

# **INTERNATIONALIZING INDIA**

## **From Sub-empire to the Nation State**



**Prateek Joshi**

St. Antony's College

University of Oxford

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

History Faculty, University of Oxford

Michaelmas Term 2025

Word Count: 82,908



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Short Abstract</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Long Abstract</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter One Introductory Chapter</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Empires, Civilization and Temporality</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Nehru's India: Of Empires and International History</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Reframing India in the International Realm</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Literature Review: Existing Scholarship, its Limitations and the Need for Reconceptualization</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapterization</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter Two Independence and National Consolidation: Intertwining thoughts on Civilization, Geopolitics and International Law</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>National Imaginations: The role of Frontiers, Muslim dynasties, and History Writing</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Making Case for Indian Unity</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Decolonization and Reclaiming India's 'Geopolitical' Agency</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>International Law: International Imaginings, Limitations and its Violation</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>United India, Paramountcy and the Monopoly of international identity</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Transfer of Power: Codifying Inheritance and Emergence of Pakistan</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>'Indianizing' Lakshadweep (Laccadive) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter Three The Making of a Territorial Identity: Revisiting the Early Years of Independence</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Separating Sacred Geography from Hindutva: Rescuing Indian Territoriality and Redefining Gandhi</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Buddha and Ashoka's Greater India: Towards a Theatre State</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>The New Indian Imaginary: Reinterpreting Buddhism and Non-Alignment</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Pakistan: An Ahistorical National Space?</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>The Himalayan States</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Violence as Part of India's International Identity</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Chapter Four Contest of Nationalisms: Kashmir's True Inheritance</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>101</b>

<b>Kashmir's Inheritance: Torn Between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Conventional History Writing on Kashmir</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Nehru's Kashmir: Between the 'imperial', the 'sublime' and the 'populist'</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Kashmir in Nehru's Political Idea of India</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Gilgit: J&amp;K's Forgotten Frontier</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Differences with Sheikh Abdullah</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>Chapter Five The Hindufication of Inheritance: Sino-Indian confrontation in the Himalayas</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>Background: British India's Tibet Policy in Twentieth Century</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Scholarly and Political Positions on Nehru's China policy and Chapter Outline</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Tibet and China in Nehru's imagination</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>China-India Ties During the Transfer of Power</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Epistemic Divergences in the Sino-Indian Border Negotiations</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Sino-Indian Boundary: A Millenia old Hindu frontier?</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Concluding Remarks</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>167</b>

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I thank my supervisor, Prof. Faisal Devji, who not only made my selection to Oxford possible but single-handedly shaped my research trajectory over the last six years of my doctoral journey. His interventions motivated me to design more nuanced and previously unexplored research questions, encouraging me to think beyond existing research paradigms. My parents, without whom this path would have been impossible, have been a constant source of support and motivation. The fact that I got married while writing this thesis is a testament to the unwavering support I received from my wife, Bhumi, who consistently checked on me to ensure that I left no loose ends during the submission process. The trust my parents and my wife had in my ability to pursue an academic career instilled in me an immense zeal.

I am forever indebted to my mentors, Dr. Ashok Kumar Behuria and Professor Kulbhusan Warikoo, who unconditionally supported my decision to pursue a DPhil and enriched my thesis with their vast archival knowledge, decades of experience in academia and policymaking, and invaluable feedback. The fact that I could reach out to them at any time to discuss my doubts was a blessing. The completion of this thesis owes much to three of my dearest friends, colleagues, and mentors: Advocate Siddharth Acharya, DS, and SR, who rescued me from precarious situations countless times over the last five years and continue to inspire me with their risk-taking abilities.

Since childhood, I was fascinated with the Himalayas and made several trips to Uttarakhand and Himachal with my parents and Late Dr. AK Sharma, a dear family friend. Dr. Sharma's passion for travel and his interest in the Himalayas also rubbed off on me as I began my research on India's frontiers. He is no more with us but the memory of our conversations and travels remains strong and fresh.

I am immensely grateful to Dr. Arvind Gupta, who awakened my interest in archives and encouraged me to spend time at the National Archives of India, even during working hours, when I served as a Research Associate under him. I will never forget the support offered by Ambassador D.P. Srivastava, Ambassador P.P. Shukla, and Mr. Tilak Devasher. Their knowledge of history and their unwavering support for my work were indispensable in the course of my research. I would also like to thank Ms. Asma Lone, Fatima (South Asian University), I.S., Shafqat Inqalabi, Ahmed Kazmi, Alia, and my friends from Gilgit, who unconditionally helped me by sharing new literature and insights on Pakistan.

I can never forget Kritika Pal Singh, who inspired me to consider pursuing a PhD at Oxbridge at a time when I was unsure about my commitment and abilities for a PhD project. She was the first person to push me and encouraged me to follow my passion for research. I am also indebted to Julia Hampton from Oxford, who reached out to me in the midst of the pandemic and helped me articulate my arguments when I was preparing for the Transfer interview. I

want to thank Dr. Brian Wong, a dear friend who introduced me to global politics in the most personal and candid way through the Oxford Union and the Oxford Political Review. Brian's presence in Oxford played a significant role in smoothing my Dphil journey.

The staff and officials at the National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum, Middle East Library (St. Antony's College), and the India Office Library (London) were extremely helpful in facilitating timely access to archives and manuscripts crucial for my research. A number of colleagues in my previous assignments helped me refine my research questions and access new literature. I would like to thank Yogesh Joshi, Satyanand Vatsa, Dr. Kapil Patil, and Aayush Mohanty for always being available, listening to me, and improving my work whenever required.

Finally, this thesis is a tribute to Late Ustad Zakir Hussain, whose genius is a constant guiding light in the course of my research. Zakir's interviews, his music and his infinite creativity became an intuitive source as I developed my thesis.

## **Abbreviations**

AISPC - All India States Peoples Conference

CPI - Communist Party of India

CR- Crown Representative

FATA - Federally Administered Tribal Agency

GOI - Government of India

J&K – Jammu and Kashmir

MEA – Ministry of External Affairs

NAM - Non-Alignment Movement

NEFA - North East Frontier Agency

NC – National Conference

PMML – Prime Ministers Museum and Library

NWFP - Northeast Frontier Provinces

PA - Political Agent

PRC – People’s Republic of China

RSS - Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

ToP - Transfer of Power

UNO - United Nations Organization

UNCIP - United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan

## **Short Abstract**

The thesis is a History of Ideas project that engages with the conceptualization and evolution of Indian nationhood in Jawaharlal Nehru's political thought. I argue that in the Nehruvian thought, the international expanse of both, pre-British era Indian empires and the Indian civilization became the basis of articulating India's unity and statehood.

I discuss how Nehru traced the unity of the Indian nation not in domestic attributes but international influence of historic empires and Indian culture. For Nehru, an influential foreign policy, based on these attributes, could only become successful if India remained united. Drawn from empires, religion and civilizational attributes, the concept of Indian unity was understood separately from constitutionalism, as its basis was a detour from the principles of republicanism and democracy.

Thus, India's political identity was demanded on the basis of its imagined foreign policy and these arguments later found space in the Transfer of Power negotiations, especially the drafting of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 where Indian nationalists insisted that India be defined not only as a successor state to British India, but also the ultimate successor to Mauryan state. In crux, the legal definition of inheritance of the Indian state was not simply an inheritance of territories once annexed by the Raj but reclamation of a timeless entity and an act of placing it back to the continuum of global history.

## Long Abstract

This thesis studies the evolution of India, both as an intellectual concept and as a state between the 1930s and the 1950s in Jawaharlal Nehru's political thought. The two decades of his public life, from the 1930s to the 1950s, offer important insights into his articulation of the idea of India as a nationalist ideologue, and as India's first Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister. It highlights his efforts to give the idea of India a tangible form as independent India consolidated control over its political boundaries and conducted its neighbourhood policy considering it as an extension of India.

Firstly, my research posits that the idea of India was conceptualized on a broader geographical canvas, embracing its neighbouring territories. Not only the territories beyond traditional frontiers were crucial to the idea of India, their imagined association with India was fundamental to the making of India's international legal personality. My subsequent argument, covered in the latter part of my thesis, states that both, India's own legal personality and its conflicts with neighbouring countries traced a common origin in the very definition of the Indian nation itself.

Fundamentally, my research seeks to fill the intellectual gaps that naturally emerged with the scholarly attribution of non-alignment, democracy, and secularism as the means and ends of Nehruvian statecraft. Theoretically, the thesis is an intellectual history project which is a philosophical investigation into the role of foreign policy and the international sphere in defining Nehru's idea of India. His role as India's first Minister of External Affairs contributed to the making of India's political identity, more than his role as the Prime Minister. His tenure in the foreign office speaks of more than an interest in foreign policy, but rather of his intellectual pursuits to define India as a manifestation of an imagined foreign policy and a geo-empire of sorts. Further, since the imagination of the foreign policy preceded that of the nation itself for Nehru, the historical journey of the Indian nation – for him – was incomplete without the acknowledgement of its impact on the international sphere.

The primary research question is: How did the international sphere and foreign policy inform Nehru's idea of India? Through this question, I explain the relationship between statehood and foreign policy and uncover the conceptual linkages between India's unity, inheritance, civilization and historical empires, the key themes that animated Nehru's thoughts.

As against the conventional statecraft that defines foreign policy as a subset of sovereignty, the idea of India conceptualized foreign policy as the lynchpin of realizing statehood. As I further discuss the role of the international sphere in the making of India's international legal identity, my research calls for the need to reconfigure Indian nationalism and the Nehruvian thought in light of the extra-territorial imageries that underpinned it.

Nehru's contribution to the nationalist thought must be recognised in the sense that he did not limit the framing of India's historical (and) legal identity solely through the lenses of democracy and republicanism, but also made historical empires as defining blocs of Indian unity. I argue that, for him, the concept of a united India took precedence over all other aspects of national identity/political organization. His thoughts and writings justifying Indian unity had two common themes, the first being the narrativization of India's unity and centralized polity rooted in powerful empires, and the second, that the civilizational influence beyond India's traditional frontiers flowed from her political unity. The British policies of provincial autonomy, independence of princely states and devolutions for the Muslim community (in the guise of responsible government introduced by the Government of India Act, 1919) provided a compelling reason to view India's history through its international influence, resulting from its unified empires and culture. Besides his conviction, these developments also drove Nehru's intellectual pursuits to situate India in global history and the wider Asian geography.

My research delves into a detailed analysis of the demands put forth by the Indian nationalists during the Transfer of Power negotiations, positing that India was demanded back from the British in the form of an empire, not simply in the confines of a modern nation-state. Furthermore, for Nehru, India was not merely a geographic expression but a nation that possessed the agency to influence territories beyond its borders. Nehru's intellectual construction of India's political personality dissolved the distinction between the domestic and international spheres of its political/territorial identity. His ideas on unity were motivated by visions of a dominant power in Asia. Since India's imperial and civilizational expanse had transcended the political state itself, the idea of India was, by default, international.

Most importantly, Nehru's disagreement with Gandhi's model of mass politics was evident in the way it was considered antithetical to the goal of statehood. Gandhi's ideas, Nehru felt, did not address sovereignty from the perspective of influencing the international sphere. Instead, Nehru's definition of nationalism morphed and subsumed Gandhian thought into his territorial and nationalist project. His efforts were redirected at simultaneously justifying both historical empires and non-violence as essential attributes of Indian identity. In the process, he accorded a false temporality to non-violence by identifying Gandhi as a successor to Buddha. For him, a united and independent India, driven by Gandhian morality, was the ultimate successor to the Mauryan India, which had attained its peak under Buddhism. Most importantly, the recourse to Buddhism and the Mauryan example also enabled him to dissociate united India with its Hindu foundations in light of growing communal polarization in the subcontinent.

My thesis, therefore, traces the genealogy of united India in Nehru's thought by investigating his thought, which considered the new nation as organically flowing from old Indian empires.

In terms of Methodology, this thesis relies on Quentin Skinner's Speech Act and Adrian Blau's Extended Meaning which prioritise text and textual meanings over context. These methods, by studying the philosophy and the intentionality behind a certain idea, help in ascertaining their coherence.

The thesis, which heavily relies on archives sourced from the PMML, NAI and India Office Records, is divided into five chapters. The introductory chapter, besides explaining the research question, hypothesis, and chapter structure, delves deep into Nehru's intellectual definition of the Indian nation and its relation with global historical processes, and the eventual inception of independent India.

The second chapter discusses the making of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 which defined India's legal identity as a successor state to British India. It discusses India's conscious acceptance as an inheritor to British India, which bestowed on it the Raj's extraterritorial rights in neighbouring countries. Further, this status was also used to delegitimize the administrative divisions - especially the distinctions between British and Princely India - invented by the British rulers. Nehru's foremost motivation was the denial of foreign policy to the princes. I simultaneously document the dichotomies evident in Nehru's ideas that conceptualized India on the basis of unity, centralized polity and an internationalist identity.

The third chapter discusses Nehru's meticulous efforts at defining Indian unity. In particular, he emphasized unity as a construct of interwoven elements of historical empires, geography, and culture, separating it from the artificial unity imposed by the British empire. In this interpretation, the Raj not only colonized India but also appropriated the principles of unity that belonged to the previous empires. Nehru's conviction in India's eternal unity also revealed the limits of his belief in the legal route, as evident in his repeated threats to incite violence and rebellion if India's successor identity was not acknowledged. I further bring Pakistan into discussion in context of India's recognition as a successor state as this episode marks another instance of disagreement between Nehru and Jinnah on the respective legal identities of India and Pakistan. Jinnah was against the term Partition, which, as the name suggests, acknowledged India's erstwhile unity at least in the language of international law. However, in Nehru's view, since the communal violence and the resulting creation of Pakistan distorted the course of the subcontinent's history, any meaningful engagement with Pakistan was fruitless.

Defining India as a successor to empires also entailed re-narrativizing the religious identities of India's successive dynasties. The dynasties of the Delhi Sultanate, as well as the Mughals, had to be owned in order to own India both legally and historically. These viewpoints were also pitched against the Princely States, who relied on their local histories, religious affiliations, and close bond with the British to claim an independent status.

Greater emphasis was placed on defining India as a timeless entity, and Indians were duty-bound to restore India to this continuum. However, the act of legally defining India as a united and timeless entity had both domestic and international implications, as my case studies on Kashmir, China, and India's other border areas show. The domestic sphere in India was not spared either. The fact that the international roots of Indian unity were also positioned against the divisive domestic sphere made any alternative political ideas anathema.

My chapter on Kashmir discusses the political ramifications of Nehru's approach to Kashmir. In Jammu and Kashmir, India's successor identity found itself in opposition to the Kashmiri identity, which was seen as the true independent successor to the Dogra rule. The fundamental problem emerged from the very articulation of Kashmiri freedom struggle by Sheikh Abdullah, which was directed against the Dogras rather than the British. This dynamic blunted the Congress Party's anti-colonial discourse. The political vacuum in Kashmir was filled by Sheikh Abdullah, who defined Kashmiri identity as distinct, if not in opposition to, the Indian identity. In other words, Kashmir, according to Abdullah, could conditionally part with its sovereignty, particularly its defence and external affairs but retain all other aspects of its independent identity. For Nehru, Kashmir eventually transcended politics, acquiring a sublime status. Both Nehru and Abdullah acknowledged and obsessed over Kashmir's exclusivity, the former to make a case for its inclusion in India and latter to retain its separate identity. The different representations of Kashmir abound in Nehru's writings, but at best, he identified Kashmiri people through a class perspective. The imperial, political, and sublime images of Kashmir played out differently and intensely in Nehru's policies, which stood in contradiction to Abdullah's visions.

The last chapter discusses the Indian case on inheritance vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian border and India's position on Tibet. Both, Nehru's thoughts on the border question and the Chinese claims reinforce claims of the Indian position as that of a timeless empire.

Here, I discuss Nehru's obsession with distinguishing the empire's extraterritorial rights in Tibet from India's cultural claims in order to justify the McMahon Line and India's historical extraterritorial rights. Independent India's claims to the McMahon Line were backed by the sanctity of the Himalayan frontier, which characterized much of Nehru's thought on the Sino-Indian border issue. The significance of the Himalayas for the Hindu faith was cited as proof of India's influence over and beyond its frontiers. The Indian Foreign Office maintained in its correspondence with the Chinese leadership that India's northern frontiers were both sacred and eternal. The respective civilizational identities of India and China, Nehru assumed, would make Indian claims acceptable to the Chinese. India's border talks with China also unveiled the limits of India's secular and constitutional discourse. In his quest to redefine the McMahon Line as India's eternal frontier, Nehru gave Indian territoriality a Hindu identity. Notwithstanding the seamless national consolidation in the domestic sphere, the setbacks in India's policy

towards Pakistan and China exposed the incompatibility of the intellectual constituents of his nationalist thought. Both these cases demonstrate, in their respective ways, how India's successor identity belied the constitutional origins of independent India. To conclude, Nehru's interventions enabled independent India to be reclaimed back as an empire - an empire in which Nehru imagined himself as emperor Ashoka, but also an empire never truly restored to its glory.

# Chapter One

## Introductory Chapter

### Introduction

This thesis makes an attempt to define the intellectual relationship between the Indian state and Indian foreign policy in Jawaharlal Nehru's political thought. It argues that Jawaharlal Nehru's idea of India had foreign policy as its cornerstone, that is, foreign policy became a means to imagine India. With this hypothesis, this research argues that Indian unity and its foreign policy were conjoined concepts and that the historiography of his idea of India had international foundations.

It unpacks the essential themes that gave Nehru's idea of India an international character and in turn influenced independent India's own political personality and foreign policy. The imaginaries of a united India influenced the Transfer of Power negotiations between the Congress leadership and the British, and subsequently shaped the Indian Independence Act, 1947 (which defined independent India as acquiring the international status of British India). India's political identity, as a result, was intertwined with its legal personality and its foreign policy. This thesis captures how foreign policy became an essential theme to imagine a united India. While early challenges in India's neighbourhood are attributed to the Cold War and India's fraught relationship with her neighbours, this thesis separately explores Nehru's own ideas on India's relationship with her neighbouring spaces. The fact that the definition of India also encompassed territories beyond its traditional boundaries affected India's neighbourhood policy. Having reconceptualized the international sphere in this way, this thesis shall discuss why Nehru's role as the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister cannot be seen as two distinct roles but as intertwined with each other.

Three themes, namely the expansionist empires of pre-British India, historical temporality and the Hindu mythology characterize much of the repertoire by the Indian nationalists. Nehru repositioned them in an international context to picture India as a unified geo-cultural space congealed by the forces of historical empires and civilizational continuity. He understood pre-British imperial history of India and her civilizational influence in a wider temporal/geographical frame to imagine India beyond its domestic imaginary. As India's first Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs, he played a quintessential role in legitimizing these ideas. This thesis also examines how Nehru's conflation of the Indian state with its international imaginary entangled independent India into conflicts with its neighbours. Finally, it highlights Nehru's idea of India in action through his foreign policy, and India's frontier/ neighbourhood policy, and identifies the central aspect of Nehru's thinking, that is, his inability to distinguish between the domestic and the international sphere.

## **Empires, Civilization and Temporality**

Empires were remembered by nationalist thinkers in the context of their centralized authority and the territorial expanse they administered. Empire, as concept became an important reference point for nationalist ideologues, as they drew inspiration from the grandeur of pre-British empires, notwithstanding the nationalist leadership's commitment to republican ideas. Although various aspects of Indian culture were handpicked (for instance, Gandhi's articulation of Ram-Rajya or the concept of Akhand Bharat by Hindu nationalists) to link India's heritage with an ideal future polity, arguments justifying absolute sovereignty over India's territorial space became crucial in proving India's greatness to its colonizers. In context of this thesis, both, pre-British empires and the Indian civilization validated the territorial and/or geo-cultural incorporation of the territories beyond its borders, blurring the distinction between the national and the international.

Nationalist history writing, as reflected in the ideas of thinkers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the Greater India Historians and their contemporaries during the early twentieth century had already assumed Indian unity as eternal and India's innate ability to colonize distant lands beyond her frontiers.

Hinduism, by the virtue of its demographic dominance and the shrines spread in all the corners of the subcontinent gave an underlying sense of coherence to Hindu imaginations about India. Just as the Ramayana maps the subcontinent's extremes (through its references to Rameswaram, Lanka or the Himalayas), the Mahabharata gives references to places in modern day Afghanistan and China. Nehru observed that the Mahabharata, despite its unclear timeline, was still remembered as a text "where a very definite attempt has been made to emphasize the fundamental unity of India".<sup>1</sup> Tilak, in *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, mapped the origins of the Vedic texts in the Arctic region. Vedic deities, according to Tilak, belonged to the Arctic, and he also understood the North Pole as Mount Meru (also known as the axis of the world in Hindu cosmology).<sup>2</sup> In Tilak's understanding, the nycthemeral cycles described in the Vedic texts more closely resemble that of polar regions than of tropical ones (that is, the Indian subcontinent).<sup>3</sup>

As Nilanjana Mukherjee notes, arguments validating India's distinct geographical past were drawn from the Vishnu Purana or the "epic journeys of Ram in the Ramayana and the Pandavas in Mahabharata ...Folkloric narratives of the 51 Shakti Peethas [Shrines dedicated to the worship of feminine deities] testify to and substantiate this spatial consciousness".<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the universality of the supernatural, Hinduism also demonstrated a tendency

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London, 1946), page 107.

<sup>2</sup> B. Tilak, *Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Bombay, 1925), page 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Tilak, *Arctic Home*, page 75-85.

<sup>4</sup> N. Mukherjee, *Spatial Imaginings in the Age of Colonial Cartographic Reason: Maps, Landscapes, Travelogues in Britain and India*, (Abingdon, 2021), page 3-4.

of tying deities with local geographies, instilling divinity into its sense of space. The Chaar Dhaams (four holy shrines), that approximately mark the four different cardinal points of modern-day India, were cited by Nehru as proofs of a living culture that was synonymous with the Indian subcontinent:

By locating his four great monasteries in the north, south, east, and west, he evidently wanted to encourage the conception of a culturally united India.<sup>5</sup>

Further, Hinduism defies the logic of temporality as many of its epics lack clear dates and origins. The absence of a tradition of history-writing in ancient India produced a sense of history as a combination of facts and beliefs. Unlike the Abrahamic accounts which have existed as written texts, and are precise about the timelines of momentous events in West Asia, the hazy timeline surrounding Hindu texts promoted a tendency to adjust history according to self-serving narratives. This is not to term them completely anachronistic, but to highlight the fact that certain textual interpretations cannot be accepted at face value. Partha Chatterjee cited early modern history writing about India in a similar way wherein “myth, History, and the contemporary, all became part of the same chronological sequence”.<sup>6</sup> The division of time into four epochs or Yugas, gives rise to a sense of India which did not even call for a recorded history to prove its existence. Their coordinates being crucial in defining Indian geography, the Chaar Dhaams themselves were believed to have emerged in different Yugas, with the first Dham (shrine) being established in the first epoch (Sat Yuga or the age of truth) and the fourth Dham in the presently continuing Kali Yuga (or the age of darkness). There was another facet to the Hindu sense of temporality that gave coherence to the idea of India; not from the perspective of factual precision but rather through its absence. As Nehru was to note, “the greater part of India [followed] the Vikram Samvat calendar”, thus crediting the emperor Vikramaditya with unifying India with common time.<sup>7</sup> The calendar itself is believed to have marked the beginning of a new era after Vikramaditya’s defeat of the foreigner Sakas. Simultaneously, the stories of Vikramaditya’s greatness were pitted against the lack of recorded history about him, and his name became synonymous with the ideal Indian king, making him a national symbol. While it is difficult to find proof of the exact period of his rule, Vikramaditya becomes a key part of Indian storytelling as he not only gave Indians a calendrical identity, but even defended the ‘nation’ by pushing out the ‘foreign’ invaders.<sup>8</sup> And “what has been most surprising”, Nehru felt, was that the Hindu history writing connects

---

<sup>5</sup> Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, page 191. On another occasion, Nehru stated that India has “been a country for pilgrimages” with “ancient places, from Badrinath, Kedarnath and Amarnath...to Kanyakumari in the South...from the very beginning of history, the people of India always thought of themselves as people belonging to one great country. J. Nehru, *One Nation, One Heart*, (Delhi, 1963), page 30.

<sup>6</sup> P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton, 1993), page 80.

<sup>7</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 100-103.

<sup>8</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 103.

“the traditional hero, Vikram, with the beginning of the era 2,000 years ago. It has also been interesting to find how emphasis is laid on his fight against the foreigner and his desire to establish the unity of India under one national state”.<sup>9</sup>

Collectively, the historical memory of pre-British empires and themes from India’s civilizational past allowed Indian nationalists to conceptualize Indian Unity and its international character as essential to nationalist thought.

In Chris Bayly’s observations, while the “ideas appropriated from the West were blended with both conservative and modernist Hindu themes” by nationalists, Nehru used them to make a case for an India which was united, eternal and had a necessary geopolitical role to play in Asia.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in Nehru’s thought, the Indian unity, its eternity and geopolitical footprint become inseparable, positioning him differently from his fellow thinkers. An important distinction is that while other nationalists busied themselves with questions about administration, demography and representation, independence for Nehru entailed the handing back of the Raj (and not just an abstract colonized territory) to the Indians.

### **Nehru’s India: Of Empires and International History**

Nehru’s entry into the freedom struggle marked a new discourse where territorial India emerged as a key demand from the British empire. The British provisions on devolution of incremental powers to Indians, particularly after the Montague-Chelmsford reforms, were understood as antithetical to India’s unity and sovereignty. He refused to view the freedom struggle solely through the political issues raised by his contemporaries or earlier nationalists. Gandhi had transformed the Congress into a mass movement by addressing socio-economic issues. Instead, Nehru envisioned the future state beyond the dominant debates of his time, as he challenged the princely states; sought to define the historical position of India’s Muslims and cultivated a discourse on foreign policy that presumed India’s unity as its lynchpin. The divisions characterizing Indian politics and society, Nehru felt, stemmed from the failure to realize the global character of unified India and its foreign policy. With Nehru at the helm, the call for a unified India took precedence over other issues concerning the nationalist movement.

The Nehruvian project, thus, did not stop at making the people of India as the focal points of the nationalist struggle. It focused on constructing a coherent repertoire on the history and identity of India, something which was not to be found in conventional legal theories or in the actual past itself. His work opens up a space to recontextualize his writings on the idea of India, which he pursued with absolute conviction throughout his public life.

---

<sup>9</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 104.

<sup>10</sup> C.A. Bayly, ‘THE ENDS OF LIBERALISM AND THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF NEHRU’S INDIA\*’ *Modern Intellectual History*, 12/3 (2015), page 606.

Nehru's thought (which stemmed from his sense of history) had a different story to tell, as his ideas digressed from the principles of republicanism and democracy he otherwise championed while positioning against the Raj. This is not to challenge the vast scholarship on Nehru's republican thought or his contribution to an inclusive international order, but to bring back focus on certain absolute principles in support of India's territorial coherence and its eternal unity.

In conflating India's existence with empires and dynasties, two concepts became crucial. Firstly, her historical journey had to be articulated as having a unitary character. That is, the acknowledgment of India's historical existence had to be that of a centralized polity, and this had to be demonstrated by referring to the large empires that had ruled her. Even if these empires remained far from controlling territories beyond North or Northwest and Central India, they were still identified as forces controlling the subcontinent.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, India's ability to influence neighbouring regions, or civilizational influence, was assumed by Nehru to be a natural consequence of this political unity. India's syncretic and adaptive culture, a recurring theme in Nehru's writings, was acknowledged as the common marker of both, domestic cohesion and the export of India's soft power.

This research examines Nehru's intellectual construction of India as a territorial state and its evolution in the post-independence years. It seeks to dissolve the distinction between domestic and international spheres of India's political/territorial identity. Primarily, this thesis brings back the themes from empire-building and Nehru's sense of international history that were essential in constructing his idea of India. His ideas hold key to understanding India's neighbourhood policy during the first decade of its independence, whereby the developments in India's peripheries reshaped its territorial identity, thus overshadowing the domestic attributes of sovereignty.

As easy as his narrative appears in his autobiography and *The Discovery of India*, where Nehru was confronted with the challenge of navigating multiple 'Indias'; namely the ancient India, mythological India, the India of Gandhi/Tagore/Pan-Asian thinkers and finally an India that was a product of imperial stratagems. He did not accept or reject any of these in entirety, but selectively appropriated those characteristics that gave coherence to his conceptual framework. While articulating his own ideas, he simultaneously contested both the Muslim League's definition of Indian society, princely interventions, and Britain's version of India's future legal status.

For Nehru, if India was to have a history, unity and civilizational overreach were its principal constituents. This is not to grant any claim of exclusivity or originality to his conceptualization

---

<sup>11</sup> In *Discovery of India*, the great war mentioned in the Mahabharata is described as having taken place "for the overlordship of India (or possibly of northern India) and it marks the beginning of the conception of India as a whole, of Bharatvarsha". See Nehru, *Discovery*, page 107.

of a united India, but rather to the difference between unity as an abstract concept and its conceptualization through its geopolitical agency. The former, which also gained popularity through British constitutional proposals in the inter-war years, had many claimants but the demand for India based on the instrumentality of unity is arguably a product of Nehru's position as India's first Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister.

This thesis studies the evolving definition of India between the 1930s and the 1950s. India's origins and historical journey, for Nehru, treaded a unidimensional path through successive empires, which also intertwined with her civilizational expanse. He relied on both, legal justification of the idea of India through international law, and even violence (where the former ceased to have any effect).<sup>12</sup> The period from the 1930s to 1950s also gives substantial insights into Nehru's theoretical articulation of the idea of India and his struggles to give it a tangible shape as independent India consolidated its control over its political boundaries and engaged with relying on historical themes. This is also an invitation to understand him as an armchair historian, a legal theorist and most importantly an imaginative thinker capable of visualising India as a corporeal entity. Initially exposed to European political ideas during his formative years and university education, he returned to studying Indian philosophy and the Indian past.<sup>13</sup> As Bipin Chandra notes, he also belonged to the breed of nationalist thinkers "brought up in the days of a well-formed nationalist movement", who were also participants in it and possessed a strong belief that "India was always a nation".<sup>14</sup>

Some of his ideas counterposed populist aspirations even if they were subject to democratic scrutiny. It is imperative to distinguish Nehru's own thinking from that of the prevailing mass consciousness and even from his Congress or socialist compatriots in order to understand his ideas on India's political personality. Despite being a protégé of Gandhi, he felt that the Gandhian ideas surrounding mass politics were antithetical to the goal of attaining statehood. Gandhi's ideas were guided by metaphysical reasons, religious attitudes and that "his power

---

<sup>12</sup> The references to Indian Culture as a marker of Indian Unity are passive definitions, whereas references to geopolitical orbits of influence and existence of centralized dynasties animate this concept in a political language. The British were confronted with the latter justifications during the Transfer of Power.

<sup>13</sup> B. Chandra, 'Nationalist Historians' Interpretation of the Indian National Movement', in S. Bhattacharya and R. Thapar (eds.), *Situating Indian History* (Delhi, 1986), page 214.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. According to Bipin Chandra, Lala Lajpat Rai was among the earliest of the nationalist thinkers to make assertions in the favour of Indian Unity. Lajpat Rai maintained that India had been a nation for the last two thousand years. He acknowledged that the influence of western discourses in India through colonialism too had a role in fomenting this unity. RG Pradhan and Subhas Bose too shared these beliefs. According to RG Pradhan, Indians were not oblivious to the "sentiment of nationality and unity before the advent of the British" and possessed a sense of territorial unity. See Chandra, 'Nationalist Historians' Interpretations', page 215. In his book *Indian Struggle*, Subhas Bose defined India as a self-contained geographical unit with a common culture.

to move people was incomprehensible” but his outlook (termed by Nehru as that of a political anarchist) was at best a detour from the attainment of statehood.<sup>15</sup>

Instead, he understood the idea of India from an international-historical reference point; be it the invader crossing the Hindukush only to blend into the Indian fabric or Asia's far-flung geographies which still retained Hindu and Buddhist cultures. In absence of a uniform language/culture and thus a domestic consensus, India's imagined transnational past and international legal personality could confer the much-desired unity. Later on, these arguments were deployed towards diluting attempts towards federalizing its polity.

While his attempts to bind Afghanistan (through NWFP) and Tibet (as an extension of Himalayan culture) into the post-independence India's geocultural frame remained unsuccessful, their references were crucial for his understanding of Indian unity. Domestically, while transportation infrastructure and the administrative machinery of the empire gave a tangible unity to the subcontinent, the Raj's success in unifying India reaffirmed the narrative of India's greatness as a blessed geography, adding to the nationalist beliefs in the linearity of the subcontinent's historical unity.

Nehru, on the other hand prioritized the exclusivity of the Indian identity, which on one hand was defined as part of a unified subcontinent, and on the other hand by its influence beyond its geographical confines. Thus, in his imagination, India was ordained to play an influential role in Asia, as Nehru summed up in a speech to the Constituent Assembly:

When we talk of Asia, remember that India, not because of any ambition of hers, but because of the force of circumstances, because of geography, because of history and because of so many other things, inevitably has to play a very important part in Asia. And not only that; India becomes a kind of meeting ground for various trends and forces and a meeting ground between what might roughly be called the East and the West.<sup>16</sup>

He reasserted similar views in one of his addresses in the United States of America:

India's pivotal position between Western Asia, South-East Asia and the Far East made it the crossroads of that part of the world. India is central point of the Asian picture ... India's role of leadership may not be so welcome to others although it may satisfy our vanity. We cannot escape the various responsibilities that arise out of our geography and history.<sup>17</sup>

From the first decade of its Independence, India faced a troubled neighbourhood, as her principal neighbours China and Pakistan contested her territorial claims. By the late 1950s, India's grand visions had taken a backseat as Kashmir lay divided between India and Pakistan, and India accepted China's control over Xinjiang and Tibet as a political reality, the Himalayan states questioned Delhi's implicit Monroe doctrine, and broader maritime Asia retreated from

---

<sup>15</sup> P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Tokyo, 1986), page 156.

<sup>16</sup> Meeting Ground of East and West, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. One (Delhi, 1949), page 235-6.

<sup>17</sup> R.P. Anand, *Studies in International Law and History* (Dodrecht, 2003), page 4.

India's strategic horizon. Although classified as foreign policy decisions, India's positioning in her neighbourhood also reflected the attitudes of a young nation-state with a deep sense of an imagined past longing to express itself on the regional stage only to be undercut by the Cold War and two belligerent neighbours.

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight Nehru's repertoire wherein he defines India's political personality in relation to its historical situatedness (and diffused existence) in Asia. His case for a united India also incorporated neighbouring territories, which made it impossible to relate them outside of this repertoire.

Moving ahead, I shall use this framework to examine India's responses to challenges in her neighbourhood as the nation's sense of itself was intimately tied to these historical and imagined continental entanglements.

This thesis further discusses how India's engagement with her immediate/intermediate neighbourhood in the first few years after independence offers us insights to reconstruct Nehru's understanding of India more than foreign policy itself.

Intriguingly, Nehru's foreign policy is often dubbed "a historic irony of partition [he] appeared never to have fully understood...and continued to act as though India were the pivot of defense in the Middle East and Southeast Asia".<sup>18</sup> This observation, rather than telling us about his foreign policy, says more about Nehru's fixation with an ideal state which attempts to resuscitate itself as a cultural empire (at least as an idea), remaining impervious to the Partition or the Cold War's constraining realities.

His foreign policy awaits further investigation in the ways it constructs the idea of India in very real ways politically. This thesis examines the role of historical and international (or extraterritorial) visions in the making of independent India; and the transformations of these territorial imaginaries as British empire approached its end and India attained independence only to face a hostile regional landscape.

Nehru's thinking about India's historical-legal edifice remains underexplored if not read in tandem with his fascination with ancient India's geopolitical orbits. This research attempts to explore how these ideas - in their varying manifestations - in fact constituted the fundamental building blocks of India's political personality, as well as being subject to change as India attempted to reconcile with the Cold War's aggressive forays into Asia.

I study the metamorphosis of his political thought that conceived India in a broader geographical setting, thus offering greater insights into the ideational underpinnings of Indian statehood. In the following chapters, these findings would be used to study India's tribulations over Kashmir, the Sino-Indian border dispute and India's search for status in Asia. The tendency to look at these questions within the ambit of disciplinary boundaries of IR, foreign

---

<sup>18</sup> F. Frankel, *When Nehru Looked East* (New York, 2020), page 29.

policy or security studies implicitly digresses attention from the evolution of independent India's political personality, assuming it to be static or at best trapped in conventional Eurocentric and/or modular definitions. Notwithstanding its scholarly contributions, these approaches omit the consideration that both, the Nehruvian idea of India as well as the newly independent Indian nation-state were products of a wider spatial and temporal imagination and grounding of national history in foreign policy.

The study of Indian nationalism -as we have come to understand – calls for a reconfiguration in scholarship to incorporate extra-territorial and spatial-historical conceptions. Extra-territoriality in the Indian nationalist thought, as a concept, is a late but influential development in historiography, and its contributions and limitations shall be explored in this research.

In his article titled *The State as a Conceptual Variable*, JP Nettl gives a cursory description of “extrasocietal form of state, which constitutes and defines itself primarily through its foreign relation”.<sup>19</sup> He argues that:

countries with a low degree of "stateness" [that is reflected in greater autonomy in institutions] in the intrasocietal field have to make special differentiated provisions accordingly (like the special status of the British Foreign Office vis-a-vis other governmental bureaucratic organizations, the awkward duality and conflict between interstate and inter-party relations among Communist states, and finally the very special status of foreign affairs in federal societies like the United States and Switzerland, where they are one of the primary *raison d'être* for the claim for stateness on the part of the federal government).<sup>20</sup>

Nehru's theorization of India's place in the wider regional or Asian context remains well researched, but his efforts at legitimizing them to legally claiming a Greater India hardly finds any place in scholarly accounts on the Transfer of Power or the political and legal instrumentalities that shaped India as an independent nation-state. Asia, in Nehru's thought is a site of historical ownership, hence acquiring priority for independent India's Indian foreign policy. This thesis, however, understands Nehru's constant efforts at defining India as part of the wider Asian geography, where the latter no longer remains a neighbouring space or a mere inheritor of Indian culture, but rather an extension of cultures and ancient empires that once ruled India.

### **Reframing India in the International Realm**

I shall attempt to reframe the idea of India, as it unfolded in later nationalist thought, by locating it within a broader international historical and geographical landscape. Again, in addition to examining the literature on the idea of India, I emphasise that the conception of India that was to be operationalised in this expanded perspective was the result of multiple ideational

---

<sup>19</sup> J. Nettl, 'The State as a Conceptual Variable', *World Politics*, 20/4 (1968), page 564.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

processes at work, namely, the historical imagination of India, Indian perceptions of imperial geopolitics and the efforts to legitimize them in the legal jargon. These ideas were pitted against proposals by the British, Princes as well as the Muslim League on the future of India. The nation-state, thus, was a product of a regional imagination, conditioned by an imperial legacy. It was within this pool of thought processes that independent India attained its politico-legal personality. This was not simply a result of narrow and abstract visions defined by domestic socio-political or economic questions, but a consequence of looking at Asia with a sense of historical-civilizational ownership.<sup>21</sup> This research postulates India's conception as a space in relation to this wider international setting which prevailing ideas of civilization had helped take birth.

Indian nationalism, I theorize, itself had an international dimension despite its spatial trappings. Since India's imperial and civilizational expanse transcended the political state itself, the idea of India was by default international. This is not an exclusive idea, and a close parallel can be located in Greek nationalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Called the Megali Idea, it emerged in resistance to the Ottoman empire. The idea envisioned Greece in the accoutrement of the Byzantine empire. It counted the people of Greek ethnicity as its own citizens even as they happened to populate regions outside modern territorial Greece.

It is interesting to note how most anti-colonial movements were articulated in the language of extra-territorial universality, or as Adom Getachew puts it, anticolonialism was a "project of reordering the world that sought to create a domination-free and egalitarian international order".<sup>22</sup> Anti-colonial nationalism, redefined in Getachew's work as 'worldmaking', attempts to recast "juridical, political, and economic institutions in the international realm that would secure nondomination".<sup>23</sup> The same was true for the internationalist moment in the interwar years, where people, ideas, political movements crossed borders and sought to reorganize colonized people's struggles in a simplified and inclusive language.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> For the intellectuals in the colonized world, Europe's involvement in the First World War meant that it lost any moral justification to define itself from a superior sense of identity, since the European discourse was often stated as 'imperial civilizing mission'. See C. Stolte and H. Fischer-Tine, 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54/1 (2012), page 66-7.

As Prasenjit Duara puts it, "Western Civilization had forfeited the right to represent the highest goals of humanity, and the new national movements sought to turn towards their own civilizational traditions—often reconstructed in the image of Civilization—to found the ideals of the new nations and the right to sovereignty". See Stolte and Fischer-Tine, 'Imagining Asia', page 67.

<sup>22</sup> A. Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, 2019), page 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> A. Raza, F. Roy and B. Zachariah, *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds and World Views 1917-39* (India, 2015), page viii.

Nehru's worldview also drew from similar influences, especially his concern for global anti-imperial trends and Pan-Asianism that seeped into his nationalist viewpoint and his commitment that Indian nationalism should speak for colonized peoples at large. Quite unlike Getachew's work on anticolonial thought and the "unequal integration" that Nehru's African contemporaries occupied themselves with, the symbols and ideograms of British rule in India were consciously appropriated by the new polity to legally facilitate colonial India's transition to independence. This idea of India, while having its own indigenous international reference points, sought legitimacy by inheriting colonial India's international status which it was believed would confer it unity (and a regional transcendence) and allow India to redeem her history. There was nothing universal or benevolent in the extraterritoriality espoused by Indian nationalists.

For the Indian nationalist leadership, decolonization had to be consciously legitimized as 'inheritance' in the Indian Independence Act. By way of contrast, Black internationalist intellectuals were determined to strike at the very roots of imperialism. In *Freedom Time*, Gary Wilder discusses post-imperial imaginations by two African thinkers, wherein freedom could be delinked from the ideal of national sovereignty and redirected to reshaping the metropole and the unitary features of latter's nationhood. Highlighting the difference between the French nation and French revolutionary spirit, Césaire did not advocate a complete independence for French Colonies (specifically Antilles), but their incorporation into the new French republic as equal stakeholders.<sup>25</sup> The colonial entanglements were impossible to separate, thus making integration as the desired solution.<sup>26</sup> The specifics about the nature of future polity were left open ended in hope for harnessing "unrealized revolutionary possibilities" in both European and Antillean history. On the other hand, Leopold Senghor was willing to interpret Africa's exploitation as Christ's sacrifice and forgive France provided the latter allowed Africans to forge a shared postcolonial identity.<sup>27</sup> The premise underlying this conviction was the uncertain future that lay ahead.

One can identify common threads in "rethinking state-sovereignty...reconstitution of the postwar international order, and...global redistribution", but Nehruvian India's appropriation of imperial phraseology departed from the ideals of Black internationalism or any such narrative that extended decolonization even to the normative aspects of administration.<sup>28</sup> In short, Nehru's idea of India, while tracing unity and the nation's international character from ancient empires, purposefully refrained from expunging the normative footprint of the British empire.

---

<sup>25</sup> G. Wilder, *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, 2014), page 30-33.

<sup>26</sup> Wilder, *Freedom Time*, page 106.

<sup>27</sup> Wilder, *Freedom Time*, page 54-8.

<sup>28</sup> Getachew, *Worldmaking*, page 3.

Indian nationalists, contrarily, as Shruti Kapila argues, not only took independence for granted but even ideated a future where the British did not exist. For them, the colonial agency had to be eradicated to “write a new future for India”.<sup>29</sup> The symbolism surrounding the Transfer of Power from the Raj to independent India had a special significance as inheritance had to be defined as a timeless attribute, and not merely a British construct.

Similarly, Nehru’s ideas departed from those of contemporary Pan-Asian activists as well. One can observe the contrasts between Nehru’s thought and that of Pan-Asian thinkers like Raja Mahendra Pratap. A “travelling revolutionary”, Pratap’s sojourns across Asia (notably Afghanistan, Tibet, China and Japan) attest to his commitment to anti-imperialism. He lobbied for an Asian Federation (which would eventually culminate in a world federation) and an Asian army since he understood India’s emancipation as flowing from that of Asia. Stolte argues that Pratap’s activism rested on the “conviction that India’s independence would materialize if Asia stood as one”; this made him an anti-imperialist first, and then a nationalist.<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding Nehru’s universalistic appeals to anti-imperialism, his insistence on colonial inheritance stemmed from viewing India’s spatial dimension through the lenses of bygone empires. “Democracy and equality were possible, Nehru argued, only under the conditions of national sovereignty”, but sovereignty itself had to be theorised and justified by imagining the Indian state through the perspective of the unitary empires of the past.<sup>31</sup>

In this sense, decolonization threw up a paradox as it could not extend itself as a discourse (in the literal sense) into the defining aspects of Independent India’s international legal identity or the institutional nomenclature that defined her frontiers.

Nehru’s search for Indian statehood did not culminate in the attainment of independence but continued to evolve tangibly even after 1947. India’s territorial entanglements with neighbours and its policies towards Asia were more than just decisions emanating from the Ministry of External Affairs. Rather, this thesis proposes to examine them as unsuccessful attempts to find a middle space between its imagined regional role and its reality as a legitimate identity, offering us crucial insights into the ideas that helped visualise India.

As Kris Manjpara highlights, that the Indian state, in the manner in which it was conceptualized and demanded during the Transfer of Power, “was not a nation; it was an empire, and the first disservice to the Indian national cause came in assuming that it was on the way to the nation-state”.<sup>32</sup> Here, civilization, for Nehru, became a synonym for a

---

<sup>29</sup> ‘Indian Political Thought in the Global Age: Shruti Kapila in conversation with Faisal Devji (uploaded 26 Mar 2022) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SxTW1I2zXM> (25 April 2023)

<sup>30</sup> C. Stolte, “Enough of the Great Napoleons!’ Raja Mahendra Pratap’s Pan-Asian projects (1929–1939)’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 46/2 (2012), page 406.

<sup>31</sup> S. Purushotham, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Republicanism, and the Commonwealth’, in Saul Dubow and Richard Drayton, (eds.), *Commonwealth History in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st ed. (Cham, 2020), page 144.

<sup>32</sup> K. Manjpara, *Age of Entanglement* (Massachusetts, 2014), page 206.

transnational presence which had faced setbacks due to societal contradictions, invasions and finally the technological leap achieved by the West. Therefore, what was needed on the eve of Britain's departure was a centralised government and the complete annihilation of feudatories (princely India) if this conception of the past had to be resuscitated. The idea of unity was thus about more than addressing economic questions, as argued by scholars who have understood modern India in terms of political economy. They conceptualized India's political consolidation purely from the perspective of scale economies that necessitated the control of the commanding heights and the maintenance of geographical contiguity.

The main argument I propose in this thesis stresses on Nehru's understanding that the unitary aspects of Indian nationhood were chiefly available in India's historical-international character rather its domestic attributes. These were combined with a civilizational imaginary that itself had a varying degree of territorial or geopolitical import in reality.

Furthermore, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya notes the indispensability of Nehru's ideas on "civilization as it had developed in the nationalist discourse and...[his attempts] to make it a foundational idea in the agenda of state building...".<sup>33</sup> State-making, as this research examines, in its ideal form, extended the civilizational argument towards co-constituting the unitary history of the Indian subcontinent with its neighbouring geographies. As Bhattacharya notes further, "the discourse of civilization appears fully fledged in Mahatma Gandhi's Hind Swaraj and Rabindranath Tagore's early essays on the History of India...[attaining] its climatic form in Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India*", yet its actual contribution to India's international political identity is yet to be captured.<sup>34</sup> As this thesis shall demonstrate, Nehru's understanding of civilization transcends the domestic realm, relocating the idea of India as a product of India's historical international agency, a product of its timeless past.

Foreign policy (and the belief in an extraterritorial identity) was the foremost ordering principle through which Nehru saw India's historical existence as well as its demand for unity and sovereignty. He would understand India's foremost role as that of reviving its civilizational grandeur and worked with this idea 'outside-in' to visualize India. To support the claims of this thesis, the genealogies of both Nehru's historical and international imaginations and their interrelatedness need to be reconstructed to understand Indian as an idea in progress. The definition and order of these concepts in Nehru's mind have to be treated with great care, considering the nature of his association with the freedom struggle and certain themes that figured substantially in his thought. He wrote extensively on diverse themes related to imperialism, economy, history, international affairs, and the social problems of colonial India.

---

<sup>33</sup> S. Bhattacharya, *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse* (Delhi, 2012), page 86.

<sup>34</sup> Bhattacharya, *Talking Back*, page 2.

While he occupied leading positions in the Congress Party, Nehru donned several other hats that tell us more about the importance he gave to certain attributes of state-making. He remained the face of the party's stance on foreign policy (beginning with his participation in the Brussels conference in 1927), he spearheaded the agitation against the princes and remained the president of the All-India States Peoples Conference (AISPC) from 1939 to 1946; and he wrote extensively on the suitability of the administrative structures proposed by the British for the future of India. He headed the interim government's external affairs department and continued as the Minister of External Affairs of Independent India.

