people to people exchanges between ASEAN and India.

While beginning with a strong economic emphasis, our engagement in the region has also become increasingly strategic in its content. Our political dialogue has grown, our consultations in regional forums have intensified, and our defence and counter-terrorism cooperation with countries in the region have expanded.

We have bilateral agreements to strengthen our defence cooperation as also cooperation in combating non-traditional security challenges with several countries of the region including with Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

In a reflection of our commitment to the region's peace and stability, India acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in 2003. We are an active participant in the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum and ASEAN Defense Ministers+8 process which provide a platform to discuss common challenges to our collective peace and security and devise ways and means to address them.

It is obvious that in the present era of interdependence, the security and economic prosperity of nations is vitally linked to safety and security of sea lanes of communication. States will need to work together to address common threats to maritime security. India supports freedom of navigation and access to resources in accordance with principles of international law, and believes that these principles should be respected by all.

India sits astride these crucial sea lanes of communication across the Indian Ocean, through which almost 60,000 ships carry merchandise and energy from the Gulf to East Asia every year. The security of these lanes is challenged by the rising incidence of piracy as well as other threats such as trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings and linkages with transnational criminal outfits.

India has contributed its naval capabilities to help safeguard the vital sealanes of the Indo-Pacific. In the past, we have cooperated with Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia to ensure security in the Malacca Straits. Today, we are cooperating with other naval forces in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia to counter piracy.

The growth of our naval capabilities enables us also to work out mechanisms of cooperation with other friendly navies to be net providers of security in the region,

and also for emergency and disaster management as we saw during the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004.

Ladies and Gentlemen: India's vision is to create a web of inter-linkages for our shared prosperity and security. We want the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific regions to develop into a zone of cooperation rather than one of competition and domination.

We would like to work for an open, inclusive and transparent architecture of regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, where all major powers in Asia and beyond work together to address the traditional and non-traditional challenges and to create a basis for a stable and prosperous Asia. These are the challenges that cut across national boundaries and require cooperative responses.

Based on this vision, we welcome the U.S. engagement in the Asia of the Indo-Pacific. The continuance of economic growth and prosperity in both our countries is in many ways linked to the opportunities for growth and prosperity in this region. It is a space that impacts our destinies, whose security and prosperity is vital to both of us, and where we have an increasing convergence of interests.

We believe that India and the United States are stakeholders in the creation of an inclusive, participatory network of interdependence, cooperative trade, economic development, security and stability in the Asia of the Indo-Pacific. These converging interests have opened up new opportunities for enhanced cooperation between our two countries.

It was in recognition of these mutual interests that Prime Minister Singh and President Obama spelt out their shared vision for peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions during President Obama's visit to India in November 2010.

This vision is reflected in India's support for U.S entry into the East Asia Summit as a full participant and recently, as an observer in the IOR-ARC (The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation).

And, we have agreed to work together and with other countries in the East Asia Summit, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the ADMM + 8 process, for the evolution of an open, balanced and inclusive architecture in the region, so that all stakeholders can make their contributions to regional security.

We are supplementing such multilateral efforts by bilateral consultations with the U.S. on the Asia-Pacific, for which we have instituted a regular dialogue mechanism. It provides an opportunity to discuss and exchange our respective perspectives on a wide range of issues in the region and is a vivid manifestation of the global dimension of our strategic partnership.

With a shared interest in maritime security in the region, cooperation in this area between India and the United States has deepened in the past several years. We both have affirmed the importance of maritime security, unimpeded commerce, and freedom of navigation, in accordance with relevant universally agreed principles of international law and peaceful settlement of maritime disputes.

Today, our naval forces conduct regular joint exercises and exchanges. The anti-piracy operations off the coast of Africa, where our navies are working together with forces of other countries have brought in a new dimension that requires continued focus so that we mitigate and remove threats to international and regional maritime commerce.

We have also launched a trilateral consultation between India, U.S. and Japan, which has helped increase mutual understanding and enhance our cooperative endeavours.

And, then there is China. It was Ji Xianlin, the pre-eminent Chinese Indologist of modern times, who said of China and India, that they are “standing side by side of the Asian continent with their neighborliness created by Heaven and constructed by Earth”. Ancient principles that defined friendship and interaction between our two countries are not antiquated. That was how the cosmology of the Panchshila or the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was defined between India and China in the fifties. And it is these principles that sustain us when we speak of Asian stability demanding cooperation, even if it is laced with competition, and not confrontation, between India and China, thus creating what is termed “an arc of advantage and shared economic prosperity” across Asia. The Australian analyst, Rory Medcalf, speaks of how the intersecting interests of the big maritime trading and strategic powers, especially the United States, China, India, “create the glue of an emerging strategic system” and that the core Indo-Pacific encompasses the South China Sea, maritime Southeast Asia and the Bay of Bengal.