Almost every speech or article by him, even if addressed to the remotest of the rural pockets of India, never failed to capture global events and their potential linkages with the local setting, even when this could not possibly be the case. His awareness (and obsession) with the international sphere and foreign policy decisions are studied from a reductionist viewpoint, as simply emanating out of his interest in international affairs. As VK Krishna Menon recalled, "Nehru could never think of India as isolated from the world."<sup>35</sup> The thesis studies his understanding of foreign policy at a deeper philosophical level, to reconstruct its actual influence on his conception of India itself.

This research, thus, investigates the interrelatedness of 'nation', 'history' and 'foreign policy' in Nehru's thought, and how their relationship with 'unity' and 'sovereignty' was structured distinctly in his ideas. It explores this relationship by deconstructing independent India's politico-legal personality in the way it was demanded by Congress and in the way it drew upon a wider, regional or international understanding to define India.

As India attained independence, some key characteristics defined its politico-legal edifice, namely, a centralised government (the Congress leadership eventually accepted Partition to gain a strong centre), the accession (followed by merger) of princely territories, and its international legal status defining the state as heir to the British Indian government and succeeding to colonial India's frontiers and international treaties. Usually, these decisions are also understood as emanating from the point of view of administrative convenience. However, a conscious adoption of these characteristics had a deeper philosophical significance.

That is, independence and state-making, while having their legal framework, stemmed from a mix of historical, geostrategic and political thought. These perspectives await an intellectual deconstruction due to the scholarly tendency of importing "the nation-state form from the west to the east, leaving out of their account the multiple meanings of nationhood and alternative frameworks of states that were imagined in the colonized world".<sup>36</sup> Since thinking is by nature abstract or intangible, our inability to visualise the smooth translation of political thought into

---

<sup>35</sup> Nehru: Introduction, VK Krishna Menon Papers, S/W by him - 3, PMML, page 21.

<sup>36</sup> S. Bose, *A Hundred Horizons* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009), page 150-51.

policy initiatives prevents a serious investigation of the mental juxtapositions which this research attempts to unpack.<sup>37</sup>

Between the inter-war years and the decade following independence, the idea of the Indian nation underwent several iterations, at times deviating from conventional ideas on the nation state.<sup>38</sup> One of these was the interface between the historico-spatial imagination that combined domestic space with that beyond the nation's imagined frontiers. As part of the multitude of influences on nationalist imaginings in the colonial period, a specific form of history writing placed the idea of India within a larger Asian landscape, eventually influencing the negotiations with the British regarding the final political shape of independent India. Post-independence challenges in the Asian neighbourhood also played their part in casting India further from her present-day nation-state frame.

Thus, besides the influence of international events (whose credit to the nationalist movement has already been explored by scholars on internationalism), thinking about the 'international' itself or specifically conceiving India as an Asian subspace is a crucial locus in bridging the gap between multiple ideas of India and the ultimate emergence of India as a political entity. This calls for reframing the relationship between the national and international spheres and their interoperability in thought zones, and its impact on the political structure adopted by independent India.

Before this research discusses the challenges in Asia, the first two chapters shall focus on the inception of the Indian nation-state as an idea, with the 'national-international' interface as innate to its evolution. Much has been written on the role of domestic imaginaries, both independent of, and also aided by imperialism in conceptualizing the Indian subcontinent as a unified politico-administrative unit. This thesis brings forth another dimension of Nehru's thinking about the national space, where he pictured India in a broader regional context. This imagination suffered in the Faustian bargain with the departing British, where Congress leadership traded off unity for a centralised authority.<sup>39</sup> This framework deserves a deeper analysis for its role in the Transfer of Power and the subsequent decisions India was to take in response to challenges in her neighbourhood. In the next chapter, this framework shall be used to deconstruct the meanings of 'Greater India' for Nehru (and the Hindu nationalists alike) and their impact on the negotiations for independence. Since this imagination was possible to realize without thinking about India's place in the Asia, that the definition of the nation-state

---

<sup>37</sup> By mental juxtapositions, I point to the inter-related thoughts on history, geography, foreign policy, unity and sovereignty that contributed to the intellectual construct of the nation. This research questions the approach that applies conventional meanings to these terms.

<sup>38</sup> D. Chakrabarti and R. Majumdar, *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition* (Oxford, 2007), page 1-4.

<sup>39</sup> R. Moore, 'Mountbatten, India and the Commonwealth', *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 19/1 (1981), page 5-11.

itself acquired an outwardly dimension. Thus, visualizations of the 'international', both in their pre-independence ideal form and in post-1947 policy praxis deserve attention in the conception of the Indian nation state.

Digressing from conventional ideas (for instance, those of Benedict Anderson) that identify nationalism with the consolidation of domestic political and sociological attitudes around common cultural attributes, Nehru (though with related ideas) envisioned the state-space from the prism of both extraterritorial identity and the political agency to act on the international front. As Nehru's writings reflect, the desire to acquire a pro-active foreign policy or an influence in Asia outshone other attributes as the basis for his demand for an independent, unitary and centralised Indian polity. The thesis goes back to the genesis of this thought, we hark back to the nationalist belief in ancient India's geopolitical orbits that became a perennial attribute of nationalist discourse, thus amplifying the urge towards a strong foreign policy if independence was to become a reality. As this research explores, these preconceptions, besides defining India, also fossilized Nehru's outlook towards Pakistan and China, besides his understanding of the neighbourhood in Asia.

Similar to the sentiment shared by most nationalist thinkers, civilizational consciousness produced an exalted image of India for Nehru. But more importantly, he would use this past (or imagined past) to justify India, both as a unified domestic space closely enmeshed with her neighbourhood (and much of Asia). The need to revive an ideal and a geopolitically preponderant India necessitated freedom be demanded in the form of a unitary India, as this hypothesis and the subsequent chapter elaborate. Such a conception, where the empire, through its geopolitical and civilizational influences helped justify its territorial cohesion also conditioned independent India's response to its first diplomatic challenges. In turn, these developments also reinforced the fundamentals of India's political identity. Since the conception of a united nation-space was predicated upon international projections of a historical grandeur, there are strong reasons to argue that research on India's nation-state identity needs a different genealogical framework from that offered by existing international relations, political science, and historical perspectives.

Such reinvestigation also possesses the potential of allowing us to narrate a bigger story of the territorial imaginary as we trace several post-independence policy decisions to their genesis in these thought zones (which will be taken from third chapter onwards). So far, Nehru's interest in the international sphere remains a separate silo. Any conversation on international sphere, either in ideational terms or the policy domain is naturally seen as part of foreign policy. And the scholarship dealing with the idea of India is overinvested in domestic socio-economic dynamics, or they reframe the freedom struggle in context of nationalists' exposure to western political thought. While there is an acknowledgement of external influences, including internationalism or Nehru's own writings on foreign policy, what remains

divorced from the study of ideas about national identity is how this identity itself was part of yearning for a broader geopolitical outlook and not simply restricted to domestic attributes of a national imagination.

This thesis traces the Indian nation's intellectual journey (in Nehru's thought) back to the pre-1947 era by asking how an extra-territorial vision helped shape the nation-state. Such a thinking also presupposes foreign policy before the state itself. It also puts forth the claim that the intellectual attributes of this territorial identity (which lay in the international history project) interfered with the first challenges India faced in her neighbourhood along with the broader Cold War dynamics.

As a first step, this project understands Nehru's thought on India in ways he related it to its immediate neighbourhood and the Asian continent. With the efforts of the previous generation of thinkers, Asia had penetrated deeply into the nationalist thought by the time Nehru joined the freedom struggle. While one may presuppose the tendency on part of colonized people to rely upon mythological narratives in articulating their sense of belonging, Nehru attempted to embed this understanding in the legal discourse as well as independent India's policy towards its neighbours. Further insight into this framework demands a deconstruction of foreign policy or international relations from a domestic perspective, thus problematizing their conventional ontological understanding in the way Indian scholars have come to use them. Just as Gandhi would tweak socialism to articulate his own understanding of it as something radically different from its conventional definition, the definition and instrumentality of the 'international' had a historically rooted meaning for Nehru.<sup>40</sup> This thesis argues that the idea of the 'international' in Nehru's territorial imagination of India remains inadequately addressed and needs to be attuned to the way he understood them intimately with regard to the nation's own ontology. Scholarly discussions about the idea of India use a downward-up approach, rooting it in local culture, religion, ethnicity and imperial administration as building blocks. Foreign policy is introduced as a distinct sphere, a set of diplomatic tools to further the nation's interests, or as an external projection of national thinking. The scholarly treatment of Nehru's discussions on Asian politics or international relations assumes the Indian nation to have achieved its conceptual maturity by discussing domestic attributes of nation-building and sovereignty. Foreign policy and the international sphere are understood as separate spheres, incapable of defining the state. The thesis brings forth Nehru's thoughts on the role of India's pre-British past, as understood through empires and their civilizational accomplishments beyond India,

---

<sup>40</sup> In *My Socialism*, Gandhi questions the Eurocentric origins of both Socialism and Communism, tracing their actual origins to ancient Indian social order and the Upanishads. Disagreeing with the fundamentals of Socialism which assumed an antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, he interpreted his socialist outlook as that of a harmonious relationship. See M. Gandhi, *My Socialism* (Ahmedabad, 1959), page 3, 7.

wherein he conceptualized the nation-state primarily as an entity whose survival necessitated an extra-territorial frame.

Further, this research shall highlight discussions about post-independence foreign policy to bring attention to the above-mentioned problem.

### **Literature Review: Existing Scholarship, its Limitations and the Need for Reconceptualization**

Fundamentally, this thesis contends the existing approaches that study the emergence of India as an independent nation state. Nehru's idea of India and the study of Indian foreign policy is incomplete unless his understanding of international sphere is factored in. In other words, Nehru's emphasis on unity stemmed from his longstanding desire to reposition India as a geopolitical hegemon having a long history and memory of influencing Asia. Thus, a rereading of Nehru's thoughts and actions on foreign policy offers novel insights into his intellectual contributions that shaped India's own political identity. Firstly, foreign policy and the international sphere have been discussed by existing scholarly accounts in relation with the idea of a nation. This thesis aims at bridging the intellectual gap that exists due to the absence of any conversation between the scholarship on the idea of India and scholarship on Indian foreign policy. Further, the scholarship on India's international identity devotes much attention to nationalist thought on India's place in Asia rather than the territorial shape of India itself.

Notwithstanding the indispensability of the scholarly work on Indian IR, existing scholarship on Nehru and international affairs rarely captures the role of foreign policy in germinating the idea of India itself. These works, while highlighting important conversations on India's approach to the world, assume a unidirectional relationship between foreign policy and the nation-state when defining India's relationship with the external sphere. This approach reveals an inherent limitation, for it does not acknowledge the essence of civilizational outreach and international influence of old empires (in other words, foreign policy) in imagining India. Thus, the very act of articulating the Indian unity through the references of cross-border civilizational and imperial influence calls for the need to understand the Indian nation as an ideational outcome of foreign policy.

The study of the origins and conduct of Indian foreign policy under Jawaharlal Nehru occupies a major space in in the field of Indian international relations and strategic studies.

Both, Nehru's writings in the pre-independence era and his thoughts/policies in the early years of independence reflect a historical memory that he wishes to institutionalise into his statecraft. Much beyond resuscitating cultural linkages, Nehruvian statecraft reflects an underlying desire to redefine India as an empire both to itself as well as the international community. This thesis delves into archival accounts, Nehru's correspondence and scholarly

accounts on Indian nationalist thought and foreign policy to understand the international origins of independent India.

Collectively, Partition, Cold War and the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) have informed the thematic landscape of scholarship covering the early years of the Indian Foreign Policy. A temporal span beginning with Nehru's participation in the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression conference (Brussels Conference) in 1927 until the 1962 Sino-Indian war is held to outline his ideas on foreign policy and the international order. Conversely, his role as the head of the interim government is credited with precipitating India's contraction as an erstwhile regional power. As the head of the interim government's External Affairs Department, he called for the withdrawal of Indian troops stationed in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, as he felt their presence in foreign territories "would be looked upon as a continuation of the old imperialist method of holding down colonial territories...[and] as a continuation of imperialist link with India".<sup>41</sup> The global race to establish control over strategic chokepoints, or colonial India's institutional influence over the Middle East, Eastern Africa and Southeast Asia through military deployments and Political Agencies no longer remained with India once Cold War rivalries rushed in to fill in these spaces, a looming fear among British military strategists later noted by the scholars of empire have.<sup>42</sup>

Nehru's efforts to define India as a territorially contiguous space is well documented, less focus is devoted to his intellectual understanding of unity linking with trans-national trappings of a nation-state. In praxis, independent India's engagement with the bipolar world (albeit with its pro-Soviet tilt), the representation of the Kashmir issue in the United Nations, tensions with China and themes of Third World solidarity are chiefly identified with activities of the MEA.

These developments, which bring Nehru's fascination with foreign affairs into spotlight, need further investigation to understand their influence on state making too. This is not unusual, given the inseparability of these issues from his foreign policy objectives and the consistency with which he pursued them throughout his public life. Nehru's emphasis on avoiding power-blocs, his role in organizing the Asian Relations Conference of 1947 and spearheading the Non-Alignment cause became the prisms through which he projected his outlook onto the international sphere. In the *Discovery of India*, an entire chapter (titled "Realism and

---

<sup>41</sup> N. Mansergh et al, Note on an interview with F.M Montgomery on the employment of Gurkha Troops in the British Army and other important matters, *The Transfer of Power 1942-7: Constitutional Relations between Britain and India*, Vol. XI (London, 1982), page 723.

<sup>42</sup> N. Mansergh et al., Lord Pethick-Lawrence to Field Marshal Viscount Wavell, Indian Forces outside India: Report by the Chiefs of Staff, *The Transfer of Power 1942-7: Constitutional Relations between Britain and India*, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. VIII (London, 1979), page 597. Also See H. Tinker, 'The Contraction of Empire in Asia, 1945-48: The Military Dimension' *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16/2, p. 230.

Geopolitics”) was devoted to criticizing the perils of classical realism (and its protagonists like Halford Mackinder or Alfred Mahan), which, in his view, were manifestations of imperialism.<sup>43</sup> Notwithstanding his representation of the anti-colonial movement, Nehru’s own writings and those of the scholars researching his ideas on international affairs are seldom understood beyond their moral considerations. Since his ideas on freedom emphasized a ‘break’ from the imperial past (a recurring theme in Nehru’s writing), scholarship researching on his foreign policy relegates his fixation with India being a primary geopolitical actor in Asia.

An abundance of scholarly works theorizing Nehru’s foreign policy already exists, and with growing access to archives, investigations into Indian foreign policy and diplomatic histories have witnessed a steep rise. Beginning with Nehru’s own authored books, his speeches, articles and correspondence (along with writings of key diplomats in policymaking roles), subsequent scholarly contributions have categorised the study of independent India’s external outlook either as a debate between Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) driven moral (and sometimes pragmatic) obligation and (to a lesser extent) a disavowed realist orientation or a combination of both.<sup>44</sup> Any discussion of India’s neighbourhood thus receives attention only in scholarly accounts sourced from the foreign office archives.

Even recent accounts discussing the origins of Indian foreign policy limit themselves to theorizing its ideological dispositions, for instance being influenced by “left-of-centre worldview...democratic socialism...Western European and British Political thought”.<sup>45</sup> This, it is argued, resulted “on the one hand in overly enthusiastic participation in the world affairs and in a broad socialistic fervour on the other”.<sup>46</sup>

Scholars like Pratap Bhanu Mehta, however, come as close to understanding foreign policy as a reproduction of “India’s sense of itself” but remain short of defining the nation’s conceptual basis from an international reference point.<sup>47</sup>

The starting point for the literature review is an examination of major accounts that discuss the origins of Indian Foreign Policy. Three broad themes dominate these works, namely Nehru’s personal reflections and official correspondence, the MEA’s policies and pre-1947

---

<sup>43</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 538-41.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, Neville Maxwell observed that “Nehru and his compatriots had been drawn into the open role of preacher...Non-alignment now appeared...as a projection into international relations of a specifically Indian morality”. See N. Maxwell, ‘Jawaharlal Nehru: Of Pride and Principle’, *Foreign Affairs*, 52/3 (1974), page 635.

On the other hand, Andrew Kennedy frames Nehru’s approach as that of a “moralistic diplomacy with his desire to promote Indian interests” or an idealism with a “realist edge”. A. Kennedy, ‘Realism and Idealism Combined’, in D. Malone, C.R. Mohan and S. Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, (Oxford, 2015), page 128.

<sup>45</sup> Z. Singh, *Power and Diplomacy: India’s Foreign Policies during the Cold War* (New Delhi, 2018), page 38.

<sup>46</sup> Singh, *Power and Diplomacy*, page 39.

<sup>47</sup> P.B. Mehta, ‘Still Under Nehru’s Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India’, *India Review*, 8/3 (2009), page 209-10.

archives to draw Indian foreign policy's linkages with the colonial era. A vast body of primary literature, beginning with Nehru's own books, archival records in the PM Memorial Library/National Archives of India inform us about the evolution of the Indian foreign policy.

The *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, a multi-volume compilation of Nehru's correspondence till his passing, offer profound insights into the gradual evolution of Nehru's political and intellectual outlook during his five-decade-long public life. This category also consists of works by early observers on Indian foreign policy and firsthand accounts by freedom fighters, scholars, journalists and policymakers close to Nehru that inform us about both Nehru as a policymaker and a thinker. A 1952 booklet titled *The Background of Indian Foreign Policy*, published by the All India Congress Committee noted how it was Nehru who "was responsible for advocating the study of the Indian problem against the wider international background" and the Nehru's articulation of India's place in the world eventually fed into independent India's foreign policy.<sup>48</sup>

Writing in the 1950s, Taya Zinkin observed the "extraordinary freedom" that Nehru exercised in the "formulation of foreign policy", an attitude she felt was borne out of his monopoly over foreign policy matters.<sup>49</sup> MS Rajan goes a step further, noting a tendency to "interpret Indian foreign policy in terms of the personality of Nehru".<sup>50</sup> Rajan attributed the Indian foreign policy to "past history and traditions and present geopolitical factors...".<sup>51</sup> In his seminal work *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy, 1947-72*, Appadorai theorised the relationship between domestic and the international sphere, noting that the "history of a nation has an influence on the making of its foreign policy...the element of continuity represents the legacy of history".<sup>52</sup> A few accounts like *India in World Affairs (August 1947-January 1950)*, wherein policy highlight India's emergence as an international entity before its independence, but fail to link this crucial point to the idea of India.<sup>53</sup>

Delving deeper, the second category of literature introduces debates on strategic thought, where foreign policy was understood in light of historical memory on both, civilization and ancient Indian empires. This also marks the arrival of a history of ideas driven approach to studying the workings of India's historical imaginary from an international perspective. Scholars including George Tanham, Kanti Bajpai and Rahul Sagar have contributed to this stream of thought, emphasizing on the role of actual and imagined past in informing India's foreign policy choices.

---

<sup>48</sup> N. Rajkumar, *The Background of India's Foreign Policy*, (Delhi, 1952), page 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> T. Zinkin, 'Indian Foreign Policy: An Interpretation of Attitudes', *World Affairs*, 7/2 (1955), page 180.

<sup>50</sup> M. Rajan, 'Indian Foreign Policy in Action, 1954-56', *India Quarterly* 16/3 (1960), page 203.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> A. Appadorai, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy, 1947-72*, page 10.

<sup>53</sup> K. Karunakaran, *India in World Affairs*, (New Delhi, 1952), page 1-2.

In 1992, George Tanham's 'Indian Strategic Thought' was an ambitious attempt to understand Indian "actions and views on power and security" based on geography, anti-colonial history writing and socio-cultural factors.<sup>54</sup> While Tanham was of the view that the sheer diversity of India prevented it from having a strategic culture, his emphasis on the "discovery of history" and its influence on "India's political development and outlook" inadvertently assumes the co-constitution of national and international visions. From the Mauryas to the Mughals, when India witnessed large territorial empires in discontinuous time frames, the evidence of imperial unity "strengthened the notions of old and great India", simultaneously evoking thoughts about the "superiority of Indian culture...[seen as] as a continuous running thread through Indian history".<sup>55</sup> The leaders found themselves in a situation where independent India inherited the vestiges of a geopolitical frame constructed by the British and yet aspired for decolonization from these very ideas. Tanham, however, concluded that the "Indian government has not succeeded in articulating or pursuing these goals in a coherent disciplined fashion" and that the "forces of culture and history [had] worked against the cultivation of a strategic mindset".<sup>56</sup>

The basis of this incoherence were the underlying realities of regionalism or social divisions and centripetal forces which were glossed over to popularize the narrative of India's historical unity. Also, while nationalism has its conceptual origins in Europe, Tanham rightly points out that its evolution also coincided with Indian elites' attempts to interpret the history of India in its territorial wholeness, a substantial innovation over the localised history-writing tradition populating the proto-nationalist writings of the nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

While Tanham communicates the role of large empires in visualizing India as a hegemon, his subsequent focus on the divisive attributes on Indian society misses out the significance of the pre-British empires in Indian unity in the Transfer of Power negotiations.

Somewhat similar views are voiced by Bharat Karnad, who traces strategic thinking "anchored at one end culturally and subconsciously in the Hindu hyperrealist strategic thought originating in the Vedas...and at the other, tethered rhetorically, at least, to Mahatma Gandhi's brand of pixilated pacifism".<sup>58</sup> Tanham's approach – while it implicitly allows foreign policy to be understood as a subset of an underlying strategic culture – attracted responses from many scholars, including Kanti Bajpai and Rahul Sagar, whose writings also reframe the understanding of history and its impact on statecraft.

---

<sup>54</sup> G. Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay*, (City, 1992), page v.

<sup>55</sup> Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought*, page v-vi.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought*, page 2.

<sup>58</sup> B. Karnad, 'An Elephant With a Small Footprint The Realist Roots of India's Strategic Thought and Policies', in K. Bajpai, S. Basit and V. Krishnappa (eds), *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory, Cases* (New Delhi, 2014), page 202.

According to Rahul Sagar, historically, “India’s elite did in fact think about strategic matters”, which he substantiates by citing different thinkers beginning with Keshab Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekananda, Bankimchandra Chatterjee leading up to Tagore, Nehru and Gandhi.<sup>59</sup> For Sagar, the existence of themes like universal brotherhood, India’s transcendental spiritual force, Asiatic democracy, Gandhi’s ideas of non-violence or notions about Greater India point towards the existence of coherent ideas which were later modified further by Nehru, and became the basis of Indian foreign policy.

These themes, highlighting how “India’s political elites [had] been thinking about her place in the world for well over a century” unfold a new dimension to understand the genesis of Nehru’s ideas on Non-Alignment and Foreign Policy.<sup>60</sup>

The examples of Shyamji Krishna Varma, Lala Har Dayal, MN Roy, Savarkar, Raja Mahendra Pratap or Taraknath Das are cited by scholars to highlight their contributions to “the centrality of the nationalist cause [as] radical nationalists of the time became aware and made productive use of allied political movements in other countries of the world primarily to further their anticolonial nationalist struggle”.<sup>61</sup> Thus, these deserve attention for their role acquainting us with the myriad intellectual contributions to the idea of India.

The third set of literature takes our understanding further, redefining the conceptual relationship between the domestic and the international imaginaries of the Indian nation. This approach no longer accepts the international sphere as separate from the nation state, focusing on the study of nationalism from an internationalist perspective. While the conceptual frameworks of these scholars vary, this approach essentially reframes the nation’s intellectual anatomy in an international frame. Scholars like Sunil Khilnani, Sugata Bose, Manu Bhagavan, Benjamin Zachariah, Kris Manjappa, Michele Louro and Carolien Stolte belong to this stream of thought. They capture the encounter of globe-trotting Indian nationalist thinkers with internationalist ideas and new ways of imagining India’s place in the world, but do not discuss the geographical idea of India that gasped for its rightful space in the world. This research shall engage with Nehru’s thoughts, that not only defined India’s place in the world but also articulated its political and territorial identity.

As Stephen Legg has asked, “where was the international?”, answering that “the Indian nation started to take shape through its international activities, while international concerns seeped into national politics, provoking troubling tensions for the colonial government”.<sup>62</sup> Legg’s research engages with India’s representation in the League of Nations, which not only

---

<sup>59</sup> R. Sagar, ‘Before Midnight: Views on International Relations, 1857-47’, in D. Malone, C. Rajamohan and S. Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2015), page 65.

<sup>60</sup> Sagar, ‘Before Midnight’, page 65-7.

<sup>61</sup> Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, page 11.

<sup>62</sup> S. Legg, ‘An international anomaly? Sovereignty, the League of Nations and India’s princely geographies’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 43 (2014), page 94.

gave it a legal personality before independence, but also unleashed a stream of serious questions about sovereignty and international identity, thereby adding impetus to the Indian 'nation's' underpinnings. Since this research focuses on the intellectual environment predating Nehru's elevation to a high-ranking Congress leader, the subsequent chapter resituates Legg's arguments to elaborate on the politics of later decades as Nehru attempted to institutionalise his idea of India.

The other idea is to discard the reductionist approach that limits the understanding of continuities from the colonial past as colonial legacy. This approach fails to capture the making of Indian nationalism's extra-territorial imaginary. Independent India's decision to appropriate British India's legal identity, its policy of preserving colonial arrangements with its neighbouring countries and its adoption of Buddhist symbols was a conscious adoption and endorsement of an internationalist identity, as against the perceived colonial legacy.

The limitations of the realist/idealist binary become starkly visible in the existing scholarship as the complexities are inadvertently analysed through the historical discourse foreign policy gives to itself.<sup>63</sup> The conscious inheritance of colonial India's international identity by independent India, including the British-era agreements, imperial frontiers and the retention of old British hands in key diplomatic positions is yet to be incorporated in scholarly discourse on India's international identity which remains fixated on foreign policy through NAM and Third World Solidarity. This thesis highlights that the demand for India's legal status as a successor to the Raj, which became fundamental to India's international identity, was driven by serious ideological considerations, beyond just administrative continuity as their basis.

In this context, the fixity accorded by existing scholarship to Nehru's thought is conspicuous. It understands his statecraft through Nehru's statements and a chronological assessment of the MEA's policies. These approaches have long characterised scholarship on Indian foreign policy, and in the process have internalized the conventional understanding of foreign policy as a state's transactional conduct with the external world. The ability of the 'international' to define and modify national and territorial imaginings is missing from such frameworks.

Indian Nationalism's understanding of Asia is discussed at length by these scholars and their approaches contest the duality that categorized national and international spheres as distinct. The role of international influences is acknowledged as more than simply contributing to the nationalist imaginary. Collectively, existing scholarship on the idea of India has understood

---

<sup>63</sup> As research domains, foreign policy and International Relations have not only considered the nation-state as a passive actor but also unidimensionally defined the former's relationship with the nation-state. Therefore, this thesis argues for an intellectual history driven approach which reveals a different disposition towards foreign policy on part of Nehru. As Kaviraj states, it is essential that the "peculiar structure and form [of the discourse] must be unravelled". Thus, the descriptions internal to the foreign policy discourse must be transcended, if not rejected. See S. Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas* (New York, 2010), page 88.

the 'international' in terms of political processes in distant places influencing domestic events in myriad ways:

1. The idea of nationalism itself as it evolved in Europe.
2. Internationalism in the inter-war years, which became a "fertile ground for anti-imperialist collaborations between India and the wider world".<sup>64</sup>
3. Anti-colonial movements across the world and their influence on Indian nationalism.

The novelty of questions and the acknowledgement of the nation's different meanings in the scholarship on internationalism opened up a new space for rethinking nationalism in broader contexts.

The interwar years witnessed the induction of extraterritoriality in all formats of nationalisms, namely the ones propounded by the Hindu Mahasabha, Khilafat internationalists, Pan-Asianists and the Communists. For instance, Sugata Bose digs into the accounts expounding the outward quests of colonized people in the region, one of them being expatriate networks, capital and labour flows and Islamic universalism. Basing his research on "the role of extraterritorial identity and universalist aspiration among the people of the Indian Ocean arena in the age of global empire", Bose works us through the early twentieth century cosmopolitan experiences of these people, which enabled them to locate their identities in broader frames: Nationalism and universalism, far from being in an adversarial relationship, were bound in a strong symbiotic embrace. Anticolonialism as an ideology was both tethered by the idea of homeland while strengthened by extraterritorial affiliation.<sup>65</sup>

Bose richly draws on these myriad mobilities to explain the Indian Ocean region's emerging sense of identity in the methods of anti-colonial agitation, different universalisms and forms of national reorganization. The extraterritoriality introduced in his work is about reconfigurations of identities and belonging those cosmopolitan encounters had produced.

This thesis positions Nehru as its protagonist to uncover his conceptual understanding of India's geopolitical orbit, and its contribution in the making of the idea of India. A useful starting point to study the impact of civilizational narratives in the late nationalist thought is Susan Bayly and Stolte & Fischer-Tine's research that delves into Asia's myriad meanings Asia for thinkers like Gandhi, Tagore, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the protagonists of the Greater India Society.

These regional imaginations influenced Nehru, enabling him to distil them into legal concepts in his negotiations with the British on India's political and territorial identity.

---

<sup>64</sup> M. Louro, 'Where National Revolutionary Ends and Communist Begins: The League against Imperialism and the Meerut Conspiracy Case', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 33/3 (2013), page 331.

<sup>65</sup> Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*, page 68.

To reiterate, scholarly works engaging with foreign policy or internationalism further narrowed down the understanding of the 'international', conflating it with directives from the foreign office.

Attempts to understand the mechanics of Indian foreign policy from a temporal-structural perspective (by shifting the timeline to the inter-war period and the Second World War) are seen as major factors in influencing the ideas of both the nation-state and its foreign policy.

As it is collectively understood in the works of Srinath Raghavan, Narinder Singh Sarila, or Anita Inder Singh, it is the Second World War and its aftermath that shaped independent India's strategic and geo-economic outlook. Srinath Raghavan, in *India's War*, addresses the crucial question of what the "war did to India".<sup>66</sup> The political economy of the Second World War cast a looming shadow on India's own postcolonial identity, ranging from the trajectory of the nationalist struggle, its military organization, partition and the commanding heights inherited by the Indian economy.<sup>67</sup>

Manu Bhagavan's research explores India's early obsession with world peace, and he meticulously documents the Indian leadership's efforts to work towards an empowered UN in what he argues became independent India's quest for one world.<sup>68</sup>

Collectively, much of these discussions intuitively uphold the national-international duality, relating the international domain and foreign policy in terms of unidirectional principles exercised by the newly emergent nation state, thus assuming the latter to be a teleological entity in these works. As Manu Goswami highlights, "the triumph of the nation-state as the normative unit of the interstate system has been taken as methodologically conclusive" but in reality, the exact political edifice of India remained undecided as late as July 1947.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the inevitability of the emergence of India as a centralised nation-state is a common assumption among scholars of India's international relations.

Scholars looking at modern India from the perspective of the imperial encounter also trace the genealogy of the Indian state to the imperial role in unifying the subcontinent. They see developments after the First World War (primarily constitutionalism reforms) as normalizing the nation-state as the only legitimate political unit on the global stage. Notably, the Cambridge School, particularly through the works of John Gallagher and Anil Seal, credits India's emergence as a centralised polity to the "Imperial self-interest, [which] demanded a measure of Indian unity and central authority...[since] united India with a strong centre made good

---

<sup>66</sup> S. Raghavan, *India's War* (New York, 2017), page 5.

<sup>67</sup> S. Raghavan, *India's War*, page 1-17.

<sup>68</sup> M. Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World* (New Delhi, 2012), page 1.

<sup>69</sup> M. Goswami, 'Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms', *The American Historical Review*, 117/5 (2012), page 1462.

imperial sense”.<sup>70</sup> Indian nationalism, they argued, “itself appears to have been the sum of ‘disparate aspirations and grievances’, welded and then held together by the structure of government”.<sup>71</sup> As this thesis shall discuss, Nehru had already answered that while British role in unifying India did indeed deserve acknowledgement, it lacked originality as the British empire replaced and substituted an existing empire that served a similar function.

Matt Carnell’s doctoral thesis, to an extent, connects the role of India’s international identity in defining its domestic coherence as he cites the coerced integration of princely states as “evidence of the intention to employ India’s external identity as a means to integrate diverse states and areas into the Indian Union”.<sup>72</sup> According to Carnell, “Nehru sought to control the international identity, and to preserve as much as possible the territorial scope of the Raj by integrating the princely states into India”.<sup>73</sup> Since princely states were de-jure independent to opt out of India/Pakistan (and thus not legally part of the successor state), Carnell understands the incorporation of princely India as an act of foreign policy since he assumes them to be sovereign bodies.<sup>74</sup>

This project seeks to address the international dimensions of India’s political personality from an intellectual history perspective. It investigates the extraterritorial imaginations (ancient empires and civilization) that informed independent India’s legal and political personality. In conceptual terms, thought construction and the interstices between thought and policy become the crucial sites of the enquiry of this thesis. The time frame considered here straddles the interwar years and the decade after independence that mark the legal-institutional genesis and spatial evolution of the Indian nation-state.

Drawing from the growing body of scholarship that locates the origins of the Indian nation state in a synthesis of civilizational thought, imperial inheritance and the influence of the Cold War, this thesis transposes these developments back to Nehruvian thought to probe how India as a politico-legal construct was a product of a broader geographical canvas, with fluid contours. More specifically, this research explores nationalist thinking about India’s

---

<sup>70</sup> J. Gallagher and A. Seal, ‘Britain and India between the Wars’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 15/3 (1981), page 394.

<sup>71</sup> G. Pandey, Book Reviews: Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism. Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century.* (Cambridge, 1968). John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal, (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation. Essays on Indian Politics, 1870 to 1940.* Re printed from *Modern Asian Studies* 1973 (Cambridge, 1973). Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism. Bombay and the Indian National Congress, 1880-1915.* (Cambridge, 1973), *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, 11/2-3, (1974), page 327-328.

<sup>72</sup> M. Carnell, ‘India from Colony to Nation-State: A Re-Reading of India’s Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia, c.1945-1955’ (PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2012), page 35.

<sup>73</sup> Carnell, *India from Colony*, page 35.

<sup>74</sup> The legality and continuity of paramountcy was contested by Nehru. The Cabinet Mission had earlier denied the transfer of paramountcy to the succeeding entity, while Nehru demanded it. See Carnell, *India from Colony*, page 34.

civilizational and transcendental being (commonly termed Greater India), and its interpretation (and violation) of International Law. The research questions put forward by this thesis are:

1. How did foreign policy as an idea shape Nehru's imagination of India?
2. How empire and civilization, as concepts, influenced Nehru's ideas on Indian Unity?
3. What were the international constituents of nationhood for Nehru and how did these factors influence national consolidation?
4. What was the impact of foreign policy challenges on India's political identity?

This thesis identifies the rationale behind the territorial idea of India that Nehru took to the bargaining table with the British administration. Independence, for Nehru, meant reclaiming India as a dominant civilizational and geopolitical power in Asia, which in turn presumed its existence as a unified territory. In his view, this objective could be achieved if decolonization was supported by dismantling of the subcontinent's feudal, cultural and administrative hierarchies, paving the way for a unitary and centrally administered nation-state.

Following their decision to transfer full self-government to the people of India after the second World War, the British, together with the Congress leadership and the Muslim League locked horns over the form of political organization that would be handed over to the people of India. This episode understandably receives little scholarly attention from the perspective of India's international framework, mainly due to the looming shadow of partition, immediately followed by the challenges from neighbouring countries and Cold-war blocs. To pursue their demand for both centralized and a united state and prevent India's division, the Congress leadership not only contested the British federative proposals, but the demands by the Muslim League too were met with derision. This thesis particularly examines how India's political personality was proposed as flowing from its foreign policy. In his writings, Nehru defined India as a transnational idea, which is widely discussed in abstract terms but seldom studied in connection with the transfer of power negotiations or his neighbourhood policy which too had similar ideas at work.

The initial chapters discuss the construction of Indian nationalist thinking on the idea of India during the inter-war years, and the eventual expression of these notions during the Transfer of Power negotiations. Besides territorial contestations, a more serious aspect of the Congress-Muslim League face-off is traced in the bargain over the international legal status of India and Pakistan. It is only in the Congress's insistence on defining India as a successor state that we see a justification for India's centralized unitary political structure. In other words, within the domestic sphere, international law on the one hand allowed newly-independent India to consolidate sovereignty over the princely states through the instruments of accession. On the other hand, it also allowed India to appropriate the empire's international apparatus

(from membership in the United Nations, international bodies, and international agreements to imperial frontier zones that transcended her political borders).

A certain interpretation of international law ensured that the historically imagined India could be superimposed onto the nation-state form of Nehru's preference; thus, the story of India was best understood as a continuum spanning several millennia. This conjoined and non-mutually exclusive sense of the 'national-international' is a common thread linking the historical idea of India with that of independent India and also the site of the genesis of independent India's foreign policy. For Nehru, such conditioning also meant that once India emerged as an independent entity, it was destined to have an influential position in the world, making the existence of a grand foreign policy essential. Foreign policy was more than simply a transactional business based on realistic or idealistic views, but rather a precondition to operationalise the idea of India. In the realm of foreign policy and its relationship with the nation-state, the emergence of India can be argued as slightly different from the traditionally understood Eurocentric nation-state model.

Nehru's obsession with Non-Alignment was simply not a product of circumstantial pragmatism or the need to take the moral high ground, but had much to do with his version of India's historical personality, or the "conviction [in the] country's inevitable emergence as a great power".<sup>75</sup>

Foreign policy, while theoretically flowing from sovereignty, became its foremost benchmark for Nehru. While he equally emphasised other facets of sovereignty, foreign policy would receive the most attention. Writing while in incarceration, he conceptualized swaraj in the following manner:

swaraj shabd ka pehle to sambandh hai ek desh se dusre desh ya deshon se Rishta, aur ye rishta rajneetik, aarthik, sanskritik, samajik ityadi hota hai. Agar rajneetik ya arthik baton me koi desh anya deshon ke adheen nahin hai tab yah azad ya Swatantra kehlata hai...iske mane yeh hain ke sanskritik, samajik, dharmic baaten is azaadi me shaamil hain aur kisi bahar wale ko un men dakhil dene ka koi adhikar nahin hai.

(Translation: Swaraj, first of all means the relationship of one country with another, and the relationship has to be in terms of political, economic, cultural, social etc attributes. If a state is not subservient to any other state(s) politically or economically, only then it is called an independent state. This means that cultural, social, religious matters are part of this independence and foreigners have no right to interfere with them).

Beginning his definition of independence by emphasizing the freedom of conducting India's own foreign policy, Nehru makes the domestic attributes of sovereignty secondary. As mundane as this text appears, the thought of defining foreign policy before the domestic

---

<sup>75</sup> Frankel, *When Nehru Looked East*, page 29.

politics is not coincidental but a conceptual arrangement of priorities to define a nation-state, wherein the ability to conduct an influential foreign policy is the first attribute of sovereignty.

This thesis will also demonstrate how, from the onset of its foreign policy challenges, India attempted to reorder its sovereignty vis-à-vis its foreign policy decisions. Defining her identity as a successor state to colonial India, the terms of the Transfer of Power would come into conflict with Pakistan and China, which would soon contest what the Government of India hoped to legitimize as its rightful inheritance. In line with the legalities that brought independent India into existence, the conditions surrounding the accession of Kashmir culminated in the first Indo-Pakistan war. Similarly, British India's diplomatic offices in Xinjiang and Tibet were transferred to India and it inherited the McMahon line and the Ardagh-Johnson line as the Sino-Indian and Tibet-India borders, another aspect of its 'legal' inheritance that eventually culminated in the 1962 war.

The very structuring of the 'international' as a subset of the Indian national imagination meant that India's first foreign policy challenges compelled substantial changes for its policymakers. In other words, India's initial foreign policy challenges in turn influenced national imaginings as chapters on India's neighbourhood policy, and on Kashmir and China will demonstrate.

The subsequent chapters further explore how the very ideas that went into conceptualizing foreign policy as something rooted in the idea of India became major limitations in times of crises. This is not to argue that India's thinkers lacked a strategic vision, which has remained a long-standing argument stemming from Nehru's own critical views on geopolitics. Even if interpretations differ, there was an agreement in the nationalist thinking that India's geography and culture necessitated a larger role for her in Asia. The difference, although a substantial one, lay in the selection of means and tools to attain such influence. Nehru, while drawing from the earlier generation of thinkers, embedded these thought projections in independent India's politico-legal personality. Through his ideas, he aspired to expand India's metaphysical frontiers beyond their Westphalian trappings, thus making imperial phraseology and an imagined history indispensable in his approach to Asia. This approach found itself challenged by the Cold War, compelling Nehru to re-evaluate his ideas since the use of foreign policy to ideate a state was no longer tenable.

## **Methodology**

The disciplinary boundaries that IR, border studies and diplomatic history impose on themselves have not only resisted going beyond policy notes or diplomatic cables but have also denied any role to imaginary geographies conceptualized around and after India's independence. India's neighbourhood is understood through inter-state relationships and foreign policy directives, rather than its indispensability to the intellectual construction of the

nation/state-space itself. This is understandable since the nation-state discourse and Cold War subconsciously prioritized the international/political contexts over ideas. Further, as discussed above, scholarly writings on the idea of India have long remained fixated on the themes related to secularism, democracy, internationalism and world-making.

As intellectual history acknowledges the novelty and interconnections between abstract ideas, their impact on real life decisions or the failure to acknowledge them, it is possible to broaden the meaning of the international sphere for Nehru. The International must be understood beyond just the influence of international discourses, rather to the very idea of India as an international concept itself.<sup>76</sup>

To reiterate, this thesis studies Nehru's case for a united India from an international reference point through his writings, and his confrontation with the British, the Muslim League and the Princes. It is crucial to understand Nehru's intentions behind his idea of India and what role he imagined for India, beyond its independence, the idea being to recapture "with an increasing sense of nuance what exactly [Nehru] may have intended or meant".<sup>77</sup>

The chapters examine Nehru's correspondence and writings over a two-decade timeframe from 1930s to 1950s, focusing on his interventions in ToP, the Indian Independence Act, 1947 and his attempts at shaping the MEA's neighbourhood policy in accordance with the imaginary of India's international influence. Firstly, it studies Nehru's understanding of India's history as that of its foreign policy experiences. For valid reasons and methodological precedence of historical contextual approach, scholars on Indian nationalist movement associated empires with a negative connotation. The criticism of the British empire and geopolitics by Nehru and the Indian nationalists is automatically taken to imply opposition to empire as a concept. As Skinner states, "some of what we currently believe about, say, our moral or political arrangements turns out to be directly questionable".<sup>78</sup>

Thus, the contextual approach to history-writing remains an inadequate tool to grasp Nehru's thoughts as long as it conflates his anti-imperialism with an outright rejection of imperial statecraft. Scholarship on anti-imperialism naturally focuses on the negative attributes of empire, which is its immediate context. However, Skinner observes that in order to recover the full meaning of an idea, "its relevant context need [not] be an immediate one".<sup>79</sup> Nationalist

---

<sup>76</sup> For instance, in *Muslim Zion*, Devji argued that Pakistan could "not be understood as part of regional histories alone". Imagining a nation without any fixation to geography had strong correlations and direct influences from the Jewish movements with Jinnah himself comparing Indian Muslims to Jews. On the other hand, Javed Majeed in his book *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity*, explores Nehru's biographies through "relationships [he constructed] between his personal identity, national identity and international relations". Regional identity for Nehru, was a point of departure towards the international where his own identity, the idea of India, and the global would coalesce. See J. Majeed, *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal*, (New York, 2007), page 142, 160.

<sup>77</sup> Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge, 2002), page 117.

<sup>78</sup> Skinner, *Visions*, page 126.

<sup>79</sup> Skinner, *Visions*, page 116.

history writing, while articulating its opposition against the British Raj, was concerned with the broader historical framework, one that concerned with the rise and decline of India and her international position over the past thousand years.

The challenge emerging from the contextual approach in the study of nationalist movements and foreign policy of newly independent states is that it is often cloaked in anti-colonial discourse, and considers nationalism an antithesis of empires. This study shall also attempt to recover the meanings in Nehru's writings and speeches on the idea of India with the help of concepts like Quentin Skinner's Speech Act that calls for the "need to grasp something over and above the sense and reference of the terms used to express it".<sup>80</sup> Methodologically, this research begins with "elucidating the meaning, and hence the subject matter" of Nehru's writings and speeches, and then turns to the "argumentative context of their occurrence", to evaluate how they relate to the subject matter. The next step is to identify Nehru's interventions through his debates with the British and his domestic rivals, where he endorses a certain idea of India. This shall gradually help "to refine our sense of the precise nature of the intervention".<sup>81</sup> Further, the "intentionality can be further corroborated by examining the coherence of [Nehru's] beliefs".<sup>82</sup>

It also engages with Adrian Blau's 'extended meaning' that combines textual interpretation with logical conclusions, and his research on text-contextual errors will be useful in theorizing Nehru's understanding of India and the role of international elements in statemaking in India. As Blau states, thinking philosophically is as important as thinking historically. Similarly, Nehru's secular credentials are extolled in light of his opposition to both, Hindu nationalists and the Muslim league. Again, a superficial reading of Nehru's writings on secularism misses out the role of Hinduism in formulating his understanding of Indian geography and foreign policy decisions (for instance, the Tibetan frontier) where religion became a central feature.

Even a textual study of Nehru's correspondence suffers from an overt focus on the virtuous aspects of his speeches/writings. As a solution, Blau calls for a "combination of textual, historical and philosophical evidence", maintaining that "thinking philosophically can be a powerful tool for making historical inferences" since the two methods have more overlaps than the differences as claimed by conventional historians.<sup>83</sup> In other words, "textual and historical contexts are allies, not alternatives".<sup>84</sup>

This research studies Nehru's idea of India through his writings that I interpret as oscillations between text and the context. Nehru's writings on unity, themed on the international influence

---

<sup>80</sup> Skinner, *Visions*, page 103-4.

<sup>81</sup> Skinner, *Visions*, 117.

<sup>82</sup> Skinner, *Visions*, 119

<sup>83</sup> A. Blau, 'Textual context in the history of political thought and intellectual history', *History of European Ideas*, 45/8 (2019), page 1198.

<sup>84</sup> Blau, 'Textual Context', page 1202.

of old empires and culture as part of the Indian sphere of influence, received less scholarly attention compared to his thoughts on international peace and third world solidarity. This thesis shall elucidate on implicit and subtle aspects of his thinking and its impact on policy decisions.

To support the arguments, this research draws on another interpretive approach termed as 'systematic reconstruction', that deals with "linking authors' ideas, making implicit distinctions explicit, assessing consistency and so on, whether or not authors themselves saw these things".<sup>85</sup> Systematic reconstruction is based on both empirical data and adaptive understanding to logically deduce what the author meant.<sup>86</sup> This framework, by combining both contextual and philosophical analysis, aids in understanding Nehru's sense of history, his views on the empire and its relevance to his project. To verify these deductions, this research shall examine their consistency in light of Nehru's speeches and writings and compare them with key policy decisions that shaped India's political identity. With this approach, sources from the National Archives of India, PMML archives and Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, that deliberately give out incomplete information can be analysed with greater scholarly scrutiny.<sup>87</sup> This research shall also triangulate Nehru's writings with correspondence from senior British officials, Nehru's own colleagues from the Congress party and that from his critics in order to affirm his ideas and statements. To demonstrate this method, the following chapters reconstruct Nehru's repertoire, based on his interest in ancient and medieval empires and the global influence of Indian culture. These themes consistently appear in his conversations during the Transfer of Power, his criticism of the Muslim League and later his approach to neighbouring countries. This research captures Nehru's constant efforts to define India as interconnected with her neighbourhood, the latter seen as an extension of its sphere of influence.

### **Chapterization**

The second chapter discusses pre-British empires and India's civilizational influence as key pillars of Nehru's foreign policy and their quintessential role in making of Nehru's idea of India. It examines Nehru's role as a historian of India, for whom India's unity is eternal, a product of civilizational ethos and attested by successive empires, irrespective of their religious orientation. It then engages with Nehru's geographical idea of India which was theoretically

---

<sup>85</sup> A. Blau, 'Interpreting Texts', in A. Blau (ed), *Methods in Analytical Political Theory* (Cambridge, 2017), page 251.

<sup>86</sup> Blau, 'Interpreting Texts', page 251.

<sup>87</sup> To date, several documents related to critical policy decisions are yet to be made public and Nehru's personal papers (under Gandhi family's custodianship) remain inaccessible. The closest we can come to understanding Nehru is through existing documents in New Delhi's Nehru Memorial Library and S Gopal's biography of Nehru, since he had access to Nehru's personal communications. The SWJN papers, since they consist of outgoing correspondence, cannot be studied in the context they were written in. See Carnell, *India from Colony*, page 22.

realized through the Indian Independence Act, 1947. In doing so, the Act also defined Pakistan as a part of undivided India in legal terms. India's legal identity as a succeeding entity to British India and the GOI's complete incorporation of the princely states was justified as a decision to preserve India's international identity. The deliberate act of defining independence through the prism of succession or continuity emerged as the sole thread linking independent India's national consolidation with her international status. This chapter highlights how Nehru's arguments about India's unity had an international historical basis. Nehru's opposition to princely states was based on denying them an international status and preventing them from claiming a separate historical identity other than that of India. It also discusses how Nehru's idea of India had a certain geopolitical element as its basis since it was the British Raj that was inherited back with its geopolitical orientation. In succeeding British India, independent India simultaneously inherited both, a centralized state and its foreign policy, making the two inseparables.