Many observers are tempted to view the India-U.S. engagement in this region, as directed at China. I do not believe that such a construct is valid or sustainable, given the significant overlapping interests that bind us in the region and globally – whether it is about global financial stability or energy security, or climate change, to name a few. The U.S. also denies that its pivot to Asia is aimed at containing China. Rather, as Joe Nye recently remarked at the Aspen Dialogue, the U.S. approach is being explained as being primarily about engagement and understanding Asia’s internal balance of power.

China is our largest neighbour. I am often asked whether our relationship with China will be one dominated by increasing competition for influence or for resources. I would not like to characterize our relations in such stark terms. Over the last two decades we have sought to deepen our dialogue and strengthen bilateral relations. Today China is our largest trading partner in goods. Peace and tranquillity have prevailed in the India-China border areas.

At the same time we do remain alert to the fact that China's growing ability to project its military strength, its rapid military modernization, and its visible and growing reach introduces a new calculus in the security situation in our region. The challenge therefore, is to manage the India-China relationship despite inherent complexities and challenges, embedding it in the matrix of dialogue and diplomacy.

The rise of China, changes the security calculus of the Indo-Pacific world. Nowhere is this more starkly felt than in our Southeast Asian neighborhood. There is massive interaction between China and Southeast Asia today, and Chinese capital is shaping inland Southeast Asia particularly in terms of connectivities to mainland China, with the building of roads, railways and dams. India too seeks closer integration with Southeast Asia and sees this as a strategic economic opportunity. I heard one analyst comment recently that our Southeast Asian friends would like to see both India and China in an "enmeshment" with their region built on commercial diplomacy and the enhancement of economic interdependence. Like Gullivers, we will be enmeshed, and this policy of ASEAN is proving very effective, because of the good for all of us that it generates! This process also creates greater stakes for India and we hope for China too, in the region's progress and stability.

For India, the creation of a stable regional environment that helps us focus more intensively on growing our economy is vital. Building strong bilateral partnerships, key trade and investment linkages with our Southeast Asian neighbours and promoting ASEAN-centred regional projects helps us facilitate economic linkages, promote strategic autonomy and also to deal with non-traditional threats to our security which pose a significant challenge to our development. Our relationships with the United States and with Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia and Australia are also very important to us in this emerging construct. Such processes enable us to balance our trade and security interests in the region.

There is a seamless stretch of oceanic space that links the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The earlier concept of the Asia-Pacific had sought to exclude India – today the term, Indo-Pacific encompasses the subcontinent as an integral part of this eastern world. We are glad that the mental map of the Asia Pacific has changed and that the centre of gravity has moved westward to include India. We have welcomed the fact that the U.S. understands how important the Indo-Pacific region is to global trade and commerce. The task before us is to concretely define this concept through expanding security, especially maritime, and economic cooperation. This should not be an exclusionary strategy; using the term enmeshment again, it needs to enmesh all concerned and create a web of interdependence. That is how we operationalize this concept.

Talk of an Asian "Concert" of powers has been prevalent in some recent analyses of the regional situation. Such a concert presupposes the maturing of stable relations among the major countries in the region with the United States also acting as an important factor for stability. The arguments have weighed in favor of deepened

understanding among all of these countries rather than polarization and division into rival blocs. This would also require mutual accommodation between the countries concerned. Others call it an “inclusive balancing” where the US simultaneously engages all the regional powers like China, India, Japan and Russia working to see a multipolar order that reduces the risk of military confrontation. As Asian affairs analyst Nayan Chanda notes, a carefully balanced policy that is not aimed at forcing people in the region into any “with us” or “against us” positions is the best prescription. The same inclusive balancing should apply to relations between the major countries within the region. Shared maritime and energy security interests become potential areas of convergence in this scenario. Advancing the scope of agreements defined by shared interests or as “building coalitions on different issues of shared concern” (Shyam Saran) through such inclusive balancing is good for the region. We have also welcomed a trilateral dialogue between India, China and the United States on global and regional challenges.

Before I close, let me say also that we must also be conscious of the fact that Asia, is as continental as it is oceanic. The wellbeing of Asia is equally dependent on the resolution of strife and violence in countries like Afghanistan and the defeat of non-state actors who perpetrate a terrorist agenda in countries like Pakistan as it is on the safety of sea lines of communication and addressing challenges and threats at sea. This must be kept in focus as we look to the future.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Today we stand at the cusp of exciting times, which hold challenges as well as promise for a bright future in this shared region of ours, built on our cooperative endeavours.

India will continue to deepen its engagement with the United States and other partners in the Asia-Pacific region with the goal to promote our collective prosperity, stability and security.

I thank you for your attention, and wish your deliberations all success