The third chapter argues that the Indian nation-state's identity was both domestic and international, flowing right from its intellectual conceptualization rather than as a consequence of independent India. Nehru's commitment to secularism did not prevent him from conceptualizing India as both sacred and a transnational geography.<sup>88</sup> An underlying theme this chapter intends to highlight is Nehru's ambivalent relationship with legality and its role in shaping India's identity since domestic consolidation and international projection were based on a simultaneous use and violation of law and constitutionalism with Nehru's sense of history as the reference point. It studies the reorientation of India's international identity after partition. Despite the territorial loss, Nehru did not abandon his thoughts on undivided India. The truncation of the subcontinent, along with the arrival of the Cold War, were setbacks to Nehru's international project as they robbed India of its very instrumentality and geopolitical agency in Asia. It is worth noting Nehru's efforts at defining India as a sacred space, without overt references to Hinduism. Buddhism, with an emphasis on Ashokan India, was introduced as an extra-constitutional element symbolizing India's unity and its foreign policy, as seen in the adoption of the national emblem. The chapter also studies the intellectual shifts caused by Partition and the Cold War. After failing to prevent the Partition, Nehru understood the creation of Pakistan as an aberration in the course of history as it was a product of communal passions. The forces of history would compel Pakistan to return to India, he believed. India's use of Non-Alignment is also discussed as a means to resuscitate its civilizational ties with the broader Asian region, as seen in its positive interventions to help the Indonesian struggle against the Dutch empire and its role in the aftermath of the Korean War.

---

<sup>88</sup> D. Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*, (New York, 2011), page 85.

Further, the chapter also discusses Nehru's counter-narrative to the challenges from regionalism and secessionist tendencies. The chapter reveals the limitations of Nehru's republican ideas as he delegitimized regional and sub-national demands as against India's civilizational ethos, which had an international character.

The fourth chapter is a case study on Nehru's policy on Jammu and Kashmir. It studies Nehru's fixation with the Kashmir valley since the pre-independence days and his dilemmas on choosing between Abdullah's populism and the legality of J&K's accession to India. The chapter also examines how the first Indo-Pakistan war (1947-48) and the subsequent internationalization of the Kashmir crisis (by its referral to the United Nations) simultaneously changed India's understating of Kashmir and the way it defined Kashmir's relationship with India. Post its referral to the UN, there is ample archival evidence on Nehru's unwillingness with the plebiscite as a means to settle the Kashmir issue. Despite his commitment to honouring will of the people, he considered the instrument of accession the final testament to his claims on Jammu and Kashmir. For Nehru, Kashmir was also a proof of India's vibrant civilization past, a political space of the present times which had to be an Indian territory to negate the two-nation theory. The chapter also highlights the acrimonious relationship between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah on the question of the 'real' history and the true inheritance of Kashmir. To Nehru, Kashmir's history and unique character attested to its underlying Indianness, whereas to Abdullah the very same attributes made it different from India. From supporting Abdullah as the sole representative of the Kashmiri sentiment to arresting him in 1953, the entire phase also witnessed Nehru's hardening position on Kashmir as a clear inheritance not simply as a legal accession from a princely state, but rather as a territory that unconditionally belong to India in the historical sense.

The fifth and last chapter is a case study of India's neighbourhood, which, in Nehru's thought often blurred the neat distinction between domestic and the international. It particularly sheds light on historical, legal and political ideas that defined Nehru's thinking on China. Both, Chinese civilization and Tibet's culture fascinated Nehru for their historic exchanges and influence from India. Having an indispensable role in shaping India's spiritual and cultural identities as per the nationalist historiography, China and specifically Tibet marked the northward extensions of the Indian geocultural influence. With independence, India inherited British Indian missions in Tibet and Xinjiang with the rationale of continuing its presence in what Nehru considered as an extended frontier. The Maoist revolution and the subsequent absorption of these two regions into the PRC challenged Indian presence and compelled it to retreat, beginning with the closure of the Indian mission in Kashgar in the early 1950s. The latter part of the 1950s witnessed the gradual transformation of disagreements into a full-blown conflict by 1962, after India provided asylum to the Dalai Lama citing Tibet's intertwined cultural heritage with that of India. As China questioned the McMahon line and India's border

demarcation practices (along with its Forward Policy), Nehru built its case heavily on Hindu texts and the sacrosanct status of the Himalayan frontier which could not be subject to any negotiation. To Nehru, the McMahon Line was an inheritance of India's timeless frontier, and that Britain's appropriation and renaming of India's traditional Himalayan frontier did not make it a tool of colonialism. What Indian leadership failed to factor in was its use of the empire's administrative apparatus (British consulates in Tibet and Xinjiang) vocabulary (McMahon line) was considered by the Chinese as the continuation of British policy.

## Chapter Two

# Independence and National Consolidation: Intertwining thoughts on Civilization, Geopolitics and International Law

### Introduction

Partition appeared as a reality soon after the gory events that had followed the Direct-Action Day (in August 1946). Prime Minister Clement Attlee's statement on 20th February, 1947 finally set the date for the transfer, which had to take place not later than 30th June, 1948. The British worried that the Congress leadership's disagreements with the Muslim League and the princely states could potentially destabilize the subcontinent and attract intervention from adversarial powers. On 3rd June 1947, the last Viceroy Lord Mountbatten announced the Partition plan, fixing 15th August as the official date for the transfer of power to India and the new state of Pakistan. Nehru's response, delivered immediately after this announcement categorically pointed out that the acceptance of the plan did not mean agreement to it, and that "the India of geography, of history and traditions...cannot change".<sup>89</sup>

However, the question of granting independence in terms of territorially contiguous nation-states remained shrouded in mystery all the way up till late July 1947, even after passing of the Indian Independence Act. Right up to the eve of independence, the British support for self-rule to Indians remained fixated on complex federative schemes (subject to differing interpretations by the League) and efforts to tie India in the larger Commonwealth frameworks (both of which were consistently resisted by the Congress).

A Cabinet Mission meeting took note of the Congress leadership's thinking once Partition became a reality; that is, "more effective power of control over the provinces".<sup>90</sup> Partition - reluctantly accepted as a compromise by the Congress leadership in exchange for a powerful central administration - did not constrain Nehru from imagining India as a mythical Indian empire. With thinkers like Vivekananda and Tagore having already explored the idea of India as an ethereal entity, Nehru acquainted the nation's metaphysical attributes with both historiography and legality. Wherever legality obstructed his vision, Nehru was comfortable in defying it to reclaim India as an international historical project, as observed in his violation of legal agreements in his policy towards the princes. Nehru found the political imagination to be incomplete at the level of legality since he believed that the forces of history would naturally enable India to re-establish her organic connections with Asia.

Civilizational consciousness, for him, was the common thread that linked the idea of India with its extraterritorial reach. The ToP records and Nehru's speeches/writings offer an insight

---

<sup>89</sup> Mansergh et al., Text of Broadcast by Pandit Nehru on 3 June 1947, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI (London, 1982), page 96.

<sup>90</sup> Mountbatten Papers, File 76A, IOR, page 50.

into his thoughts, particularly his ideas (both abstract and historically grounded) and how they informed his decisions. Far from being objective records, Nehru's writings and correspondence capture the idea of India and its eventual manifestation into political reality, with foreign policy and international imaginings informing his thoughts and actions. The contest between the Congress leadership and the British in the final days of ToP helps us understand the fight to reclaim civilizational India (as informed by Nehru's sense of history) in the four-sided contest with the Muslim League, princes and the British government.

This chapter captures Nehru's intellectual journey from the point he began ideating Indian statehood as an international history project, all the way to the attainment of its politico-legal status through the Indian Independence Act, 1947 and finally its independence on 15<sup>th</sup> of August. The Act, despite recognizing Pakistan, notionally preserved undivided India's international status, giving Nehru a much-needed moral victory as it protected the essence of undivided India despite its partition. The Act, still ambiguous on the future of princely India, nevertheless paved the way for defining independent India as the successor state to British India. The Act upheld British India's international status that the new Government of India relied on to consolidate its unitary political structure.

Just as much remains to be done in the realm of theory-building on the national-international interface (as discussed in the previous chapter), the story of integration of princely India has not been understood from an international perspective. This chapter revisits Nehru's "key role in pushing the Congress into a confrontation with the Indian states" for he was convinced that their liquidation was crucial to deny them a potential international status, thus preserving India's politico-administrative unity from an international legal perspective.<sup>9192</sup> Further, it also throws light on Nehru's thoughts on Indian unity and integration as subsets of a grand historical international idea. The Congress's interpretation of paramountcy, its claims to inheritance and independent India's frontier claims will be discussed in context of this historical imaginary.

### **National Imaginations: The role of Frontiers, Muslim dynasties, and History Writing**

Nehru's geographical understanding of India was paradoxical as it viewed his pride in India's international role and cosmopolitan spirit with a sense of historical vulnerability to foreign invasions. Thus, both its mountainous and oceanic frontiers emerged as an important focal

---

<sup>91</sup> S. Purushotham, *From Raj to Republic* (California, 2020), page 31.

<sup>92</sup> The 1938 Haripura session of the Indian National Congress is remembered as a landmark session with regard to its position on the princely states. As Nehru would remark, Haripura affirmed that "the integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for, and the same full measure of political, social, and economic freedom was to come to the States as to the rest of India". See J. Nehru, *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937-1940* (London, 1941), page 29. It must be recalled that the Congress remained divided as many of its leaders (including Gandhi) still held the "traditional view that the States were separate units and therefore not the concern of the national movement". See Nehru, *Unity*, page 28.

point in Nehru's idea of India. India, as Nehru described it, was that "natural cradle" between the "impassable mountain ranges [and] deep oceans".<sup>93</sup> Here, he outlined the boundaries and frontiers prior to defining the nation's interior or its socio-political milieu. As Sankaran Krishna wrote, "in Nehru's Autobiography, anxiety regarding the physical boundary of the nation is inscribed early".<sup>94</sup> Thus, the porosity of the frontiers directly impinged on the nation's and subsequently Nehru's own vulnerabilities. India's historical journey, besides embracing Asia, was also to be one of a "series of encounters with this anxiety".<sup>95</sup> The melting pot culture and India's unconditional embrace foreign influences were no doubt celebrated, but continued to be understood as exogenous processes. Within the subcontinental space, her power of assimilation was celebrated only in a passive sense, as it followed invasions. As a result, the colonial obsessions with frontier defences were not alien to Indian policymaking, that would later make the same case for clear delineation and consolidation of its frontier defences to control spaces that had constantly pushed the Indian history into the realm of uncertainty. Although the Muslim encounter with the subcontinent was not overtly vilified by Nehru as in the case of Hindu nationalist narratives, he too shared the British obsession with demarcating and defining the frontier, more so in a philosophical sense as a gateway to reclaim India's international identity.

Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty consider nationalisms outside Europe as hostage to their antecedents of nationalism and state-making in Europe, that reproduced Europe elsewhere.<sup>96</sup> Even if "nationalism was entirely a product of the political history of Europe", a "European import" as Chatterjee defined it; the intellectual tools Nehru would use to make the case for one India had interesting departures from processes of European state-making, if not its overall discourse.<sup>97</sup> The preponderance of a certain discourse should not be a hindrance in studying the ways it digressed from the mechanics of the modern state, as it can take different conceptual forms. A closer scrutiny of Nehru's thoughts reveals different rationales and emotions at work.

To begin with, this research positions itself vis-à-vis Partha Chatterjee's account on Indian nationalism, an influential framework to understand the making of the Indian nation. While the Congress leadership's demand for an inherited, centralized and a unified apparatus can be argued as operating in the Eurocentric discourse, it departed from Chatterjee's understanding of the trajectory of the Indian nationalist movement.

---

<sup>93</sup> S. Krishna, Cartographic Anxiety: Mapping the Body Politic in India, *Alternatives* 19/4 (1994), page 509.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Krishna, 'Cartographic Anxiety', page 510.

<sup>96</sup> D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, 2008), page 7-8.

<sup>97</sup> P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton, 1993), page 4.

In his popular account discussing the spiritual and the material domains of anticolonial nationalism, Chatterjee delves deep into exploring the various literary inventions, history writing and social movements that took place with the intent of marking sovereignty over the inner domain, leaving the superior 'material' untouched:

[For the nationalists] what was necessary was to cultivate the material techniques of the modern western civilization while retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture.<sup>98</sup>

In the 'outer' domain, Chatterjee states, nationalism "challenge[d] the 'rule of colonial difference' in the domain of the state" and exhausted its energies on bridging this difference.<sup>99</sup> In the process, nationalist politics (which had limited itself to linking the spiritual difference with material similarity) ended up appropriating the modern liberal state only.<sup>100</sup> However, a closer reading of nationalist discourse reveals that the new generation of nationalists refused to accept British superiority in the matters of statecraft. The demand for independent India as a successor state to British India essentially was based on the belief that the British too had ruled a territory which had been politically constituted much before. The stress laid by Nehru on India's historic empires as a proof of its unity was intended to equate centralized rule with geographical unity. India's past was constructed by its nationalist leadership through a chronology of empires and their natural acculturation towards unity.

As Chatterjee claims, there is an "imbrication of two discourses" in post-47 Indian politics. In the process of elaborating the intellectual processes that define these two time-frames, Chatterjee does not capture the actual making of India's political personality at the cusp of independence as his account devotes greater focus to the instrumentality of the postcolonial state, rather than the genealogy of the nation defined by the late nationalist thought. Nehru features in Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World*, with his role rightly highlighted as that of a vociferous proponent of a state with a centralised authority.<sup>101</sup>

The rise and decline of historical empires also fascinated Nehru, helping him theorize India's unity. He believed (without offering much rationale) that large empires, centralized power structures and India's civilizational influence were interlinked. Since the dissolution of centralized dynasties in the past remained a major concern for Nehru, the unravelling of unity came to be identified with phases of identity crisis. India could only be resuscitated by the

---

<sup>98</sup> Chatterjee, *Nation and its Fragments*, page 120.

<sup>99</sup> Chatterjee, *Empire and Nation*, page 42.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Nehru features in Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and Colonial World*, with his role rightly highlighted as that of a vociferous proponent of a state with a centralised authority. But Chatterjee limits Nehru's motivations to the need for economic planning and social justice, which necessitated the creation of a "central, autonomous and directing role of the state". Therefore, for Chatterjee "the principal political task before the nation [was] to establish a sovereign national state", following which the challenges in the social, economic and scientific domains would be addressed from an impartial standpoint. See Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, page 132-33.

successive centralizing forces. It was this perspective which had to be accorded legal justification to support the claims of unity. Unlike the thinkers of late nineteenth century, who Chatterjee credits with setting the discourse in which nationalist thought would operate, Nehru's history-writing was not concerned with the question of 'who had written history' or 'what is the true history', but rather with defining India as a product of two processes, the first being a common cultural undercurrent of a civilization known for crossing its frontiers and the second being the history of empires.<sup>102</sup> And Nehru was particular about defining these processes as possessing an international character.

In Chatterjee's words, by the late nineteenth century, the trajectory of nationalist history-writing had already been laid down. It began with defining India as a glorious civilization, followed by the "age of decline" due to inroads by the Muslims.<sup>103</sup> The glorification of the Vedic civilization has parallels with the Europeans' celebration of the Greek civilization, followed by the onset of the dark ages of the medieval past (which found parallels with the Muslim rule in India).<sup>104</sup> Over the course of time, there was a shift in history writing due to the exposure to western education. These strict comparisons, again disappear in Nehru's articulation of his idea of India. In Nehru's narrative, the ancient, medieval and British India were at most united in their natural orientation towards unifying the territorial space under a single authority. The arrival of the Muslims was not interpreted as an undoing of India and the social role of Muslims was rather understood only from their cultural interface with the Hindus, having its share of pleasant and not-so-pleasant features. Here, Nehru emphasized that since the Muslims did not bring any new political or economic structure, "their influence on the economic life of India and the social structure was very little".<sup>105</sup> His depiction of the Muslim dynasties appears to have a normal tone, but he categorically highlighted the role of the Mughals in retaining the subcontinent's territorial identity (which was acknowledged by the British as well).<sup>106</sup>

Even in the Mughal empire's twilight years, the British were still influenced by the discourse of unity when they recognized them (whose rule was reduced to mere illusion) as rulers of India, even if the post-Aurangzeb phase saw the emergence of regional kingdoms that sought to assert their autonomy from Delhi. Since it was from the Mughals that the British officially took control of India, Nehru would position the Congress in the line of this chain of succession.

---

<sup>102</sup> Nationalist writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee remained obsessed with the former questions. Writing about Bengal, he asserted that Bengalis did not have their own history as the existing British accounts were based on the "testimonies of foreign Muslim chroniclers". See Chatterjee, *Nation*, page 76.

<sup>103</sup> Chatterjee, *Nation*, page 93-4.

<sup>104</sup> In certain instances, Nehru's *Discovery of India* attempts to chart a different trajectory from European discourse as well as its replication in the nationalist accounts.

<sup>105</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 267.

<sup>106</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Nehru quotes the Mahabharata era as one of the earliest instances of efforts to be undertaken to unite India.

## **Making Case for Indian Unity**

The 'international' in the metaphysical and the political India's ever-existing unity and the need for its legal recognition loomed large in Nehru's thoughts. In an essay (titled *The Unity of India*) that he wrote for *Foreign Affairs*, he outlined his own version of Indian unity, which was not a political expression, but an interwoven element of geography and culture based on the assimilation of external influences and their subsequent indigenization into local practices.<sup>107</sup> Nehru acknowledged that the British gave political unity to India, but saw it as a "superficial idea imposed from above [and] the natural outcome of that fundamental unity which had been the background of Indian life for thousands of years".<sup>108</sup>

The contours defining the Nehruvian idea of unity were intangible and were felt only in terms of the socio-cultural impact in distant geographies over a longer time horizon. He noted in *The Discovery of India* with an "astonishing thought that any culture or civilization should have ... continuity for five or six thousand years or more....[and India's] cultural basis was strong enough to endure".<sup>109</sup> To understand unity and integration in this contextual setting, Nehru's writings from the late 1920s onwards are a crucial reference point as this phase marks the beginning of his influential phase in the freedom struggle. While India's unity was articulated differently by various nationalist thinkers, Nehru's entry into the higher echelons of the Congress party would mark a break from the prevailing debates and viewpoints. Treading differently from the radicals and moderates, Nehru's conceptions would shift the ontological notions of unity and reframe them in a broader spatial and temporal context.

This tendency took form of speaking about the history of a united state space in terms of long timelines and of interpreting unity as a metaphysical element which was not trapped within the subcontinent's geographic confines. The ability to absorb external cultures and influencing distant cultures underpinned this unity, that was both innate to the idea of India and transcended it. As we see, his writings were a quest to highlight the historical and modern-day factors that gave India its unity. His writings circled back to culture, kingship, centralising tendencies of empires, and most importantly their international influence as necessary attributes of state-making.

He understood the decline in India's civilizational vitality as the diminishing of its capacity to influence distant geographies through trade, cultural or even strategic domination. As mentioned above, the downfall was primarily attributed to the social conditions of the subcontinent, and not to political upheavals or invasions (which he understood as fallouts of

---

<sup>107</sup> J. Nehru, 'The Unity of India', *Foreign Affairs* 16/2 (1938), page 233.

<sup>108</sup> Nehru, 'The Unity of India', page 237.

<sup>109</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 50.

societal problems). Nehru traced the crisis plaguing India's cosmopolitan spirit (and hence its civilizational power) to its caste system. As he stated:

Where Indians had gone abroad, as in south-east Asia, they were not so rigid in mind or customs or in their economy, and they had opportunities for growth and expansion. For another four or five hundred years they flourished in these colonies...but in India herself [they] developed a narrow, small-group, and parochial outlook. Life became cut up into set frames. Education and opportunities of growth were withheld from the lower castes...".<sup>110</sup>

Enfeebled by the weight of its societal contradictions (which in turn invited invasions), the road to India's emancipation, for Nehru, lay in a strong state that would not only function as the arbiter of its social life but also defend its vulnerable frontiers and expand the contours of its civilizational influence.<sup>111</sup> No matter how important this "past record of Indian cultural solidarity" was, it proved ineffective in time of invasions, crisis and social upheavals.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, unity had to be redrawn from the more contemporary and legitimising instruments, that is, the centralizing political power of the state.

Nehru was aware of the limits posed by India's narrow religious and social structures, which is why he mentioned them on the lines of their drawbacks and potentialities. He attributed culture as an indispensable facet behind India's unity, but at the same time he associated it with an element of fallibility.<sup>113</sup> The decay caused by its own social structure and imperialism would need a centralized polity to revive it. As this thesis shall elaborate, unity was eventually reframed as a political concept in terms of the demand for a centralised sovereign state. Nehru outlined the idea of unity as an exclusive domain of the ruler, and not that of the masses since the latter were not interested in such larger ideas.<sup>114</sup> Thus, a centralized state, narrativized as an inevitable historical phenomenon was demanded by the nationalist leadership, framed as a legitimate tool of the nation's sovereignty.

---

<sup>110</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 225-6.

<sup>111</sup> Here, he differs from Tagore's strict classification between the society and the state, wherein the king or the sovereign dealt purely with the matters of statecraft (wars and treaties), and the society had a trajectory of its own, untouched by princely politics. That is, according to Tagore, irrespective of what happens to the ruler or the state, society shall remain insulated from these developments. See R. Tagore, *Greater India* (Madras, 1921), page 1-3.

<sup>112</sup> Nehru, *The Unity of India*, page 18.

<sup>113</sup> On the decline of civilizational prowess, Nehru stated that the "past does not necessarily help us today", since India "undoubtedly deteriorated and the vital urge in her began to weaken. Her power to assimilate and absorb became feebler, and the flexibility of her thought and structure gave place to rigidity...The immediate result...was the growth of conservatism, a further shrinking of India inside her shell in self-defence." See Nehru, *The Unity of India*, page 18.

<sup>114</sup> Here, he echoes Tagore, as he too reserved the power of law-making and sovereignty as an absolute domain of the king. See Tagore, *Greater India*, page 1.

This is also the juncture where India's Hindu and Muslim past had to be viewed in an unbiased manner as well as through the chronology of empires.<sup>115</sup> Here, Emperor Akbar became crucial for Nehru, since he created a "sense of oneness among the diverse elements of north and central India".<sup>116</sup> Nehru's criticism of Aurangzeb was more concerned with his role in undoing the 'structure' (in other words, threatening the unity of India) established by Akbar (and pursued by Jahangir and Shah Jahan).<sup>117</sup> It was not the collapse of the Hindu age of glory (which Chatterjee understands as a running theme within the nationalist thought), but rather the collapse of the Mughal empire and similar structures of past (that symbolized India's unity) which occupied Nehru's thoughts. The first significant fallout of Aurangzeb's policies was the break-up of the Indian empire, after which both Indian and foreign adventurers tried to "carve out principalities for themselves".<sup>118</sup> Nehru's ruminations on the disintegration and fragmentation of past empires have strong contextual origins in British policy towards the princely states, since it kept them autonomous with assurances of independence after their withdrawal.<sup>119</sup>

Turning to Nehru's writings, he also felt that religion-inspired nationalism was a revanchist idea, an unsophisticated attempt to fill the vacuum that followed structural collapses. For instance, Nehru considered Hindu Nationalism a reactionary outcome of Aurangzeb's policies and immediate leadership void that emerged after his death. For him, it did not "embrace the whole of India in its scope", and remained coloured by "feudalism, local sentiment and sectarian feeling".<sup>120</sup> Hindu nationalism, with the Muslims as its focus, not only excluded the non-Hindus from its worldview, but also prevented India from being understood in the continuum of empires in its rejection of the history of Muslim rule, he felt.<sup>121</sup> This was a crucial aspect of the Nehruvian narrative where the Muslim rule had to be acknowledged and recognized (if not embraced) in order to own India in her entirety. Further, in dealing with the princes and the Muslim question, their restricted and regional authority and history had to be submitted to an imperial past over which they had no control. The Mughals belonged, in this sense, to the Indian nation by law and history and not to the Muslim League.

---

<sup>115</sup> Nehru describes the cultural synthesis achieved in the period of Islamic empires as a "state-sponsored effort, [where] the personality of the emperor" played "a crucial role". See Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*, page 136.

<sup>116</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 270.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 272.

<sup>119</sup> His disdain for the Princely States' claims is also visible in this book. Writing about the status of Hyderabad, Nehru feels that the state owes its existence to "duplicity and for profiting by the misfortunes of others", and could not survive without the protective shadow of the East India Company. See Nehru, *Discovery*, page 273.

<sup>120</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 271.

<sup>121</sup> He felt that "Hindu nationalism was a natural growth from the soil of India, but inevitably [came] in the way of the larger nationalism which rises above differences of religion or creed". See Nehru, *Discovery*, page 272.

Thus, the imperial line of inheritance was traced from the Mauryas, Guptas, Mughals, Sikhs and Mahrattas to the British and beyond. It was not just territory, status or foreign property that was inherited through the Independence Act but history as the source of Indian unity. Such understanding of unity can be argued as ahistorical, given how the trajectories of classical European bourgeois revolutions spawned the capitalist order, followed by the emergence of the state as a political “instrument to correct its spontaneous production of inequality”.<sup>122</sup>

Sudipta Kaviraj traces the emergence of the centralised state apparatus to the need for social justice and redistribution. The omnipresent state, in Kaviraj’s view, was inevitable as it had to perform “functions left to the institutions of civil society”.<sup>123</sup> This is true if understood in the context of Nehru’s socialism-inspired economic vision. However, this thesis points to the state’s omnipresence in the socio-political sphere, which has its philosophical roots in the belief that a centralized polity could rejuvenate India’s civilizational vigour by restructuring the Indian society away from its casteist leanings.

The state’s omnipresence stemmed from more than just socialist leanings. Also, as against the communist or extremist viewpoints that disregarded even the slightest imperial footprint or the moderate faction’s preference to confine its struggle to constitutionalism, Nehru’s push for unity was rooted in highlighting episodes of high imperial organization as the rightful and the only trajectory of India’s historical and political identity. Any attempts by the British to reconfigure Indian politics on the lines of caste/religious/princely hierarchies would only invite violence.<sup>124</sup> India’s civilizational unity was broad enough to include Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian powers so as to prevent it from being defined merely by an act of British instrumentality. Instead, the Raj, too, was seen to be premised upon this civilizational identity. And it was this unity that could and had to be inherited, since Britain had already become part of India in ruling her.

Not limiting the ambit of the ‘international’ to foreign policy decisions, this chapter also understands India’s unity through the prism of Nehru’s thoughts on Asia. He intertwined his study of the Indian history with that of the broader civilizational landscape of Asia, and deduced independent India’s own political personality in a unitary perspective. As independence drew close, a certain version of India’s international historiographic identity prompted the nationalist leadership to redefine imperial constitutionalism to demand a united India and its international

---

<sup>122</sup> S. Kaviraj, *The Imaginary Institution*, page 25.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Nehru’s thinking on Indian statehood combined both constitutionalism and violence, an aspect that remains less explored mainly due to the credit attributed to Patel due to his authority over the States Ministry, negotiations with the princely states and India’s overall political reorganization. Patel’s presence makes the settlement of the princely matter appear purely a domestic issue as well as an internal affair between the States Ministry and the princes. Though emanating out of the tussle between the Congress leadership and the princes, this narrative ignores the underlying discourse that drew from India’s status in international law, as well as its sense of extraterritorial identity to justify Indian unity.

status as a successor entity. Nehru and his colleagues would introduce extra-legal insights into their interpretation of international law to further the actualization of the idea that independent India was rightfully entitled to inherit colonial India as well as its presence over Asia (as against military dominance); the latter through the normative frameworks and diplomatic missions that had evolved over the past century to legitimize the empire's continental presence. The thought of defining independence from the prism of continuity became the sole thread linking nationalist identity with the national consolidation and international status the Congress had demanded. In structural terms, the legitimacy of India's unity, as Nehru argued, stemmed from no other source than independent India's status as an inheritor of colonial India's international status.

The roots of the legitimacy of the nation-state lie in Woodrow Wilson's reorganization of the international system of states (after the First World War), that redefined international community and belongingness through the state-centric order. Itty Abraham argues that "belonging to a nation-state had taken root as the dominant aspirational goal for all subjugated peoples who sought political sovereignty".<sup>125</sup> Indeed, after the first World War:

territorially sovereign nation-state became identified as the most legitimate international form of collective political organization and...[had] far-reaching consequences for the prospects and meanings of decolonization.<sup>126</sup>

In this context, a reinvestigation into the concept is important as belonging to a nation-state had different meanings for different nationalist movements. Also, it is important to emphasize that neither the British offered independence in the form of a bounded or a centrally organized nation-state, nor did the Congress leadership (including Nehru) conceptualise India strictly in terms of a nation-state in a Westphalian framework. Notwithstanding Nehru's mass appeal, his concepts drew motivation purely from intellectual pursuits, with mass appeal playing an important but an ancillary role.<sup>127</sup> It is important to highlight this point since the Congress's opposition to princes (with Nehru's rancorous language against the princes being its main feature) continues to be understood in context of the efforts to mobilize popular attitudes under one political umbrella. Here, Nehru's thoughts are placed in a legal/constitutional perspective to discuss the import of the imagined extraterritoriality to conceptualize India in opposition to the British schemes that considered princes and the provinces in autonomous setups.

From the promulgation of Government of India Act of 1935 to that of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, the British proposals for self-rule progressed in a sluggish manner

---

<sup>125</sup> I. Abraham, *How India became Territorial* (California, 2014), page 47.

<sup>126</sup> Abraham, *How India*, page 46.

<sup>127</sup> While Congress's eventual opposition to the princely states acquired its peak mass appeal from late 1930s onwards when Nehru took charge of the States Peoples Conference, his negation of the legality and historicity of princely claims deserves a deeper analysis in which the idea of a united India came to be argued by an elite intellectual, and not a plebeian perspective.

and at best offered diffused governance structures (even after the announcement of withdrawal), according provinces and states the right to refuse accession to the Indian Union. In response, the nationalist demand for independence stressed on 'continuity' to nullify Princely claims to paramountcy. Furthermore, India's relationship with its neighbourhood was consciously understood as inheriting certain aspects of institutionalised colonial hierarchies.

Nehru's arguments filled the interstices between his imagination of a historical civilizational imaginary and its final arrival as a political person. The Congress's insistence on legitimizing 'continuity' as the defining facet of the Indian polity even altered Pakistan's political identity, much against Jinnah's politico-legal idea of Pakistan (which will be discussed in the next chapter). 'Continuity' would, in a way, partly legitimize the subcontinent's vivisection as 'Partition'. Mountbatten too highlighted the legal inference of this provision in his letter to the Secretary of State, that "after Partition the identity of the remainder of India after the northern and eastern portions are separated will remain identifiable with the pre-partition India".<sup>128</sup>

Indian leaders ensured Pakistan's identity as a seceding state, while Jinnah wanted to officially term the process a 'Division' and demanded both India and Pakistan be termed as new states, as against the 'Continuity' principle proposed by the Congress.<sup>129</sup> The fundamental difference of opinion was a "conceptual difference about the nature of the partition...[with] Nehru contending that":

While some parts of India were being given the opportunity to secede, India as an entity would remain and the Government of India would accordingly continue, inheriting the status, the treaty and other obligations of its British predecessor, whereas Jinnah maintained that what would happen would not be secession but division".<sup>130</sup>

Jinnah, however, sought to "establish the creation of two new states, neither of which [could] claim to be the successor of India...".<sup>131</sup>

### **Secularizing the Eternal India: Locating India in the Historical Continuum**

Continuity, as discussed in the previous section, became crucial to defining India's political personality. In legal terms, the empire relinquished control over an apparatus whose retention became crucial to new India's identity. This had in the background, efforts by Nehru that began challenging Britain's administrative classification of India as a collection of disaggregated political units. The swelling tide of anti-British sentiment following the Second World War emboldened the Congress's defiance of British constitutionalism. The anti-colonial confrontation underwent an institutional transformation under Nehru's stint as the Congress

---

<sup>128</sup> Mountbatten Papers, File 76A, IOR, page 27-37.

<sup>129</sup> Mountbatten Papers, File 76A, IOR, page 37.

<sup>130</sup> Mansergh et al., Introduction to Volume XI, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI (London, 1982), page xv.

<sup>131</sup> Mansergh et al., International Status of the Indian Dominions, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 346.

president during 1936-37 annual sessions. Among other factors, his opposition to the concept of Federation rested on denying the princes any claim to separate identities, thus rejuvenating the All-India States Peoples Conference.<sup>132</sup> To claim a united India, its legal continuity from the British India had to be invented, and the British were drawn into a sustained wrangling as the Congress leadership under Nehru dismissed the safeguards to the states under both GOI Act, 1935 and later the Cabinet Mission Memorandum. 'Continuity' was a legal improvisation connecting Greater India's international expanse with the centralized apparatus of united India.

The focus was on defining India as an ancient or a timeless entity and the purpose of independence would be to place India back into this continuum. Nehru separated the 'timeless' from its (erstwhile widely held) 'sacred' element, secularizing and redirecting it to improvise his interpretations with the objective of legitimizing India as a politico-legal entity. India's eternal existence was put forward as a legal argument during the ToP negotiations. While existing scholarship rightly sees some of the narratives on extraterritorial outlook from a foreign policy perspective, they are restated as fundamental to the Indian political identity that Nehru was to accord them.

It is true that "in terms of geopolitical thinking, Nehru's writings on geopolitics; how India was the centre of geopolitical setting of Asia, and how other countries would not attack India – not because of some idealistic concerns but based on strict realpolitik – could be thought of as nothing spectacularly new, but the continuation of a certain way of thinking about foreign policy that had origins in colonial space".<sup>133</sup> Referring to texts that discuss the making of independent India's foreign office, Pallavi Raghavan states that "its antecedents placed it at the very heart of the operations of the British Empire".<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, Nehru retained several key policymakers (Girija Shankar Bajpai and KPS Menon to name a few) as well as the institutional setup which "had been heavily invested in the shaping of India's international positioning in the decades before the transfer of power".<sup>135</sup> While she rightly questions the "tendency to see 1947 as a critical date for a substantial shift in the foreign policy" and situates the institutional continuity in examining "the deliberations which went into its organizational structuring after

---

<sup>132</sup> After Mountbatten announced the date of British withdrawal, several princely states expressed their concerns, "when the time came...to decide whether they would sign the Instrument of Accession or not" and "what each wanted to know was whether he was being faithless to the long history, tradition and integrity of his state if he signed." C. Corfield, 'Some Thoughts on British Policy and the Indian States, 1935-47', in C.H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright, (eds.), *The Partition of India* (London, 1970), page 528.

<sup>133</sup> V. Thakur, 'The Colonial Origins of Indian Foreign Policymaking', *Economic & Political Weekly*, 49/32 (2014), page 59.

<sup>134</sup> P. Raghavan, 'Establishing the Ministry of External Affairs', in David Malone, C. Rajamohan and Srinath Raghavan, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2015), page 80.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

the transfer of power”, Raghavan’s research concludes with the examination of administrative continuity of the colonial institutional frameworks.<sup>136</sup>

Nehru’s understanding of inheritance was rather grounded in the history of empires as well as India’s civilizational values, wherein Britain was seen as appropriating a geography, which by design had exported its influence for centuries. And in essence, independence was pursued with the objective of redeeming the lost splendour, besides the emancipation of the people of India. While their political ideas and English discourses were framed in colonial epistemes, the thinkers from the late nationalist phase did not consider India’s influence over Asia as the monopoly of the British empire. For the nationalists, the British, in uniting India, simply reappropriated a mechanism that gave India its geopolitical character, and that any ruling empire/dynasty would naturally do so. Despite the presence of conservative thinkers within the Congress propagating a Hindu revivalist identity, the party leadership’s consensus on the idea of continuity allowed the acceptance of Muslim rulers in the annals of India’s past.<sup>137</sup> As CA Bayly observes, the “prevailing sentiment of 1945–8 was a widespread view amongst Congress leaders, intellectuals and the business community, in the words of S. Gopal, Nehru’s biographer, that while India should not be a “theocratic state” as such, it should nevertheless be “a state which symbolized the interests of the Hindu majority”...this sentimental and territorial coherence of the state provided the background to the deliberations of the Cabinet Mission of 1946.<sup>138</sup>

Such reading of India’s historical unity meant that as long as pre-colonial India was understood to have existed under a single ruling authority, the religious identities of the ruling dynasties did not matter. They only strengthened the nationalists’ claims in the favour of a united India. To quote Kaviraj:

Historically, Muslim rule did not counteract the ever-existing tendencies of the [natural recourse to unity]. Actually, Muslim rule furthered the process of unification implicit in earlier history...and [also] contributed significantly to the emergence of an inchoate consciousness of community among Indians.<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> By the 1920s ‘Greater India’ had attained popularity and was identified with an exclusive Hindu way of thinking. The historical construction of India’s past was influenced by the works of French Indologist Sylvain Levi and his students, chiefly Taraknath das, PC Bagchi and Kalidas Nag, who went on to establish the Greater India Society. On Levi and his disciples, Susan Bayly has discussed Levi’s research on Indian influence on Southeast Asian art and culture. However, she also notes how Levi’s ideas were misappropriated by his Indian students when they interpreted India’s influence on Southeast Asia as a unidirectional process, defining the recipient communities as passive. See S. Bayly, ‘Imagining ‘Greater India’: French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 38/3 (2004), page 703-44. Levi’s work rather highlighted the hybridization of these influences based on a selective acceptance of certain attributes.

<sup>138</sup> C. Bayly, ‘THE ENDS OF LIBERALISM’, page 611.

<sup>139</sup> Kaviraj, *Imaginary Institution*, page 261.

The “national responses to British imperial history defended the cultural worlds of ancient Hindu kingdoms, of Buddhist ecumenes, and of Islamic universalism” as Kris Manjapra highlights.<sup>140</sup> The forces of Hindu Nationalism and its Muslim counterpart would selectively appropriate these episodes, casting them into their respective territorial visions like Mahattvar Bharat (Greater India) or Muslim imaginings, consisting of Khilafatist ideas or the Aga Khan’s vision for South Asia.

But for Nehru, the Mauryas and the Mughals became indistinguishable from the perspective of the territorial expanse of India controlled by their respective empires.<sup>141</sup>

Nehru synthesized these ideas wherein he would accept Greater India (excluding its hypernationalistic facets furthered by Sylvain Lévi’s Indian disciples or the Hindu Mahasabha), while at the same time he acknowledged India’s past under Muslim dynasties, to give a historically unifying character to his call for Indian unity. Stolte and Fischer-Tine argue that Nehru:

...a rigorous proponent of secularism, was among its [Greater India’s] politically more moderate supporters. He cites Sylvain Lévi’s *l’Inde Civilisatrice* several times in his widely read books *Discovery of India* and *Glimpses of World History*. One might speculate that the attempts at Asian integration during Nehru’s term in office were inspired partly by the idea of Greater India.<sup>142</sup>

Greater India and/or Akhand Bharat, in its imagination gave a spatial dimension and chronology to itself, dominated Nehru’s arguments. If Greater India’s geopolitical expanse made it inseparable to imagine it without Asia, the belief in its eternity and unity was emphasized to delegitimize the federation schemes and its policy of autonomy to princely India.

Though anti-imperial in his outlook, Nehru could not hide his conservative thinking as he made a conscious effort to define India as a state-space to be retrieved from the empire. He called for claiming India in its entirety, where old treaties, boundaries and institutional affiliations remained unaltered to the extent of retaining their normative legitimacy, both within and beyond India’s borders. Thus, after a century of direct subjugation, the nationalist leaders worked for the transfer of power to acknowledge this historical continuum. Appropriation of the imperial apparatus (specifically in terms of India’s international identity) linked the ‘imagined India’ with the ‘politico-legal’ India of 1947.

The British conquest itself persuaded a generation of nationalist thinkers to conceive India in terms of an imperial entity in itself. The subjugation of the subcontinent’s geography to

---

<sup>140</sup> K. Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement* (Massachusetts, 2014), page 196.

<sup>141</sup> This attracted criticism from Hindu nationalist thinkers. Historian RC Majumdar in *The History and Culture of the Indian People* charged both Nehru and Gandhi of deliberately ignoring the differences among the Hindus and Muslims. See R. C. Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People: British paramountcy and Indian Renaissance* (Bombay, 1951), page 6.

<sup>142</sup> C. Stolte and H. Fischer-Tine., ‘Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54/1 (2012), page 87.

manoeuvre the Asian balance of power further undergirded the nationalists' faith in India's splendid imaginings wherein they saw the British empire's geopolitical prowess in Asia emanating from its ability to control Indian subcontinent and its peripheries. Thus, even though British rule was opposed, imperial India's ability to influence Asian geopolitics was subtly accepted as sanctifying the true character of ancient (or timeless) India.<sup>143</sup>

It was in this context that the demand for inheriting colonial India's international status assumed significance. The demand was considered legitimate to state-making as it could be used to project India's historical influence on its neighbourhood and the wider Asian sphere.

The role of the empire in instituting domestic unification and giving geopolitical weight to the Indian subcontinent is well-documented, and equally conspicuous were the nationalist narratives replete with criticism of these policies. Instead, India's quintessential position for the Raj was believed to be predestined in the course of India's historical trajectory. While the British control over India was opposed, India's sub-imperial identity as a regional power was accorded an indirect acceptance.

### **Decolonization and Reclaiming India's 'Geopolitical' Agency**

Throughout his writings, Nehru expressed an aversion to geopolitics, criticizing the use of geography for strategic objectives, a standard policy by imperial powers. But on the contrary, he was not oblivious to the role of geography – as India's geopolitical orbits figured in his thoughts since his early years in the freedom struggle – in the construction of India's historiographic identity and her neighbourhood. For instance, he considered Afghanistan to be an Indian territory till Nadir Shah raided it in the eighteenth century.<sup>144</sup> Afghanistan's independence was a consequence of the weakening of Indian unity; the latter began under Aurangzeb's reign. Also, "in no contingency [was] Afghanistan an important consideration" except for its "key position in case of a war between England and Russia", hence the "frantic attempts...to gain the king's favour" and [the] significance...given to King..in London".<sup>145</sup> If the "little state of Afghanistan is the factor of importance in a war, how much more is the good will

---

<sup>143</sup> Greater India's proponents were more specific in their accounts as they relied on archaeological discoveries to celebrate ancient India's influence. Kalidas Nag's book *Greater India* cites ancient inscriptions that depicted Indian Gods as peacemakers to differentiate India's peaceful internationalism from the imperialistic or exploitative internationalism of the Assyrians or Romans. Nag cited the Vedic texts, Upanishads, and the messages of Buddhism and Jainism as having universal and divine cosmopolitan messages. At a time when Rome, the "mother of European imperialism" was at war, Asoka preached peace, sending his emissaries to Syria, Egypt and even Macedonia. See K. Nag, *Greater India* (1926), page 15.

<sup>144</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 274.

<sup>145</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru Pre-independence Papers, Articles by Jawaharlal Nehru, 1 (23), PMML, page 19-20.

of the Indian people. If we realised the true position we would see that in our dealings with England today we occupy the dominant position and can dictate our terms".<sup>146</sup>

This realization put geopolitics at the heart of the Nehruvian idea of India. However, the quest was to redeem India in an imperial historiographic imaginary, as against a carry-over from the colony to a nation-state. The Raj, in conferring unity and geopolitics to India, had been subsumed in the historical journey described in the *The Discovery of India*. The demand for reclaiming India as a uniform space required an exposé of the duality of the British policy towards India. That is, whenever imperial goals in Asia had to be furthered, India was treated by the British as a unitary space, a subcontinental 'whole' that aided the imperialists with a geostrategic hold on the region. On the contrary, in response to the popular nationalist demands, British saw India as a socially fractured entity divided between Hindus and Muslims, Upper and Lower castes, and politically divided between the British India and princely states possessing their respective political identities. What the British offered to India in the garb of successive political reforms was a retraction from India's natural agency of a subcontinent.

For Nehru, India's geopolitical agency and cultural influence were the defining constants, while the administrative divisions were seen as anomalies in the natural course of history. As Nehru asserted, the British Empire was an artificial construct destined to dissolve, whereas India would endure. His conviction in India's strength was not a result of British dominance over the subcontinent but was grounded in India's inherent strength to influence and control Asia.<sup>147</sup> Earlier, Lord Curzon had also acknowledged India's unique position, that India [was] "indeed the only part of the British empire which is an empire".<sup>148</sup> India's claim to empire rested on a secure foundation of "her history, her geographical position, and her material strength".<sup>149</sup>

For Britain, the possession of India transformed its outlook towards the eastern hemisphere. The eastern question, Curzon argued, was no longer limited to securing holy places after the fall of the Byzantine empire but rather "directed by considerations of the security of our Indian possessions".<sup>150</sup> After all, it was only to secure India, Britain had to control the Suez Canal, colonize Aden, expand its presence in Eastern Africa and invade Afghanistan and Tibet to keep Russian off her frontiers. As much these measures aided to the defence of India, the

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Even when the British East India Company pacified the Mughals, it was a belief in India's imperial personality that dictated the company's dealings with the latter. As Stephen Cohen states, "the theory of Indian empire enabled the...company to retain the fiction that it ruled on the behalf of the Mughals". Later, the empire and its inheritance into a new state became part of the Nehruvian project on Indian history. See S. Cohen, 'India and the Region', in D. Malone, C.R. Mohan and S. Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, (Oxford, 2015), page 343.

<sup>148</sup> G. Curzon, *The Place of India in the Empire* (London, 1909), page 9-10.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

advantages offered by India's geostrategic position were equally instrumental in sustaining this balance of power.

The 'Raj' had to be reclaimed since it too operated on the organizing principles of previous empires. Nehru's perspectives on colonial laws attests to his clarity to this view. In a letter to BN Rau written in May 1951, Nehru called for repealing obsolete colonial era laws but "for foreign relations, [he stated he had] no intentions of passing any law at present".<sup>151</sup> Perhaps he felt the need to retain the illusion of the Raj's preponderance in notional terms through British India's treaties with its neighbours.

As much as Britain's use of India as a geopolitical springboard was despised by the Congress, it was perceived as an inevitable (and not coincidental) course of action. Much beyond exploiting India in terms of the 'Drain of Wealth' hypothesis, the subcontinent's colonization enabled the British to control its imperial possessions spreading across the Asia-Pacific region. Britain's conquest of India made it central to the imperial defence strategy throughout the expanse of the Indian Ocean Region and much of continental Asia. Given its geographical position vis-à-vis the larger Asian region and by the virtue of its vast manpower and reserves of raw materials, India had played an indispensable role in securing British influence in Africa, Middle East and East/Southeast Asia, in turn making its defence crucial for the empire's survival.<sup>152</sup> During the Second World War, India emerged as the "central bastion of the Middle eastern and South-East Asian fronts, a base, a storehouse and a recruiting ground".<sup>153</sup>

British India's external outlook branched out into three spheres; namely the northern landward focus on pre-empting the Russian threat from Central Asia, Tibet and China (famously termed as the 'Great Game'), "Burma, the Malay Peninsula and East Asia, and third, the maritime zone stretching from the Gulf to eastern Africa".<sup>154</sup> In his seminal work *Empire Project*, John Darwin describes that "in the world east of Suez, the indispensable element in British world power was India" with its "own sphere of influence" and by 1870s "India's role as the 'imperial strategic reserve' in the world east of Suez became the dominant element in British plans for its future".<sup>155</sup> Though London's writ reigned supreme, India's external policy

---

<sup>151</sup> BN Rau papers (1<sup>st</sup>), Correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru, PMML, page 35.

<sup>152</sup> Many overseas colonial possessions were administered from British India before being transferred to London's jurisdiction. In 1839, the Bombay Government captured Aden, which was governed by the Bombay presidency and later as Chief Commissioner's province (administered directly by the Viceroy of India's) till 1937 when it became a crown colony. The British Protectorate of Somaliland, established in 1884 was administered by the Resident of Aden, under the Bombay Government, and therefore under India Office till 1898. The Straits Settlements too were administered by the East India Company before being converted into a crown colony. See *British Somaliland and Sokotra* (London, 1920), page 24.

<sup>153</sup> R. Moore, *Escape from Empire* (Oxford, 1984), page 28.

<sup>154</sup> R. Blyth, *Empire of the Raj* (New York, 2003), page 2.

<sup>155</sup> J. Darwin, *The Empire Project* (Cambridge, 2009), page 9-10, 26.

was also driven by what historian Robert Blyth terms as forces of “British Indian sub-imperialism”, giving colonial India a distinct geopolitical identity.<sup>156</sup> Colonial India played a stabilizing role in the Asia-Pacific, where its armies could be swiftly dispatched to Aden, Zanzibar, or to Malaya in the east. The role was successfully tested during the First World War, where the “Indian army’s main effort was focused on the Middle East and East Africa, and India’s military involvement in the erstwhile Ottoman territories continued in the post-war period” and “it seemed a foregone conclusion that India should secure its spheres of influence” when the next war struck.<sup>157</sup> Even as a colonial entity, India had acquired a geopolitical weight of its own. By the virtue of the geopolitical expanse the Indian peninsula oversaw and the scale of human and economic resources it possessed, India was again naturally pulled into the two world wars. Here, even if the British divided colonial India into different administrative spheres, it still acquired a unitary character when exerting geopolitical influence.

Collectively, the garrisons of the NWFP and Balochistan, the direct control over frontiers overlooking Tibet and Central Asia/Xinjiang, the deployment of Royal Indian Marine divisions in Bombay and Calcutta also encouraged the imagination of India as a unitary space in this context.

It is crucial that we understand the intellectual understanding and articulation of colonialism by nationalists. While the British deployed their scientific/industrial superiority and their ideas of historical progress to subjugate India and redefine it from the perspective of the imperial calculus, their efforts at institutionalizing India’s subordinate identity still left her with an unaltered/inviolable agency, that revolved around making the subcontinent central to controlling Asia. Redemption of this agency (that is of controlling India to strengthen control over Asia) was key to reviving its role in Asia and most importantly needed a centralized state to reassert itself. Anti-imperialism, in this context was articulated as something radically different from usual political or socio-economic rhetoric that dominated the nationalist discourse. Fundamentally, it was realised that the British control over the subcontinental geography became the basis of its control over Asia. Within the later nationalist imagination, the empire was thus a product of an expansionist ideology that relied on misappropriation of this geopolitical agency. A conscious effort was made to differentiate between imperial expansionism and the ‘natural’, ‘benign’ and ‘inclusive’ geopolitical agency of the subcontinent’s geography that had given India a regional preponderance whenever controlled by the empires of the past. Thus, decolonization did not mean that independent India would abandon this agency (no matter however challenging it would be to reframe regional influence

---

<sup>156</sup> Blyth, *Empire*, page 2.

<sup>157</sup> S. Raghavan, *India’s War* (New York, 2016), page 9.

in the language of peace) but rather a search for a means to extract/abstract it from the imperial 'contamination'.

The ability of subcontinental geography and its resources to naturally thrust India's geopolitical influence onto the broader regional horizon was theorized as an axiomatic aspect of Indian identity predating the British, and not a product of imperial designs. Since the quest for Asian leadership was a desired objective for Nehru, the idea of India had foreign policy and an element of geopolitics as its basis.

As the nationalist leaders were to argue later, it was the British administration whose acknowledgement of this agency that gave India its unitary legal personality, a process that had its formal inception in India's representation in the League of Nations.<sup>158</sup> A combination of support from the princes, large-scale recruitments in the British Indian Army and other logistical support structures during the First World War won India its membership of the League of Nations. Interestingly, the then Secretary of State Edwin Montagu recognized the potential threat this decision posed to the empire. Itty Abraham notes that "by virtue of giving India tacit recognition as an entity with an international legal presence, the British government had put "India insofar as international affairs are concerned on a basis wholly inconsistent with the position of a subordinate country".<sup>159</sup> On India's membership, Montagu anticipated that India's emergence as an international actor heralded a problematic development as it could "compel Britain to grant it internal self-determination".<sup>160</sup> Despite princely contributions to the war efforts, India was still represented as a unitary entity and its international legal personality had predated its formal independence. These facts (or we could say interpretations) were to be drawn upon later by the nationalist leadership to justify British India's absolute control over the princely states (meaning that they had no legal basis as sovereign entities).

However, the tightrope walk for Nehru was in extracting (and yet not disconnecting) independent India out of imperial policies and ideograms that characterised colonial India's frontier and neighbourhood policy, especially in the troop deployments by the Indian Army across Asia. The tension lay in modern geopolitics/territoriality being imperial constructs (thus despised by Nehru), Asia's descent into the Cold War and Nehru's frantic attempts to refashion this wilful inheritance to preserve its space in Asia, while simultaneously attempting to de-link India from its colonial past.

---

<sup>158</sup> Bal Gangadhar Tilak's memorandum to George Clemenceau, written for the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, is worth mentioning here. Tilak's demand for India's right to self-determination was based on his belief that India "had an acute sense that its character as a country, the nature of its internal regime would serve to make it an area of great power agreement". In other words, Tilak implicitly tied unity with foreign policy. See P.B. Mehta, 'Still Under Nehru's Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India', *India Review*. 8/3 (2009), page 213.

<sup>159</sup> Abraham, *How India*, page 53.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

The continuity theory, despite its flawed premise remains the sole basis on which the Indian leadership negotiated unity as the basis of its sovereignty (or in the conventional political jargon, the demand for a centralized India and continuity in her international legal status).

### **International Law: International Imaginings, Limitations and its Violation**

The importance of international law remains a widely discussed subject in the study of both India's legal personality and India's foreign policy. Its exploration in scholarly works is tilted more towards the study of India's border disputes with Pakistan and China or its engagement with the United Nations or international organizations.<sup>161</sup> Its relationship with the historiographic idea of India shall be retraced to discuss how Congress leadership interpreted international law to make its case for a united India based on her transnational character. This was preceded by defining India's historical journey through the stories of large empires. In giving India back to the natives, the recognition of India's legal status as a continuing entity would also attest to the existence of unity, the Congress leadership believed.

The growing awareness of the legalities associated with India's international identity could help us understand the role of an imagined history in redefining the legal foundations of a state. Further, it sheds light on independent India's multifaceted approach where imperial inheritance, anti-colonial solidarity and NAM co-existed (not as paradoxes but complementing each other) as indelible attributes of the Nehruvian statecraft. However, such thinking would be characterized with the limitations of its own making in light of exogenous developments, as the following chapters will discuss.

Antony Anghie argues that "it was through the use of international law itself that the new states sought to further their own interests and to redeem the discipline from its colonial past".<sup>162</sup> This chapter discusses the nationalist leadership's interpretations of the international law to subsume and succeed British India. For one, they were unanimous in the belief that international law, despite being a creation of the European powers contained ideals of justice and egalitarianism, but more importantly offered the scope to improvise India's definition of its political identity, aided by historical insights.<sup>163</sup>

The belief in international law was only invoked in its violation by the very powers that brought it into existence. Writing in 1938, Nehru had described the prevailing situation as an

---

<sup>161</sup> WPS Sidhu, Regional Peace and Security, in S. Chesterman, H. Owada and B. Saul (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Law in Asia and the Pacific* (Oxford, 2019), page 102.

<sup>162</sup> A. Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge and New York, 2004), page 202.

<sup>163</sup> India's membership to the League of Nations is a prominent example of one such 'theoretical' conviction even on part of the non-moderate faction within the congress. Even though its pliability by select powers and its refusal to check imperial expansionism became a subject of criticism, the League, in theory, was considered as an ideal platform in the quest for global peace and equitable representation.

“abnormal world, full of wars and aggression. International Law has ceased to be, treaties and undertakings have no value, gangsterism prevails unabashed among the nations”.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, in a letter to the editor of Manchester Times written during the beginning of World War II, Nehru noted the then Prime Minister Chamberlain’s attitude towards Hitler, which was devoid of any talk of “high principles...human rights and justice, of international law and morality...”.<sup>165</sup>

On the issue of Indian freedom, the nationalists also took the opportunity to interpret international law separately from its European definition. This opened up space for reinterpretations, addressing the dual purpose of defining the structure of independence as well as basing independent India’s outreach to the world through an international law driven order. The Independence Act provided the congress with an opportunity to interpret the legality of independence from a retrospective (that too for a constructed past) position, and in subservience to a politico-cultural idea which detached international law itself from its Eurocentric moorings.<sup>166</sup>

### **United India, Paramountcy and the Monopoly of international identity**

For the Congress leadership, the Muslim League’s demands for provincial autonomy and the British definition of paramountcy were long perceived as threats to India’s Unity. The response to Muslim demands (as embodied in the Delhi Proposals of 1927) in the Nehru Report of 1928 left no doubt about the Congress leadership’s discomfort with full provincial status to Muslim majority provinces, even if the Muslims offered to relinquish separate electorates. Nehru subsequently turned to the Government of India, Act, 1935, which too, he felt threatened India’s natural unity in its categorization of provinces and princely states as separate categories. Writing a summary for KT Shah’s book *Federal Structure*, Nehru (who was part of a three-member editorial team associated with the book) criticised the Government of India Act, stating that:

The Unity of India must be maintained by the constitution. This unity, both geographical and cultural, is a patent fact of Indian History...the federation proposed under the Government of India Act, 1935, under which there is no uniformity and an unnatural alliance is sought to be made between feudal states and...more or less democratic provinces. A large amount of uniformity is essential and we should try to

---

<sup>164</sup> J. Nehru, ‘The Unity of India’, *Foreign Affairs* 16/2 (1938) page 242.

<sup>165</sup> Nehru, *Collected Writings*, page 291.

<sup>166</sup> Bimal Patel draws parallels with Congress’s line of argument while arguing that the practices guaranteed under modern-day international law (like inter-kingdom relationships, arbitration) were carried out even in the olden days with greater sincerity. He states that “While in Europe, there were Greeks, in Asia; it was India, which showed the world how sovereign states could live in mutual cooperation with each other like a single community” See B. Patel, *The State Practice of India and the Development of International Law* (Leiden, 2016), page 15.

aim at reworking all distinction between what is called British India today and Indian India or the States".<sup>167</sup>

This viewpoint, expressed in the aftermath of the promulgation of the GOI Act is identified with Congress's institutional opposition to British efforts towards granting self-government to Indians. Unity, being a "patent fact of Indian history" was a product of and not limited to nationalist leadership's view that "India was formed by a cultural process which went back into immemorial antiquity" with its ideational roots extending to the international sphere.<sup>168</sup>

The concept of unity perhaps remains one of the toughest bargaining points between the British and the Nehru-led camp of the nationalist leadership. Until the eve of independence, the exact legal future of princely India and provinces remained ambiguous, despite the British acknowledgement of the princes' loyalty and support throughout the world wars and in checking the spread of nationalist ideas. The princely support to Britain in the second world was borne out of the expectation to preserve their legitimacy and privileges in the event of imperial withdrawal.

The successive political reforms during the inter-war years failed to bring any concrete steps towards integrating these territorial spaces on administrative lines, despite the 1935 Act making provisions for their political participation (which was intended to prevent the Congress from dominating the legislative spaces).<sup>169</sup> The plethora of options offered by the British on the future status of both princely states and provinces have to be noted since they prove that the final nation-state form taken by India and Pakistan was neither a natural outcome of the ToP negotiations nor that of a Westphalian socialization that postwar world is said to have seamlessly embraced. Since the British considered both popular parties and the princes as equal stakeholders in any future political settlement, the rivalry between the Congress, League and the princes ruled out any form of imposition of modular statehood inspired by Euro-American ideas. For the British, the multiplicity of stakeholders of India could only manifest in a complex solution like that proposed by the Cabinet Mission, whose members went ahead with their proposals only when the disagreements between the Congress and Muslim turned out to be inconclusive. Even the Union structure proposed by the British in the post-war era deviated from the Westphalian model as it was modelled on securing representation through autonomous structures for the Muslims and the states, and a compromised unity seemed achievable if sovereignty was kept diffuse among these stakeholders. This was also pointed out in the Congress President's letter to Lord Pethick Lawrence on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1946 that

---

<sup>167</sup> An Economist, Lawyer and later a member of the Constituent Assembly, KT Shah was known for his important legal interventions related to socialism, secularism and parity in centre-state relationship. See K. Shah, *Federal Structure* (Bombay, 1937), page 512.

<sup>168</sup> Kaviraj, *Imaginary Institution*, page 121.

<sup>169</sup> The 1935 Act preserved the autonomy of the political units, provinces and states that constituted India, and freeing India under the Act's unaltered provisions would only institutionalise its disunity.

questioned the logic of provincial groupings “more so on religious basis” since a “sub-federation within the Federal Union Would Weaken the Federal Centre”.<sup>170</sup>

Thus, the Cabinet Mission proposals embodied the duality between preserving unity and preserving the right of the Indian Muslims to form their governments. In contrast, it was the leaderships of the two parties that quarrelled over their respective ideas of sovereignty. As it is known, for the Muslim League, an ideal state represented sovereignty over the Muslim majority northeastern and northwestern provinces while for Nehru, nothing less than sovereignty over the entire subcontinent (subsuming the princely states) seemed acceptable.

The Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12th May, 1946 was unambiguous in its position on the states, stating that the “British Government could not and will not in any circumstances transfer paramountcy to the Indian Government”.<sup>171</sup> An enclosure - drafted under Conrad Corfield’s (Political Advisor to the Crown Representative and a known sympathiser of the princes) supervision – shared during Mountbatten’s meetings with the Indian leaders further proposed the External Affairs Department to deal with states opting for independence since the Political Department (and associated machinery consisting of Political Agents/Residents) would cease to exist with the Lapse of Paramountcy.<sup>172</sup> As per the British interpretation, the end of paramountcy meant that the rights surrendered to the paramount power by the states would return to them and they would be free to decide their terms of relationship with the successor governments.

Nehru, in a June 1947 speech at the All-India Congress Committee meet, argued that there was “a certain inherent Paramountcy in the Government of India which cannot lapse”.<sup>173</sup> The unity achieved under imperial subjugation was interpreted as a phenomenon eternal to Indian history, thus denying the princely states any claims to paramountcy. While the administrative complexities emerging out of the state’s individual relations with the Political Department were problematic, the international aspect of paramountcy was more existential. As Nehru was to observe:

What were the tests of sovereignty [with reference to the Princely States]? One was the capacity for International Relations. The States had no such capacity. Another was the capacity for declaring war. The States had no such capacity”. [For him] it [was] quite inconceivable that a state can become independent in the legal sense of the term, which means having external relations and the power to

---

<sup>170</sup> Letter from the President of the Congress to Lord Pethick-Lawrence dated 28th April 1946, *Papers Relating to the Cabinet Mission to India 1946* (Delhi, 1946), page 10.

<sup>171</sup> Mansergh et al, Sir C. Corfield to Mr I. D. Scott (Enclosure no. 2), *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 274.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 63. This ‘inherent’ paramountcy, which otherwise has questionable historical and legal precedents, has conceptual parallels with the research’s argument on India’s ‘inviolable agency’.

declare war or peace...If any foreign power encouraged such independence of a State this can only be considered as an unfriendly act by the Indian Union.<sup>174</sup>

Just because the states were administratively dealt with by the Crown and the rest of India was under the British Indian government did not deny India its rightful unified personality. In a discussion with Mountbatten, Nehru pointed out that until the GOI Act “came into operation, [the Political Department] worked under the Governor-General-in-Council” and the functions it “formerly exercised in relations to the States were separated and allotted to the Crown Representative” only following the Act’s promulgation.<sup>175</sup>

Paramountcy, as C. Rajagopalachari argued “came into being as a fact and not by agreement, and on Britain’s withdrawal the successor authorities must inherit the fact along with the rest of the context.”<sup>176</sup> Rajaji charged that:

The crown did not act in an abstract capacity or in the capacity of the sovereign of England. The Governor-General acted with reference fully and exclusively to the governance of India....Under the earlier Government of India Acts the existence of political relations between the Executive Government of British India and the Indian states was clearly contemplated and the government of India was fully empowered to transact business with the Indian States. [Therefore] the British withdrawal cannot suddenly become the basis for a status they had not in history.<sup>177</sup>

Corroborating with Nehru, Rajaji denied the states as having any international status, making it implicit that colonial India, in the exercise of its foreign policy was one, despite the assurance from princes that they could not have gone against the British in their external dealings.<sup>178</sup>

Another interesting observation by Rajaji and jurist Alladi Krishnaswamy Iyer was the simultaneous announcement of withdrawal from British India and the end of paramountcy. In his letter to Mountbatten dated 9 June 1947, Nehru attached Iyer’s observations on paramountcy and the states. That the British themselves refused to see these as separate announcements also alluded to the fact that these classifications were artificial, rather mischievous given the prevailing circumstances, Iyer noted. Therefore, the Crown being indivisible in abstract theory (and not having different jurisdictions as the portrayal of British India and the states as independent entities), the inheritance of power of the Crown by the new Government of India would naturally pass on the jurisdiction of the states to the government succeeding British India.<sup>179</sup> To further quash these claims, Aiyar cited the Butler Committee Report of 1927, which denied the existence of independent states in accordance

---

<sup>174</sup> Mansergh et al., Minutes of Viceroy’s Eighteenth Miscellaneous Meeting, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 323. Also see Pandit Nehru to Lord Ismay, page 510.

<sup>175</sup> Mansergh et al., Minutes of Viceroy’s Eighteenth Miscellaneous Meeting, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 320.

<sup>176</sup> Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 63.

<sup>177</sup> Mansergh et al., Mr Rajagopalachariar to Sir S. Cripps, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 196.

<sup>178</sup> Mansergh et al., Mr Rajagopalachariar to Sir S. Cripps, page 197.

<sup>179</sup> Mansergh et al., Pandit Nehru to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma (Enclosure no. 1), *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 211.

with the rules of international law before the British arrived.<sup>180</sup> The report (as quoted by Aiyar) stated “None of the States even [ever] held international status. Nearly all of them were subordinates or tributary to the Mughal Empire, the Mahratta Supremacy or the Sikh kingdom and dependent on them.”<sup>181</sup>

For Nehru, it was critical to delegitimize princely claims to an independent history in order to deny them an independent identity. The absorption of princely states into the Indian Union, the emphasis on successor status and the adoption of a quasi-federal polity were attributed to India’s historical international identity. This is not to discredit the domestic determinants of nation-building but rather Nehru’s conscious efforts at circumventing them. United India found its most coherent defence in an ideal foreign policy that once took old empires and civilizational influences far beyond her borders.<sup>182</sup>

The first step necessitated the reclamation of paramountcy by the successor state, since categorization of two Indias was essentially based on political expediency, that is direct annexation of British Indian territory and indirect control over the States and nothing else.<sup>183</sup> As the *Report on the Indian States Committee* acknowledged that it was “impossible to define paramountcy”, it too could not define the paramountcy in essence, and in absence of any clear definition stated that “Paramountcy must remain paramount”.<sup>184</sup>

Paramountcy, an invention of the East India Company, was not rejected by nationalists as a concept, as they understood India as the natural successor to all of Britain’s directly and indirectly administered territories in the subcontinent. Nehru’s construction of India’s past portrayed it as the sole paramount power exercising loose control over its feudatories, hence,

---

<sup>180</sup> It was also known as the Report of the Indian States Committee, which was commissioned by Viceroy Lord Irwin and presented in the Parliament in 1929. The report is famously known for its ambiguity in defining Paramountcy. Rather than addressing the states’ anxieties, as they expected acknowledgement and legal safeguards regarding their claims of sovereignty, the Committee’s report kept the definition open-ended. It defined Paramountcy as a “living, growing relationship shaped by circumstances and policy, resting...on a mixture of history, theory and modern fact”. See Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 25. Such ambiguities would later be exploited by the nationalist leadership. However, if not a proper definition, its functionality was delineated in a negative affirmation that Paramountcy could not be transferred without the agreement of the states, thus giving them a Veto in the 1935 Act, as Purushotham describes.

<sup>181</sup> Mansergh et al., Pandit Nehru to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma (Enclosure no.1), page 212.

<sup>182</sup> Sunil Purushotham aptly captures the problem faced by Nehru. The challenge at “the onset of decolonization, however, was an opportunity for the East to reclaim the spirit and Asia’s central place in world history. For Nehru, the problem was not that India had no history proper, but rather that it had too much history”. See S. Purushotham, ‘History and Temporal Sovereignty in the Thought of Jawaharlal Nehru’ in D. Edelstein and N. Wheatley (eds), *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History* (Chicago, 2020), page 342. The other dimension of this challenge, it is argued, is also that it was impossible to justify the Indian unity through regional historical accounts in the presence of multiple states and ethnolinguistic identities with many of them having their respective visions of sovereignty.

<sup>183</sup> *White Paper on Indian States* (New Delhi, 1948), page 7.

<sup>184</sup> *Report of the Indian States Committee* (London, 1921), page 31. The White Paper on Indian States also highlighted this point to nullify British claims. See *White Paper on Indian States*, page 23.

the “sole and unquestionable authority of the British as the paramount power [was] traceable to this source”.<sup>185</sup> The correspondence of Conrad Corfield with senior officials expresses alarming concerns over the lengthy legal interpretations by Nehru, Rajaji and Aiyar, as the ToP records substantiate.<sup>186</sup>

The AISPC in its resolutions of June 1947 rejected the British Government’s 3rd June Statement and threatened that attempts to impose “any such conception would meet with fantastic results and India would be reduced to state of anarchy”.<sup>187</sup> The resolution repeated the historiographic interpretations put forward by Nehru that “none of the States were completely independent at the time of the advent of the British” but rather subordinate to the Mughals, Mahratta or the Sikhs.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, the British administration risked going against “history and tradition [and] law...”.<sup>189</sup> Historically, the East India Company officially assumed control of India from the Mughals, and in 1858, following the mutiny, it transferred authority to the British Crown, thereby upholding the continuity of governance.

Thus, the end of paramountcy did not mean independence and the All-India Congress Committee resolution of 15th June 1947 termed such a stance as the “denial of the course of Indian History”, and “the facts of geography cannot be ignored and the dominant power in India will necessarily exercise certain control over any State which does not choose to come into the Union”.<sup>190</sup> In a note to Ismay, Nehru stated that the “the facts of geography, as paramount as Paramountcy itself”, made it necessary to eliminate any “voids” emerging out of the ambiguous political status of the states.<sup>191</sup> India’s unity, which came at the cost of princely autonomy, was the first step in reclaiming India as an influential actor in the international sphere.

The potential for any legal improvisations in favour of the states was constrained, as Nehru positioned violence as a counterpoint in this negotiation spectrum. Nehru stands out as a distinctive thinker in his opposition to the princes through both constitutional means and his threat of ‘legitimate’ violence. In his presidential address at the Lahore Congress in 1929,

---

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Durga Das, in his book *India: From Nehru to Curzon and After* shared his correspondence with VP Menon and officials from the pro-India princely who shared details on the nexus between Corfield and the princes. While Mountbatten and Nehru and Sardar Patel worked on amicable terms, Menon was worried about Mountbatten’s soft attitude towards the Nizam of Hyderabad and the “Corfield-Bhopal move to weaken India”. See D. Das, *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York, 1970), page 241.

<sup>187</sup> Mansergh et al., (2) Position of Indian States in regard to the British Government’s Statement of 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1947, Resolutions (2) and (3) passed by the Standing Committee of the All India States’ People’s Conference at its meetings held in New Delhi on 11 and 12 June 1947, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 283.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Mansergh et al., Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee on the States, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 400. Also see Pandit Nehru to Lord Ismay, page 510.

<sup>191</sup> Mansergh et al., Pandit Nehru to Ismay, page 512.

Nehru had candidly stated, "I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican, and I do not believe in kings or princes".<sup>192</sup> He asserted that the "the only people who have the right to determine the future of the States must be the people of these States".<sup>193</sup> The Congress, in the same year adopted the Purna Swaraj resolution demanding complete independence. The Congress Socialist Party, formed in 1934 with Nehru's support, called for the "elimination of princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters without compensation" and for the "redistribution of land to peasants".<sup>194</sup>

The interpretation of legal relationship between the empire and Indian states, given its centrality to the picturization of India was one such issue where Nehru readily showed proclivity towards violence. He openly threatened with inciting the state subjects against the princes if the latter were to choose an alternative path other than accession to independent India.<sup>195</sup> His own attempts at threatening the British administration, and its institutionalization through the deployment of AISPC (as early in the 1930s) also defined the limits of his reliance on the legal route on the subject matter. Later, Corfield recalled Nehru's obsession with paramountcy and princely claims, particularly his exaggerated feeling of "India disintegrating, if the Rulers had *technical* independence when paramountcy lapsed".<sup>196</sup>

Therefore, on questions innate to India's identity, legality was to be favourable only to the extent it would peacefully reconstruct independent India as contiguous and centralised entity. Mountbatten took note of an acrimonious debate between Nehru and the Political Secretary over the control of states, and "a stage was being reached at which very serious consequences were threatened".<sup>197</sup> Nehru threatened Mountbatten with a rebellion if paramountcy was to return back to the states.<sup>198</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (Massachusetts, 1976), page 135.

<sup>193</sup> U. Phadnis, *Towards the Integration of Indian States 1919-1947* (New York, 1968), page 90.

<sup>194</sup> See Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 151.

<sup>195</sup> It should be recalled that till the 1920s, while Gandhi remained the sole steering force of the nationalist struggle, the congress followed a policy of "non-interference in the states' affairs". At best, requests were made to the States to establish responsible governments to empower their respective subjects. See Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 30.

<sup>196</sup> Corfield recalls how the Political Department, which was the Crown Representative's link with the princely States, was over-ruled with Mountbatten negotiating directly with the princes on Nehru's behest. The Cabinet Mission's assurances on States' freedoms to negotiate their future relationship with the two dominions were disregarded by Nehru and they were pressured to accede before the lapse of paramountcy on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, 1947. C. Corfield, *The Princely India I knew* (Madras, 1975). page 156-8.

<sup>197</sup> Mansergh et al., Minutes of Viceroy's Eighteenth Miscellaneous Meeting, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 322.

<sup>198</sup> The Congress's principled stance on the people of the states as the sovereign decision makers (hence the threat to indulge in violence if the princes were to stay on) worked practically in the case of most of the princely states, and given the events in the postwar situation, this strategy was expected to succeed. The case with Kashmir would characterize this problem where Nehru's erstwhile ally Sheikh Abdullah, earlier supported by the Congress in opposition to the ruler would later turn against Nehru. This would drive Nehru's Kashmir policy after independence.

## Transfer of Power: Codifying Inheritance and Emergence of Pakistan

The Congress viewpoint on the draft Indian independence bill remained fixated on a legal status based on absolute central authority over the territory. After changing the draft bill from its original title of Indian Dominions Bill to Indian Independence Bill, the Congress also demanded two different bills, with “the first creating the Dominion of India to consist of the whole of existing India excluding the Pakistan provinces and such of the contiguous states as might accede to Pakistan”.<sup>199</sup> The objective of proposing two separate bills was to “establish...that the new Dominion of India would continue the international personality of existing India”.<sup>200</sup> While the demand for two separate bills was rejected citing the paucity of time, it was clarified by Mountbatten to have been met in Clause 2 (sub clause 1) of the Indian Independence Bill. The Congress succeeded in defining Pakistan as a secessionist state, thus nullifying Jinnah’s claims, according to which India and Pakistan were supposed to be two new states. In a personal report written shortly after announcing Partition, Mountbatten mentioned Nehru’s attempts to formalize future Pakistan’s secessionist identity wherein he mentioned that “Pakistan would [not] be allowed to remain within the Commonwealth...if Hindustan wished to withdraw”, despite being assured that it was not with His Majesty’s Government to control the Commonwealth and that the states were free to decide their future course of action.<sup>201</sup> He further recorded how “Jinnah was at pains to explain that both states would be independent and equal in every way” but Nehru insisted for a different approach, where “India was continuing in every way the same” and the seceding “dissident Provinces...must not interrupt the work of the Government of India or its foreign policy...”.<sup>202</sup> In a staff meeting at the Viceroy’s House, Mountbatten took note of Nehru’s emphasis “that the only basis on which he would ever agree to the formation of Pakistan was that, by means of a variation of the Cabinet Mission Plan, certain Provinces had been allowed to opt out”, and that “Nehru had always stressed the continuity of India as such”.<sup>203</sup>

Continuity, while anointing India as the successor state in her international personality, would thus be simultaneously weaponised to exterminate the princes’ identities. The first

---

<sup>199</sup> L. Carter, *Mountbatten's Report on the Last Viceroyalty* (New Delhi, 2003), page 201.

<sup>200</sup> Carter, *Mountbatten's Report*, page 202.

<sup>201</sup> Mansergh et al., Viceroy's Personal Report No. 8, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 162. Later, when India declared itself as a republic as against the principles of the Commonwealth, the Pakistan government interpreted it as an existential threat. Sharing his thoughts with British HC Graffety-Smith, Liaqat Ali Khan felt that since the Commonwealth has diminished its status in order to placate India, it would not hesitate in sacrificing Pakistan to India, “were this demanded by Delhi”. See Outward Telegram, From UKCOM Karachi to CRO, March 18<sup>th</sup> 1948, Graffety-Smith Papers, Middle-Eastern Archives Centre, S9, 1/1, page 11.

<sup>202</sup> Mansergh et al., Viceroy's Personal Report No. 8, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 164.

<sup>203</sup> Mansergh et al., Minutes of Viceroy's Forty First Staff Meeting, Items 1-2, 4-5, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 238.

White Paper on Indian States (published by the Ministry of States in 1948) stressed on the urgency of reclaiming paramountcy in order to legitimize India's continuity as a united state in both political and the legal sense.

Also, given the vulnerabilities (since Nehru and Mountbatten believed Pakistan would remain weak) that would naturally come to Pakistan with partition, its international identity could at least be tied to India in the legal-historical sense. Pakistan, thus emerged from the Indian Independence Act, having been denied its separate identity since it was felt that to define the two nations through two different bills would amount to extinguishing the state of India.<sup>204</sup> Similar to the insistence on the legal position of the states, the Congress refused to negotiate on the matter of allowing Pakistan to have a separate legal identity, as Mountbatten had feared that "far greater difficulties" lay ahead if their [Congress's] contention was not accepted.<sup>205</sup>

Conscious of its demand for a successor identity, the Congress was categorical in ensuring India being named as India and not only Hindustan, the latter name being the original proposal floated from the British side.<sup>206</sup> Nehru's stubbornness finds corroboration even in George Abell's letter to Turnbull (dated 5th June, 1947) which stated that "Nehru holds strongly that Hindustan will succeed to India's position as an entity in international affairs and will be represented automatically at U.N.O.", even though he believed the official view to be that "two new states [would] be created and neither of them [could] claim to be India".<sup>207</sup> In another telegram to Mountbatten (dated 9th June, 1947), he enquired for greater clarity on the nature of the transfer, expressing his preference for defining post partition India as a "continuing entity from which certain parts have seceded", insisting to see the proposed legislation before it went to the British Parliament.<sup>208</sup> Collectively, these provisions also permitted India to inherit its United Nations membership from British India.<sup>209</sup> On the other hand, Pakistan had to separately apply for the membership. The clarity and accompanying consensus on part of Nehru and his colleagues contrasted with Muslim League leadership's divided stance. As stated above, Jinnah had objected to Nehru's arguments on India's international identity but

---

<sup>204</sup> Mansergh et al., Note by Mr Krishna Menon, Mr Krishna Menon to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 392.

<sup>205</sup> Mansergh et al., International Status of the Indian Dominions, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 346.

<sup>206</sup> On the other hand, Nehru's compatriot Kwame Nkrumah would extend decolonization to renaming his homeland as Ghana.

<sup>207</sup> Mansergh et al., Mr. Abell to Mr. Turnbull, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 144.

<sup>208</sup> Mansergh et al., Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to the Earl of Listowel, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 220.

<sup>209</sup> As RP Anand notes, India's membership in the UN (predating its independence) flowed from India's membership in the League of Nations. India was a "signatory to the Declaration of the wartime coalition of the 'United Nations' of 1 January 1942, in Washington, DC". See RP Anand, *The Formation of International Organizations and India: A Historical Study*, *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 23/1 (2010), page 17.

Liaqat Ali Khan “did not wish to ‘waste time arguing whether Hindustan should take the title of India or inherit the membership of U.N.O.” as he remained preoccupied with the question of equitable distribution of assets and liabilities, thus prioritizing economic security over legal terminologies.<sup>210</sup> As Mountbatten observed, for the Congress, the “question of international status of Hindustan is one of prestige and the League’s approach to the problem is one of practical politics”.<sup>211</sup> Mountbatten also highlighted that, similar to Pakistan’s concerns about the division of assets, addressing the Congress leadership’s apprehensions about inheritance was crucial and warned that a “wrong approach to this issue [would] cause a complete breakdown...”.<sup>212</sup>

The India Burma Committee of the Cabinet inadvertently alluded to Nehru’s agenda of reinterpreting the Transfer as inheritance. The report, initialled by the last Secretary of State Lord Listowel stated that the adoption of Hindustan as the entity taking the personality of India involves...[that] Hindustan succeeds to all property outside India now owned by the Governor General of India in Council such as the India House in London and the Legation buildings in Kabul and Kathmandu...”.<sup>213</sup> Some British officials - it appears from looking into the proceedings - viewed Nehru’s emphasis on inheritance only from the view of simply inheriting British India’s properties/offices outside India, rather than his philosophy and the historiographic reasons for emphasising continuity. The Cabinet Committee’s larger considerations revolved around identifying the extent to which Pakistan would have a “share of the property...owned by the Government of India for the purposes of foreign affairs”, that needed settlement between the two states.<sup>214</sup>

### **‘Indianizing’ Lakshadweep (Laccadive) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

A crucial offshoot of the nationalists’ adherence to inheritance was to do with the retention of the Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, that remotely fared in nationalist spatial or popular imaginations but would be demanded as appendages of inheritance. Although this affair constitutes a brief yet important debate among the Congress, the League, the British military strategists and British bureaucracy, revisiting it will only support this research’s hypothesis, that the idea of India was as much international, as it was codified in its successor

---

<sup>210</sup> Mansergh et al., Introduction to Volume XI, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page xv.

<sup>211</sup> Mountbatten Papers, 76A, IOR, page 27.

<sup>212</sup> Mountbatten Papers, 76A, IOR, page 28.

<sup>213</sup> Mansergh et al., International Status of the Indian Dominions: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 348.

<sup>214</sup> Mansergh et al., Minute 2: International Status of the Indian Dominions Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to the Earl of Listowel, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 480-81.

identity. Despite Lakshadweep being home to a Muslim majority population (and thus claimed by Pakistan), the Islands neatly fitted into India's legal stand on its inheritor status.<sup>215</sup>

Given their respective location to the west and east of the Indian peninsula, both islands were initially proposed to be kept under British control if its post-war influence in the Asia-Pacific region was to be sustained without the help of the independent states that emerged in the Asian landscape after 1945.<sup>216</sup> Before departing for India, Mountbatten was apprised by Chiefs of Staff on the “great importance...they attached to these [Andaman and Nicobar] Islands”, along with the Laccadive Islands.<sup>217</sup> The Laccadive or the Lakshadweep Islands were deemed crucial “from the air point of view” by the Joint Planning Staff in case defence facilities could not be retained in the independent India.<sup>218</sup>

In fact, to Mountbatten's surprise the Draft Independence Bill had even stated that the Islands would cease to be part of India after 15th August.<sup>219</sup> The Joint Planning staff and Chiefs of Staff Committee, respectively, expressed their apprehensions that without Laccadive and Andamans, “communication to the Far East would be entirely dependent on the continued and full-cooperation of the Indian authorities”.<sup>220</sup> The British Minister of Defence also highlighted the “vital importance” of the Andamans in “the scheme of Commonwealth Defence as an essential link in our air communications with the Far East”.<sup>221</sup>

In a telegram to Mountbatten, the Secretary of State reminded him of the India Burma Committee meeting of May 1947, wherein it was decided to retain these islands as part of the British territory “at any rate”.<sup>222</sup> As pressure grew on Mountbatten, Ismay “press[ed] strongly for the complete exclusion from the draft [Independence] Bill of any reference to the...Islands” and insisted Mountbatten grant him the authority to deal with this issue.<sup>223</sup>

During the talks on the Indian Independence Bill, both Nehru and Patel highlighted the need to retain Andaman and Nicobar, the Cabinet meeting had noted.<sup>224</sup> As the Congress stuck to the inheritance claim, it was initially thought that “nothing should be done in the legislation or

---

<sup>215</sup> Besides Jammu and Kashmir, the islands were the only other Muslim-majority unit to come under the Indian administration.

<sup>216</sup> Mansergh et al., Laccadive Islands Report by the Joint Planning Staff: Ministry of Defence, Chiefs of Staff Committee Joint Planning Staff. Paper J.P.(47)87 (Final), *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 344-45.

<sup>217</sup> Mansergh et al., Minute 4: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to the Earl of Listowel, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 482.

<sup>218</sup> Mansergh et al., Laccadive Islands Report by the Joint Planning Staff: Ministry of Defence, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 344.

<sup>219</sup> Mansergh et al., *Transfer of Power* Vol. XI, page 464.

<sup>220</sup> Mansergh et al., Laccadive Islands Report, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 344-45.

<sup>221</sup> Mountbatten Papers, File 76A, IOR, page 50.

<sup>222</sup> Mansergh et al., Andaman and Nicobar Islands: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, Cabinet: India and Burma Committee. Paper I.B.(47)97, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 312.

<sup>223</sup> Mansergh et al., Lord Ismay to Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 544.

<sup>224</sup> Mountbatten Papers, IOR, 76A.

said to the Indian leaders” that the British considered the Islands as an organic part of India.<sup>225</sup> Besides the need to avoid further controversy between the Congress and League, the fate of Islands was another reason why Listowel was not in favour of showing the Draft Independence Bill to the Indian leaders. He did toy with the idea that the ownership of islands could be legislated out of India, showing them as not controlled by British India and thus implicitly transferred to Britain, making the logic of inheritance inapplicable to the islands.<sup>226</sup> Echoing the military strategists, Listowel considered the “defence interests [having] extreme importance” and did not want the islands to be “left by [British] parliament as part of India”.<sup>227</sup>

There were proposals in London to treat the Islands in the same way as Aden, whose jurisdiction “up to 1937, administrative responsibility...rested with the Government of India”.<sup>228</sup>

Mountbatten realized that any attempts to claim the Islands could “cause an absolute flare-up throughout the length and breadth of India...and Pakistan” and considered “some form of joint control or leasing of naval or air bases under a treaty” as a “reasonable solution”.<sup>229</sup> “Any high-handed action” by London could “destroy all the good feeling”.<sup>230</sup> It was also feared Nehru might attempt to scuttle the British efforts to retain the Gorkha troops (from Nepal) the moment he was to discover the Islands slipping away from Indian control.<sup>231</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff reasserted that Britain’s “strategic requirement [could] only be assured if British sovereignty over the...Islands is maintained, whatever the future of India and Burma”, and “pressed strongly for the islands to be retained for strategic reasons”.<sup>232</sup> The Muslim League too demanded their inclusion as part of Pakistan, but the interim government legally justified their inclusion in the Indian territory as they formed an “organic part of British India”, besides the oft-stated strategic reasons.<sup>233</sup> One report by the Joint Planning Staff on the future scenario reports assumed that the Islands would be “excluded from the transfer of power”, which also tells us about the military’s efforts to retain them.<sup>234</sup> Eventually, the Secretary of State (in the cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Attlee) conceded to the Congress

---

<sup>225</sup> Mansergh et al., Draft Telegram from Secretary of State for India to Viceroy, Cabinet: India and Burma Committee Paper I.B.(47)97, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 312.

<sup>226</sup> Mansergh et al., Cabinet: India and Burma Committee. Paper I.B. (47)102, Question Whether the Draft Bill Should Be Shown to the Indian Leaders: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 377.

<sup>227</sup> Mansergh et al., Andaman and Nicobar Islands, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 313.

<sup>228</sup> Mountbatten Papers, 76A, IOR, page 50.

<sup>229</sup> Mansergh et al., Viceroy’s Personal Report No. 9, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 306.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Mansergh et al., Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to Lord Ismay, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 502.

<sup>232</sup> Mansergh et al., Introduction to Volume XI, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page xxvi-xxvii. Also see Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to Mr Attlee (via India Office), page 319.

<sup>233</sup> Mansergh et al, Introduction to Volume XI, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>234</sup> Mansergh et al., Laccadive Islands: Report by the Joint Planning Staff Ministry of Defence, Chiefs of Staff Committee Joint Planning Staff. Paper J.P.(47) 87 (Final), *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 344.

leadership's demands acknowledging that the "Indians felt deeply...and any attempt by His Majesty's Government to separate the Islands from India would probably provoke violent opposition from all parts of India".<sup>235</sup>

## **Conclusion**

On 15th August, 1947, India officially emerged as an independent nation state. At that moment, the remaining accessions (Hyderabad, Jammu & Kashmir and Junagadh), and the expanse of India's influence through the continuation of its diplomatic presence in Tibet, Xinjiang and the Himalayan states placed independent India somewhere between the political personality it had acquired and its imagined projection aspired by Nehru. In the coming years, national consolidation established the state's absolute authority within its political boundaries, beginning with the controversial accession of the three princely states, and culminating in annexation of Goa in 1962 (and later Sikkim under Indira Gandhi's regime). On the external front, the Maoist revolution in China exterminated its inherited influence over the vast trans-Himalayan landscape with the closure of missions in Kashgar and Lhasa, compelling it to focus on controlling the Himalayan kingdoms. India's proactive diplomacy in the Korean War and engagement in Indonesia's struggle against Dutch imperialism marked the high points of its ambitions to expand as a moral force in Asia. However, for most of the 1950s, the Cold War, the Kashmir problem and deteriorating ties with China occupied India's strategic outlook, particularly because they challenged the basis of India's political identity. The following chapters engage with these problems from an alternative conceptual frame, bypassing the traditional foreign policy or security studies perspectives, but rather as an idea Nehru toiled to put into action. The impact of partition and the Cold War is discussed since they struck at the foundations of the Indian imaginary. As these two chapters argue, this idea of India and its international status - which was codified into the Independence Act - had its eternal frontiers and unity (in its instrumental capacity) as its philosophical basis.

An aspiring regional hegemon was beset by the challenge from the Cold War and caught in her entanglements with China and Pakistan; compelling Nehru to redefine the Indian state even though his yearning for Greater India never diminished. This research also captures the intellectual journey of independent India's political personality and its evolving theoretical understanding in light of such challenges.

---

<sup>235</sup> Mansergh et al., Minute 4: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rear-Admiral Viscount Mountbatten of Burma to the Earl of Listowel, *Transfer of Power*, Vol. XI, page 482.

## Chapter Three

# The Making of a Territorial Identity: Revisiting the Early Years of Independence

### Introduction

Some people accuse me of paying too much attention to international affairs. I may be wrong. But my reading of Indian history tells me that whenever India has turned inwards and broken its living contact with the outside world, it has always fallen and suffered eclipse.

Nehru's address to Congress workers, October, 1947<sup>236</sup>

The above statement, delivered shortly after independence was a reiteration of Nehru's hypothesis, that India's identity (both cultural and geographical) could not be divorced from its international surroundings.

This chapter studies the making of India's political and territorial identity in the early years of independence as an 'intermestic' process, a term denoting the synthesis of domestic and international attributes.<sup>237</sup> India's domestic political sphere, its relationship with its neighbourhood and international problems were too intertwined to be seen as separate categories.<sup>238</sup> Both, the international situation and perceptions on the neighbourhood rekindled Nehru's belief in India's indispensable role in global politics, and his conviction about India's influential role in world history fuelled his own politics in the post-independence era. The immediate goal after independence, Nehru repeatedly asserted, was resuscitating her lost linkages with Asia. India had never been an isolated country in the past and its linguistic, cultural and archaeological influence could be found outside the subcontinent. It was not only her cosmopolitan spirit but also her land contacts that intertwined its cultural geography with Asia, he believed.<sup>239</sup> Even though territorially bound nation-state became the principal mode of political organization in the international sphere, India, Nehru did not as a historico-legal concept was not understood as a contained geography. Yet, he navigated the duality of being

---

<sup>236</sup> Abide by Gandhian Principles, *SWJN* (Second Series, Vol. 4), page 118.

<sup>237</sup> Intermestic refers to the "interface between 'international' and 'domestic' policy agenda" Elizabeth Leake uses the term in the context of Indian frontier policy at the time of independence. See P. Raghavan, M. Bayly, E. Leake, and A. Paliwal (eds.), 'The Limits of Decolonisation in India's International Thought and Practice: An Introduction', *The International History Review*, 44/4 (2022), page 812-18. The findings of this research understand the idea of India itself as an 'intermestic' concept, where the domestic and international could not be seen as separate realms.

<sup>238</sup> As Javed Majeed writes, "domestic and the international necessarily intermesh... that the 'interests and activities of states overflow their boundaries...so that it is simply impossible for any one nation to isolate itself". See Majeed, *Autobiography*, page 159.

<sup>239</sup> Nehru's narration of the spread of Buddhism from India to China appeared to be a rediscovery of the Asian geography and its centrality to Indian history, "as Buddhism spread in China, there began that long succession of pilgrims and scholars who journeyed between India and China for 1,000 years. They travelled overland across the Gobi Desert and the plains and mountains of Central Asia and over the Himalayas...There was another route also, not much safer, though probably shorter: this was by sea via Indo-China, Java, and Sumatra, Malaya and the Nicobar Islands." See Nehru, *Discovery*, page 192-93.

the architect of a securitized frontier while working towards reviving India's fluid spatial links with Asia.<sup>240</sup> Both, territorial anxieties, and a quest to institutionalise cross-border influences shaped independent India's political identity, a process that came to an end in the 1960s, following the two wars with China and Pakistan, and Nehru's eventual passing in 1964.

It is important to mention that despite claiming Pakistan's territorial and historical space through Indus Valley civilization, Buddhism and finally, the Independence Act, Pakistan ceased to be part of Nehru's geopolitical imagination. The policies on Himalayan states and use of Buddhism in Southeast Asia through relic exhibitions, circulation of literature, monarchical customs that intertwined history with feudalism acquired a newfound importance.

This chapter captures the intellectual shifts in Nehru's articulation of India, its situatedness in and its relationship with Asia. Drawing from Shruti Kapila's work, it explores how Nehru radically reformulated ideas (and practices) of India's regional histories and imperial inheritance and then projected them to the international sphere.<sup>241</sup> Only by "placing ideas above historical contingency", one can attempt to better understand "the trajectory of some of the period's critical and ambitious changes, including freedom from colonization, partition, violence".<sup>242</sup> The confrontation and reformulation (borrowed from Kapila's terminology) discussed here is threefold, the first being the dilution of India's Hindu past in defining India's national identity, the omission of Pakistan in Nehru's geographical imaginary (after years of struggle to keep the territories comprising Pakistan within India) and lastly an attempt to rediscover India outside its inherited political boundaries. Despite claiming Pakistan's territorial and historical space through Indus Valley civilization, Buddhism and finally, the Independence Act, Pakistan ceased to be part of Nehru's geopolitical imagination. The policies on Himalayan states and use of Buddhism in Southeast Asia through relic exhibitions, circulation of literature, monarchical customs that intertwined history with feudalism acquired a newfound importance. The latter part of the chapter discusses Nehru's use of violence to preserve Indian unity in the post-independence years. Since unity, for Nehru, served as the essential condition for realizing India's regional ambitions, he legitimized violence in the name of safeguarding India's international civilizational identity. Drawing from Faisal Devji's work where he reconstructs Gandhi's relationship with violence with a nuanced insight into his politics, this chapter traces a relatable relationship between independent India's international legal personality, its foreign policy outlook and its connection with violence in the domestic sphere.

---

<sup>240</sup> L. Rose, 'India, China, the Himalayan Border States and Afghanistan: 1947-57', *South Asian Survey*, 4/1 (1997), page 85.

<sup>241</sup> S. Kapila, 'Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political', in Darryn McMahon Darryn and Samuel Moyn (eds.), *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014) page 256.

<sup>242</sup> Kapila, 'Global Intellectual History', page 262.

## **Separating Sacred Geography from Hindutva: Rescuing Indian Territoriality and Redefining Gandhi**

It is interesting to highlight that Nehru echoed the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS in prioritizing India of geography to other federative modes of political reorganization. Both Partition and Cold War accelerated sensitivities towards potential geographies of influence for both Nehru and the Hindu nationalists alike and any attempt at justifying complete ownership over geographical India had to choose one of these methods, namely violence or a convincing narrative consisting of elements of history/legality or a combination of both. India was destined to be united not on the basis of Hinduism (or imperial factors) alone or any revolutionary mechanism but the spirit of India, a recurring theme used by Nehru to define the Indian identity. Though an emotional and esoteric concept, the spirit of India had no tangible determinant other than the territory (religious/cultural spaces) historically inhabited by the Hindus, Buddhists and people identifying with other Indic faiths. The connecting link between Indian geography/geopolitical spheres and nationalism was the existence of multiple philosophical/religious traditions and empires and an assumed harmony between the two, thus tracing the ancient on the lines of unity and diversity. On the other hand, the geographical India of the Hindu Mahasabha – as Manu Bhagavan explains - was to be composed of “primordial “nations” (communities with essential, indivisible identities) tied strictly to pieces of land, and therefore it was concerned with regenerating an “ancient,” “pure” race by fulfilling its destiny—that is, by reclaiming the race’s rightful homeland”.<sup>243</sup>

If territory was the physical manifestation of the spirit for Nehru, the journey from the abstract/metaphysical India to an objectively defined nation-state too had to sidestep both violent episodes of the past and the need for violence in future despite the ambitious objectives of unity and transnational existence. Perhaps it is this false historicization of peace in India’s imperial journey and the expectation of perpetual peace in its revival that made Nehru redefine the Gandhian discourse.

As Faisal Devji notes, for Gandhi, the success of his politics lay in establishing a society based on the principles of non-violence while giving no history to virtue as its origins lay in social relations and not national history. The primary focus of his Ram Rajya was sacrifice and not Rama’s personality/divine attributes which otherwise had a mass appeal and cultural familiarity among Hindus. And neither territory nor history could confer nationality to Indians. Only Satyagraha could, which entailed owning one’s sufferings, thus conferring sovereignty to the individual.<sup>244</sup> But for Nehru it was territory that instrumentalized the respective

---

<sup>243</sup> M. Bhagavan, ‘Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary: Exploring the Cartography of Hindu Nationalism in Colonial India’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67/3 (2008), page 885.

<sup>244</sup> F. Devji, *The Impossible Indian: Gandhi and the Temptation of Violence* (London, 2012), page 48-9.

universalities Gandhi (and Tagore) embodied.<sup>245</sup> On the other hand, in Tagore's thought, as Amitav Acharya states, "promotion of the spiritual and civilizational affinities among Asia's peoples constituted an alternative conception of Asian regionalism in which societies rather than states [read territory] take the center stage".<sup>246</sup> If Tagore imagined a universalist Asia, Nehru's conviction lay in a nationalist Asia.<sup>247</sup> The difference, Acharya states, lies in prioritizing societies (Tagore) over states (Nehru).

Though ostensibly opposed to their ideas on nationalism, Nehru morphed their very basis by subsuming them in his nationalist and territorial discourse. Also, for Nehru, it was the esoteric Indian spirit that united India while for Savarkar it was violence that could preserve the Hindu identity.<sup>248</sup> Savarkar too envisioned a "centralised Indian state", calling on the Muslims to "befriend the [Hindu] majority to owe undivided love and loyalty to our common motherland".<sup>249</sup>

To highlight an example of the former, India's policy on Himalayan states in the early years of independence demonstrated the balance Nehru sought to achieve. As against the proponents of Akhand Bharat who demanded that the areas be "rejoined" with the motherland", Independent India opted to "assert[ing] its status as the successor state" to legitimize its interventionist role.<sup>250</sup> The other ideological challenge from the Hindu Mahasabha came from its conception of unity that made princes indispensable in imagining Akhand Bharat. Like the Muslim League which imagined the possibility of state making out of discontinuous geographies, the Hindu Mahasabha too found prudence in allying with the Hindu Princes as it would "provide them with a set of geographic strongholds".<sup>251</sup> While sharing similarities with Nehru's modal conceptions on unity, the Mahasabha's methods digress in a way that it wanted to rebuild a united India from these geographic strongholds.<sup>252</sup> Nehruvian

---

<sup>245</sup> For Tagore, as Amitav Acharya states, "promotion of the spiritual and civilizational affinities among Asia's peoples constituted an alternative conception of Asian regionalism in which societies rather than states [read territory] take the center stage". If Tagore imagined a universalist Asia, Nehru's conviction lay in a nationalist Asia. The difference, Acharya states, lies in prioritizing societies (Tagore) over states (Nehru). See A. Acharya, 'Asia is not one', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 69/4 (2010), page 1002-4.

<sup>246</sup> Acharya, 'Asia is not one', page 1004.

<sup>247</sup> Acharya, 'Asia is not one', page 1002-3.

<sup>248</sup> Similar views were held by another Mahasabha leader K M Munshi who was convinced by the futility of non-violence, rioting was ought to become a regular feature and self-defence would have to become essential to the preservation of the Hindu race. See Bhagavan, 'Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary', page 899-900.

<sup>249</sup> Savarkar statement on 5 June 1945 on announcement of Viceroy's Executive Council proposing 15 member with 5 Hindus and 5 Muslims, Papers and Correspondence pertaining to the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha, SP Mookerjee (VIII-IX inst.), Subject File no. 2, Part 1, PMML, page 103.

<sup>250</sup> Rose, 'India, China', page 85.

<sup>251</sup> Bhagavan, 'Princely States', page 885.

<sup>252</sup> These developments only horrified Nehru since the Hindutva-Princely alliance threatened to consolidate what he identified as anachronisms that threatened to divide India further. The Mahasabha, on its part, appeared to be successful in pitting the Hindu princes against the states ruled by the Muslim princes.

interpretation on inheritance, by definition meant that he did not believe in reclaiming India through such incrementalism, except in entirety and it was the transnational that concerned him more.

Notwithstanding his commitment to secularism and syncretic culture, to attribute India's transnational identity to Hinduism alone naturally legitimized recourse to violence in reconstituting the Indian nation-state. To argue it through Savarkar's lens, a nation (Bharatvarsha) which owed its identity, unity and sovereignty to the Hindus alone since time immemorial had to be reconstituted through violence since both foreign and Buddhist influences had morally, territorially and socially emaciated India. For Savarkar, "Ashoka's turn to nonviolence not only was "anti-national", but also weakened India's independence at the time and made India susceptible to foreign invasions".<sup>253</sup> Each of his major writings, as Vinayak Chaturvedi states, was either "a [historical] analysis of warfare in India" or concerned with the importance of understanding warfare and violence in world history.<sup>254</sup> Further, Savarkar quotes events from international history mostly for understanding the rise and fall of nations and refuses to embed India's own trajectory in a global or a continental frame. Unlike Nehru's fascination with Chinese civilization, which he considered equivalent to that of India, China, for Savarkar, had been a base to launch invasions against India. Savarkar maintained the same stance till his last work *Six Glorious Epochs*. The exact demarcation of India's territorial frame was more important for Savarkar:

the cohesion, strength, and the sense of unity of a people is that they should possess an internally well-connected and externally well-demarcated 'local habitation' and a 'name' that could, by its very mention, rouse the cherished images of their motherland as well as the loved memories of their past.<sup>255</sup>

On the other hand, by contesting the British and princely versions of inheritance and paramountcy respectively, the nationalist leadership had legally defended India's unitary structure. A different social narrative was needed that could philosophize Indian unity through national symbols that not only reflected India's past but also its international outlook and transnational frame.

Being the numerical majority, the Hindu community would "naturally influence nearly all phases of life in the country".<sup>256</sup> This fact itself was enough and Hinduism needed no further validation. Beyond this, Nehru found Hinduism having limitations in other key aspects of India's identity, especially from a territorial point of view. The nation's international existence had to move beyond Hinduism's historical role in shaping certain cultures in Asia to prevent the new nation from being appropriated by the Hindu nationalists. Further, the mountainous frontiers

---

<sup>253</sup> V. Chaturvedi, 'Rethinking Knowledge with Action: V. D. Savarkar, The Bhagavad Gita, and Histories of Warfare', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7/2 (2010), page 431.

<sup>254</sup> Chaturvedi, 'Rethinking Knowledge', page 425.

<sup>255</sup> V. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu* (Bombay, 1969), page 82.

<sup>256</sup> No Progress Without Communal Peace, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 5), page 28.

crucial in imagining India could not be defined through a Hindu-centric sacred geography alone. Although Nehru had once discussed how Amarnath shrine and the Kailash Mansarovar were integral to his attachment with the Himalayas, the political situation at the time of independence demanded integration of the non-Hindu populations that inhabited the frontier areas, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, NWFP, and the Northeast (along with the Excluded Areas which were to be merged into the Indian Union). Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, with their deep ties to Buddhism had to be intellectually intertwined with the idea of India before any policy of physical linkage evolved.

The articulation of the nationalist thought by different leaders of the era had Hindu themes as their least common denominator, if not sole basis. As discussed in the previous chapters, the most common references to Hinduism came through the invisible and timeless attributes of Indian culture especially when other faiths (Buddhism included) had a defined timeline. Nehru, in fact, had stopped short of defining these syncretic and atemporal aspects as Hindu elements since he believed that the non-Hindu communities residing in India had also embraced and added to the diversity.

The deepening of communal faultiness and the Congress leadership's commitment to secularism eventually subdued references to Hinduism. By the time the Constituent Assembly deliberated on India's official identity, there was already a sense of discomfort in adopting the Hindu themes as the basis of post-independence India's identity. Nehru's awareness of persistence of the casteist and communal influence within senior echelons of the congress leadership and the existing communal situation deemed it necessary to dilute the appropriation of Hindu symbols in new India's political identity.<sup>257</sup> While Hinduism could be drawn on to imagine India as a sacred geography, references to Buddhism, Islam and even imperialism found their way more prominently as the new defining blocs of Indian statecraft. In one of his speeches in 1953, Nehru acknowledged that India inherited a "strong tradition of unity" which was "built on two contradictory factors", namely the "British rule and the..national movement", denying Hinduism playing any such role in political unity.<sup>258</sup> With a cryptic reference to Hinduism, he stated that India had also inherited "powerful disruptive tendencies" (even if Hinduism contributed to some degree of cultural unity), hence the danger lay in the security

---

<sup>257</sup> Referring to Patel and Bengal Congress leader Bidhan Roy, S Gopal observed that communalism "had not been extinguished even in the higher levels of the Congress Party and was inspiring the decisions of the central and provincial governments." See S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Vol 2 (Oxford, 1979), page 76. Patel's speeches appealing to all the Hindus of Pakistan to return back to India were also interpreted as finalizing India and Pakistan as exclusively Hindu and Muslim states. Individual non-Muslims leaving Pakistan for India was one thing but to "make their departure a matter of general policy is quite a different thing", the then British HC to Pakistan observed. See From UKCOM Karachi to CRO, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1949, Graffety-Smith Papers, Middle-Eastern Archives Centre, File S/9, 1/1, Page 8.

<sup>258</sup> The Psychosis of Fear, *Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches*, Vol. Two (Delhi, 1954), page 255.

provided by this “false sense of unity”.<sup>259</sup> Moreover, the politicization of religion by the right-wing parties only promoted obscurantism and not nationalism.<sup>260</sup> Nehru came to believe that Hindu nationalists’ recourse to history ended up promoting insignificant facets of history along with non-scientific beliefs and risked confusing “great things of past with its minor trappings”, thus promoting divisive tendencies.<sup>261</sup> While nationalist feelings had to be an indispensable part of one’s identity, they “covered a multitude of sins and a multitude of things that [were] dead and gone”.<sup>262</sup>

On the other hand, the Hindu Right wing had resumed opposition to the Muslim population and likened partition and Jammu & Kashmir’s special status to the sacrilege of the holy land. The Hindu Right Wing chose to focus on the sites that remained at the centre of communal discord, particularly the disputed sites at Somnath and Ayodhya. Sheikh Abdullah’s elevation as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and the introduction of the Hindu Code Bill galvanized the conservative opposition against Nehru, who simultaneously battled similar sentiment within the Congress, including opposition from the likes of Patel and President Rajendra Prasad.<sup>263</sup>

Chris Bayly has pointed out the challenge to Nehru’s secular project from within the Congress ranks. If not a theocratic state, the predominant view among “Congress leaders, intellectuals and business community [favoured] a state which symbolized the interests of the Hindu majority”.<sup>264</sup>

The government adopted different methods to deal with threats from the Hindutva forces and the communists.<sup>265</sup> The policy was characterized by severe repression of Communist ideologues especially as the second congress of the Communist Party of India (February-

---

<sup>259</sup> Nehru, *Psychosis*, page 256.

<sup>260</sup> Nehru, *speeches*, page 262.

<sup>261</sup> Nehru, *speeches*, page 262.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Nehru shared an uncomfortable relationship with President Rajendra Prasad as he was not Nehru’s preference for the Presidential position. Interestingly, Nehru preferred Rajagolapachari’s candidature due to his “quality as a window on foreign lands and the profound impression he had made on foreign dignitaries and ambassadors”. See D. Das, *India From Curzon*, page 302. Also, if Nehru’s private secretary MO Mathai is to be believed, there were multiple instances where Nehru disapproved of the President’s conduct. Against Nehru’s wishes, Prasad insisted India be renamed as Bharat. According to Mathai, the “first act of the first President of the Republic was the shifting of all Muslim servants from his wing in Rashtrapati Bhawan”. The other annoying aspect Mathai mentions was Prasad’s visit to Varanasi where he was seen washing the feet of Hindu ascetics. Much to Nehru’s displeasure, Prasad also visited Somnath temple to install the Shivalinga. See M. Mathai, *My Days with Nehru* (Delhi, 1971), page 20, 61, 62.

<sup>264</sup> C.A. Bayly, ‘THE ENDS OF LIBERALISM’, page 611.

<sup>265</sup> Like the Hindu Right Wing, the Communist Party too rejected partition. It even attempted to infiltrate Pakistani politics in the early days of Pakistan’s inception. The Government categorized Communists as a security threat due to evidence of CPI members’ involvement in mobilizing the labour classes for an arms struggle against it. Nehru was aware that this risked deteriorating ties with the Communist bloc and clarified that such steps were purely a domestic affair and had “nothing to do with India’s stand in international politics”. See *The Advent of a New Era, SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 5), page 87.

March 1948) condemned the draft Constitution of India and called for an armed revolution.<sup>266</sup> Despite Soviet support for worldwide communist movements at the onset of Cold War and a global appeal for the Communist sentiment and the fresh memory of inter-war years communist activism, the new dispensation in India, owing to its socialist and non-alignment credentials showed no inclination towards offering any intellectual counter-narrative to communism.<sup>267</sup>

Since Hindutva's potential appeal to Indian society could render kinetic measures by the government ineffective, India's identity itself had to be reconstituted. A Buddhist identity would rather bolster India's claims over Asia given the tangibility of Buddhist influence across Asia. In the domestic sphere, Buddhism could preach equality (social equality, if not political) but internationally, the language of Indian outreach to Asia got narrowed down as references to common yet diverse Hindu traditions were subdued in Nehru's rhetoric. Unlike Tagore, who saw Indian influence in abstract terms and highlighted myriad facets of Hindu and Buddhist past that influenced Asia, Nehru's projection of India surpassed the former's thoughts. Even though it omitted Hinduism, it would acquire a territorial overtone. The intended cultural agency (focus of Tagore) was replaced with that of a geocultural one emanating from a unitary state that appeared to be drawing ideas from the imperial playbook. The idea of India, if not the Indian statecraft itself, eventually became geopolitical since its historical influence pre-required the existence of a unitary state.<sup>268</sup> It was hoped that these ideas could get legitimacy if India took lead in supporting nationalist movements in its near and extended neighbourhood.

The response to Hindu nationalism took an ideological dimension since the nature of the threat had greater discursive power owing to the sheer numbers of the Hindu demography. Hindu Nationalism, on the other hand, risked nullifying India's transnational spirit and thus required a powerful counter-narrative and not just police action.<sup>269</sup> In response, it is argued

---

<sup>266</sup> Cable to V. K. Krishna Menon, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 6), page 387-88. The Calcutta Congress remains a controversial episode as the Communist Party refused to accept Indian independence.

<sup>267</sup> On his part, Stalin did not show any concern for India or Pakistan as he believed the new dominions as being puppets of the British and that communism would not find fertile soil in either of these new polities.

<sup>268</sup> In this research, it is intended to differentiate between geopolitics as an intellectual concept and in praxis. The idea of India for Nehru is purely geopolitical, making all other attributes of politics and governance subservient to the geography. Post-independence, many of his thoughts either never operationalised or had unexpected outcomes. However, in retrospect, IR scholars have viewed Nehru's engagement with geopolitics only in a binary way, that is the presence or absence of policy frameworks. Similarly, the word strategy (a commonly used concept in IR terminology) is not able to capture thoughts on state-making in entirety and together with the former concept have become politicized over the years to produce value judgements.

<sup>269</sup> The rejection of the Indian national flag and subsequent villainization of Gandhi (followed by his assassination) by the Hindu right had convinced Nehru of an impending ideological contest that aimed at nullifying his secularist project. Between Independence and Gandhi's assassination, Nehru's correspondences, including those with Syama Prasad Mukherjee repeatedly addressed threats to Gandhi's life from Hindu nationalists and the ahistorical nature of the Hindutva project. The view was further substantiated from the intelligence reports in 1947-8 which pointed to collusion between certain

that India's post-independence international identity was sought to be recreated in the Buddhist past and symbols. The use of Buddhism in the foreign policy discourse is commonly associated with its universal message of peace, as reflected in the apolitical posturing of the Non-Alignment Movement. It is not to discount these perspectives and rather delve into Nehru's search for alternatives to Hinduism in defining India's historical international journey and future outlook. Although categorized as a religion, Buddhism had the quality of transcending religious boundaries by not tying the universal good with belief in revelations or specific ways of identity expression. As Himanshu Prabha Ray explains:

Like other contemporary Indic religions, Buddha's dhamma had no central organization, "no single authoritative text, no simple set of defining practices. Its core principle was refuge in the Buddha, the dhamma and the Sangha, though as it expanded across Asia it absorbed local traditions...."<sup>270</sup>

In his latest work *Dust on the Throne*, Douglas Ober too sheds light on the myriad Buddhist revivalist movements in colonial India, besides emphasising on the development of Buddhist sites like Sarnath as "center[s] of India's international Buddhist activist scene".<sup>271</sup>

By 1940s, both Nehru and Ambedkar emerged as leading proponents of redefining Buddhism for the Indian body politic, envisioning universal but contradictory objectives. Unlike Ambedkar, who saw Buddhism as a replacement for the Brahmanical order and Buddha's messages having a universal appeal, Nehru refrained from appropriating Buddhism (as done by the Mahasabha, Greater India Society or philanthropists like Birla) or positioning it against Hinduism.

### **Buddha and Ashoka's Greater India: Towards a Theatre State**

Another facet of inheritance was the appropriation of the historical Buddha as defined by the colonial archaeologists and historians.<sup>272</sup> In the colonial context, Buddha was resurrected as a "counter to the predominant Hindu system [as well as an] an opponent of caste and of the priestly system" and "stood for social reform in the eyes of colonial officials".<sup>273</sup> After independence, Buddha became synonymous with Nehruvian India.

As highlighted by Richard Pryor, Nehru's fondness with the Buddha could be evidenced by the presence of Buddhist images and sculptures in his Teen Murti house where "almost every

---

princely states (especially Deccan and Rajputana states) and the RSS due to the common opposition to the Congress. See 'Banning of R.S.S.S, Khaksars and Muslim League Organization in Indian states', States Department, Political Branch, NAI, 1948.

<sup>270</sup> Ray, *The Return*, page 32.

<sup>271</sup> D. Ober, *Dust on the Throne: The Search for Buddhism in Modern India* (California, 2023), page 192.

<sup>272</sup> H.P. Ray, *The Return of the Buddha: Ancient Symbols for a New Nation* (London, 2014), page 21.

<sup>273</sup> Ray, *The Return*, page 131. Also see J. Silk, 'The Victorian Creation of Buddhism', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 22/1 (1994), page 182.

room there is a representation of the Buddha in either a photo or a sculpture. No other image is repeated with such regularity”.<sup>274</sup>

India’s Buddhist identity transformed the relationship Nehru sought with other neighbouring states. The goal was not merely friendship but rather expectation to be acknowledged “mother country from which their great religion originated”.<sup>275</sup> Moreover, the use of Buddhism enabled a reassertion of India’s cultural geography that included the Himalayas, the Hindukush and parts of Southeast Asia. Thus, with Buddhism, Indian history was not only captured in a continental frame, but was also delinked from communal frenzy of partition and theological obsessions surrounding religion. As Ananya Vajpeyi states:

these visions and intimations were of a historical and not a religious nature and through them Nehru grasped some of the philosophical teachings of the Buddha...but more importantly the depth, complexity, and nobility of India's past.<sup>276</sup>

In other words, references to Buddhism meant that despite independent India’s acceptance of its demarcated borders, its wider cultural geography and potential sphere of influence mattered. Douglas Ober has termed this policy as “poetics of power”, an ability to demonstrate authority as against “bureaucratic modes of production”, and it was demonstrated time to time when India used Buddhism to unilaterally define its relations with its neighbours as well as the wider region.<sup>277</sup> For instance, in 1949, when:

Nehru handled the cremated remains of Buddhist saints [Sariputta and Mogallana] and passed them onto neighbouring rulers, who installed them in their own royal halls and constitutional assemblies, he was linking these different polities to India’s history and modern mode of being, both in the past and the present.<sup>278</sup>

Both, past empires and spirituality were extra-constitutional but important aspects in reconstructing India’s relationship with her neighbours and beyond in the form of what Ober describes as a Theatre State. The deliberate focus on Ashokan Buddhism had an imperial emphasis, both from territorial and administrative viewpoint. From the Ashokan perspective, the state space appeared as a vast South Asian landscape laden with 84,000 relics spread across the region, with Mahabodhi Temple as the central focal point. In this context, Nehru’s interest in purging the Mahabodhi temple from Hindu Mahants and divesting it from the Hindu markings should not be seen as a policy of antagonising the Hindu community. Rather, as demonstrated by Richard Pryor and Tara Doyle, they formed part of broader “efforts to build

---

<sup>274</sup> C. Pryor, ‘Bodhi Gaya in the 1950s Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahant Giri and Angarika Munindra’, in D Geary, M. Sayers and A. Amar (eds), *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site* (Oxford, 2012), page 111-2.

<sup>275</sup> Letters to Premiers of Provinces, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 9), page 294.

<sup>276</sup> A. Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic*, (Massachusetts, 2012), page 200.

<sup>277</sup> Ober, *Dust on the Throne*, page 5-6.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

regional alliances with neighbouring countries” and resuscitating the Buddhist individuality that was instrumental in bestowing unity to India.<sup>279</sup>

Further, as Ananya Vajpeyi points out,

the dhammacakra, a symbol that occurs widely in Buddhist art and literature, when set atop a pillar would suggest that the worldly empire of the Mauryan dynasts and the ethical imperium of dhamma (dharma) were coextensive: they extended over one and the same territorial/abstract space.<sup>280</sup>

Ashoka was the third-generation ruler of the Maurya dynasty, thus an inheritor of an empire built on expansionism, a fact subtly evaded by Nehru despite his fascination with the Mauryas.<sup>281</sup> Appropriation of Ashoka was also emblematic of a refusal on part of Nehru to accept India in her post-war modal confines. Vajpeyi explains how “Asoka provides a template for Nehru for a number of different reasons...his capacity to command and expand an empire, topped by his even greater ability to exercise restraint” and his rock edicts that reveal the expanse of “the Mauryan sphere of influence”.<sup>282</sup> Although Nehru described him as a unifier of the Indian subcontinent, he acknowledged South India being outside the Mauryan sphere.

It was not Ashoka’s inability to annex it but his generosity that South India could not become part of his empire despite the military means to do so. Further, the Mauryan empire, despite excluding South India, still constituted the territorial axis of Nehruvian India for the moral means it exercised to influence distant geographies. Most importantly, the Mauryans were an ideal case where both empire and civilization reinforced the political and the moral structure of the state. In Nehru’s thoughts, such generosity was desired in the prevailing international politics but not without forgoing the agency to act.

Also, viewed from the lenses of foreign policy (itself a product of exogenous developments), this chapter’s arguments differ from Ananya Vajpeyi’s understanding of Nehru beset with the “tension within the self... between aspiration and instrumentality, between norm and purpose”.<sup>283</sup> There was no distance between Ashoka and Buddha, even if the former was the conqueror and the latter a renouncer. For Nehru, Ashoka complemented and completed Buddha to construct a national identity that valued both the drive for territoriality and political renunciation, however unrelated they sounded. Ashokan India was ideal for him since it represented a sequential progress (from domestic consolidation to international influence) India ought to achieve after its unification. Asia’s decolonization was not intended to simply

---

<sup>279</sup> D. Geary, ‘World Heritage in the Shadow of Zamindari’, in D. Geary, M. Sayers and A. Amar (eds), *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site* (Oxford, 2012), page 143.

<sup>280</sup> A. Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic*, page 200.

<sup>281</sup> Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic*, page 194.

<sup>282</sup> Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic*, page 198.

<sup>283</sup> Vajpeyi, *Righteous Republic*, page 206.

address NAM's foreign policy objectives. It needed further acceleration if this imagined geopolitical preponderance had to be revived<sup>284</sup>:

Now that the greater part of Asia is free from the colonialism of the past, our minds inevitably go back to the old days and old relationship with other countries in Western, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia. Our mind tries to skip over this colonial period...as we pick up old threads again....<sup>285</sup>

Everything from the adoption of the National Flag, the Dharmachakra to the Lion capital was a conscious projection of its identity into the international sphere as well as intertwining both.<sup>286</sup> As Nehru would justify:

Now because I have mentioned the name of Ashoka I should like you to think that the Asokan period in Indian history was essentially an international period of Indian history. It was not a narrowly national period. It was a period when India's ambassadors went abroad to far countries and went abroad not in the way of an Empire and imperialism but as ambassadors of peace and culture and goodwill.

This is not untrue but the significance of the Mauryas equally lay in their credentials as the first dynasty to unite India under a central authority. However, in Nehru's retelling of history, unity had to necessarily acquire an international orientation. He was cautious of not associating Ashokan expansionism with imperialism while at the same time justifying the centralizing attributes of dynasties that ruled India.<sup>287</sup> References to the Buddhist identity also meant that ancient India acquired an international identity once Buddhism was embraced.<sup>288</sup>

---

<sup>284</sup> Imperialism, Nehru believed, had assaulted the idea of India on two fronts. Domestically, it divided India based on artificial political and demographic classifications. Secondly, while the British were credited for enhancing India's role in the Asian balance of power, they were also blamed for diluting India's organic territorial linkages with Asia, replacing them with oceanic routes. He highlighted that the "major effects of the British occupation of India was the isolation of India from the rest of Asia. Until the British came here India had many close contacts with her neighbouring countries, but the result of British rule, partly deliberately and partly as a result of the development of sea routes, cut [India] off completely from these countries and our contacts with each other were broken except by way of sea routes controlled by Europe – more especially by England." See J. Nehru, *Inter-Asian Relations*, *India Quarterly*, 2/4 (1946), page 325.

<sup>285</sup> Nehru, *Speeches*, page 167.

<sup>286</sup> Even the choice of national anthem had this angle. Nehru's justification for choosing Jana Gana Mana as the national anthem was as much about aesthetics as much as it was about the text loosely capturing the Indian geography. Since the national anthem was essential to diplomatic missions abroad, it had to sound appealing to the international audience. *Vande Matram* lacked such appeal, Nehru felt.

<sup>287</sup> Ashoka was ideal for Nehru since he was credited with achieving political unity "two thousand years ago and built up an empire far greater than that of Britain in India today. His empire stretched right into Central Asia and included Afghanistan". See Ray, *Return of Buddha*, page 219.

<sup>288</sup> While there was a consensus in the constituent assembly on the adoption of the national flag, one of the members highlighted that the Ashokan wheel did not encapsulate India's historical or philosophical journey. In his words, the flag did not include the Swastika (which too symbolised India's culture) and that the message of universal peace could not be confined to Buddhism alone as Hinduism too preached the same.

### **The New Indian Imaginary: Reinterpreting Buddhism and Non-Alignment**

Since communal tensions had paved the route for partition of India and the superpower rivalry was to transform Asia into another zone of power politics, the Indian imaginary had to be projected in the international domain. No doubt, these were momentous events creating powerful geopolitical upheavals, the “spirit and outlook of a nation” still retained the power to reset these eventualities.<sup>289</sup> What troubled Nehru was not these political changes, “but rather the creeping sense of a change of spirit which created enormous barriers” among Indians.<sup>290</sup> The spirit of India, which enabled her to influence Asia over the course of history, was assaulted by the prevailing forces attempting to pervert it.<sup>291</sup> Thus, Partition and the Cold War were understood as unnatural events, but nevertheless real, with the former “representing the urges of a large number of persons”.<sup>292</sup>

The new language of transnational identity was defined through the ideals of Non-Alignment, the geographical expanse of Buddhism and suppression of Hindu references in independent India’s political identity. The first step was preventing India from acquiring an exclusive Hindu identity, Nehru believed. Even though Hindu conceptions of sacred geography have references to Ceylon, Tibet and Southeast Asia as part of an imagined geographical orbit, the prevailing communal wave in the subcontinent would only promote medieval and fascist tendencies in India, he felt.<sup>293</sup> The Muslim League’s use of communal politics had already divided the subcontinent and subsequent politicization of Hinduism would only further fissiparous tendencies. Thus, he reimagined nationalism by containing the Hindu undertones prevalent in the nationalist discourse. Further, nationalism’s international dimensions evolved from supporting myriad anti-imperialist struggles toward re-engaging Asia through the inherent internationalism Nehru believed to be possessed by the Indian civilization. Sunil Purushotham’s research shows how the new nation-state organized historical time, inherited space and attempts “to integrate the future as the horizon of this structuring of time”.<sup>294</sup> While he makes this argument from the lens of Nehru’s modernizing project which was executed through elections, five-year plans and quotidian developmentalist activities, the reorganization of time and space in the new nation-state, with its Buddhist symbols, went beyond these developments.<sup>295</sup> Through Buddhism, civilization could be traced back to an empirical past given the abundance of recent archaeological discoveries. By owning the Buddha, India’s history appropriated Pakistan, the Himalayan states and Southeast Asia. The idea was to

---

<sup>289</sup> A Common Cultural Inheritance, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 5), page 25.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 343.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

project Indian body-politic as permeable geography, marking its presence beyond its borders.<sup>296</sup> There could be a Tagorean essence in this vision if the argument was limited to cultural and spiritual similarities between Indian culture with that of Asia, that is, the belief in India's continued glimpse in distant traditions even in the times when no major empires ruled it in the past. Nehru complemented and yet digressed from Tagore as he devoted equal focus to geopolitical influence, which was intertwined with cultural influence, or the spirit. If India was understood as a cultural phenomenon for Tagore, Nehru's India stood for diffused geography that could be found beyond her frontiers and the power of "Indian civilization [to] interweave other cultures in a single pattern" was meant to be reflected in territorial preponderance.<sup>297</sup>

Collectively, the colonial experience and resulting nationalist response gave a geopolitical mooring to the idea of India. The idea of India manifested differently in the writings of Hindu nationalists, Muslim intellectuals and secular-minded thinkers in the Congress but its centrality in Asia remained a common underlying theme. For the Congress leadership and Hindu nationalists alike, India's civilizational preponderance and dominant role in the history of the Asian balance of power was a matter of pride. Nehru's approach to India's neighbourhood and Asia had civilizational revivalism as a key objective making Non-Alignment a product of history than that of realpolitik or peace per se. He believed that anticolonial nationalists were by definition conceptualized in the language of history. The encounter with foreign powers was bound to amplify memories of a proud past.<sup>298</sup> Decolonization, once achieved in the true spirit, had the potential to bring these states back to the natural course of history through an acknowledgement of a shared past. However, it was equally important to differentiate between nationalist feelings under foreign domination and that in a free country. Once the imperial power departed, leaving no common enemy to unite against, nationalism had to be rescued from its reactionary tendencies of both Fascism and Communism by recourse to the secular elements of history. Both Communism and Fascism had the potential to exploit the interlude between decolonization and national consolidation and undo nation-building.<sup>299</sup> India's support

---

<sup>296</sup> Nehru was convinced that India, owing to her resources and her geography, would function as a nation tying up other nations of Asia with herself. See To the Nawab of Bhopal, 9 July, 1948, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 7), page 9.

<sup>297</sup> H. Lahiri, 'Tagore's Asianist Discourse: Reception and Resistance in Chowdhury', in Pradipta Shyam and Sandip Kumar Som (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore Revisited: Essays on Tagore* (Kolkata, 2012), page 29.

<sup>298</sup> Just as the nationalist leadership drew on history to justify a unitary state having the right to subsume multiple princely states and administrative hierarchies, India's centrality was similarly imagined for a decolonized Asia.

<sup>299</sup> In the early months following independence, simultaneous instances of Communist-backed violence in India, Burma, Malaya convinced Nehru of its threat to indigenous nationalist movements. Nehru termed Communists as saboteurs and reactionaries as communism was bound to come into conflict with nationalism once the common threat of imperialism was removed. It was not Communism per se but communists' involvement in the violence that needed to be checked. Violent communist movements had spread across southeast Asia, and came in conflict with nationalism, giving India an additional reason to spearhead the norm setting on Asia. While he remained critical of the communist activities

for anti-imperial movements across Asia could play a key role in preventing these digressions, while simultaneously promoting the goal of reviving India's cultural and geopolitical linkages with the region.

However, even if India had noble intentions and had wished to intervene, all such nationalisms are intolerant of interference by external actors. Moreover, interference risks being "regarded as a kind of weapon in the hands of those who are opposed to nationalism".<sup>300</sup> Although Nehru's writings demonstrate an aversion to influencing nationalist movements, he was eager to define India's indispensability to his Asian peers. Non-Alignment Movement, for India, became the means to communicate the Nehruvian sense of Asian history with a unitary Indian state as the central actor. After all, a united India (having combined its geopolitical strength and resources) would be in a better position to aid various nationalist movements as demonstrated by its efforts in Indonesia, Korea and Nepal.

After the departure of imperial powers, Asia had to be reclaimed and not simply engaged with. However, the Transfer of Power, while conferring sovereignty to Indians, also passed on the complexities of colonial India's neighbourhood and regional policies which in turn were products of a complicated relationship between policymakers in British India and London. While imperialism was condemned by the nationalist leadership, the spatial understanding of India and her neighbourhood could not be separated from policies that once tied colonial India with her immediate neighbourhood and rest of Asia. The territorial overlap between imagined cultural geography and imperial India's geopolitical overstretch made it difficult to abstract the former out of the latter. There were limits to conceptually separating colonial India's geopolitical agency from that of a romanticized 'Greater India' since both necessitated conjoined imagination of the Indian subcontinent with its neighbouring geographies.

This research extends the hypothesis that the post-1947 concept of India, as a spatial entity, remained fluid and open-ended. This was largely because Indian leadership was deeply invested in redefining its relationships with Kashmir and managing the colonial policies related to Tibet and China after independence. Nehru's reactions to the shifting regional dynamics were more reflective of how Asia could fit into his *longue duree* vision of Indian history.

Independent India's approach to foreign affairs can be compartmentalized into two distinct spheres, firstly with the distant states and the then power blocs and the other with India's immediate neighbourhood. The former domain is associated with Nehru's famous Non-Alignment dictums, where non-interference and adherence to international law became the pillars of his foreign policy. As seen in the case of the Indonesian struggle for freedom and the

---

across Asia, this was purely an internal matter of discussion and in no way prejudiced India's position in international politics, which was about avoiding power blocs. See Nationalism, Imperialism and Communism, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 8), page 276-77.

<sup>300</sup> Nehru, *Speeches*, page 148.

Korean war, India did not hesitate in intervening through the legal route or otherwise, depending on the circumstances. India questioned the Dutch policy of recognizing parties other than the Indonesian republicans, since it was reminiscent of the British policy of not recognizing the Congress as the sole representative of India. The Indonesian experience with Dutch imperialism had more in common with Indians than just shared colonial experience as it rekindled Nehru's discomfort with the concept of federation. To weaken the nationalists, the Dutch coerced them to accept a federal setup that would keep authority decentralized and hence weakened. The fact that the Federalists were pro-Dutch did not come as a surprise to India. Alongside a formal conference to discuss the situation in Indonesia in 1949, India also called an 'informal conference' after dissatisfaction with developments in the UN. On this occasion, Nehru noted that "we cannot possibly remain silent and just wait for the Security Council to be a little more generous".<sup>301</sup> Simultaneously, India also took the responsibility of representing the Indonesian cause to the international community by personally ferrying Indonesian leaders to the conferences.

Although the contexts differ, Indian vigilantism over Indonesia stands in sharp contrast to Nehru's refusal to actively acknowledge Pakistan as part of his Asian imagination. Just as India's support of the Indonesian struggle was actively thought of as an obligation of history, Nehru's understanding of Pakistan as an ahistorical project omitted it altogether from his Asian story.

### **Pakistan: An Ahistorical National Space?**

By the end of the second world war, when the Muslim League was able to consolidate itself among the subcontinent's Muslim population, the growing support for Pakistan terrified Nehru for reasons other than territorial loss. As Devji argues, Jinnah "exhibited an indifference to India's own geographical integrity by focussing on its partition in strictly legalistic [and populist] terms" in order to disconnect the Muslims from the layered history of Hindu-Muslim relationship as well as India's national geography.<sup>302</sup> Violence (Direction Action Day in case of the Muslim League) and coerced homogeneity were constant markers in the League's indifference and the Hindu nationalist obsession with geography. For Nehru and Gandhi, the refusal to acknowledge violence (episodic or permanent) in the historical nation-building process also reduced its threshold at a time when the Congress and the League battled out their respective territorial imaginations. For the Congress, there was a point of no return after Direct Action Day.

---

<sup>301</sup> 'Informal Conference on Indonesia - Scheduled for April 13, 1949', External Affairs Department, IANZ Branch, Progs, Nos. 837-IANZ, 1949, NAI, page 1.

<sup>302</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, page 26.

Jinnah, accepting both intimacy and difference between the two communities, could still imagine separate arrangements under a loose federal setup as long as legal and constitutional principles were upheld. He had demanded “a social contract between Hindus and Muslims for years... in which all that had been inherited from the [overlapping] past could be abandoned so as to begin afresh”.<sup>303</sup> Nehru’s faith in the indivisible Indian identity, Jinnah believed, would only reduce Indian Muslims into a disempowered religious minority. And since it was history that informed the former’s idea of India, the conflicting “Hindu as well as Muslim narratives of past” would oppress the Muslims further in a Hindu-majority state.<sup>304</sup> Thus, Gandhi’s simultaneous call for non-violence and Hindu-Muslim unity without addressing their acrimonious relations was a façade (if not an ill-informed decision) which would enable the Congress to consolidate power.<sup>305</sup> Jinnah on the other hand was “interested in turning these religious categories into legal persons defined by...wealth, education, number and power; the only relationship that mattered for Jinnah was the contractual or rather constitutional one that bound these people as juridical figures.”<sup>306</sup> As Devji further points out, Jinnah had questioned the territorial discourse that defined the idea of India by pointing out to Gandhi that the Congress was labouring under the wrong idea that self-determination meant that only of a territorial one.<sup>307</sup>

His Pakistan scheme originally included unified Bengal and Punjab as the key constituents, and his partition scheme included the rest of India barring these.<sup>308</sup> The Congress (heavily under Nehru’s influence at the time of independence) preferred partition to a legal setup where differences could be institutionalised to the extent of denying territorial basis to Indian unity, thus terming this coherence as ahistorical. Nehru’s frustration was visible after the Muslim League’s agitation in NWFP compelled Mountbatten to include a referendum in the Partition Plan despite an elected provincial government.<sup>309</sup> The Congress leadership supported a sovereign Pathanistan as a third option as a last effort to prevent Pakistan’s creation, only to

---

<sup>303</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, page 43, 97.

<sup>304</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, page 90, 99.

<sup>305</sup> Earlier, in the 1920s, Tagore had questioned Gandhi’s deployment of faulty parameters to express his commitment to Hindu-Muslim unity as “the tremendous exaltation lately produced by the imaginary easy prospect of Hindu-Muslim unity”. Paraphrasing Tagore, Khilnani states that “such aspects to engineer a national unity spectacular in the moment had invariably left behind a desert track of demoralization...History’s nuances, if “suppressed, ignored or brushed away have a tendency of retrogressing”. See Panoptical Views on Politics: Nationalism — Prof. Sunil Khilnani, YouTube (uploaded 24 September 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WnBaSVI7ek&t=216s> (11 Sept 2022).

<sup>306</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, page 100.

<sup>307</sup> Devji, *Muslim Zion*, page 28.

<sup>308</sup> N. Mansergh, ‘The Partition of India in Retrospect’, *International Journal*, 21/1 (1966), page 14. Also see B. Chakraborty, An Alternative to Partition, *South Asia*, 26/2, page 201.

<sup>309</sup> Note on the Position in the N.W.F.P., Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (SG) File No. 3, PMML, page 191-3.

be reminded of its duplicity when it opposed independence of other provinces (particularly Bengal) or states.

However, while he was able to define the creation of Pakistan as a breakaway Indian territory through the Independence Act, Nehru's anguish following the partition altered his attachment with the subcontinental geography. Unlike the connections he sought with the rest of Asia, his views in the early years of partition suggest that he retained his disdain towards Pakistan. According to Nehru, even if Pakistan wanted to reunite with India at some point, he would refuse such an offer since its creation had already contaminated the subcontinent's historical processes to the point of no return at least in the immediate run. If Pakistan was to return to the Indian fold (Nehru was certain it would) it would have to be through the natural correcting course of history and not on Pakistan's wishes. The Congress too made it clear to London that certain units were contracting out of the Indian union and should they fail to survive they could not return to India. If they were to come back, this had to be in entirety. Meanwhile, India maintained the legal fiction of its unity despite the changed geographical realities.

An ahistorical national space would only cause problems for India if it was to unite in the short run. That West Pakistan was built on the territories where the Muslim League was barely popular till the events of 1945-6 demonstrated the power of religious zeal in upending ethnocultural foundations (especially in the NWFP) that had once kept these forces at bay. While Indian officials cited legal considerations in the public domain, this chapter argues that the above-mentioned rationale could have influenced independent India's refusal to capitalize on problematic territorial consolidation within Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan, Northwest Frontier Province and the northern part of the Jammu and Kashmir's territory under Pakistan's control.<sup>310</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the Prime Minister of Kalat State addressed a letter to the Secretary General, Indian External Affairs Department requesting recognition as an independent state, citing the 11<sup>th</sup> August (1947) meeting with the Crown Representative (CR) and Jinnah where the soon to be declared leaders of Pakistan too recognized the same.<sup>311</sup>

Unlike Nehru's stance on the princes and notwithstanding Pakistan's pressure on Kalat to accede in March 1948, the Draft Communique from the meeting between Mountbatten, Jinnah

---

<sup>310</sup> This is perhaps the most criticized facet of Nehru's policies by the Hindu right wing groups who not only rejected Partition but also launched nationwide protests against the Congress. The Kashmir issue also catapulted the Jana Sangh onto the national stage under Syama Prasad Mukherjee's leadership.

<sup>311</sup> Request from the Wazir-E-Azam Kalat State regarding recognition of the Independent Sovereign Status at Kalat State by the Government of India', External Affairs Department, File no. 14-IA/47, NAI, page 48-9. The Press Communique of a meeting between the Khan, Crown Representative, Jinnah and officials of the Pakistani States Ministry reads as follows: "The Government of Pakistan recognises Kalat as an independent sovereign state in treaty relations with the British Government; with a status different from that of Indian States." Page 49 of the document mentions the 11th August meeting.

and the Khan of Kalat was issued, calling for further legal consultations on whether Pakistan could claim inheritance rights from Kalat.<sup>312</sup>

An emissary from Kalat, who happened to be in Delhi shortly after independence to negotiate the possibility of a Trade Agency between India and Kalat was denied any such arrangement.<sup>313</sup> It was felt that any such recognition would weaken India's case in Hyderabad as it risked Pakistanis making a similar move on Hyderabad.<sup>314</sup> More so, there appeared to be a consensus among Indian policymakers on Kalat's status as an Indian state (to support its accession to Pakistan) despite Pakistani leaders (with reference to 11<sup>th</sup> August statement) accepting its independent status.

While legality and geographical disconnect with Balochistan were cited as the main reasons behind India's reluctance, there was a virtual policy vacuum regarding sensitivity to the Pakistani geography. There had already been attempts by Congress leadership to stoke nationalist sentiment among the Pashtuns in NWFP before independence and later Pakistan accused India of conspiring from the Afghan soil.<sup>315</sup> For all the support he lent to Nehru and Gandhi, Bacha Khan was left helpless and lived with a sense of betrayal. Regarding Gilgit and Hunza, the northernmost parts of the princely state of Kashmir, Indian diplomats rarely recorded their concerns in the region's local politics. The Maharaja, a suzerain authority, possessed the authority to approve the appointment of Hunza's ruler.<sup>316</sup>

---

<sup>312</sup> Private Letters from Lord Listowel to Lord Mountbatten and from Lord Mountbatten to Lord Listowel, MSS Eur. C 357a, IOR, page 47.

Pakistan and Kalat agreed to recognize the latter's status as an independent state (and not an Indian state) for separate reasons. Kalat's independence would enable Pakistan to claim Crown's rights over Kalat's territories (Quetta, Bolan, Nasirabad and Nushki) that were leased out to the British. Legally speaking, the British policymakers argued that Kalat's status as an Indian State would enable it to claim these territories as its own once they departed, but the Khan of Kalat's "insistence on his independence" was a "high price to pay for vanity". Thus, in the weeks preceding the war over J&K, Pakistan appeared more flexible on its relationship with the princes. See 'Status of Kalat', L/P&S/13/1846, IOR, page 31-4.

<sup>313</sup> 'Request from the Wazir-E-Azam Kalat State regarding recognition of the Independent Sovereign Status at Kalat State by the Government of India', External Affairs Department, 48-9 14-IA/47, NAI. In theory, it was possible to use Kalat (and possibly NWFP) against Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir considering its overtures to the Congress leadership but Nehru believed that this would rather weaken India's case on Hyderabad accession. Despite the proximity to Iran and Afghanistan, Balochistan's physical disconnect and Nehru's personal anguish with partition did not generate any enthusiasm on part of the Indian leadership at that time. Jinnah too was sanguine about the fact that Hyderabad could not join Pakistan. Furthermore, Nehru had earlier disregarded Travancore Premier's (who called Nehru an unstable man for his views on princes) attempts to resist accession to India by exploring a similar trade agreement with Jinnah. See Extract from Viceroy's Personal Report, No.14, dated 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1947, Political (Internal) Department, Collection 48/5, L/P&S/13/1842, IOR, page 27.

<sup>314</sup> Request from the Wazir-E-Azam Kalat State, NAI, page 12-13. Refer to Sir GS Bajpai's note on Kalat.

<sup>315</sup> Soon after independence, Pakistani newspapers carried reports accusing Nehru of his personal involvement in destabilizing the NWFP/FATA region. These reports attributed disturbances in Waziristan to covert support from India. See Nehru's letter to Mountbatten dated 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1948, Krishna Menon Papers, Subject File 695 (I), PMML, page 65.

<sup>316</sup> Death of Mohammad Ghazan Khan of Hunza and succession of Mohammad Jamal Khan as Mir of Hunza, R/2/1086/308, IOR, page 3-4. See page 28, for a telegram from the Resident, Jammu and

In the 1950s, when a rebellion in Azad Kashmir (popularly termed as the Sudhan revolt) displaced a few thousand people of Azad Kashmir to Jammu, there was no concern from Delhi.

As the following chapter on Kashmir shall discuss, India's obsession with Jammu and Kashmir eventually boiled down to securing eastern Jammu, valley and Ladakh. With Pakistan, the legality of inheritance overshadowed the emotional entanglements the congress had long cultivated with this space. Despite the opportunities to question Pakistan's tenuous control over these territories, India made peace with the legal acknowledgement of the historical ownership of Pakistan, but charted its new relationship as if it had no historical memory. India-Pakistan dynamic was characterized by conflict and cooperation (as fresh insights from Pallavi Raghavan's research work demonstrate), the former largely based on impulses and the latter on the "necessity of establishing the finality of partition".<sup>317</sup> Barring the entanglement over Kashmir (which involved the historical question of inheritance), it was law and not history that informed Indian understanding of Pakistani territoriality. The trajectory of the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, even if it agonized Jinnah, became a paradigm shift for Nehru as it forced him to think on the former's lines, detaching him from historical memory of India's northwestern frontiers as well as the people who desperately sought help from India (particularly the Baloch royals and the Pashtun leaders). While Jinnah's quest for a united India based on contractual relationship between the two major communities might have failed, the events of partition compelled Nehru to treat India-Pakistan relationship on similar lines.

Except for hoping for Pakistan's eventual merger with India, there was not much Nehru could hope for. For a breakaway territory, it was difficult to define Indo-Pak ties from the perspective of bilateralism and the only uncertainty for Nehru lay in the question of when would the Pakistani territory merge back with India. Engagement between the two countries in the first few years of independence revolved around "Kashmir, canal waters, evacuee property" etcetera; that is, over issues that needed dialogue to minimize hostilities.<sup>318</sup> On the domestic front, Nehru's correspondence with Syama Prasad Mookerjee points to the scrutiny he faced from the right-wing forces over his Pakistan policy. Haunted by the spectre unleashed by religious ideologies that found a common ground in identity-led violence, India, for Nehru, had digressed from the course of history. Indo-Pak interaction in the years after independence could be identified with the Nehru-Liaquat Pact, inconclusive talks over Kashmir (including the

---

Kashmir reaffirming a custom since 1892, wherein the succession of the ruler of Hunza was subject to the Maharaja's approval.

<sup>317</sup> P. Raghavan, 'The Making of the India-Pakistan Dynamic: Nehru, Liaquat, and the No War Pact Correspondence of 1950', *Modern Asian Studies*, 50/5 (2016), page 1647.

<sup>318</sup> N. Jafri, 'Pakistan's Trade with India', *Pakistan Horizon*, 5/2 (1952), page 86.

infamous Nehru-Bogra talks) and the Indus Waters Treaties, perhaps the only success in bilateral ties.

### **The Himalayan States**

The policies in the latter domain demonstrated insecurities and India's version of the Monroe doctrine. Partition on the one hand entailed an uncomfortable acceptance of Pakistan as a breakaway artificial entity. On the other hand, the Himalayan states of Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal – although they became subject to virtually reduced as extensions of the Indian body politic, and denied an independent foreign policy.<sup>319</sup> Nevertheless, with Nehru's intervention, they were classified as special cases, recognized as separate units for their unique history and culture, yet devoid of sovereignty in foreign policy.

For Sikkim (which initially preferred a Standstill Agreement in 1947 despite the offer of accession to India) and Bhutan, which had more commonalities with Tibet rather than mainland north Indian culture, India's historical relationship with Tibet emerged as an important repertoire to highlight its closeness to the former.<sup>320</sup> The MEA's Historical Division, in a 1954 note described Sikkim as a "part of India" from "the viewpoint of external relations".<sup>321</sup> The note pointed out that Sikkim's position was "never similar to that of Bhutan...even in the days of British rule" and "tighter control was exercised" over the state.<sup>322</sup> In 1947, Sikkim asserted itself and "sought a status similar to that of Bhutan", but it was denied by India.<sup>323</sup>

Therefore, as a response to Sikkimese monarchy's uneasy relationship with New Delhi, the pro-merger emigrant Nepali majority (represented by Sikkim State Congress) became India's preferred representatives in the kingdom.

The treaties of Friendship with Nepal and Bhutan, barring their altered text to suit the constitutional language, were replicas of British era agreements.<sup>324</sup> It is also interesting to note how India treated Nepal's domestic and international status through different parameters. In the domestic sphere, the influence of Indian nationalism was crucial in shaping the Nepali Congress; whose leaders (just like those of Bhutan State Congress) took refuge in India at the time of the party's formation in 1946. Unlike Patel who was keen on supporting the Rana dynasty, Nehru favoured then democratic leadership (with the monarch as the notional

---

<sup>319</sup> Further, India deliberately treated each state "as a separate case in its own compartment [with the hope of maintaining]...a larger degree of leverage" and preventing any "collective multilateral action" on their part. See S. Dutt, 'India and the Himalayan states', *Asian Affairs*, 11/1 (1980), page 72.

<sup>320</sup> 'Breakdown in the administration of Sikkim. 2. Appointment of a Dewan by the Govt. of India to administer the state under the direct control of the Indian political officer in Sikkim', Department: President Secretariat, Branch: General, File No. 74-GG/43, NAI, Page 1-3.

<sup>321</sup> Sikkim's External Relations, Subimal Dutt Papers, Subject File 78, PMML, page 141-2.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> For instance, the Indo-Nepal Friendship treaty had provisions relating to foreign policy and defence that were interpreted by India unilaterally.

figurehead) but believed it had nothing to do with Nepal's foreign policy which had to be de-facto under Indian influence.<sup>325</sup> In other words, elected or anointed, Nepal's leadership would be discouraged from discussing foreign policy issues. The friendship treaty was negotiated under the Rana regime during "its last days in power", its ouster did not generate the need to renegotiate it under the successive democratic regime since the hierarchical bilateral relationship was considered to be constant on part of Indian leadership.<sup>326</sup> On their part, the Ranas, cognizant of their weakening position "were keen to clinch a deal with New Delhi as a modicum of assurance against overt interference" but Indians took it to be following the course of history.<sup>327</sup>

Despite the rising anti-India attitudes in Nepal since independence, the Treaty would survive all machinations in the bilateral relationship even if it would cost India its goodwill. After China's invasion of Tibet in 1950, the three states would be integrated further into India's internal security calculus and the southern watershed of the Himalayas would become synonymous with the Indian defence sphere.<sup>328</sup>

The 1951 uprising in Nepal which ended the Rana regime was closely monitored by Nehru. Not only the Government of India permitted the Nepali Congress to use the Indian territory to smuggle arms and stage insurrection, Nehru denied transit facilities to the Nepali army to capture parts of border towns in Nepal that could only be accessed through Indian territory.<sup>329</sup> Senior Nepali Congress leader BP Koirala recalled that "Nehru took a strong line with the Government of Great Britain", given the latter's Nepal policy, and threatened them that "if he did not have his way, he would get out of the Commonwealth".<sup>330</sup>

Indian insecurities over Nepal and Bhutan's foreign policy and international affairs also explain their delayed entry into the United Nations. Nevertheless, understanding India's

---

<sup>325</sup> In his letter dated 17 November, 1950 to BN Rau, Nehru expressed his concerns on foreign interference in Nepal and stated that the "old Rana regime could not be allowed to continue". See BN Rau Papers (1<sup>st</sup>), Correspondence with Jawaharlal Nehru, PMML, page 32. In his interview with the PMML, Former Foreign Secretary KPS Menon recalled the disagreement between Patel and Nehru where the latter expressed support for the democratic movement and the "king in the present case". Menon recalls that Patel "took a different view", since "Ranas had ensured the stability of Nepal for the last hundred years and...could be counted upon to preserve stability in that region". Oral History Transcript, Shri KPS Menon, Accession no. 363, PMML, page 18-19.

<sup>326</sup> S. Subedi, India-Nepal Security Relations and the 1950 Treaty: Time for New Perspectives, *Asian Survey*, 34/3 (1994), page 275.

<sup>327</sup> P. Mehra. 'Managing India's Nepal Policy: The Raj and After', *EPW*, 29/15 (1994), page 850.

<sup>328</sup> See Dutt, 'India and the Himalayan states', page 72. In 1951, the government of India set up the North and North East Border Defence Committee to recommend policies on India's frontiers. Indian states in the north were clubbed together with the Himalayan states as part of the frontier defence strategy. According to former Chief of India's Intelligence Bureau, VP Mallick, the committee's first set of recommendations (submitted in April 1951) included Sikkim, Bhutan, NEFA and the Eastern frontier bordering Burma. The latter part contained the recommendations on Ladakh and the frontier regions of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal and was submitted in September, 1951.

<sup>329</sup> BP Koirala Oral History Transcript, Accession Number 739, PMML, page 62-63.

<sup>330</sup> BP Koirala Oral History Transcript, PMML, Page 64-65.

relationship with these states from the lens of buffer spaces (often deployed by IR scholarship) would be a partial understanding of Nehruvian thinking. Indian policies over Kashmir (to be discussed in the upcoming chapter) and Bhutan, other than realpolitik, would also be shaped by a deep emotional connection with the Himalayas. Always understood as impermeable to invading forces, Nehru was overwhelmed by the strength of both the old Indian spirit (through Buddhism) and modernity (through nuclear attacks and radiation that had the power to pierce the Himalayas), and naturally, he sided with the former.<sup>331</sup> India's simultaneous adoption of Buddhist identity and appropriation of the sacred Himalayas would further disempower these states from having a history independent of India as Indian civilization was presented as a stronger cultural bond between independent India, Bhutan and Sikkim. India – despite being the larger state along with its successor status – could not solely rely on the colonial agreements and the provisions of the GOI Act of 1935 to institutionalise the appropriation of the Himalayan States. Sikkim had already countered India's claims to successor status with the argument that Independent India was a “new juristic person” which could not “claim to be subrogated to the rights and obligations of the British Government”.<sup>332</sup>

Sikkim's demand for the return of Darjeeling becomes important in this case. In a memorandum shared with the Viceroy, the Maharaja of Sikkim claimed that Darjeeling's cession to British India in 1835 was temporary, did not give the British (and hence India as the successor entity) sovereignty over the area by the virtue of agreement.<sup>333</sup>

The legal anomalies arising out of colonial treaties found an appropriate complement and alternative in the Buddhist narrative. For example, Sikkim was not just a protectorate (continuing the relationship established under the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1890) but was also tied to India historically through Buddhism. And for both strategic and cultural reasons, democratic/progressive movements modelled on the lines of Congress did not receive wholehearted support from India in the first few years, since India also felt that stability lay in the continuation of dynastic rule.<sup>334</sup> Sikkim's “pyramidal hierarchy ranging from the feudal landlords to the Maharaja” necessitated Indian intervention to maintain order and prevent possible communist infiltration, and that the popular uprising in Sikkim took inspiration from “experiences in other states in other parts of India”.<sup>335</sup>

---

<sup>331</sup> Foreword to 'A Bunch of Old Letters' – I, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 44), page 659-60.

<sup>332</sup> L. Rose, 'India and Sikkim: Redefining the Relationship', *Pacific Affairs*, 42/1 (1969), page 33.

<sup>333</sup> 'Memorandum from H.H. the Maharaja of Sikkim regarding the cession of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Terai which at present form part of the Darjeeling District', File No. 1446/67/43, Department: President Secretariat, Branch: General, NAI, page 11-12.

<sup>334</sup> A.C. Sinha, Political Development and Strategic Security in Bhutan, *Dialogue*, 11/1.

<sup>335</sup> Harishwar Dayal, the Political Officer for Sikkim in 1949 held Sikkim's feudal structure responsible for tensions that broke out in May and June, 1949 which were followed by Indian intervention. The Political Officer was compelled to intervene by sending force to maintain law and order. Extract from conversation between Mr. J.S.H. Shattock and Harish Dayal, Political Officer for Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan on August 25<sup>th</sup>, Sikkim Affairs and Relations with India, L/PS/13/1449, *JOR*, page 12-13. Also,

While Indian unity was defined and institutionalized by negating princely claims independent India acknowledged the independence of Himalayan states but continued the British policy of influencing their respective foreign policies. The India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty of 1949 was a continuation of the Treaty of Punakha of 1910, where Bhutan agreed to be guided by India in its external relations.<sup>336</sup>

Besides the security interests, leaving these states with their monarchical structures intact (for the time being) demonstrated living proof of the cultural practices that existed in the Indian cultural geography, if not the political one. This would be demonstrated by the itinerary of Nehru's visit to Bhutan in 1958. Enroute to Paro, when he reached Sikkim, "the first engagement of the Prime Minister in Gangtok was to open the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, where in a beautiful Sikkimese/Tibetan style building, an extensive collection of Tibetan manuscripts and artefacts had been assembled under the guidance of the Maharajkumar of Sikkim".<sup>337</sup> As insinuated by former diplomat Jagat Mehta, who had accompanied Nehru in his historic Bhutan 1958, Bhutan (with its Buddhist characteristics) had to be protected both from the forceful introduction of modernity by Maoists in Tibet that threatened to spill over southwards as well as from Hinduism, "with its caste structure and different culture, which had come with the Nepalese who continued to infiltrate the southern slopes of Bhutan".<sup>338</sup> Nehru's romanticization of Bhutan also ran counter to ideas of modernity and progress he otherwise professed to criticize monarchies. It brought forth imagery of an India frozen in time, too picturesque and culturally rich to be tampered with:

I must confess that I had a powerful urge to go to Bhutan. The urge is there when high mountains are concerned...one of the very few countries which still live in a past age, unaffected by what is called modern life...I shall have some peace of mind and live in a world different to what I am used to...it took me to a world which modern science and technology has not affected at all...yet it was not an unhappy world.<sup>339</sup>

The feudal relationship between the king and the subjects did not seem to bother Nehru as long as Bhutan's remoteness remained under Indian supervision and its ruling dynasty had agreed to let its foreign policy be guided by India. Bhutan's acquiescence to Indian geopolitical vision also meant that India's support to the Bhutan State Congress (which was dedicated to

---

see page 11A/11B, a Reuters report dated 1 August, 1949, quoted the President of Sikkim State Congress, who appealed to the Government of India to support the popular uprising in Sikkim and take over the state administration.

<sup>336</sup> Bhutan's External Relations, Subimal Dutt Papers, Subject File 78, PMML, page 123. Also, a 1953 note by Foreign Service officer TN Kaul also observed that "Bhutan Government cannot have any foreign representatives...without our [India's] consent". See Subimal Dutt Papers, Subject File 78, PMML, page 124-5.

<sup>337</sup> J. Mehta, Catalysing Graduated Modernisation Through Diplomacy: NEHRU'S VISIT TO BHUTAN-1958', *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 6/2 (2002), page 89.

<sup>338</sup> Mehta, 'Catalysing Graduated Modernization', page 94-5.

<sup>339</sup> To Chief Ministers, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1958, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 44), page 15-6. Also see *The Contemporary World*, page 31.

democracy, political rights abolition of feudalism) did not acquire similar intensity as in case of the Sikkim State Congress. When greeted by the ruler of Bhutan, he felt he had seldom seen “anything more spectacular than [the] long procession of people looking like medieval knights, dignitaries...in their special robes”.<sup>340</sup> While change was inevitable, he hoped that it “not come suddenly to them [the people of Bhutan]”.<sup>341</sup> Nehru confided in the monarchy to be the driving agent in introducing “controlled modernization” and preserving the “distinct personality of Bhutan”.<sup>342</sup>

Theoretically, there was no distinction between abhorring imperialism and attempts at influencing India’s neighbouring territories. On the contrary, NAM was projected as synonymous with the principles of Indian foreign policy, having roots in Gandhian/Buddhist notions of non-violence and peaceful co-existence, inter-war era developments and the second world war.

However, the neighbourhood policy, traditionally understood as a set of rules combining inheritance and realpolitik, had a deep historical memory tied with the idea of nation itself. This chapter has highlighted Nehru’s misapprehensions regarding inheritance, where recourse to history instilled confidence that India’s status as a successor state would guarantee her regional designs an international acceptance.

At a time when India’s own political future was unclear due to Muslim League’s territorial demands and fate of princely states (in addition to widespread communal riots in North and East India), Nehru, in his capacity as the head and external affairs minister of the interim government organized the conference to project India’s centrality in Asia and to promote inter-Asian harmony. This notwithstanding, the conference was also a platform to convey the nation’s sense of itself.<sup>343</sup> The narrative of the conference defined history and civilizational heritage as a stepping stone to reclaim Asia.

---

<sup>340</sup> To Chief Ministers, October 15, 1958, *SWJN* (2nd series, Vol. 44), page 21.

<sup>341</sup> To Chief Ministers, page 20.

<sup>342</sup> Mehta, ‘Catalysing’, page 96.

Although a marginal issue in bilateral ties, Bhutan had a very important message for India considering the domestic challenges Nehru was embattled with. He was impressed with the reception of Hindi language by the Bhutanese people, with a proactive role played by the Maharaja in its promotion. Bhutan’s continuing antiquity, prevalence of Buddhism and the reception of India held important lessons for the linguistic divisions in India that Nehru believed as antithetical to nationalist feelings.

<sup>343</sup> In August 1946, Nehru’s address to the Indian Council for World Affairs outlined his preliminary thoughts on the Asian Relations Conference. For Nehru, scientific cooperation, the status of immigrants and cultural exchange were not as essential as it was to convey India’s centrality in Asia’s intra-regional and defence affairs. As he stated, “whether one talks of 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 [thus] it is inevitable for India to be the centre of things in Asia”. See Nehru, ‘Inter Asian Relations’, page 323-4.

Nehru highlighted the role of the proposed conference in reviving India’s geographical connections with neighbouring territories that had gone dormant due to the development of colonial sea routes.

## **Violence as Part of India's International Identity**

Around the time of Cabinet Mission's arrival, many nationalists and legal experts of the time either favoured partition or some form of loose federal scheme to pacify the Muslim League. For Ambedkar, there was no scope for reconciliation between the two communities. Even though two-nation theory or partition was abhorred by Maulana Azad, who was convinced that the "Cabinet Mission Plan was the best solution from every point of view" as "it preserved the unity of India...".<sup>344</sup> Nehru's close aide, VK Krishna Menon too digressed when, in 1947, he wrote to Mountbatten "urging the newly appointed viceroy to break the impasse with the Muslim League by acceding to the creation of many small "Pakistans," each with control over their own economic policy, with their own chief minister and even their own flag, but without control over foreign affairs or defence".<sup>345</sup> Demands for autonomy, which could be argued as fundamental to equality, were seen by Nehru as threats to India's unity. As Niraja Gopal states, "the idea of citizenship was moreover forged simultaneously with the idea of the nation".<sup>346</sup> Self-determination was attributed to an indivisible national identity which could not co-exist with sub-national or regional feelings.

As the chapter discusses, India's neighbourhood became a crucial reference point for articulating its uniform national identity, something that Indian domestic politics was too divided to offer. The underlying message was that the moment Indian influence transcended its traditional frontiers, it sublimated itself and manifested in a uniform Indianness, ceasing to be defined by narrow attributes of nationalism. Thus, it was important for Nehru to highlight that the basis of this influence was a spiritual vitality produced by centuries of co-existence and intermingling in a large subcontinent. The new state instead redirected these concepts to impose uniformity; meaning that the 'international' being the reference point for nationalist identity legitimized the suppression of diversity in Independent India.

The previous chapters discussed another dimension to Nehru's fascination with the international domain, that is, its role in ideating unity and justifying India's successor status. Nehru's emphasis on international identity also came with its repercussions. In the early years following independence, Nehru relied on foreign policy as a tool for national consolidation.

No doubt republicanism lay at the heart of Congress discourse, the international constituents of the idea of India narrowed the spectrum of what Indians could do with the republican identity. Republicanism was indeed demonstrated in adult franchise and the government's welfare and socialist policies, but fell short of addressing the questions of representation based on ethnic, religious or regional demands; it was fixated on legitimizing India's geographic unity. Attempts to define India's territoriality were prioritized over accommodating India's diversity, especially

---

<sup>344</sup> M. Azad, *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version* (Madras, 1988), page 200.

<sup>345</sup> Bayly, 'The Ends of Liberalism', page 610.

<sup>346</sup> N. Gopal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History* (Massachusetts, 2013), page 12.

in the border areas as well as populations with a strong sense of ethno-nationalist identity. In the realm of personal laws, Hinduism, along with Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism were legally assimilated. Gopal further writes that “since the Indian nation was not [deliberately] defined in terms of any ethnocultural identity, nationality could not form the basis of claims to citizenship from either”.<sup>347</sup> The legal definition of India (through the Independence Act) as an inheritance from empires of the past itself meant that constitutionalism (in conventional terms) was inadequate in imagining India’s geographical coherence or its transnational character.

Despite drifting from the Gandhian thought as Nehru understood India’s coherence in the historical empires, Gandhi’s mass appeal and moral messages made him the true architect of the freedom struggle’s democratic and republican character. As understood, defining India as a product of successive empires could not disconnect Indian history from violence, Nehru gave a false temporality to non-violence, thus having his Gandhian moment in attributing independent India’s identity to Buddha. Perhaps it was a philosophical tool justifying Indian territoriality (even if it was incorrect) as a product of consensus and non-violence and Gandhi as the destined successor to Buddha:

We have attained our political freedom mainly through the efforts of one [Gandhi] who, though not a Buddhist by religion, could claim by virtue of his words and deeds to be one of the noblest inheritors of the teachings of Gautama Buddha.<sup>348</sup>

The emphasis on tracing territorial nationalism to Buddhism also made the message of peace compatible with geopolitics, both being essential to Nehru’s internationalist project. Other than the above-mentioned promises, the social contract between the Indian leadership and India’s citizens was promising yet ambiguous on issues tied to political representation.

Nehru remained critical of many of Gandhi’s ideas, but the latter’s stature and contribution to the three-decade long (and largely peaceful) struggle gave Indian leadership a conducive atmosphere to ideate a national identity which remained ambivalent on granting rights or political autonomy based on religious or ethnolinguistic background. While it was Gandhi’s quotidian engagement with the masses and the need to accommodate diverse identities that remained his focus; for Nehru, people by default had to rally behind the leader (himself). Later, Nehru’s obduracy over the grouping scheme envisaged under the Cabinet Mission Plan would rather accelerate the forces of partition.

Soon after independence and Gandhi’s death, the Indian state’s refusal to honour the promises made to the Kashmiris (to be discussed in the next Chapter) and Sikhs attracted criticism from their respective leaders who refused to accept partition as the final verdict on India’s destiny. Sikh scholars and intellectuals often quoted Gandhi’s 1931 speech at Delhi’s Sisgunj Gurudwara where he promised the Congress’s support for the demands that the Sikh

---

<sup>347</sup> Gopal, *Citizenship*, page 55.

<sup>348</sup> The Message of the Buddha, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 9), page 102.

community would make. The congress stood for safeguard of the minorities, including the Sikhs, a community of “brave people” who knew how to “safeguard their rights by the exercise of arms if it should ever come to that”, Gandhi said.<sup>349</sup> In 1946, the Akali Dal had put forward the demand for a separate Sikh state. Later, in 1952, when confronted by slogans of Punjabi Suba (statehood) in his public address in Patiala, Nehru warned “I will not allow India to be divided again...If there is trouble in any part of India, I would put it down with all my strength” since these demands were termed as an act of separatism.<sup>350</sup>

To Nehru, cultural autonomy, and not political autonomy marked the limits of India's accommodation of diversity (including the Kashmiris, Sikhs and the Nagas). This is where - as Upendra Baxi mentions – Nehru hoped to rely on his charisma and historical references to dismiss such demands as even having a legal basis.<sup>351</sup> The belief in unity and India's imperial/civilizational expanse was never conditional to any social contract since regional or religious identities were trivial matters in India's historical journey. The only constant was the Indian spirit, an abstract culmination of the interconnected cultures that defined India's domestic and neighbouring spaces.

As mentioned above, with sharpening of communal fault lines, he grew cautious of associating India with her Hindu foundations, increasingly turning towards Buddhism and Mauryan past. The history of India was communicated to an international audience without overt references to religion and identity, without precluding the possibility of having a strong unitary state. The justification of a unitary state (and references to past empires) not only carried passive violence implicit in its definition, but also revived multiple competing (other than that of Muslim League) historical narratives challenging Nehruvian thought.<sup>352</sup> The act of legally defining India as a united and timeless entity had both domestic and international implications. The requirement of a powerful state was not simply about correcting “stultifying effects of Indian society”, but also censoring alternative nationalist and sub-nationalist aspirations in post-partition India.<sup>353</sup>

---

<sup>349</sup> *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 51 (Ahmedabad, 1972), page 186-7.

<sup>350</sup> J. Grewal, *Master Tara Singh in Indian History: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Politics of Sikh Identity* (New Delhi, 2017), page 467.

<sup>351</sup> U. Baxi, The Recovery of Fire: Nehru and Legitimation of Power in India, *EPW*, 25/2 (1990), page 197. This trait of Nehru was also observed by Lord Pethick Lawrence in his letter to Wavell discussing Nehru's plans to visit Kashmir in 1946 to stoke up the popular sentiment against the Maharaja. Terming Nehru's proposed visit as unauthorized owing to the absence of viceroy's executive council's jurisdiction over states, Pethick-Lawrence pointed towards Nehru's “charming side” which he could use to “get away with it all right”. See Extract from Private and Secret Letter from Lord Pethick-Lawrence to Lord Wavell, dated 22 November, 1946, Kashmir: Affairs and Fortnightly Reports, File L/PS/13/1266, IOR, Page 138.

<sup>352</sup> This is not to claim that Nehru or the Hindu nationalists were solely responsible for the emergence of competing parallel ideas on territorial statehood. Such ideas evolved through the course of time but the popularity of the Congress and its electoral success contributed to the deepening of ideological divisions.

<sup>353</sup> Purushotham, *Raj to Republic*, page 342.

Besides the threat to its unity, the existence of multiple nationalist aspirations would be detrimental to India's broader vision for Asia. Moreover, British experiments with federative proposals (notably the 1935 Government of India Act) were not forgotten and demands of identity-based reservations (other than that of caste) were dubbed as divisive and treasonous. The concept of federation was approached with unity as the focal point. There are ample references attributed to Nehru's suspicions of federalism, his inflammatory speeches against the princely states and uncomfortable relationship with linguistic demands make it difficult to gauge his commitment towards federalism in true letter and spirit.<sup>354</sup> The fact that Nehru saw the demand for linguistic provinces as synonymous with the problems surrounding the accession of Hyderabad and Kashmir is another proof that he considered the Indian identity to be indivisible<sup>355</sup>:

We have had many troubles since independence; the state of Hyderabad has become a nuisance... There is conflict going on in Kashmir and there are also arguments and debates about linguistic provinces... The Congress is wedded to the principle... of linguistic provinces [but] I do not wish our unity to be disrupted by this separatist tendency being given priority.<sup>356</sup>

Linguistic identity was essential but not of "primary importance" in the prevailing circumstances when a newly independent nation had other pressing challenges to address.<sup>357</sup> Despite his popularity and acceptance as a national leader, Nehru's views on the issue of language were at crossroads with sentiment prevailing in several parts of the country. His ideas began to be challenged even before the constitution was finalized. Similar to his thoughts on India's political personality, he envisioned the creation of an all-India language that too reflected its transnational heritage.<sup>358</sup>

Responding to a controversy over the choice of Jana Gana Mana as the national anthem, Nehru pointed to the specific identities that questioned it (which implicitly implied their non-acceptance of the Indian identity). He questioned, "are we going to shake and twist our cultural institutions, because somebody who used to belong to Muslim League or Madras does not approve of them?"<sup>359</sup>

---

<sup>354</sup> The Indian federal structure, as defined by the constitution devolved a certain degree of autonomy to the states, but it was strictly dependent on the will of the Centre. See H.M. Rajashekara, 'Nehru and Indian Federalism', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 55/2 (1994), page 137.

<sup>355</sup> Nehru found Pakistan's treatment of princely states to be incongruous with conventional nation-building process. While India had introduced responsible government in the former princely states, Pakistan's inability to fully absorb some of the princely states (Chitral, Swat etcetera) made him question its legitimacy on these grounds, other than the use of religion in defining its national identity.

<sup>356</sup> The Inevitability of Accession, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 6), page 225.

<sup>357</sup> Objectives Resolution and the Draft Constitution, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 8), page 177.

<sup>358</sup> Citing close links between ancient Pahlavi and Vedic Sanskrit, he proposed a new language with 3000 or so basic words, that would be a mix of these two languages along with English and other foreign languages.

<sup>359</sup> Duties in a Free India, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 7), page 406-7.

As diverse ethnic/linguistic groups, be it the Sikhs, Kashmiris, Nagas or the Tamils agitated for provisions that were perceived as separatist or seeking autonomy, Nehru invoked India's international civilizational spirit. An ideal foreign policy, that entailed the revival of the civilizational spirit in Asia, could only become a reality only when such demands would stop.

This is not to question his conviction in his belief in unity in diversity but rather his fear of the Indian identity since it was "something held the people of India together...[the] thing which gave strength to India...also has given weakness to her".<sup>360</sup> While he was not against provincialism per se, he would continue to "oppose provincialism with all might".<sup>361</sup>

Foremost, the submission to history to make a case for India's unity and strong central government through the imperial past, bundling different identities into 'Indians' by invoking civilization only reignited multiple competing narratives after independence. Independence, rather than providing a level playing field to aspiring religious/ethnic minorities, offered additional impetus to consolidating unitary tendencies. In the domestic sphere, Nehru had to contend with ethnic and nationalist aspirations since they used similar deductive arguments from their historical interpretations to claim separate statehood or special provisions. In Kashmir, the memory of centuries of foreign rule shaped Sheikh Abdullah's nationalism (this shall be discussed in the coming chapter). Having their territorial aspirations scuttled under competing ideologies of the Congress and the League, Sikh demands had the Khalsa Panth and Maharaja Ranjit Singh's imperial exploits at the heart of their identity.<sup>362</sup> In Madras, the Congress underwent a structural transformation to accommodate the local caste aspirations and Tamil nationalist tendencies.<sup>363</sup> Kashmiri and Sikh aspirations, on the surface appeared to be based on the notions of equality and social justice but asserted an individuality that stemmed from their respective imperial pasts. Similarly, in the northeast, as Elisabeth Leake argues:

---

<sup>360</sup>Fundamental Unity of India, *SWJN* (Series 2, Vol. 7), page 392.

<sup>361</sup> Fundamental Unity, page 394.

<sup>362</sup> The two Sikh members of the Constituent Assembly (Sardar Hukam Singh and Bhupinder Singh) refused to ratify the final draft of the Indian Constitution after their demands for separate electorates, reservations in Central and Punjab legislature, and reservations in the Army were not accepted. Hukam Singh stated that the Sikhs had been "discriminated against. Let it not be misunderstood that the Sikh community has agreed to this Constitution. I wish to record an emphatic protest here. My community cannot subscribe to this historic document". See Appendix 9 Sardar Hukam Singh's Last Speech in the Constituent Assembly, in Grewal, *Master Tara Singh*, page 695-700. During the peak of its power under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sikh empire controlled Kashmir, Ladakh and the north-western India up to the Afghan border.

<sup>363</sup> The word Dravidian became synonymous with Non-Brahmins during the Dravidian movement which began articulating its political aspirations. The Dravidian demand of 1938, calling for separation from India, had gained greater traction after Mr. Jinnah's articulation of the Pakistan Demand. Dravidian Movement, L/I/1/1155, War Series, File No. 462/144, IOR, page 11.

the Indian state's concerns...were as focused on national security as nation-building (if not more so). This served as a key impetus for ignoring local demands for the reconstitution of Assam into a series of smaller ethnolinguistic states during the 1956 States Reorganization Commission.<sup>364</sup>

The next chapter takes Kashmir as a case study, understanding the complex interplay of history, inheritance and the problems associated with Nehru's romanticization of the valley. If not a means, India's international identity ensured violence was not a product of impulse but a legitimized response to bring independent India in line with the course of history.

---

<sup>364</sup> Leake, *Where National*, page 861.

## Chapter Four

### Contest of Nationalisms: Kashmir's True Inheritance

#### Introduction

It has often crossed my mind that Nehru's love of Kashmir made him jealous of my hold over its people. This resentment expressed itself in his taking action against me... It would not be difficult to believe that when he died, like when the Emperor Jehangir passed away, 'Kashmir' was hovering over his last few breaths.<sup>365</sup>

Sheikh Abdullah, *Flames of Chinar*

These views from Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography speak about more than just Nehru's love for Kashmir. They attest to Nehru's intimacy and insecurities with a land he coveted to the extent that he would defy conventional politics and resort to deploying coercive tools to justify Kashmir valley's place in India.

This chapter delves into the semantics of Kashmir's inheritance in Nehru's thought and praxis, and the contradictions it posed to his other promise to settle the Kashmir issue through plebiscite or the will of the people. It connects the important dots between the intellectual foundations of Nehru's India and their application to Kashmir and examines his claim over Kashmir as a historical Indian territory and his ensuing opposition to both, the international opinion and Kashmir's popular mood. The chapter further highlights the change in Nehru's own definition of inheritance of Kashmir following his fallout with Sheikh Abdullah.

Kashmir entangled Nehru due to two factors. Firstly, the Congress politics in the states had long based its legitimacy through its support of the right to self-determination. Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India had made popular will conditional to its full accession. The Transfer of Power, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, installed Sheikh Abdullah as the political head of the state administration. Abdullah's popularity and the diminished role of the monarch in post-accession Jammu and Kashmir weakened the procedural legitimacy of 'inheritance', which the Congress had improvised to fuse ideas of unity with that of a timeless nation to monopolize control over the newly formed nation-state. Inheritance and populism, which were otherwise skilfully deployed to claim a united India, contradicted each other as Abdullah's populist base existed separately from that of the Congress, if not in its opposition.

In other words, Abdullah's predominant position, his elevation as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and later UNSC resolutions deterred India from using its successor identity to fully integrate the state into India.

---

<sup>365</sup> Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, *Flames of the Chinar: An Autobiography*, tr. Khushwant Singh (New Delhi, 1993), page 76.

Secondly, Abdullah's political motivations stemmed not just from the instrument of accession but Nehru's own promise that made the will of the people fundamental to the fate of Kashmir; he also saw himself as the real inheritor of Jammu and Kashmir just like the Congress legitimized its successor identity through its interpretation of the Indian Independence Act.<sup>366</sup>

For Nehru, the solution lay in transferring the agency from the monarch to the Indian state. That is, for him, Jammu and Kashmir belonged to India not only because of its accession, but rather to India's successor identity which had the inherent power to override both princely and Pakistani claims to any part of India, at least in the legal and moral sense.

This chapter elaborates the political situation in Jammu & Kashmir between the late 1940s and the early 1950s through the available archives and news reports. It attempts to distill Nehru's thoughts and decisions on Jammu and Kashmir in light of his simultaneous love and anxiety for the Kashmir valley. This chapter also postulates that Kashmir remained non-negotiable for Nehru. Kashmir was "undoubtedly, that is legally speaking, historically speaking, constitutionally speaking, a part of India, a part of the Union of India", as Nehru stated.<sup>367</sup> It was also a key part of the subcontinent's liminal zones that figured substantially in his writings. Nehru's description of the NWFP, Kashmir, Tibet and Xinjiang hinted at more than just India's political claim on these areas; as it loosely mirrored his thoughts on Greater India. With Nehru as the quintessential link between Abdullah and the mainland Congress leadership, and later as the architect of Kashmir's relationship with India, the chapter studies Kashmir through interlinkages between Nehru's abstract and contextual sense of India's sovereignty over Kashmir.

### **Kashmir's Inheritance: Torn Between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah**

It was not the British policies as much as it was the opposition to the Dogra empire that directly shaped the trajectory of the political struggle in Kashmir. Political consciousness in Kashmir had emerged in the public sphere by the 1920s, culminating in the 1931 agitation and the formation of the Muslim Conference (and later National Conference).

Later, Nehru struggled to rely on the instrument of accession to claim ownership over Kashmir since his alliance with Abdullah was based on nominating Kashmiris as the original signatories of accession. The National Conference had already outlined a separate status for Jammu and Kashmir in its *Naya Kashmir* Plan while expressing its desire to function as a

---

<sup>366</sup> The policy was evident since the time when Abdullah was appointed as the Prime Minister in March 1948 wherein "he continued to represent the Maharaja and worked under the shade of the Royal Seal". When the Maharaja blamed him of reneging on the loyalty pledge sworn by Abdullah, in 1949, he was asked by the Indian government to leave the state. In legal terms, Abdullah's appointment by the Maharaja enabled him to become the leader of the entire Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir even though his popularity did not extend beyond the valley and its neighbouring districts. See K. Ahmad, *Kashmir: Looking Back in Time* (New Delhi, 2021), page 74.

<sup>367</sup> Views on the World Problems, *SWJN* (Series 2, Vol. 39), page 569.

constitutional monarchy, as a part of the British Indian federal apparatus. The Kashmiri political discourse did not exactly share Nehru's disdain for loose or decentralized federal arrangements since they ran counter to his theoretical foundation of a unified nation-state. While inheritance was invoked by the Indian leadership to claim the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, Nehru's support to the populist struggle in the state failed to finalize India's relationship with Kashmir. The reasons lay in the valley's demography and an unpleasant collective memory of the Dogra rule. The emergence of mass consciousness and the eventual rise of the National Conference also broadened Abdullah's politics towards championing inclusivity, welfare of the 'nation' and a responsible government. In theory, this was an attempt to steer Kashmiri aspirations away from the religious spectrum in which the valley's populist struggle had long operated. The shift did not elevate Abdullah's stature beyond the valley but gave him the legitimacy to define Kashmir's status as an inheritor separate from that of India, that eventually challenged Nehru's monopoly over the discourse of Indian history. Although Nehru had outlined that the fate of Kashmir would be decided by the Kashmiris themselves, his promise outlived its utility once the British had left and the Government of India consolidated its administrative apparatus over the part of J&K's territory under its control. While the instrument of accession for J&K had similar provisions as those signed by other princely states, the crisis of popular legitimacy (for both India and Pakistan) and the fog of war made the state's future conditional to the will of the people (with three-fourths of the state's population comprising of Muslims).

In other words, Abdullah's influence on the valley's populace meant that Kashmir had a democratic mandate in his popularity that even India and Pakistan could not exercise, owing to absence of institutional roots of both Congress and the Muslim League. Given the popularity of Abdullah's emancipatory discourse and relatively obscure sentiments on India or Pakistan, it was possible for him to imagine Kashmir as a separate political entity even if it remained heavily dependent on the two states for economic and geopolitical factors.

For Nehru, inheritance of a unified India was essential in realizing its historical geopolitical potential and for Abdullah, inheritance was essentially a demand for the oppressed people of the state. Given J&K's insular geographical location, the solution lay in a stable South and Central Asian region so Jammu and Kashmir could reap the best opportunities from India and Pakistan. For this purpose, Kashmir's external affairs could ideally be managed by India and Pakistan without compromising on essential tenets of Kashmiri nationalism. Understood in this context, Abdullah's repeated references expressing anguish at Pakistan-sponsored invasion accords reinvestigation into his thoughts on J&K's accession. The aggression from Pakistan not only compelled him to accept the accession despite ambiguous Kashmiri Muslim sentiment on joining India; it also scuttled Abdullah's desire to capitalize on advantages that could be extracted from J&K's geographic location through a working relationship with India and

Pakistan combined.<sup>368</sup> Abdullah's anguish stemmed from his diminished bargaining power as any accommodation with Pakistan had been ruled out once India stepped in to fight the tribal invasion of Jammu & Kashmir.

While he subscribed to Nehru's commitment to secularism, Abdullah refused to adhere to Nehru's interpretation of inheritance which exterminated states' identities. Abdullah's nationalism, even though it drew inspiration from the Congress, essentially claimed inheritance of Kashmir from the Dogras and not the British empire. Thus, irrespective of the Kashmir matter being referred to the United Nations, the finality of New Delhi's pronouncements on the matter of accession were questionable for the Kashmiris. For Abdullah, the legal provisions of the constitution and the instrument of accession were clear enough to preserve Kashmir's individuality and hence contradicted any attempts to merge the state into the Indian Union.

Irrespective of the threats from Pakistan and the UN-mediated referendum (if it were to be held), Kashmir was "a unit of the Indian Federation and [had] to be governed accordingly," a right enshrined in the Indian constitution.<sup>369</sup> Consequentially:

the framing of the constitutions [ought to be] be entrusted to a Constituent Assembly for the unit concerned... Even in a Federation every state has the right to make its own constitution. India cannot, therefore, prevent Kashmir, which at present is a unit of the Indian Federation, from exercising a similar right, which, indeed, is expressly recognized in the Constitution of India.<sup>370</sup>

In a speech after his release from jail in 1968, Abdullah reiterated how the Indo-Pak war left the settlement of Kashmir unfinished. Reiterating the Congress party's line, he too stated that after the lapse of paramountcy "sovereignty of monarchs had reverted to the people of the states".<sup>371</sup> Secondly, Nehru's decision to take the matter to the United Nations exposed Kashmir (and resultantly the Nehru-Sheikh relationship) to the fluidity of Cold War politics as he realised that the UN's decision-making was aligned with the power politics.<sup>372</sup> The first decade after independence witnessed the extremes of Nehru's unconditional love and contempt towards Abdullah. Starting out as J&K's Prime Minister in 1948, Abdullah was arrested in August 1953 on charges of sedition, which was followed by a long phase of incarceration. Although the reasons for Nehru's hostility against Abdullah and his reluctance towards plebiscite can be understood from a realist lens of deterring separatist sentiment or

---

<sup>368</sup> A. Noorani, 'Kak and Sheikh', *Frontline* (10 Sept 2010), <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article30181714.ece> (15 Oct. 2023)

<sup>369</sup> N. Khan, *Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's Reflections on Kashmir* (Cham, 2018), page 40.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Khan, *Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah*, page 171.

<sup>372</sup> Before the Kashmir issue was internationalized, Nehru felt it appropriate for Kashmir to be discussed by UNSC or Secretary General. He even rejected the possibility of discussing the Kashmir problem with the International Court of Justice citing the lack of UN's oversight over the body. See Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, L/P+S/13/1845.b., IOR, page 83.

Pakistani interference, this chapter delves deep into the underlying thought processes that drove Nehru's outlook towards Kashmir.

Nehru's love and insecurities stemmed from his Kashmiri ethnicity and his exoticization of the Kashmiri geographical space, something which would not be assimilated into the Indian fabric in the way defined by the principles of western models of democracy. The constitutional language was insufficient to capture his intimate thoughts on Kashmir's individuality and its Indianness. Nehru romanticized Kashmir's exclusivity as a subset of the broader Indian identity. The century-long rule of the Dogra regime did generate substantial resistance against the monarchy and a momentary fascination for socialist ideas (under Abdullah's leadership) but the Congress leadership refrained from expanding its base in the state. This can be argued to be true for the other princely states that survived over longer periods but the Congress, through the AISPC, emerged as the most popular entity among the state subjects. On the other hand, Kashmiri nationalism was positioned against the Dogra rule. Abdullah's famous letter to the Cabinet Mission delegation in 1946 questioned the Treaty of Amritsar, terming it as "a sale deed" in which the "people of Kashmir were sold away to servitude of Dogra house" thus positioning the "Kashmiri nation" against the Dogra rule.

In light of the paradoxes that accompanied the instrument of accession, this chapter documents Nehru's intellectual limitations, as reflected in India's Kashmir policy throughout the 1950s. While accession of states had a legal basis, the merger of states was carried out through an arbitrary legal interpretation. However, it was not challenged by most of the states owing to the Congress' popularity among the masses. This hardly bore any fruit in Kashmir due to Nehru's inability to rescue the Kashmiri political worldview from its local historical moorings.

### **Dogra Expansionism and institutionalisation of mass struggle in Kashmir**

The state of Jammu and Kashmir – as it existed in 1947 – was a classic Curzonian construct in the way it evolved over the past century, extending northward enough to command the Indus watershed and its passes that opened into Xinjiang (erstwhile Chinese Turkestan), and the Tsar's spheres of influence in Central Asia. Erstwhile feudatories of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Dogras expanded their empire beyond Kashmir to incorporate Ladakh, Gilgit and Trans-Karakoram tracts through varying forms of direct and indirectly administered zones. By the late nineteenth century, Hunza and Chitral also came under subordinate agreements with the Dogras. Notwithstanding the British support in facilitating the empire's expansion, the Dogras constantly struggled due to intra-state power politics with their Poonchi kins as well as with the British imperial designs since the state was integral to the empire's frontier policy. Hari Singh's own appointment as the Maharaja was made possible due to British intervention since

Maharaja Pratap expressed his desire to pass on the throne to his adopted son Raja Jagatdev Singh of Poonch.

On the domestic front, the specific bias against the valley's Muslim population led to widespread migration into neighbouring Punjab, which, by the first decade of the twentieth century, emerged as an intellectual hub for Anti-Maharaja sentiment. The migration of Kashmiris, along with the spread of competing reformist/revivalist thoughts among the Muslims of Punjab instilled a new organizational zeal in support of the Kashmiri brethren. Before the historic 1931 agitation took root in the valley, some of Punjab's leading intellectuals and religious movements spearheaded protests against the Maharaja in the first three decades of the twentieth century. The Ahmadiyya Jamaat was arguably the first institutionally organized group to organize its efforts against the Maharaja in Kashmir, followed by the Deobandi Ahrars who had considered both Ahmadis and the Dogras as their opponents.

The Muslim League, while sympathising with the Muslim Conference limited its engagement with Kashmir's princely affairs, one reason being its preference towards the princes (to exploit the latter's opposition to the Congress). Jinnah visited Kashmir in 1944 with the objective of bringing about reconciliation between the Muslim Conference and the National Conference, but faced opposition from the latter and had to return without much success. The Jinnah Papers contain several letters written to Jinnah by League sympathisers requesting him to institutionalise the party's presence in the valley. His stature as a leading voice for the subcontinent's Muslims could potentially win him greater support in the valley but his concerns remained a personal affair between him and the British officials. His correspondence with successive Viceroys, discussing the plight of Kashmiri Muslims, is indicative of his concerns about their emancipation.

On the one hand, Abdullah's rebranded the Kashmiri struggle as a nationalist cause and deepened his affinities with the Congress leadership, the Muslim Conference leadership kept close contact with Jinnah, even though "many of its members were not particularly attracted to the idea of union with Pakistan".<sup>373</sup> Its opposition and yet an intermittent sociability and tactical alliance with the Maharaja rested on its hope to undercut the National Conference, which otherwise combined Abdullah's charisma with the party's ethnoreligious appeal.<sup>374</sup>

---

<sup>373</sup> A. Lamb, *Birth of a Tragedy* (Hertingfordbury, 1994), page 44. The Mirwaiz, the most popular Muslim Conference leader in Kashmir, opposed Pakistan, calling for a responsible government under the Maharaja. Fortnightly Report of the Kashmir Residency for the fortnight ending the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1946, Kashmir: Affairs and Fortnightly Reports, L/PS/13/1266, IOR, Page 204. Fortnightly reports from Resident in Kashmir give an elaborate account of Muslim Conference's interactions with Jinnah and the Muslim League leadership.

<sup>374</sup> Further, the Muslim Conference remained ridden with factional fighting. By the 1940s, the Kashmir faction was headed by Mir Waiz and the Jammu faction, headed by Ghulam Abbas, gave the party its actual strength and support base. See Appreciation of the position resulting from the arrest of Muslim Conference leaders, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1946, Kashmir: Affairs and Fortnightly Reports, L/PS/13/1266, IOR,

Even before the launch of the Muslim Conference, the battle lines had already been drawn on sectarian lines with the creation of the All India Kashmir Committee, and rivalries between the Ahmaddiyas and the Ahrar leaders.<sup>375</sup> These entities were also extensions of Punjabi Muslim communal sentiments into the valley.<sup>376</sup>

However, Nehru's narrative on the Kashmiri Muslim identity did not factor in the use of religious attributes in the local nationalist struggle. He believed that the sufferings imposed by a feudal dispensation could be ameliorated through socialist reforms, leaving out any scope for religious sentiments of Kashmiris as Muslims of a unique geography. Theoretically, Congress had long accommodated the Muslim aspirations, beginning with its alliance with the Deoband leaders, through its endorsement of the Khilafat movement and later with the Muslim Mass Contact Campaign in the aftermath of the 1937 elections. Even with its distinct motivations, the Congress was not averse to endorsing the transnational objectives posed by Pan-Islamism and its reception by the leading Indian Muslim thinkers. Nehru's political engagement with Kashmir evolved as Abdullah's movement came to capture mass politics.

The Kashmiri Muslim identity was not only passively defined by Nehru, but he never connected it with the aspirations of the Muslims of the subcontinent. He pursued the case for their emancipation mostly from the concepts available in the socialist rulebook.<sup>377</sup>

This is not to say that the Kashmiri Muslims were not acknowledged; in fact, Nehru prioritized addressing the concerns of Kashmiri Muslims over non-Muslims since they constituted a majority in the state, but only from a class perspective as serfs awaiting emancipation and not as people of culture/faith whose claim to a separate national identity stemmed from a combination of their Muslim identity and local cultural influences. The economic repression under the Dogra regime convinced Nehru of the insignificance of communal identity and that socio-economic emancipation was the only solution to meeting the Kashmiri aspirations. In turn, Sheikh Abdullah, conscious of his secular credentials still articulated the Kashmiri identity as an indigenous cultural phenomenon with references to Islamic injunctions given the prevalence of backwardness and illiteracy among Kashmiri Muslims.<sup>378</sup> While drawing some

---

page 96. The rivalry between the Jammu and Kashmir factions was termed by the Resident as "acute". See Fortnightly Report of the Kashmir Residency for the fortnight ending the 30<sup>th</sup> November 1946, L/PS/13/1266, IOR, page 113.

<sup>375</sup> In 1930, the Ahrars had staged a massive protest against the Maharaja, wherein almost 30,000 protestors tried to cross into Jammu from Punjab.

<sup>376</sup> S.R. Lone, 'The princely states and the national movement: The case of Kashmir (1931–39)', *Studies in People's History*, 4/2 (2017), page 192.

<sup>377</sup> Socialist redistribution was the top priority for both Nehru and Abdullah once the latter was installed as the head of the state government. The state was also the first to carry out Land reforms. While Abdullah considered socialist measures as part of the ultimate goal of self-determination, Nehru took them to be adequate. Any assertions by Kashmiris on matters of identity were dismissed by him as Pakistan-sponsored.

<sup>378</sup> B. Taseer, *The Kashmir of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah* (Lahore, 1986), page 17-18. Also see PN Jalali Oral history Transcript, PMML, Accession no. 834, page 65.

inspiration from Nehru, the secular element in Abdullah's leadership, he felt, also came from the Kashmiri society which made his politics acceptable. As he would write to Nehru in 1950 that "despite our having so many affinities with Pakistan we did not join it because [it] did not fit in with their policy".<sup>379</sup> The unique history of Kashmiri identity, for Abdullah, meant that it had the right to have separate inheritance from the rest of India.

### **Conventional History Writing on Kashmir**

Similar to the standard narratives on the partition, the historiography of modern Kashmir happens to be a collection of polarized writings, broadly viewed as a contest between Congress, Hindu nationalist, Pakistani and indigenous Kashmiri accounts. With due regard to their rigour, these sketches are steeped in partisanship as they choose to defend their protagonists. The Indian nationalist narratives, as we are familiar with, situate Kashmir in a hostile environment created with the inception of Pakistan, whose leaders launched a tribal invasion into the valley resulting in a hurried accession, followed by the valley's heroic rescue by the Indian Army. While unanimous in defending the accession's legality, the pro-Congress and Hindu nationalist versions differ on post-accession policies and the responsibility accorded to the National Conference in running the J&K government.

History writing in Pakistan, on the other hand, questioned the legitimacy of accession due to the different benchmarks applied by Indian leaders in Hyderabad and Junagadh. Here, the tribal raid was inevitable, resulting from a religious upheaval which, in Jinnah's words, went beyond his control. The violence surrounding the partition and the Maharaja's procrastination propelled action from Pakistan. The tribal raid, on one hand, became the basis of India's complaint to the United Nations, but on the other hand, its failure to capture the valley generated discontent on the other side of the border, as General Akbar Khan's *Raiders in Kashmir* or Hasan Zaheer's *The Rawalpindi Conspiracy 1951* reveal. Pakistan's emphasis (and thus the nationalist history writing) is more of an existential account, fixated on ridiculing the validity of the Maharaja's accession to India, and projects the tribal raid as a natural reaction against India. It ties Kashmir with the very identity of Pakistan and argues that the combined influence of the Muslim Conference, Punjab's Sufi shrines (which too played a proactive role in influencing adjoining areas of present-day Jammu and Azad Kashmir) and the horrors of partition were bound to bring the state under Pakistani control.

The indigenous narratives from the valley and Pakistani administered Kashmir, while embedded in the region's local political dynamics, delve into nuances of popular mood in Kashmir, the extent of Abdullah's popularity, India's arbitrary policies and the legitimacy of Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India.

---

<sup>379</sup> Taseer, *The Kashmir*, page 33.

Besides elaborating on all that went wrong on New Delhi's part, the other common strand in Kashmiri accounts (especially Abdullah's *Atish-e-Chinar* and writings of PN Bazaz) is the exoticization of the Kashmiri identity which is defined as something independent of conventional Indian or Pakistani ideas on nationhood.

The general view from Muslim Conference leaders is closely associated (if not similar) with the Pakistani line of thought, at least till the events of 1947, and is invested in the hagiographies of Sardar Ibrahim and Abdul Qayyum, the two lodestars of the anti-Maharaja (and later anti-India) agitation. Ghulam Abbas's *Kashmakash*, MY Saraf's *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, and FM Hasnain's *The Freedom Struggle in Kashmir* provide a detailed description of the Muslim sentiment in the state.

In another category, Alastair Lamb and AG Noorani respectively explore the crisis through rigorous chronological and legal perspectives, with their conclusions apportioning greater responsibility on Indian policies (with Nehru as a primary culprit). They question the assumptions of the impartiality of the key figures involved in the Transfer of Power, and hold Mountbatten and Radcliffe accountable for their partisan attitude towards India. The postponement of the Radcliffe Award by a week's time is alleged to have resulted from Nehru's pressure on Mountbatten, and thus cited as the first proof for India's partisan behaviour.<sup>380</sup>

The communist narratives occupy a marginal space despite the significant role of Communist ideologues in both Indian and Pakistani controlled territories in the initial years, namely through NC's socialist policies and the Rawalpindi Conspiracy case on the Pakistani side. Relatively less acknowledged is Sheikh Abdullah's short-lived partnership with socialist BPL Bedi and his wife Freda who were instrumental in drafting the *Naya Kashmir* document, the NC's economic blueprint for the state and education policies.<sup>381</sup> Abdullah's commitment to socialism figures in the perspectives of the great powers in the Cold War calculus. Also, the socio-economic revolution executed during the early years of the Abdullah administration gets less recognition in the scholarship.

The mainstreaming of the right-wing narratives in India questioned the legitimacy of both Congress and Muslim League claims as the sole representatives of mass sentiments. As it is known, the rise of the Jana Sangh can be traced back to Kashmir's special constitutional position and the Delhi Accords, which became a springboard for widespread agitation by Syama Prasad Mukherjee and the Praja Parishad (over Kashmir's distinct political status), which had part role in the eventual ouster of Sheikh Abdullah from J&K's premiership in August

---

<sup>380</sup> Lamb, *Birth*, page 40.

<sup>381</sup> A CPI ideologue, Bedi was instrumental in influencing Sheikh Abdullah's socialistic outlook towards Kashmir. He was instrumental in drafting the *Naya Kashmir* document and after independence, he coordinated political outreach and Public Relations on behalf of Abdullah. Bedi also worked towards laying down the framework for the educational curriculum. See BPL Bedi Oral History Transcript, Accession No. 270, PMML, page 229-237.

1953.<sup>382</sup> Such narratives prioritize the centrality of the Dogra regime as the binding force behind J&K's complex geography and trace the origins of Kashmir's separatist identity in the special constitutional provisions and Nehru's decision to internationalise Kashmir issue.

The latter perspectives feign indifference on part of Nehru, which automatically allowed Pakistan to take advantage of Maharaja's vacillations and the tribal invasion as the precipitating factors towards accession.<sup>383</sup> Both the versions also avoid delving into the role of history in the Kashmiri intelligentsia's political consciousness, which played a substantial part in informing the Kashmiri worldview on the relationship with India. In crux, the defining attributes of J&K's political identity and accompanying problems (namely, the instrument of accession, plebiscite, the claim to Kashmir's leadership and the role of UN) remain deeply contested in these narratives. While these partisan accounts can be problematised, the same texts can be used and archival sources to extract Nehru's sensitivities and ignorance about the factors that influenced the Kashmiri sentiments in those years.

This chapter uses an intellectual history framework to investigate Nehru's thoughts on Kashmir as they evolved in the phase surrounding independence. This chapter compares them with Sheikh Abdullah's vision and the frictions that got him deposed and arrested in 1953. As part of Nehru's broader thought process, the chapter delves into the Nehru-Sheikh Abdullah relationship, Kashmir's position in Nehru's idea of India and his fallout with Abdullah that culminated in his arrest in August 1953. These events also crystalized the state's political geography and its place in India for Nehru.

In the absence of well-developed contiguity with post-independence India (since the state's main routes were poorly linked to eastern Punjab) or a co-religionist majority, the moral claim to Kashmir was to be based on a fragile edifice, that is, Nehru's relationship with Sheikh Abdullah. Moreover, the first generation of middle-class Kashmiri intellectuals was influenced by intelligentsia of (mainly western) Punjab given its proximity in the pre-Partition times. Abdullah's affinities with Nehru on one side and personalities like Hafeez Jalandhari, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, former Congress leader Mian Iftikhaduddin, MD Taseer and members of the Marxist Progressive Writers Association from the pre-partition days-era collectively shaped his outlook towards partition. Later, Faiz, Taaseer and Mian Iftikharuddin attempted to bring Kashmir into the Pakistani fold (albeit unsuccessfully).<sup>384</sup>

---

<sup>382</sup> By agreeing to ceasefire with Pakistan in 1949, Nehru was accused of giving into the two-nation theory as all Muslim majority areas (except the Kashmir valley) were given to Pakistan. According to Balraj Madhok, by elevating Sheikh Abdullah as the undisputed leader of Kashmir, Nehru gave birth to three-nation theory. See B. Madhok, *Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh: Problem and Solution* (Delhi, 1987), page 47.

<sup>383</sup> M. Mahajan, *Accession of Kashmir to India (the Inside Story)* (Solapur, 1969), page 3.

<sup>384</sup> In fact, Taaseer and Iftikharuddin also visited Kashmir to persuade Abdullah to align with Pakistan.

It can be inferred Abdullah too shared the Communist view that both Congress and League were main culprits behind partition as the first few years of his government were strongly influenced by socialist agendas. To save Kashmir from falling prey to this rivalry, Abdullah sent GM Sadiq and GM Bakshi as his emissaries to Pakistan just before the tribal invasion in an effort to mediate between the countries to find a common ground over Kashmir in the tense weeks after 15<sup>th</sup> August.<sup>385</sup>

While the instrumentalities of Transfer of Power and the claim of imperial succession loomed large within the nationalist thought and particularly Nehru's interpretations of India's political personality, this chapter shall highlight Kashmir as a digression from the unidimensional interpretations of the legality of what constituted India. This does not exactly have to do with the Indian state's use of extra-legal measures to subdue the local political sentiments or the treatment meted out to Abdullah, since these measures were merely symptoms of Nehru's thinking that convinced him about Kashmir's centrality to the idea of India. The focus of this research is rather on Nehru's evolving understanding of Kashmir that largely stemmed from his emotional outlook towards the valley.

Similar to other princely states, the J&K's accession to India was defended on both legal and populist grounds (that is, through the instrument of accession and Sheikh Abdullah's popularity in the valley). However, the two facets came into conflict with each other; following the accession and internationalization of the Kashmir issue. Despite the legal validity of the instrument of accession, Nehru did not demonstrate much enthusiasm towards claiming part of J&K territory under Pakistani control. His relationship with Sheikh Abdullah suffered, and much of his attention would go into either preventing or limiting international intervention in Kashmir. It must be recalled that in its complaint to the UN, India sought Pakistan's withdrawal, as India went ahead with the implicit assumption that Kashmir's accession to India was complete.

The inheritance of the Raj is perhaps best reflected in the way J&K came into the Indian fold. The nature of questions posed by the likes of Alastair Lamb, AG Noorani or Andrew Whitehead revolve around the circumstances surrounding the signing of the Instrument of Accession, along with suspicion whether India dispatched troops before its signing of the instrument (thus violating established legal procedure). Also, India's official historical records rarely discuss the conditions under which the Maharaja's Prime Minister Kak was dismissed followed by Nehru's renewed attempts to wean away the Maharaja from Pakistani influence.<sup>386</sup>

---

<sup>385</sup> Noorani, 'Kak and Sheikh', Frontline.

<sup>386</sup> It is alleged that Mahajan was installed as the Prime Minister after Ramchandra Kak was found to be sympathetic to the idea of joining Pakistan and thus in contact with the Muslim League. As a member of the Punjab Boundary Commission who pushed for Gurdaspur's inclusion into India, Mahajan was trusted by Nehru and Patel for the task of coercing the Maharaja to accede to India. Shortly before

There appears an inability to comprehend those aspects of Nehru's thoughts in historical accounts. As these doubts arise from the very details Nehru (and the Government of India in the following years) chose to hide, there is possibly a deliberate suppression of crucial details about the controversial policy decisions attributed to Nehru. The chapter, thus attempts to extricate Nehru's thought process from available sources and connects his speeches with his actions to draw a clearer picture of his perspective on the true meaning of Kashmir's inheritance for the Indian state.

### **Nehru's Kashmir: Between the 'imperial', the 'sublime' and the 'populist'**

By the early twentieth century, the presence of multiple accounts on the exclusivity of Kashmir's geography (ranging from emperor Jahangir's descriptions to Iqbal's poetry) was an integral constituent of the Kashmiri nationalist thought. In addition to a freedom struggle that followed a different trajectory from the dynamics in mainland colonial India, such exclusivity risked transforming the local historical narratives into the demand for a separate political status (and at times it would transform into the demand for nationhood). In this context, Nehru's attachment to Kashmir and his efforts to influence the popular struggle in Kashmir underscore an important philosophical aspect. Nehru coveted Kashmir for its exclusivity and was at pains to prevent the Kashmiri mass memory from conflating these exotica with separatism. He wanted to change the way Kashmiris imagined their history by subsuming it into his international historical project (that is, his story of India). By deploying socialism in its full capacity (through land reforms, literacy drive, cancellation of debts etcetera) once the state acceded to India, Nehru expected the Kashmiris to start afresh.<sup>387</sup>

Although Nehru became an early supporter of the Kashmiri nationalist struggle, his love for Kashmir predated and transcended these populist undercurrents. As discussed above, the valley, for him, had been predestined to be an Indian entity much before the Kashmiri people's aspirations would figure in. The post-accession turn of events would convince Nehru that Kashmiri politics was too powerful to be rescued or dislocated from its local-historical moorings. Despite finding the best candidate in Abdullah with the hope of executing his ideas, the collective influences from Pakistan, Cold War and Hindu political groups ensured that it became impossible to shift Kashmir onto the regional canvas from which the idea of India could be extricated. For Nehru, Kashmir was approached from a wider thought spectrum, but

---

taking charge as J&K's Prime Minister, he visited Kashmir on Nehru's instructions to persuade the Maharaja to release Abdullah. See Mahajan, *Accession of Kashmir to India*, page 5.

<sup>387</sup> To support Abdullah's candidacy, Nehru went as far as upsetting the Hindu sentiment by preventing the Jammu-based Praja Parishad from contesting the first assembly elections in the state. It was pre-decided that Sheikh Abdullah had to win the first elections with a heavy majority. These irregularities notwithstanding, the election itself drew criticism from the United Nations as it violated the provisions of the UN resolutions.

smooth application of this idea in tumultuous circumstances became impossible, and eventually redirected his energies in controlling the state through extra-legal means. After a momentary jubilation following Abdullah's elevation as the political head of the state, the Dogra legacy was felt to have been reborn in Kashmir as Nehru and Abdullah fought over the differences in their respective visions of Kashmir.

At the same time, the individuality of Kashmir in his thought evaded an identification with the Hindu facets of greater India. He refrained from defining sovereignty over the valley through the use of Hindu symbols, something he did comfortably when confronted on the Sino-Indian border. Kashmir valley's much evident Shaivite/Buddhist heritage remains subdued in his claims to the valley's ownership. On the surface, it can be argued that since the Kashmiri Muslims were disconnected from Kashmir's Hindu heritage, the claim to Kashmir's ownership using these narratives would be futile.<sup>388</sup> This argument does not hold ground since Nehru's conceptualization of Kashmir incorporated people much later when the struggle against Maharaja acquired widespread appeal among the state's Muslim subjects thus feeding into Nehru's position on princely states. He invoked his Kashmiri Pandit background as a testament to his affinity for the valley, but it too remained a personal sense of belonging. His Kashmir was equally devoid of Kashmiri Pandits as much as it omitted the Kashmiri Muslims from those territorial imaginations. While this partly corroborates Noorani's view that for Nehru "it was not love for the people but for the land" that drove his Kashmir policy but his claim that Nehru's motivations stemmed from the Cold War can be challenged by the abundant literary evidence on Nehru's obsession with Kashmir.<sup>389</sup> By the time the rise of the nationalist tide came about and required him to accommodate Abdullah, Nehru did not understand the National Conference's politics beyond its anti-feudal politics.

As the question of Kashmiri identity (self-determination) began to dominate the valley's mood soon after independence, the promise of self-determination (mentioned in the instrument of accession and pledged by India to the United Nations) became anathema to Nehru. The turn of events in October 1947 might have deflected New Delhi's attention on the political nuances characterizing the politics in Kashmir but they are being restated here for greater clarity on Sheikh Abdullah's actual thoughts.

In a situation, where both historical and contemporary accounts on Kashmir were replete with arguments that justified its distinctness, Nehru, despite similar thoughts, worked on

---

<sup>388</sup> Ram Chandra Kak, the second last Prime Minister of the State, felt that even if India wanted to retain the valley of Kashmir, it would be inappropriate to think only in terms of "deciding its future with reference to the composition of its population". See R. Rajan, *Jammu and Kashmir Dilemma of Accession: A Historical Analysis and Lesson* (New Delhi, 2018), page 139.

Kak felt that Kashmir held a special significance for the Hindus since time immemorial. The reverence simply went beyond "individual temples and shrines", and Kashmir could be rightfully claimed for the very uniqueness it had fostered for the Hindu faith.

<sup>389</sup> Noorani, 'Kak and Sheikh', Frontline.

subsuming it within the idea of India. The Congress leadership also worked hard to make efforts to unite the Kashmiris against the British empire as it did in the rest of India.

Thinking of Kashmir and northern frontier, Nehru wrote:

when I think of India, I think of many things...of the Khyber Pass in all its bleak surroundings; of the southern tip of India; of people, individually and in the mass; and, above all, of the Himalayas, snow-capped, or some mountain valley in Kashmir in the spring, covered with new flowers, and with a brook bubbling and gurgling through it. We make and preserve the pictures of our choice, and so I have chosen this mountain background rather than the more normal picture of a hot, subtropical country.<sup>390</sup>

As Amar Sohal argues, “the field of intellectual history has widely acknowledged the role that natural landscapes play in nationalist imaginations across the modern world”.<sup>391</sup> Working with Abdullah, Nehru and Iqbal’s thoughts, his research highlights how “these thinkers obsessively returned to Kashmir’s attractive landscape—of mountains, hills, rivers, flora, and meadows...[where] this natural scenery had the unique power to represent Kashmiri particularity”.<sup>392</sup> Compared to the nationalist writings or socio-cultural narratives on Kashmir, “we do not seem to find nature playing a similarly disruptive role in the many other regional nationalisms of the subcontinent”.<sup>393</sup> Even as Nehru and Iqbal have left extensive literature on their respective visions on the subcontinent, their writings on Kashmir reproduced exclusive imageries, even if both differed on the state’s political future.

For Nehru, Kashmir remained an obsession till the end of his life. Its status as a princely territory with a Muslim majority population problematized its incorporation even in his intellectual conception of India. His fixation with mountains in general, and Kashmir in particular, rested on his fascination with the valley’s landscape. By now, we can have a consensus that out of all the geographic regions that form part of the Indian nation-state, Kashmir stood out as a special case for Nehru. Besides his love for the Himalayan landscape, he remained conscious of his Kashmiri Pandit ancestry, and wrote extensively about his enthralling visits to the Kashmir valley.

Besides his integral role in challenging the Dogra autocracy through the Indian nationalist discourse, Nehru would express his admiration for Kashmir in terms of aesthetic abstractions, which had an element of sublimity. Distinct from the India of the masses, Nehru’s case for Kashmir’s inclusion into India rested more on its visual splendour and aesthetic facets which forever overshadowed the political sensitivities he would never understand (or pretended to not understand).

---

<sup>390</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 68-9.

<sup>391</sup> A. Sohal, ‘Pure Kashmir: Nature, Freedom and Counternationalism’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 19/4 (2021), page 1108.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> Sohal, ‘Pure Kashmir’, page 1112.

Going through Nehru's correspondence during the accession crisis during mid-1947, we observe that Nehru appeared to have fully embraced Abdullah's vision, but the warmth was short-lived once Abdullah digressed from Nehru's designs.

Notwithstanding his imaginative approach, his claims on Kashmir had an idealistic dimension as well, as he tended to locate India in Kashmir's panoramic vistas. According to Nehru's biographer Frank Moraes, Kashmir, for him, was always "a land of enchantment, and in writing of it he betrays a rapture of mood and thought which has led many people into thinking that his political attitude to it was coloured by this emotional glow".<sup>394</sup> Kashmir was a tragedy for Nehru in the sense that even the spaces that sublimated his imagination could fall prey to politics and strife, paradoxically, for very reasons that formed the basis of such attachment. And these feelings were at display on the eve of Partition, when Nehru decided to leave for Kashmir. Mountbatten noted Nehru's desperation to visit Kashmir after he believed his meeting with the Maharaja in June 1947 had been unsatisfactory. Instead, Mountbatten arranged a meeting between Gandhi and the then Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, RC Kak in late July 1947. Had Nehru visited Kashmir at that time, Mountbatten wrote that he "had visions of the Maharaja declaring adherence to Pakistan just before Nehru arrived".<sup>395</sup>

Realizing Nehru to be in his "most emotional state" Mountbatten "called a meeting of Nehru, Patel and Gandhi" to convey the impropriety on part of the head of interim government and future Prime Minister of India to "leave the capital" for "private business", as it would "be badly received in the world press" and would also amount to political lobbying. Gauging Nehru's emotions, Mountbatten felt "Kashmir meant more to him than anything else".<sup>396</sup>

With the growth of anti-Dogra resistance in the valley, his fixation with Kashmir took a pragmatic turn through his support for the National Conference, which could be described as an attempt to extend the Congress' philosophy into the valley. As the President of the AISPC, Nehru was instrumental in Abdullah's appointment as its vice president in early 1946, mainstreaming NC on a pan-Indian canvas. In doing so, Nehru hoped to redefine the struggle of the Kashmiris against the bigger enemy, that is, the British empire in questioning their bias towards the princes.<sup>397</sup> In his new role, Abdullah also launched the Quit Kashmir agitation in

---

<sup>394</sup> F. Moraes, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (Mumbai, 2007), page 402.

<sup>395</sup> Extract from Viceroy's Personal Report No. 16 dated 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1947, L/P+S/13/1845.b., IOR, page 619.

<sup>396</sup> Soon after India took the Kashmir issue to the UN, British HC to Pakistan also noted that Nehru's "personal position" might outweigh the "considerations of natural justice." See Outward Telegram, From UKCOM Karachi to CRO, Graffety-Smith Papers, page 12.

<sup>397</sup> Soon after he was elected as the Vice President of AISPC in January 1946, the NC Working Committee passed two resolutions, the first criticizing the British Government's attitude towards the princes and their support for undemocratic governments in the princely states and second threatening the Maharaja to launch a popular movement for responsible Government in the state. See Extracts from the Kashmir Residency Fortnightly Report from January 31<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup> 1946, Kashmir: Affairs and Fortnightly Reports, L/PS/13/1266, IOR, page 197.

May 1946, reversing the NC's pledge for a constitutional monarchy in the *Naya Kashmir* document.

Despite exercising the legal route to get the Maharaja to accede to India, defining Kashmir purely in the succession project would be incomplete especially when Nehru defended Kashmir's case on the pretext of populism.<sup>398</sup> Along with the onset of communal frenzy in Punjab and Jammu, the tribal invasion of the valley crippled the Dogra administration, leaving the Maharaja "in no position to exercise his free will".<sup>399</sup> The Maharaja signed the instrument of accession with India, which still left the final decision on the status of Jammu and Kashmir on the will of the people of the state (three-fourths of them being Muslims). With Abdullah having outlined his blueprint on Kashmir in accordance with the earlier British offers on federation, the reliance on popular will became impossible to defend on Nehru's part.

### **Kashmir in Nehru's Political Idea of India**

Soon after the announcement of Partition, Nehru's idea of a post-partition India put Kashmir into the Indian map more bluntly than the Independence Act's legal status had permitted. With the exception of Nehru, the demand within the Congress leadership for incorporating Jammu and Kashmir into India was at best feeble, to begin with.<sup>400</sup> This is substantiated in Patel's initial thoughts (since he initially tried to explore a potential trade-off between J&K and Hyderabad), first-hand accounts by Maharaja Hari Singh, VP Menon, Feroz Khan Noon and former Prime Minister of J&K Meherchand Mahajan; all of whom separately confirm the leadership's initial disinterest in Kashmir.<sup>401</sup> For Patel, Jammu and Kashmir rose to significance only on the eve of partition and later in the retributive context of the tribal raid and the precondition of accession for military assistance was immaterial.<sup>402</sup> Nehru's intellectual

---

<sup>398</sup> Meherchand Mahajan states that "Pandit ji was more keen on Maharaja handing over power to Sheikh Abdullah than about accession, which in his view could be discerned once the administration of the State had gone into popular hands". *Kashmir Problem in its true perspective*, Speeches and Writings by Meherchand Mahajan, Meherchand Mahajan Papers, PMML, page 81.

<sup>399</sup> Navlakha, 'Bharat's Kashmir War', page 2954.

<sup>400</sup> On taking charge as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Mahajan requested Gandhi "whether I should persuade...the Maharaja to accede to India. He [Gandhi] said, there is no hurry, study the position and give him advise you think best. Sardar Patel answered on similar lines though he liked Kashmir's accession to India...". See Mahajan, *Kashmir Problem*, PMML, page 81.

<sup>401</sup> In a letter to President Rajendra Prasad written in 1952, Maharaja Hari Singh claimed he was assured by Lord Mountbatten "that if Kashmir went to Pakistan, it would not be regarded as an unfriendly act by the Government of India... the Government of India did not make up their mind and, if I may be permitted to say so, dealt with the situation in a half-hearted and desultory manner." See K. Ahmad, *Kashmir: Exposing the Myth Behind Narrative* (New Delhi, 2017), page 398.

<sup>402</sup> Copy of a paper enclosing a copy of the minutes of Defence Committee No 8 of 1947 concerning Kashmir and Junagarh, 25 October 1947: contemporary copy, Broadlands archives. MS62/MB/1/D/42/9. University of Southampton Special Collections, University of Southampton. The minutes mention Patel's stance, that "he did not consider that there was anything to prevent India sending armed assistance whether or not Kashmir acceded". See <https://archives.soton.ac.uk/records/MS62/MB/1/D/42/9>.

pursuits marked a gradual yet uncomfortable shift from romanticism towards an anti-feudal activism as intensified among the valley's Muslims.

Nehru's writings in the pre-independence years attributed the anti-feudal movement in Kashmir to Congress Party's credit. Writing for the *National Herald* in 1940, he linked the political upheaval in the Kashmir valley with nationalist movement in India, arguing that:<sup>403</sup>

The Nationalist Movement in India...had far reaching results in many fields. Our insistence on hand-made products gave a new lease of life to these products [that is, Kashmiri art and craft]. Kashmir was affected by this renaissance...and a new market for Kashmir goods sprung up in India.

Further, the anti-colonial resistance in NWFP under Bacha Khan's leadership, and the latter's popularity among the Kashmiris was another factor, Nehru believed, that influenced the sentiments in Kashmir:<sup>404</sup>

I imagine, though I have no definite data for this, that the development of the Congress movement and of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the North-West Frontier Province had considerable influence on Kashmir. At the same time, he was aware of the communal overtones that governed the nationalist sentiment in Kashmir.<sup>405</sup> However, Nehru's thoughts on Kashmir spiralled into distinct dimensions as he aged. He articulated his Kashmir both inclusive and devoid of people at different time phases. The valley was a world in its own and yet a part of India, which he could abstract out of it, depending on the aesthetic and cultural meaning he attributed to it. The other axis that tied Kashmir with the Indian story was Congress' campaign to rid the subcontinent of feudal dynasties. The existing setup under the Dogra regime metamorphosed Nehru's exoticization of Kashmir into a legitimate political demand by the Congress.

In the absence of Congress grassroots support or a sizable Hindu population (ideally a potential Congress support base) in Kashmir, Nehru fuelled the anti-Maharaja sentiment spearheaded by Sheikh Abdullah.<sup>406</sup> And as BPL Bedi recalls, that "since the Kashmir

---

<sup>403</sup> J. Nehru, 'Kashmir', *National Herald*, in VK Krishna Menon Papers, s/w by others, No. 13, PMML, page 109.

<sup>404</sup> Nehru, 'Kashmir', VK Krishna Menon Papers, no. 13, PMML, page 110.

<sup>405</sup> The communal atmosphere of Punjab in 1920s and 1930s often spilled over to Kashmir and NWFP. While the invasive influence of the Punjab based communal sentiments was perceived with caution, it managed to "create friction and trouble" given the geographical continuity. See, Nehru, 'Kashmir', VK Krishna Menon Papers, no. 13, PMML, page 110-11.

<sup>406</sup> Veteran journalist PN Jalali mentions that it was a deliberate effort on part of Abdullah to not allow the Congress to extend its organizational set up into the valley. It earned the tag as a party of the Hindus due to the Muslim League propaganda. Also, any such institutional presence in the valley could also interfere with Abdullah's own popularity. According to Jalali, the Congress had a Jammu branch, but during Nehru's visit to the State in 1941, he urged the workers to merge the unit into the National Conference. See PN Jalali Oral history Transcript, PMML, Accession no. 834, page 62, 64. Also, in 1946, after Abdullah was arrested by the Dogra regime, the Congress was rumoured to have made efforts to institutionalize its presence in Kashmir but failed to do so due to differences with the NC cadre. See Fortnightly Report of the Kashmir Residency for the fortnight ending the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1946, Kashmir: Affairs and Fortnightly Reports, L/PS/13/1266, IOR, Page 149.

leadership had always been nurtured in such independence”, that they resented any dictation from Delhi.<sup>407</sup>

Besides historicizing the valley as an integral part of the Indian body politic, Nehru’s de-facto claim to Kashmir moved out of his esoteric thoughts towards a policy of challenging the Maharaja’s policies towards the Kashmiri people. The alliance with Abdullah remained stable till it was shrouded in anti-feudal terminology, with the Dogra regime as the common enemy to both the Congress and the Kashmiri masses. However, a strange dichotomy underlies the Nehruvian idea of India since it was equally influenced by the imperial nomenclatures as much as it was driven by the need to command popular sovereignty. Although the freedom struggle was thoroughly populist, wherein the masses rallied against British rule, equally important, the nationalist leadership’s definition of India had to be codified in the Indian Independence Act of 1947 which defined its international legal personality as a successor state to British India. Though appearing to be a transfer of legal status, independent India was a product of a forceful amalgamation of princely India with British India. The provisions of the instrument of accession were violated to merge the princely states with the provinces in order to produce a unified nation-state. While populism worked in favour of the Congress party in most of the princely states and British administered territories that acceded to India, the complexities in border areas with mixed populations (namely Jammu and Kashmir, Sylhet and NWFP) were believed by the British to be solved through a popular vote.

Following tribal raids in the Kashmir valley, Nehru’s letter to British Prime Minister on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1947 clarified that India’s decision to intervene was not intended to “influence the state to accede to India” and that the invasion from Pakistan had impeded the exercise of the will of the Kashmiri people.<sup>408</sup>

Traditionally, Kashmir has been understood from Nehru’s internationalist perspective, wherein Nehru’s faith in international institutions is argued as the guiding factor behind India’s decision to approach the UN. This is factually correct but partially true if considered in the light of the ontology of the nation in Nehru’s thought. Soon after India took Kashmir to the UN, the deliberations at the UN also shaped Nehru’s evolving positions on plebiscite.

During GS Bajpai’s visit to London in March 1948, Sir Stafford Cripps floated his ideas on plebiscite wherein he proposed that the powers of plebiscite be vested in a “small group nominated by the Security Council, or appointed by the administration of Kashmir on the Security Council recommendation”.<sup>409</sup> He further suggested withdrawal of Indian garrisons

---

<sup>407</sup> BPL Bedi Oral History Transcript, PMML, Page 249.

<sup>408</sup> Inward Telegram from India (Govt.) to CRO, Kashmir Affairs and Fortnightly Reports, India Office Records, Political (Internal) Department, L/P&S/13/1266, IOR, page 528.

<sup>409</sup> ‘Bajpai-Cripps Interview’, March 1948, L/P&S/13/1942, IOR, page 5.

eastward from Poonch.<sup>410</sup> The then British High Commissioner, having seen Nehru's reply to Bajpai on this issue observed that Nehru rejected the idea of having an advisory committee citing external interference "advised Bajpai to go slow on independence", but also "play for time" if the issue was raised in the Security Council. Nehru felt that "Indian opinion was against a solution on the lines of independence".<sup>411</sup>

His position became clearer after the UNCIP resolution of 13<sup>th</sup> August 1948, which noted the illegal presence of Pakistani troops in the State and recommended the withdrawal of the tribesmen and forces. Writing to the UNCIP a week later, Nehru pointed out to Pakistan's aggression "on Indian Union territory" and if the solution of Kashmir was to be decided through a plebiscite "Pakistan should have no part in the organization and [its] conduct".<sup>412</sup>

On several occasions, Nehru agreed to a plebiscite to decide the fate of Kashmir, but his thoughts on UN resolutions revealed that the plebiscite was not an abstract concept and its proposals on plebiscite "appeared to limit the method of ascertaining the will of the people".<sup>413</sup> The will of the people, according to the Government of India, could be ascertained through methods other than plebiscite.<sup>414</sup>

Nehru endorsed the possibility of a plebiscite if it was in accordance with his terms.<sup>415</sup> In fact, the Owen Dixon proposals ran parallel to Nehru's own thoughts to the extent that he was comfortable with Azad Kashmir/Northern Areas remaining with Pakistan and Ladakh/Jammu with India, but he would agree to a plebiscite in the Kashmir Valley only when India would have the exclusive rights to organize it.<sup>416</sup> In his interview with the PMML, General Roy Bucher (the last British Commander in Chief of the Indian Army) cited his correspondence with Nehru during the war over Kashmir, wherein the latter pressed upon him to initiate a ceasefire which came about before the United Nations could arrive at one. Nehru had expressed his concerns to Bucher over the continuing fighting, and that in the absence of a ceasefire, India would be "faced with an advance into Pakistan":

I knew if General Gracey [commander in Chief of Pakistan Army] understood that Pandit Nehru had approved the message...he would immediately inform his own Prime Minister, Mr. Liaqat Ali Khan...The

---

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> 'Bajpai-Cripps Interview', L/P&S/13/1942, IOR page 4.

<sup>412</sup> Leading Documents Related to the Kashmir Dispute, L/P&S/13/1949, IOR, page 24-25.

<sup>413</sup> Leading Documents, IOR, page 47.

<sup>414</sup> Leading Documents, IOR, page 48.

<sup>415</sup> F. Eggleston, 'The Kashmir dispute and Sir Owen Dixon's report', *Australian Outlook*, 5/1 (1951), page 3-9.

<sup>416</sup> In his letter to Patel, dated 27<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Nehru referred to his proposal to Liaqat Ali Khan, wherein Pakistan could keep Western Poonch, Gilgit, Chitral and Baltistan and India retain Kashmir. See Ayyangar Papers, S. No. 6, Nehru, Jawaharlal. Holograph enclosing copy of letter to Vallabhbhai Patel dated 27 October 1948. Similarly, in another letter to Krishna Menon in November 1948, Nehru discussed his preference for an "immediate settlement between both parties on the basis of certain frontier areas being kept by Pakistan such as western Poonch and territory northwest of River Kishenganga". See Krishna Menon Papers, Subject File 690, PMML, page 12.

Ceasefire came in. Indian troops stopped firing...the United Nations Commission were told that what they come out for had been achieved two days or so ago. I do not think that the Commission knew anything about the Ceasefire signal before that.<sup>417</sup>

This highlights his reluctance to move into western part of J&K once the valley was secured by Indian troops, thus securing India's de-facto sovereignty over and above the legal claim on the entire state.

Nehru's attitude was aptly captured in his conversation with John Kearney, the Canadian High Commissioner to India. Kearney felt that India need not be surprised by its UNSC's call for a plebiscite since "India herself had put her case before the Security Council on the lines that all she wished was a free and open expression of the will of the people".<sup>418</sup> And the UNSC took India's word "only to find that India was insistent on terms for a plebiscite which to say the least would be extremely favourable to India". Kearney felt that "if India had adopted a...more realistic approach" and made her intentions clear that "she must have Kashmir for strategic reasons her case would probably have been reviewed very much more sympathetically".<sup>419</sup>

Further, the accession of J&K reproduced the British legacy, for independent India did not prefer to tamper with its geo-cultural complexities despite political demands from Jammu and Ladakh to delink these respective areas from Kashmir citing separate religious and cultural traditions. Notwithstanding the political calculations evident in keeping Kashmir tied with Jammu and Ladakh (other than the subconscious imperial logic), Nehru wanted to preserve this inheritance. The state existed as a "collection of territories" (lacking cultural or ethnic unity) annexed over the years and as Lamb points out, the conglomeration (consisting of distinct geographical and cultural landscapes) had nothing ancient to its organizational origins, thus complicating its claim through the use of purely cultural concepts.<sup>420</sup> The logic of inheritance, in this case, was a more convenient tool to appropriate the state (beginning with the Kashmir valley) with all its imperfections.

Nehru used his commitment to secularism as the alibi to not divide J&K along religious lines despite Abdullah's disinterest in areas of the state beyond Kashmir (including Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas as well). Independent India preserved the territorial arrangement under its control as an unaltered "British geopolitical artefact" even though "there was no reason whatsoever why in 1947 it should not have been radically redefined to meet the requirements of the new order in the Subcontinent".<sup>421</sup> In contrast, Pakistan displayed its administrative

---

<sup>417</sup> Oral History Transcript Roy Bucher, Accession no. 59, PMML, page 20.

<sup>418</sup> Inward Telegram to CRO: From UK High Commissioner in India to Karachi, Chinese Draft Scheme and Discussion T.N., L/PS/13/1944, IOR, Page 17-19.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Lamb, *Birth*, page 11-12.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

pragmatism by bifurcating the part of Kashmir under its control into 'Azad' Kashmir and Northern Areas, despite Islam being the dominant faith across the two territories.

Contrary to Pakistan's argument that Jammu and Kashmir's case had to be seen in light of India's actions in Hyderabad and Junagadh (where Indian intervention was justified citing the presence of Hindu majority population), Nehru never saw any such parallels.<sup>422</sup> Partition was a product of contesting demographics, and despite the Congress' refusal to endorse religion as a dividing factor, it used the same arguments to coerce Hyderabad and Junagadh into accession. India's case for Jammu Kashmir makes it difficult to identify a similar yardstick.

Officially, the tribal invasion became India's rationale to intervene in Kashmir and seek its accession to India.<sup>423</sup> However, this chapter also points to an altogether different set of rules Nehru had already outlined to put his case forward for Kashmir. Notwithstanding his affinities with Abdullah, his thought of Kashmir as an exotic territory (devoid of people) stood as a justification (only for himself) powerful enough to delink it from the developments of Junagadh or Hyderabad. He feigned seriousness about facilitating the plebiscite to legitimize the legal process of accession, but Kashmir remained an exclusive conversation between him and the valley. Choosing between an assertive Abdullah demanding action on Nehru's promise of self-determination and controlling the state without any regard for political representation or accountability, Nehru opted for the latter.

Another topic of concern relates to Indian activities on the eve of the State's accession. The British officials were quick to draw parallels between Abdullah's release and visit to Delhi, the dismissal of key British officials and their replacements by Hindu officials and the construction of a new road linking Pathankot with Jammu.<sup>424</sup> These developments were counted as evidence of Maharaja's attempts to prepare ground for Indian military assistance.<sup>425</sup>

---

<sup>422</sup> India did not accept Junagadh's decision to accede to Pakistan, stating that "any decision involving the fate of large numbers of people must necessarily depend on the wishes of these people...should be decided by a referendum of a plebiscite". It set up a Provisional Government of Junagadh on September 25, 1947, and followed it up with a plebiscite. Pakistan used similar precedents to set-up a provisional government of 'Azad Kashmir' in the following month. A. Noorani, *Of Jinnah and Junagadh*, Frontline (13 October 2001). <https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30252105.ece>

<sup>423</sup> In his letter to Attlee dated 26<sup>th</sup> November 1947, Nehru highlighted withdrawal of raiders as the precondition for any decision on Kashmir's final accession. See Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office, L/P+S/13/1845.b., IOR, page 83-4.

<sup>424</sup> Both, the chief of Jammu Kashmir State Forces and the chief of Jammu and Kashmir State Police were removed by the Dogra administration. In his telegram (dated 6<sup>th</sup> October, 1947) addressing the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations the British High Commissioner to Pakistan brought attention to these facts. Inward Telegram: From U.K High Commissioner in Pakistan to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, L/P+S/13/1845.b., IOR, page 593.

<sup>425</sup> Weeks before tribal invasion, the Maharaja had requested arms from India. The Defence Committee meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> October noted that while the "States Department and the Defence Department had both approved these demands" and that Patel had ordered that "arms...be supplied out of India's share", they were told by the then army chief that administrative issues had prevented the supplies from being dispatched. Copy of a paper enclosing a copy of the minutes of Defence Committee No 8 of 1947 concerning Kashmir and Junagarh, 25 October 1947: contemporary copy, Broadlands archives.

Discussions among Indian leaders did not factor in the need to sign the instrument of accession before sending supplies. Nehru echoed Patel in rejecting accession as a precondition for intervention as he felt “there could be no legal objection to sending armed assistance” on request and that accession under these circumstances would be considered a political manoeuvre.<sup>426</sup> The committee also factored in the possibility that in case of a temporary accession (as it turned out), the Pakistani side was bound to incite the people of Kashmir that accession was permanent and thus against their will. That some Kashmiris were colluding with the tribal invaders was not unbeknownst to Nehru as he advocated an aggressive armed action.

In other words, Nehru had accounted for all possibilities, including the prospect of opposition from the Kashmiri masses had they known about Indian leadership’s attempts to trivialize the seriousness of the referendum.

The presence of Patiala State troops in Kashmir before the signing of the Instrument of Accession is cited as evidence of the Indian government’s plans to exercise influence over the state. While Indian military narratives claim the presence as resulting from Maharaja’s request as he anticipated an attack from Pakistan. Since Patiala had already acceded to India by the time its forces were stationed in Kashmir, its forces became part of the Indian Union, Lamb notes.<sup>427</sup> It has been found that “published Patiala sources...suggest that this intervention took place at the personal request to the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, by Jawaharlal Nehru”.<sup>428</sup>

### **Gilgit: J&K’s Forgotten Frontier**

For many Indian researchers working on Gilgit’s history, the thinly available archival evidence is interpreted as a deliberate act on part of the British to hide their role in handing over the region to Pakistan. That Major Brown-led mutiny of Gilgit Scouts and the subsequent ouster of Dogras from the region have not left any archival trace of the correspondence between the British and Pakistani authorities or senior British officials serving in Pakistan has left enough grounds for suspicion and speculation. Further, Nehru’s silence on Gilgit in those years perfectly feeds into the views on his tacit participation in broader international conspiracies that territorially cut off India from the Soviet Union with the loss of Gilgit to Pakistan.

---

MS62/MB/1/D/42/9. University of Southampton Special Collections, University of Southampton.  
<https://archives.soton.ac.uk/records/MS62/MB/1/D/42/9>.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid

<sup>427</sup> Besides Lamb, Christopher Snedden and Victoria Schofield also questioned New Delhi’s official version since the presence of troops confirms an aggressive policy on Kashmir directed towards incorporating it into the Indian Union. See V. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London, 2003), page 52 and C. Snedden, *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris* (London, 2015), page 175.

<sup>428</sup> Lamb, *Birth*, page 71.

Gilgit is perhaps an anomaly in the Nehruvian idea of India where a territory legally part of the Jammu and Kashmir state was willingly forgotten to accommodate his fixation with the raging sentiment in the Kashmir valley. Notwithstanding the obsession with inheritance, Gilgit evaded Nehru's attention despite being part of the Maharaja's territory. The Northern Areas eventually found a place on India's official political map but the claim never went beyond normative assertions as the archival accounts of the late 1940s show. Its cartographic inclusion in the Indian map and emotional exclusion from Indian political discourse also points to the tendency of treating inheritance as a normative end in itself given Nehru's willingness to trade-it off for Kashmir valley.

As the tribal invasion of the valley in October 1947 had entirely captured Delhi's attention, the Gilgit Scouts detained the Dogra Governor installed in Gilgit and invited Pakistan to claim the region.<sup>429</sup> The circumstances in which Gilgit went to Pakistan also prompted serious accusations from the Hindu right-wing and realist thinkers on Nehru's obliviousness (or a deliberate subservience to British Cold War designs) to geopolitics since the Hunza happened to be the sole connecting link between India and the Soviet Union.<sup>430</sup> In addition to this, it could have served as an important listening post for Xinjiang. The preponderance of events in the Kashmir valley hardly attracted independent India's focus towards Gilgit. Hunza's proximity to the Wakhan Corridor, Soviet Union and Xinjiang was expected to heighten geopolitical anxieties for the subcontinent, with Nehru himself having highlighted this aspect in his early letters and notes when the dispute arose. The Political Department (and later the Indian Foreign Office) remained unclear over the extent of India's claims over the nature and territorial extent of the Gilgit frontier.

The spillover of the Russo-British rivalry over Central Asia/Iran and Gilgit's location on the Russian frontier had influenced the Crown's ties with the Dogra administration. By the closing decade of the nineteenth century, Hunza-Nagar and Chitral had been militarily pacified, and the Durand Line officially marked the separation of the British and the Russian spheres of influence. Gilgit (existing as an amalgamation of directly and indirectly controlled territories under the Dogra empire) became a British Agency in 1877, and 1891 and was leased out in 1935 to the Crown for sixty years. It was retroceded to the Dogras under the Transfer of Power negotiations, which officially ended the Crown's agreements with the Princely states.

---

<sup>429</sup> Two weeks after the arrest of Gilgit's Governor Ghansara Singh, the first Pakistani official landed in Gilgit on November 15, 1947.

<sup>430</sup> During the first Indo-Pak war over Jammu and Kashmir, Indian armed forces conducted air attacks on airfields and military installations in and around Gilgit. One of the Government of India's earliest official publications, *Defending Kashmir* (1949) describes these attacks merely as defensive steps to deter Pakistani reinforcements, rather than attempts to reclaim its territories. See Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, *Defending Kashmir* (Delhi, 1949), page 110-14.

The lease came to an end in June 1947, soon after the final Mountbatten Plan had finalised the principles on which independence and partition were to take place. Immediately after Prime Minister Attlee's announcement of the intentions of withdrawal (in February 1947), the Political and External Affairs departments discussed Maharaja's relationship with Gilgit and adjoining principalities.<sup>431</sup>

With Kashmir occupying much of Nehru's attention, available archival evidence shows that his focus towards Gilgit only addressed the timing of its retrocession back to Jammu and Kashmir. In April 1947, he requested the government to reconsider the retrocession decision till Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the Indian Constitution was finalized, but the government went ahead with it.<sup>432</sup>

The fact that the States Department was established under VP Menon's auspices a month before this decision conveys that he "did strive beyond the normal call of duty to ensure (without success) that Gilgit remained the Maharaj's".<sup>433</sup> Here, Nehru's perspectives on Gilgit, despite the emotive deficiency, uphold some attachment to the principles of inheritance and the geopolitical idea of India.

Unlike Kashmir, the absence of any pro-congress social base in the Gilgit region and its remoteness contributed to Indian leadership's disinterest, however appealing its cartographic addition was to the Indian map. It is to be noted that when the UN began discussing Kashmir, it did not factor in Gilgit or Skardu until the Indian government brought attention to it.

Nehru's letter to the UNCIP on 20th August 1948 noted that the writ of the Jammu and Kashmir government was not challenged in the northern part, except by the "roving bands of hostiles" or "places like Skardu which were occupied by irregulars of Pakistan troops".<sup>434</sup> Calling on the Pakistani authorities to withdraw its forces from these areas, he further stated that India was "prepared to accept Gilgit as an exception", while other areas could revert to Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>435</sup> Moreover, his letter stated at the outset that its contents were not to be "considered as a condition to the acceptance of the [UNCIP's] resolution by the Government of India."<sup>436</sup> Similarly in a letter to Krishna Menon sent in early 1948, Nehru stated that "if the worst comes to the worst, I am prepared to accept the Poonch and Gilgit area being partitioned off".<sup>437</sup>

---

<sup>431</sup> Gilgit consisted of Gilgit Subdivision, Gilgit Wazarat and other semi-independent principalities (mainly Hunza and Nagar). The Dogra administration interpreted entire Gilgit as its own territory comprising the principalities citing its tributary relations and suzerainty over them. The Political Department, on the other hand did not equate suzerainty with ownership, and considered these principalities as independent of the Maharaja's territories.

<sup>432</sup> "Future of Gilgit Agency", File no. 267. C.A./47, NAI, page 8-9.

<sup>433</sup> Lamb, *Birth*, page 49.

<sup>434</sup> To Josef Korbel, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1948, *SWJN*, (Second Series, Vol. 7), page 301.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (SG) File No. 6, PMML, page 101.

Thus, the Indian government's attitude towards these territories meant that the inclusion of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan in the Indian map alluded to the notional value inheritance brought to the Indian State rather than any willingness to incorporate them.<sup>438</sup>

His emotional disconnect, in Lamb's view, could have arisen from his sense of complacency since his request of delaying the handover of Gilgit to the Dogras was made at a time (in April 1947) when the Congress ministry was functioning in NWFP (which shared its border with Gilgit via Chitral).

There are several archival documents and private papers that shed light on the discussions among government officials and legislators after independence; a file from the Kashmir section of the Ministry of States warrants special attention as it changes the perception on how the Government of India understood its relationship with Gilgit and Hunza. In 1952, the Ministry of States and the Ministry of Law Government of India discussed the legal status of Hunza region with respect to its relationship with Kashmir. Hunza, which had been under suzerainty of the Kashmir Durbar, was not classified as part of Jammu and Kashmir by the colonial administration. The Government of India Miscellaneous (Act), 1940, which prevented territories under suzerainty to automatically accede in line with the suzerain state, was invoked to de-link Hunza from Kashmir. However, the two ministries concluded that since Hunza was not classified by the Crown as a separate state, its existing relationship was sufficient to categorize it as an Indian territory.<sup>439</sup>

Whether Hunza was a part of Kashmir or was only under the suzerainty of Kashmir, the accession of Kashmir to India legally included Hunza. This decision also applies to the other territories, namely, Nagir, Chilas, Yasin, Koh-Ghizar and Ishkoman.

Even if the Maharaja enjoyed nominal suzerainty over the above stated territories (which, except Chitral, constituted the Northern Areas), Pakistan's claims of accession of Hunza or Chitral remained doubtful.<sup>440</sup> Thus, notwithstanding Kashmir's relationship with Hunza, Nagar or Chitral, India's status as a successor state, in theory, automatically legitimized its jurisdiction over these territories.

### **Nehru versus Abdullah: Contest of Divergent Historiographies**

For Nehru, historical narratives on India's invasion had evoked both uncomfortable and accommodative aspects tied with her historical journey. Besides tying the story of India with the global historical project, foreign forces (the Aryans, Mughals and the British) added

---

<sup>438</sup> Besides the tribal raiders from NWFP, Indian forces also fought the Azad Kashmir Forces, which were manned by Muslims of Western Jammu. Despite claiming 'Azad Kashmir' as part of undivided Jammu and Kashmir, the hostility from this area never prompted both Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah from attempting any actionable steps.

<sup>439</sup> Position of Gilgit & Chitral, Dhir etc vis-a-vis J&K in connection with the Indo-Pakistan Canal Dispute, F 1(2)-K/53, NAI, page 9-11.

<sup>440</sup> Position of Gilgit & Chitral, NAI, page 12.

cosmetic dimensions to an underlying esoteric unity and a geopolitical agency. India, for Nehru, was coveted for its agency. Britain's role in India's transformation into a sub-empire aimed at stabilizing Asian geopolitics was acknowledged as emanating out of the subcontinent's natural geographic centrality to the Asia-Pacific region.

In contrast, the narrative of recurring invasions left Kashmiris bereft of an agency of their own. Abdullah's thoughts converged with Nehru (and Iqbal) in imagining Kashmir as a unique space and in its "ability to displace human history", as Sohal argues.<sup>441</sup> The Kashmiri sense of history added to this existing sense of individuality. Kashmir, owing to its beauty, remained subject to invasions throughout the centuries, as highlighted by Abdullah on multiple occasions. Despite sharing similar faith with the valley's majority population, even the Mughal empire and the Afghan dynasty too were identified with the invading forces (unlike Nehru's tendency to assimilate invaders)<sup>442</sup>:

For centuries the Kashmiris have been deprived of their rights, whoever the ruler from outside Kashmir, he treated Kashmiris harshly...For a very long time Kashmir has attracted people by its natural beauty...if Kashmiris has been such an object of attraction for people from outside, how much for is it for the Kashmiris who have been born in this beautiful setting.<sup>443</sup>

This narrative became a common theme in Abdullah's speeches. In one of his public addresses, he stated:

Kashmir had a chequered history. It was in turn overrun by Moghuls, Pathans [Pashtuns], Sikhs, and later by Dogras. They were all bewitched by the beauty of this place, but, drunk with power and intransigence, they treated its inhabitants as mere chattel....<sup>444</sup>

Thus, memories of external imperial encounters only intensified the otherization of the outsider, leaving Kashmir with an unpleasant historical memory. This ran counter to Nehru's romanticization of India's capacity to absorb external influences and redefine itself in a composite way. The simultaneous departure of the British and the Dogras offered a ray of hope for Abdullah to enact his vision but New Delhi's invasive role (and its interpretation of accession) was understood as a repeat of the very history Abdullah had outlined in order to chart out an escape route for Kashmir's political future. A freedom struggle that was barely two decades old, seeped in religious idioms, and having defined its relationship with India in a federal setup; Kashmiri politics refused to be drawn into Nehru's historical project, despite his closeness with Abdullah. Abdullah had briefly explored an alternative to the plebiscite, provided that the constituent assembly of the state was kept free from Delhi's interventions.

---

<sup>441</sup> Sohal, 'Pure Kashmir', page 1110.

<sup>442</sup> Y.D. Gundevia and S. Abdullah, *The Testament of Sheikh Abdullah* (Michigan, 1974), page 31.

<sup>443</sup> Khan, *Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's Reflections*, page 37-38.

<sup>444</sup> Sohal, 'Pure Kashmir', page 17.

Like Nehru, he too detested the idea of external bodies deciding Kashmir's fate. But Nehru's decision to support the right to self-determination through the United Nations (and not Abdullah's terms) and NC's precarious position in the valley compelled Abdullah to question Nehru on his intentions.<sup>445</sup>

The memories of the Dogra regime were rekindled as soon as New Delhi moved ahead with defining accession as final soon after the state elections. The NC resisted the policy of equating Kashmir's case with the rest of the Indian states, something which was otherwise successfully sold to residents of the remaining states. Abdullah - who otherwise believed that the Kashmiri identity could find its best expression in a federal association with India – began to express the fear of “being lost in the vastness of India”.<sup>446</sup>

Also, the Treaty of Amritsar, through which Gulab Singh had purchased Kashmir remained Abdullah's main rallying point. His anti-imperialist stance (while having common ground with Nehru) entailed the demand for getting sovereignty back into the hands of the Kashmiri people. Defined in the legal language of inheritance, Kashmir would thus go to Abdullah and not Nehru, the former felt.<sup>447</sup> Nehru was later to regret his support to NC and Abdullah, once Abdullah's demands zeroed in on self-determination. Thus, in Nehru's thought, the rising tide of Kashmiri nationalism could only be nullified by banishing Abdullah from politics.

### **Differences with Sheikh Abdullah**

In the summer of 1953, a few months before Abdullah's arrest, Nehru visited Srinagar and addressed a meeting of NC leaders. Criticizing both Abdullah and the NC leadership for their approach to the Kashmir problem, he was confronted by Abdullah for castigating him publicly without any factual basis. According to Bedi, a furious Nehru told Abdullah, “I have every right to do so, After all, the state has acceded to us”, to which Abdullah responded, “if the State has acceded, then I take the stand that I am the Prime Minister of the State.”<sup>448</sup>

The Government of India's policies on Kashmir not only had a strong Nehruvian influence but remained free from any factional interference, particularly after Patel's death in 1950. On the other hand, despite Abdullah's proficiency in Islamic theology and his charismatic persona, his relationship with the masses came under attack from the valley's nationalist and pro-

---

<sup>445</sup> In an interview, he accepted that the “Constituent Assembly [of Jammu and Kashmir] could, in the absence of a plebiscite, resolve the issue of Kashmir once for all...But the government of India did not approve of my plan at all...Pandit Nehru...said he could not go back on the promises made to the United Nations”. See Gundevia, *Testament*, page 45.

<sup>446</sup> Gundevia, *Testament*, page 40.

<sup>447</sup> Khalid Bashir Ahmad highlights that as Prime Minister, Abdullah continued to use the Dogra Seal (depicting the Sun God as the Dogras identified themselves as Suryavanshis or the descendants of the Sun dynasty, a prominent Kshatriya warrior clan. Lord Rama also belonged to this clan). See K. Ahmad, *Kashmir: Looking Back in Time* (New Delhi, 2021), page 74-5.

<sup>448</sup> This encounter, mentioned in BPL Bedi's oral archives, aptly captures both Nehru and Abdullah's respective claims to Kashmir. BPL Bedi Oral History Transcript, PMML, page 252.

Pakistan voices that were quick to question his legitimacy and relationship with New Delhi, forcing him to prioritize self-determination even as socialist redistribution was implemented in true letter and spirit.<sup>449</sup> As evident from his interview (cited in the previous page) with India's former Foreign Secretary YD Gundevia, Abdullah confessed that his ability to manoeuvre Kashmir's case in India's favour was stymied by Nehru's pledge to the United Nations to work towards self-determination.<sup>450</sup> There can be two interpretations of Abdullah's claims. Firstly, the UN was a newly established institution and both, India and Pakistan acted cautiously as the UN's resolutions (even if not enforceable) were considered as having international ramifications, and thus carried a degree of accountability. On the other hand, Abdullah's criticism of Nehru deflected attention from NC's weakening popularity in Kashmir. In addition, the pressure from both Hindu nationalists and Pakistan threatened his position, unless he invoked the Kashmiri identity as simultaneously unique and Islamic.

Post-accession, Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir turned into a political battleground between the Jana Sangh, the Dogra loyalists (who abandoned their initial pro-freedom stance towards pro-monarchy Hindu nationalism) and the NC leadership, which found it increasingly difficult to justify its association with India once Pakistan began accusing the Indian government of harbouring communal elements. Notwithstanding the other complexities surrounding Jammu and Kashmir, the genesis of the problems within Kashmir also lay in the common attributes that brought Nehru and Abdullah closer. Nehru and Abdullah shared a common vision towards secularism and socialism, which also convinced the latter to side with the Indian nationalist movement.<sup>451</sup> Abdullah also attributed it to Nehru's influence in broadening the NC's ambit.<sup>452</sup> Fundamentally, both challenged the feudal absolutist worldview of Maharaja Hari Singh and denounced two nation-theory. Abdullah's tilt towards Nehru and the Indian nationalist movement also challenged the Maharaja, who, like other princely states, preferred independence over India or Pakistan.<sup>453</sup>

---

<sup>449</sup> Initially Abdullah had attempted to open a dialogue with Pakistan. Oblivious of Pakistan's actual plans over Kashmir, Abdullah had dispatched two emissaries (Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq and Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi) to negotiate terms of engagement with Pakistan and the talks reportedly failed after Jinnah dismissed Abdullah's status as a leader of the Kashmiris.

<sup>450</sup> Gundevia, *Testament*, page 45.

<sup>451</sup> Abdullah, *Flames*, page 49-50.

<sup>452</sup> He states in an interview "Jawaharlal a very sensitive man with a wide vision advised me to broad-based the National Conference and to keep the doors of the organisation open to non-Muslims in spite of sharp opposition from landlords". See Lok Sabha Secretariat, Eminent Parliamentarians Monograph Series: Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah (New Delhi, 1990), page 4. A Telegram addressed by Secretary to the CR, LCL Griffin, to the Resident, Kashmir in 1945 also discusses Nehru's influence on Abdullah which led him to align with Congress aspirations, particularly in expanding his focus on Kashmiri Muslims and imbibing Congress party's socialist tendencies. See India Office Library, Kashmir Affairs, Political Department, Political Branch, File No.182-P (S)/45, page 28.

<sup>453</sup> BPL Bedi Oral Transcript, Page 242.

Furthermore, it was also felt that a predominantly Muslim Kashmir could retain its identity in a predominantly Hindu India rather than in a Muslim Pakistan which could potentially inundate Kashmir's individuality in its efforts to homogenize the Pakistani identity.<sup>454</sup>

As he broke away from the Muslim Conference (which later supported the Pakistan movement), Abdullah amplified his vision into a nationalistic project despite his affinity with Nehru. Nehru, on the other hand, treated populist upheavals in the princely states as part of the broader Indian nationalist struggle. His efforts at reinvigorating the AISPC were aimed at transforming the Congress into a pan Indian organization in order to challenge the empire from a position of strength. Despite the vilification of the princes, "the struggle in Indian States [remained] not as much against the Princes as against British imperialism".<sup>455</sup> This distinction was absent in Kashmir as the freedom movement there had its roots in the anti-Maharaja agitation of 1931 that mainstreamed the Muslim Conference as a pan-regional force among Muslim subjects of Kashmir valley (as well as Jammu's Muslims).<sup>456</sup>

The Maharaja's regime was challenged on a mass level through religious injunctions. The protests of 1931 even owed Abdullah his stature. His entry into mass politics began in reaction to the state's indifference towards a blasphemous incident that had galvanized the state's Muslim population.<sup>457</sup> The launch of the Muslim Conference in 1932 at Srinagar's Pathar Masjid under a "green flag spotting crescent and star in white" made it a religious affair.<sup>458</sup> To a lesser extent, even the rival side of the political spectrum was occupied by Abdullah's former ally Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, the revered leader of Jami Masjid who fell out with him on matters related to religious grounds.<sup>459</sup> Nevertheless, Abdullah still relied on his mastery of theology to influence the masses despite giving a secular makeover to the NC's political roadmap.

Abdullah's socialization with the Congress leadership in the late 1930s offered a scope to dissociate Kashmiris from the Pakistan movement, yet at the same time, it did not take away

---

<sup>454</sup> Lok Sabha Secretariat, *Eminent Parliamentarians Monograph Series*, page 9.

<sup>455</sup> N. Behera. *Demystifying Kashmir* (Delhi, 2007), page 18.

<sup>456</sup> Before 1931, Congress or the mainstream Muslim organizations of the subcontinent were yet to make inroads into Kashmir, meaning that the agitation had its own local dynamic factors at work.

<sup>457</sup> The leaders of this agitation, Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas and Maulvi Yusuf Shah were notable figures in Muslim Conference. In his autobiography, Abdullah recalls several incidents of 1931 that precipitated mass agitation against the Dogra empire. The first incident occurred in Jammu in April where an Imam was prevented from offering Khutba by the police. The second incident involved the desecration of the Quran by a policeman. The most important of them all was the arrest of a non-Kashmiri individual named Abdul Qadir, who, during his visit to Kashmir incited the locals to speak against injustices against the valley's Muslims. On the day of Qadir's hearing, protestors gathered near the main jail and were fired at by the authorities. The massacre claimed the lives of 22 people. See Abdullah, *Flames*, page 19-22.

<sup>458</sup> Ahmad, *Looking Back*, page 20.

<sup>459</sup> The Mirwaiz even claimed to have blessed Abdullah's entry into politics, which necessitated the recourse to faith to garner mass appeal. Both fell out eventually, one key reason being the Mirwaiz's accusation of Abdullah having ties with the Ahmadiyya community. In turn, Abdullah disassociated with the Ahmadiyyas.

the religious or the exclusive ethnic element from his politics considering the circumstances back then.<sup>460</sup> The sensitivity to faith is something Nehru's understanding of the Kashmiri cause failed to capture.

Nehru's initial attempts to absorb Kashmir within his subcontinental outlook entailed empowering Sheikh Abdullah as the sole voice of the Kashmiri sentiment. In his support for Abdullah's party, he went as far as warning the valley's non-Muslims if they did not extend support to the National Conference (if Bazaz is to be believed).<sup>461</sup>

This was a momentary success for Nehru till independence as long as Abdullah appeared to align with his discourse. The accession, on one hand, legalized India's control over the state (pending a plebiscite), but the rationality of inheritance brought its own set of complications. With Abdullah as the sole spokesperson of Jammu and Kashmir, there was a fleeting confidence in legitimizing India's control, but the decision also altered India's entire outlook towards the state. Following the tribal invasion, Nehru would inadvertently depend on Abdullah to redraw J&K's political map in accordance with the latter's populist appeal rather than India's legal claims on the state. This is not to say that the territories under Pakistani control could have been retrieved back through the continuation of war (as some of India's military strategists and scholars have long argued with conviction), but to underscore that the political leadership discouraged any attempts to have a working policy on the territory under Pakistani control.

The Dogra policies did not leave much scope among the Muslim populace to divert attention to the empire as the focal point of the Kashmiri political struggle. Later, in 1946, when the National Conference led the 'Quit Kashmir' movement against the Dogras, the agitation was that the Cabinet Mission proposals would enable the princes to declare independence as they proposed the end of paramountcy.

Notwithstanding Nehru's efforts to stitch Abdullah's politics with the broader Indian nationalist struggle through the AISPC, he failed to extract the agency to define Kashmiri identity for Kashmiris at large. Just as Nehru attributed India's secular and syncretic traditions to the subcontinent's geo-cultural forces, Abdullah believed the same was endemic to the Kashmiri culture.<sup>462</sup> Also, their mutual rejection of the two-nation theory had different

---

<sup>460</sup> Jalali states that the "hold of Sheikh Abdullah was galvanizing people not in the name of secularism...but in the name of exploiter and exploited, using Islamic idioms to keep the things going. He could outdo any mullah in that issue" See PN Jalali, Oral History transcript, PMML, New Delhi, page 65.

<sup>461</sup> P.N. Bazaz, *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir* (New Delhi, 1954), page 248. Bazaz cites Nehru's speech during his 1945 visit to Kashmir. "If Non-Muslims want to live in Kashmir, they should join the National Conference or bid good-bye to country", he stated. In his address to the Pandit Community during the visit, he also stated "if Pandits do not join it [National Conference], no safeguard and weightages will protect them". See Bazaz, *The History of the Struggle*, page 248.

<sup>462</sup> "Religion could never become a cementing force even among Muslims. Our country is inter-woven, multilingual, multiracial and economically backward and each region has its own distinct cultural

meanings. For Abdullah, added to his secular credentials was the demand for independence along with a personality clash with Jinnah. For Nehru, Kashmir – by roping in Abdullah – could be reimagined as India's response to the two-nation theory wherein a Muslim majority region could peacefully exist as a part of India.

Nehru refused to acknowledge the Kashmiri aspiration for freedom as inclusive of faith-sensitive aspects. The activities of the Hindu nationalists, as Nehru's concerning letters show, were understood by him as the only remnants of faith-driven assertion in the state.<sup>463</sup> This attitude influenced the Indian government's approach towards the first elections held in the state in 1951, which had to be rigged in Abdullah's favour to exclude the right-wing Praja Parishad from reigniting communal passions, as Nehru was convinced of their role in initiating the import of communal passions in Jammu.<sup>464</sup>

Contrary to India's expectations, the internationalization of the Kashmir issue and the following UN resolutions on Kashmir shifted the focus away from the accession's legal validity towards the need to secure a plebiscite, which added uncertainty to Abdullah's own position.<sup>465</sup> From then on, his politics revolved around questioning the limited accession to prevent Pakistan and the Indian right-wing forces from claiming an absolute ownership over Kashmir. His insecurities were evident even at the time of the drafting of the state constitution, wherein he refused to incorporate Fundamental Rights and jurisdiction from the Supreme Court of India. Going by a literal reading of the instrument of accession and the federative provisions of the constituent assembly, Abdullah demanded at least those provisions be restored in letter and spirit since they still left states with a good deal of autonomy. Abdullah's thoughts oscillated between some form of autonomy/limited accession and independence, so he would take a position that would endear him to his support base.

Challenging the British theory of two Indias, he too rejected the agreements with the princely states and corroborated with Nehru on the point "that the termination of the British regime would mean the end of the rulers who were stooges of imperialism, and the cancellation of the

---

heritage", he had told Jinnah during the latter's visit in 1944. See Lok Sabha Secretariat, Eminent Parliamentarians Monograph Series, page 9.

<sup>463</sup> Nehru's letter to Patel on October 30, 1947 brought attention to his concerns about the activities of the RSS in Jammu and Kashmir. He was concerned that the "whole Kashmir position will crack up if in Jammu Province an anti-Muslim drive takes place now". See Jawaharlal Nehru papers (SG), File no. 4, PMML, page 68.

<sup>464</sup> Nehru's correspondence with Sardar Patel attest to his concerns on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's involvement in communal violence in Kashmir.

<sup>465</sup> In his letter to Gopaldaswamy Ayyangar sent on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1950, GM Bakshi, the then Deputy Prime Minister of J&K pointed towards "the factor of uncertainty which exists in our political situation" encouraging the disgruntled elements to spread a "sense of defeatism and frustration". Also, the prospect of Admiral Nimitz as the Plebiscite Administrator gave these elements hope that the "tables may turn against us" and "various moves and counter-moves in the Security Council about Kashmir also provide them with ready material for the subversive propaganda". See Letter from GM Bakshi to Ayyangar, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1950, Ayyangar Papers, Subject File No. 37, PMML, page 3-4.

treaties which were meant to enslave a people against their will".<sup>466</sup> Having said that, the final decision of Kashmir would have to be made by the Kashmiris themselves, with Abdullah (and not Nehru) as their leader.

Nehru, on the other hand, stuck to a different approach to the region wherein the Kashmir valley remained the sole site of his politics, and he would never subject it to any intervention. Other than his reliance on the mass support through Abdullah (that too limited to the Kashmir Valley), factors like Jammu and Kashmir's princely identity, its Muslim majority demography, its location on the frontier and pressure from the right-wing forces would drive New Delhi's worldview as Pakistan came into existence. With their respective influences, these myriad facets exerted a centrifugal influence on India's claims and actions, producing impulsive responses. The growing pressure from the Jana Sangh (to integrate Kashmir with India) and Abdullah's insistence on a separate identity took its toll on Nehru, leading to Abdullah's arrest in August 1953 on the charges of corruption, sedition and unlawful activities, a day before he was rumoured to address a large crowd and supposedly declare independence.<sup>467</sup>

## Conclusion

Nehru's charm for Kashmir's landscape, his eventual opposition to Sheikh Abdullah's politics and the continuation of communal politics in the subcontinent shaped the post-independence history of Jammu and Kashmir. This was complicated by the Cold War and an unexpected response from the UN, which resulted in acrimonious exchanges of non-negotiable viewpoints with Pakistan. India's policy eventually became that of controlling the Indian administered part of the state at all costs. Kashmir emerged as an ideological project for Nehru; one he would guard with utmost jealousy. His interventions influenced the political landscape of the state after partition, troubling its relationship with New Delhi yet keeping it under firm control.

In Nehru's thinking, the internationalization of Kashmir was rather intended to force Pakistan to stop its proxy warfare and communicate the fact that the accession was nominally and legally complete, and the UN ought to recognize it before proceeding ahead with its decisions.<sup>468</sup> Despite the UN's efforts at finding a solution through multiple negotiators, Nehru refused to subject Kashmir Valley to any international influence after India's version of the complaint was not fully entertained.

As the dispute with Pakistan unfolded, Kashmir became a test of Nehru's conviction on the civilizational ownership of the subcontinent, a belief he retrofitted into the legal language to

---

<sup>466</sup> Abdullah, *Flames*, page 78-9.

<sup>467</sup> M. Sarabhai, *Sheikh Sadiq Correspondence [August to October 1956]*, page ii.

<sup>468</sup> Nehru came clear on his thoughts on the issue, expressing his willingness "to talk with Pakistan or any country or UN provided two basic facts are accepted. One basic fact is that Kashmir became part of India in October, 1947. The other basic fact is that of Pakistan's unprovoked and improper invasion of Kashmir" See G. Navlakha, 'Bharat's Kashmir War', EPW, 26/51 (1991), page 2954.

claim and justify a state with a powerful centre. His efforts to find a common ground between validating the state's accession and the trajectory of populism could not achieve success since his affinities with Abdullah rested on the assumption that "once power was in the hands of a popular mass leader...Kashmir's accession to India could be more comfortably discussed", in accordance with his [Nehru's] thoughts on the state's relationship with India.<sup>469</sup> On the contrary, the populist forces challenged Nehru's Kashmir policy as he sought to exercise greater control over J&K. Addressing the Parliament in 1952, Nehru gave a new definition to India's relationship with Kashmir, stating that the "accession was complete in law and in fact in October 1947" and "it is not open to doubt or challenge".<sup>470</sup> Unable to convince Abdullah, Pakistan or the UN about his thinking on Kashmir, Nehru closed all remaining spaces for negotiation on Kashmir.

---

<sup>469</sup> R. Tanwar, *Be Clear Kashmir will Vote for India' Jammu & Kashmir 1947-1953: Reporting the Contemporary Understanding of the Unreported* (New Delhi, 2019), page 33.

<sup>470</sup> Nehru went on to challenge the very legal basis of the Instrument of Accession in this address, stating that the "fact that Kashmir did not immediately decide whether to accede to Pakistan or to India did not make Kashmir independent for the intervening period. Since she was not independent, it was our responsibility as the continuing entity to see that Kashmir's interests were protected". See J. Nehru, *Kashmir 1947-1956 – Excerpts From Nehru's Speeches* (Delhi, 1956), page 35-36.

## Chapter Five

# The Hindufication of Inheritance: Sino-Indian confrontation in the Himalayas

### Introduction

The frontier from Ladakh to Nepal is defined chiefly by long usage and custom... Our maps show that the McMahon Line is our boundary and that is our boundary — map or no map. That fact remains and we stand by that boundary, and we will not allow anybody to come across that boundary.<sup>471</sup>

Nehru's Speech in Parliament, November 1950

Addressing the parliament in the wake of the PRC's invasion of Tibet, Nehru outlined that the McMahon line was indisputable and sacred for India. This chapter attempts to understand Nehru's thoughts on China. It highlights his inability to define bilateral ties outside of his narrow view informed by civilizational discourse and inheritance of the empire's extra-territorial rights in Tibet. He considered India's presence in Tibet as a continuation of a millennium old tradition. Nehru's perspectives on China at large and specifically on the boundary problem relied on a historical version that he sought to bring back to life through India's successor identity. In this way, he accorded the Himalayan frontier the status of a traditional boundary and Tibet as an extension of the Indian civilization, both sanctified by eternity. His emphasis on an unconditional acceptance of India's border position was a defining constant in his China policy; a stance that did not stem from arrogance but rather out of a hope to rebuild India-China ties based on old linkages. Based on this belief, the Sino-Indian border, which was left undefined by the British, was finally demarcated by Nehru in 1954.

It is well known that the Sino-Indian war in 1962 came as a personal setback to Nehru, so much so that his death was attributed to his inability to come to terms with the shock. His efforts to get the PRC recognised in the international fora and simultaneous support to the Tibetans (for their autonomy) were key facets of his China policy. He saw China and Tibet as interlinked yet distinct civilizations deserving separate recognition, an understanding that the British too had relied on to define their ties with Tibet (albeit for their political ends). The McMahon Line, for India, marked her natural historical frontier, as Nehru would argue. Tibet and China were essential components of his global history project and the confrontation between the two entangled India's ties with China. Notwithstanding the power differential between the two states, Nehru's response on Tibet's invasion threw up the dilemmas that are difficult to comprehend through the lenses of foreign policy unless the role of inheritance is factored in.

---

<sup>471</sup> A. Noorani, 'A failure ordained', *Frontline* (14 October 2015). <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/a-failure-ordained/article23593270.ece>

The difference in his approach to the Maoist revolution in China can be gauged from his writings as well as that of the policymakers of his era attesting that he did not consider China as a natural Soviet ally and that Chinese communism was distinct from its Soviet counterpart.<sup>472</sup> It was not communism's ideological pull but the international isolation by the west that would draw China into the Soviet umbrella, hence he opposed any policy to isolate or antagonize China.

The chapter understands independent India's relationship with China in three sections. The first section gives a brief background of imperial frontier policy (and some of its inherent contradictions) from the late nineteenth century up to India's independence. The second section attempts to theorize Nehru's mental picturization of Tibet and China. Since the idea of Indian territoriality also encompassed its neighbouring spaces, it would be incomplete to study China or Tibet through the lenses of conventional IR theory, strategic studies or diplomatic history. India's negotiations with China gave rise to a fundamental dilemma as the colonial administration left behind an impression that the Himalayan States and Tibet were modifications of Indian States; also an impression not alien to a cultural nationalist idea of India. The third and the final section documents the emergence of Hindu themes in Nehru's thoughts to reclaim the Himalayan frontier. As China and Tibet were understood through an intersection of civilization and colonial entanglements, this chapter understands Nehru's China policy in the 1950s as an unsuccessful attempt to extricate civilizational India from British India's extraterritorial overreach in China.

### **Background: British India's Tibet Policy in Twentieth Century**

From the latter half of the nineteenth century to the onset of the second world war, British India's frontier policy was largely driven by fears of Russian incursion into Tibet and the present-day Xinjiang region.<sup>473</sup> However, unlike Afghanistan, wherein the demarcation of the Durand Line was pursued with professionalism, British India's frontier perceptions vis-à-vis India's northern frontiers varied with time. In the Western Sector (Ladakh border), the British refrained from coercing China into accepting a frontier and on the eastern side, it took decades

---

<sup>472</sup> Sharing an international media report with Sardar Patel in 1950, Nehru drew his attention to the ideological nuances that characterised the Chinese Civil War, which, to the Chinese, "was a struggle between two interpretations of the Revolution, the term which in China means the long, continued effort to modernize the State and raise the level of the economy". The question was not about choosing Soviet ideology or the western ideology, "but whether Communism does not represent a more modern and effective system for carrying out the reforms which the Kuomintang so wholly failed to provide". See D. Das, *Sardar Patel's Correspondences 1945-50*, Vol X (Ahmedabad, 1974), page 329.

<sup>473</sup> The decision to explore Tibet had been made as early as the second half of the eighteenth century when the East India Company desired to tap the Tibetan market. In the 1770s, Warren Hastings, the then governor of Bengal sent George Bogle of Bengal Civil Service to assess trade potential with Tibet. The mission was not allowed to proceed to Lhasa by Tibetan authorities (See BG. Gill, 'India's Trade with Tibet: Early British Attempts', *The Tibet Journal* 25/4 (2000), page 78). Commercial interest soon gave way to strategic interests with the rise of Russian imperialism in the nineteenth century.

for the McMahon Line to finally appear in the *Survey of India* maps; the frontier remaining undemarcated till the 1940s.<sup>474</sup>

In recognition of China's historical relationship with these areas and its role as a potential counterweight to Russia, Britain recognized China as an important stakeholder (in addition to its direct commercial interests with China) in the role of a suzerain power over Tibet. The British frontier policy, in its efforts at checking Russian (and later Chinese) influence, morphed into stop-gap arrangements and multiple proposals of linear borders, owing to the evolving threats and the complex topography of the frontier. Tensions between China and Tibet meant that "Tibetans refused to have any direct dealings with the British, and the Chinese expressed inability to enforce Tibetan compliance".<sup>475</sup> A classic example of this complexity can be seen from the differences arising out of the Lhasa Convention of 1904 which "was subject to Chinese protest since it sought to nullify the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, which had by implication afforded British recognition of China's status as Tibetan overlord".<sup>476</sup>

Rather than a neatly demarcated frontier itself, it was the ambivalence created by the British administration regarding the border and the Chinese relationship with Tibet, that independent India consciously inherited in the form of its forward policy.<sup>477</sup> After the 1914 Simla Convention, British efforts were focused on demonstrating through new practices and nomenclatures that Tibetan autonomy was a reality, and that the Chinese overlordship was only ceremonial.<sup>478</sup> There were instances where the proposed British conventions contradicted their past agreements. As Lamb has highlighted, the Simla Convention in 1914 "permitted a British official to visit Lhasa" whereas the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 prohibited both Russia and Britain from sending their respective officials to Lhasa.<sup>479</sup> The complexities were carried

---

<sup>474</sup> K. Gupta: The McMahon Line 1911-45: A British Legacy, *The China Quarterly*, Vol 47 (1971), page 537.

<sup>475</sup> S. Ghosh, 'British Penetration of Intransigent Tibet', *The Tibet Journal* 4/1 (1979), page 9.

<sup>476</sup> K. Gupta, 'Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibetan Trade and Intercourse', *EPW* 13/16 (1978), page 697.

<sup>477</sup> Despite the resistance movement against Chinese invasion of Tibet after the Anglo-Tibetan convention of 1904, the British did not recognize Tibet's independence despite the Dalai Lama's insistence. As explained by Richardson, "declarations of independence by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Assembly were accordingly ignored and a message was given...expressing the desire of the Government of India to see the internal autonomy of Tibet under Chinese suzerainty..." (See H. Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962), page 103). In retrospect, a section of scholarship, notably Claude Arpi, has questioned the need for the British to recognize the Chinese role in Tibet since China never had anything to do with Tibet's internal matters. Moreover, the first decade of the twentieth century was marked by tensions between the two sides due to General Chao er Feng's atrocities on the Tibetans. After all, during the Simla talks in 1914, the Tibetans fiercely resisted "with the utmost demonstration" the proposal to define Tibet as an integral part of China. See Richardson, *Tibet and its History*, page 109.

<sup>478</sup> Richardson, *Tibet and its History*, page 118-22.

<sup>479</sup> The decision is justified by citing a request from the Dalai Lama to position a British official as a counterweight to the Chinese officer. Also, to honour the Anglo-Russian convention, the British refrained from stationing a permanent official and opted for occasional visits that were contingent on Russian

over to Sino-Indian border negotiations when both sides presented multiple historical documents with overlapping claims.

From the 1890s to 1947, the British unsuccessfully attempted to get the Chinese authorities to agree to a common border. After the Durand Line successfully delineated the British and Russian spheres of influence, the next few decades were spent in persuading China to expand into the Pamirs.<sup>480</sup> The two factors guiding this policy were, namely, preventing a potential Russian ingress and discouraging the Maharaja of J&K from expanding further northward.<sup>481</sup> It is worth noting that at the time of the First World War, the Indian government adopted the Ardagh line as its border and by 1927, it changed to the Macartney-Macdonald Line (proposed in 1899).<sup>482</sup>

Northeast India's frontier with China, unlike the securitized western sector, was not part of the British security calculus for most part of the nineteenth century.<sup>483</sup> Beginning with the annexation of the Brahmaputra valley in 1826, it took till the end of the century to annex the highlands; yet "the province remained loosely integrated, both internally and with the rest of India".<sup>484</sup> In the northeast, the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 (also known as the Inner Line Regulation) marked the limits of colonial administration in the form of an Outer Line. Initially intended to prevent friction between commercial practices in Assam Plains and the hill tribes, the line acquired a geopolitical significance by the turn of the century as the Russian threat loomed large in Tibet.

Tibet was successfully brought under British influence in 1904 due to Lord Curzon's fear of Russian influence in the region. Tibet's correspondence with the Russians and its refusal to enter into direct negotiations with the British became a catalyst for the British expedition

---

approval. See Richardson, *Tibet*, page 110. Also see A. Lamb, *The China-India Border* (London, 1964), page 52-3.

<sup>480</sup> The policy of accommodating China dates back to Younghusband's Pamir expeditions in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Mindful of the Qing dynasty's efforts to gain its claims in Central Asia, British policymakers on the ground showed keen interest in encouraging the Chinese role as the rightful third party in the Pamirs. The Pamir Settlement (1895) between Britain and Russia had settled the frontiers between the two empires but left a buffer zone with an undefined frontier on the eastern fringes with China. See P. Nightingale and C.P. Skirne, *Macartney at Kashmir* (London, 1973), page 78-80.

<sup>481</sup> One exception to this was the proposals by Major General Ardagh, the chief of Military Intelligence in 1896-7. He proposed to shift the borders north of the Indus watershed which he felt would make it easier to preempt a potential Russian invasion. The proposal was also seconded by Lord Curzon, whose extensive travels in the Pamirs and obsession with frontiers would lay the ground for the Tibet campaign. A few years later when China faced an upheaval in 1913, the then British viceroy Lord Hardinge once again reasserted such claims. In case Russians took advantage of the vacuum and occupied Xinjiang, it was very much in the rights of British India to claim a boundary which would place "Taghdumbash, Raskam, Shahidula and Aksai China outside Russian and within our [British] territory". See Lamb, *The China-India Border*, page 108-9.

<sup>482</sup> Lamb, *The China-India Border*, page 112.

<sup>483</sup> B. Guyot-Réchar, 'Reordering a Border Space: Relief, rehabilitation, and nation-building in northeastern India after the 1950 Assam earthquake', *Modern Asian Studies* 49/4 (2015), page 935.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

despite clear instructions from London to exercise restraint.<sup>485</sup> The collapse of the Chinese administration over Tibet in 1911 and the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's subsequent declaration of independence in 1913 provided the British with an opportunity to legitimize Tibet's position as a buffer between China and British India, as well as finalising Tibet's border with India. In the eyes of British India, Tibet's situation, as Nirupama Rao highlights, was distinct compared to the Himalayan States of Sikkim, Nepal and Bhutan since the British interests were limited to neutralizing Chinese influence.<sup>486</sup> Unlike these states, the Raj did not intend on recognizing Tibet's independence to incorporate it into its strategic line of defence, thus making its dealings with Tibet partly subject to its relationship with China.<sup>487</sup>

Similarly, China's tenuous hold over its western periphery added to this ambivalence since the Chinese authorities seldom responded to British efforts to settle the boundary question as seen in the case of Ladakh-China boundary proposals in early 1900s and later during the Simla talks in 1914.

As Lamb, Maxwell and Karunakar Gupta discovered, there are many questions on McMahon Line itself and its surreptitious induction as India's boundary with Tibet during the late 1930s. A closer examination of these records shows that the tripartite negotiations were limited to discussing the administrative division of Tibet between Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet and not the India-Tibet border. The discussions on the frontier (or McMahon Line) took place separately in the form of notes exchanged between the British and Tibetan delegations, which, in a way, symbolized Britain's recognition of Tibet's independence to carry out international negotiations without Chinese interference.<sup>488</sup>

Further, the proposals devolved substantial administrative control to China in Inner Tibet while giving greater autonomy to Outer Tibet. The Chinese representative Ifan Chen refused to ratify the proposal that recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet (subject to the condition that the Chinese would ratify the proposals on Tibet). The British concerns over Tibet remained subdued until British interest in the McMahon line was reignited in the late 1930s.

In the process, the entire tract from Kashmir to Assam Himalayas became sensitive to colonial designs and the threat perception from Russia. The expanse of the Tibetan plateau or the topographic sub-divisions of the Pamir plateau meant that a linear boundary separating India and China would not be possible without its own set of complexities. Nevertheless, the

---

<sup>485</sup> Advocating a forward policy, Curzon wrote to the then secretary of state Lord George Hamilton that "I have very little doubt that the Russians have been in communication with Lhasa and that our policy up-to-date has been a mistake and must be reversed". See Ghosh, 'British Penetration', page 9-10.

<sup>486</sup> N. Rao. *The Fractured Himalaya: India Tibet China 1949-62* (Gurugram, 2022), Iphone version page 113.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> While Gupta and Lamb imply that the Chinese were taken into confidence before consulting the Tibetans over McMahon line, Claude Arpi and Nirupama Rao interpret China's exclusion from the discussions as a sign of Tibet's independence.

factors driving British India's insistence on demarcating borders with Hunza, Ladakh and eastward to Assam Hills lay in sealing off the territorial interstices that it felt could potentially fall under Russian influence. Moreover, British India went on to either incorporate or influence areas which were either Tibetan or resembled Tibetan culture.<sup>489</sup> Further, the overlapping tributary arrangements with Hunza, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim also made it difficult to demarcate a political boundary between India and China/Tibet, and such agreements, as Lamb highlights, were initially ignored but not terminated with the hope to keep Chinese authorities pacified.<sup>490</sup> However, over the years, the British quest for linear borders would subdue these arrangements as boundary alignments in Hunza or Assam frontier revealed.<sup>491</sup>

For deliberate reasons or due to lack of clarity, independent India's policymakers never accepted the fact that the British negotiated the frontier at a time when China underwent an uncomfortable political transition with weak or no control over its peripheries.

After its creation in 1914, the McMahon line remained a largely forgotten concept till the late 1930s when Olaf Caroe got it officially declared as the boundary line. As Karunakar Gupta has noted, "to strengthen the British-Indian claim to the McMahon Line in fresh negotiations with the Tibetans after the lapse of more than twenty years, he arranged for the issue of new Survey of India maps showing the north-eastern frontier of India with Tibet along the crest of the Himalayas".<sup>492</sup> Since past maps depicted the border along the foothills, Caroe withdrew the circulation of the 1929 edition of Volume XIV of Aitchison Treaties, replacing them with a "spurious edition printed in 1938, but carrying an imprint of 1929".<sup>493</sup> The new edition wrongly stated that one of the reasons behind the Simla Convention was to negotiate the "international status of Tibet...and frontiers of Tibet with both China and India".<sup>494</sup> Later, this edition became India's official policy stance on the McMahon Line.

### **Scholarly and Political Positions on Nehru's China policy and Chapter Outline**

Scholarship on Sino-Indian relationship, largely consisting of post-war accounts, continues to produce polarized historical accounts discussing the validity of Indian claims and the rationale behind Nehru's decisions. Heavily based on a "post-1962 (that is, after the 1962 Sino-Indian War) perspective", much of Indian scholarship interprets China from the prism of the 1962

---

<sup>489</sup> "All along the [western] edge of the [Tibetan] plateau from the Karakoram Pass to Assam are found people who are not only Tibetan in racial type but also share many of the characteristic features of Tibetan culture". See Lamb, *The China-India border*, page 18.

<sup>490</sup> Lamb, *The China-India Border*, page 97.

<sup>491</sup> By the 1930s, the Mir of Hunza was forced to forgo his grazing rights in the Pamir and Shaksgam Valley situated north of the Indus watershed. In the northeast, the McMahon line suddenly reappeared as the Indo-Tibetan boundary. In the following years, the British authorities pursued boundary-marking practices with greater intensity.

<sup>492</sup> K. Gupta, 'Sino-Indian Agreement', page 698-9.

<sup>493</sup> Gupta, 'Sino-Indian Agreement', page 699.

<sup>494</sup> Gupta, 'Sino-Indian Agreement', page 698.

war.<sup>495</sup> The main themes in these accounts revolve around the evolution of colonial border making practices, India's military preparedness, flaws in Nehru's forward policy and Chinese expansionism. As Srinath Raghavan points out, the major themes dominating scholarship on India-China relationship are either the accounts that view "India as the victim of Chinese betrayal and expansionism" or those that hold Nehru's revisionist Forward Policy responsible for the war.<sup>496</sup>

Nehru's China policy remains widely discussed amongst his supporters and critics alike. For the latter, India's inaction on China's invasion of Tibet and subsequent Panchsheel declaration or the 1954 agreement (where India relinquished its rights over Tibet) were linked to Chinese insolence on the boundary question. In hindsight, observations on his China policy by Sardar Patel (especially his letter to Nehru in November 1950), erstwhile colleagues Acharya Kriplani and Ram Manohar Lohia, and opposition leaders from the Jana Sangh appear prophetic if read in the context of India's defeat in the 1962 war. Their oft-cited forebodings support the hypothesis that Nehru failed to gauge China and eventually lost both territory and international prestige in 1962.<sup>497</sup> In the hindsight, the Panchsheel agreement, India's refusal to support the Tibetan cause in the United Nations (by late 1950s Nehru's disillusionment with the UN's effectiveness appeared to be complete) and Nehru's differences with the Dalai Lama over the latter's expectations of Indian intervention again feed into these narratives.<sup>498</sup> The opposition of the day found Nehru's China policy contradictory to the internationalist principles he otherwise championed. The fact that China and Tibet had to sign a separate Seventeen Point agreement in 1951 reaffirmed Tibet's separate identity since "China did not enjoy sovereign

---

<sup>495</sup> T. Sen, 'India's Recognition of the People's Republic of China', *China and Asia*, 3/2 (2022), page 187.

<sup>496</sup> The latter view is supported by references to the influence of K M Pannikar and VP Menon on Nehru's China policy. Besides bringing forth the debates among Indian policymakers, Raghavan also sheds light on Nehru's evolving ideas on the border issue and his willingness to negotiate with China. The important point he raises is that Nehru and his advisors too remained unsure of certain Indian claims to the border areas particularly in the western (Ladakh) sector. There is also a scholarly consensus on Nehru's hardening stance on the border issue by late 1950s as a result of growing domestic opposition to his China policy. See S, Raghavan, 'Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute', 1948-60, *EPW* 41/36 (2006), page 3882.

<sup>497</sup> Despite the impossibility of maintaining soldiers and other extraterritorial privileges, Nehru expressed anguish at the allegations made by the members of the opposition, that if India "had not drawn voluntarily, [it] would have been forced to do so". See India and International Situation, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 25), page 420.

<sup>498</sup> One can find instances of Nehru's discomfort with the Tibetan leadership as it pushed him to be vocal for Tibetan self-determination. Their expectations from India became a matter of embarrassment if a diplomatic account is to be believed. On multiple occasions, the Dalai Lama requested India's mediation in the tensions between China and Tibet and pointed out threats from China. Apa Pant's (who served as Political Officer in Sikkim from 1955 to 1961) account recalled Nehru's reaction to the Dalai Lama's visit to India in 1956 when he lost his temper knowing about the former's views on China. See Oral History Transcript Apa Pant, Accession no. 123, PMML, page 24.

rights over Tibet”, the opposition members noted.<sup>499</sup> The Jana Sangh, which questioned India’s decisions to internationalize the Kashmir issue, began questioning Nehru’s apprehensions on taking the Tibet matter to the UN. If, in Nehru’s own words, “any and every form of colonialism” was to be condemned, his silence on the sufferings of the Tibetans belied the hope given by the Indian leadership to the Tibetans.<sup>500</sup>

As researchers draw from increasingly available archival sources, their accounts become entangled with quotidian diplomatic deliberations, relegating the fact that Nehru’s understanding of China, Tibet and the frontier were equally tied to his historicization of Indian civilization and territoriality. Behind his interpretation of the McMahon line as a natural frontier, his conviction in the power of Indian civilization surpassed any proof available in official records.

The other challenge to scholarship emerges from our insights into China as linguistic barriers make it difficult to access Mandarin/Cantonese literature along with the Kuomintang Archives. Indian scholarship in the past barely went beyond understanding Chinese perspectives other than official statements and claims communicated by Chinese officials to the Indian government. Such accounts assumed Communist China was a bigger threat to independent India’s territorial integrity than Nationalist China, given their ignorance of the Kuomintang’s policies in the late 1940s and “the interactions between the roi [Republic of India] and representatives of the Nationalist government”.<sup>501</sup>

Barring a few accounts (both legal and historical aspects included) that include works of Alastair Lamb, AG Noorani, Dorothy Woodman and a few others, the India-China boundary is rarely discussed in its entirety since Kashmir, Tibet and the North East Frontier have their vast histories and varying political contexts. The 1962 bias also transcends ideological boundaries in prioritising the geographical focus on certain border areas while ignoring other sectors. For example, the Hunza-China axis remains relatively less explored among Indian scholars compared to research on McMahon line, missing out on critical perspectives on China’s border perceptions before the Maoist revolution. However, it can be argued in support of these accounts that it is an ambitious task to summarise the Sino-Indian relationship considering the wide spectrum of issues involved.

A recent addition to the scholarship by Nirupama Rao reconstructs the Sino-India relationship by not only drawing from wider archival sources but also delving deep into the respective territorial imaginations of the Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan thinkers on their shared

---

<sup>499</sup> ‘Discussions in Parliament from 2nd April-12th September, 1959 including laying of first white paper containing notes, Memoranda and letters exchanged and agreements signed between the Government of India and China, 1954-1959’, 1959, Department: President Secretariat, Branch: General, File No. 130/59, NAI, page 93.

<sup>500</sup> Discussions in Parliament, File No. 130/59, NAI, page 69.

<sup>501</sup> Sen, ‘India’s Recognition’, page 188.

destinies through ancient past as well the empires in modern times. Besides documenting the different viewpoints among British officials on Tibet's legal status and relationship with China, her research sheds light on the Kuomintang's thinking on India in light of China's imagined position in Asia. Notwithstanding the differences among the views of key diplomats (especially KM Pannicker, KPS Menon and GS Bajpai to name a few) over India's Tibet policy and its legal position, the consistent emphatic overtones in Nehru's articulation of the Tibet problem are aptly captured in Rao's account.

This chapter discusses Nehru's understanding of China in relation with Indian history, imperial inheritance, and the complications that resulted from historicization of Sino-Indian ties. This chapter focuses on the 1940s and the 1950s, including the 1947-50 phase, a critical period when colonial privileges in Tibet and inherited border alignments were redefined as an essential aspect of India's past. In colonial times, some of the highly trained officers (especially from the Indian Political Service) occupied influential positions in the frontier bureaucracy and a common trait observed among those serving at the fringes of the empire (Charles Bell, Hugh Richardson, Basil Gould to name a few in the case of Tibet) was their emotional investment in the subject out of an empire-building zeal.<sup>502</sup> Owing to the remoteness of frontier terrain, at times their actions (for example, the excesses committed during the Younghusband expedition to Tibet) went beyond the official mandate and eventually became embedded in the institutional memories in the Tibetan and Chinese nationalist discourse. Thus, to the Chinese, independent India's successor status was perceived as inheriting the same border practices and interferences that was earlier identified with the excesses committed during the British rule.

The vast legacy of frontier policy and British engagement with Tibet leaves a narrow scope to evaluate Nehru beyond these colonial entanglements. Besides formal treaties between Tibet and Himalayan states, British policymakers also left behind unfinished conversations in the form of undemarcated tracts and overlapping border proposals. It is natural that the colonial frontier policy and the rapid political changes in China left too little time and agency with the Indian policymaking to incorporate new perspectives or flexibility in its approach toward China. As a successor state, India also inherited the disagreements between China and Tibet, resulting from British mediation efforts over the frontier that was never agreed to by China. Independent India's policy of maintaining ties with Tibet independent of China, while

---

<sup>502</sup> Oral History Transcript KC Johorey, Accession no. 712, PMML, page 137. Also, besides Indian states, postings in the frontier areas were a defining feature of the Indian Political Service. Further, the postings of these officials ranged from "Aden, Kuwait and Khorramshahr, to the north Kashgar, to the east Chungking in China and to the south the Indian States in Southern India." These positions, particularly the ones outside India were replaced by the foreign service officials after Indian independence. See Personal Memoirs of PJ Keen, EME MBE, a former member of the Indian Political Service. MSS Eur F 226/16, IOR, page 10.

interpreted by the Tibetans as a sign of recognition of their independent status, was viewed as an infringement by the Chinese on their sovereignty. Notwithstanding the intentions of China's communist leadership, Nehru remained firm in his belief that any negotiation with China had to be conducted with India's successor status as the foundational principle. In doing so, he believed that India was simply asserting its claims that predated colonial interference in Tibet. India was not insensitive to the British empire's interference in China and neither it advocated Tibet's separation from China. At the same time, the affinity between Indian and Tibetan leaders did not stem from British India's recognition of Tibet as a separate cultural entity but from centuries of cultural exchanges that the British later institutionalised through their diplomatic intervention.

The belief that a shared history/culture could manifest into shared territoriality formed the basis of Nehru's China policy. Conversely, it contributed to the deterioration of Sino-Indian ties due to India's insistence on colonial frontiers and its moral support for the Tibetan cause. In addition to official diplomatic correspondence and secondary literature on Sino-Indian ties, the chapter delves into Nehru's understanding of Tibet and China in relation to his idea of India. The chapter does not intend to discuss the veracity of Indian or Chinese claims. However, it utilises the arguments put forth by Nehru and concerned policymakers on Indian claims to shed light on the intimate relationship between the Indian nation as a concept and her frontiers. In defining India's historical linkages with China and Tibet, Nehru was not reiterating facts from history but pointing to an impossibility of imagining India without China and Tibet. In retaining imperial treaties, Nehru wanted to emphasize the empire's recognition of the centuries old territorial fluidities while renouncing the hierarchies these treaties brought with them.

From the time of India's independence up to October 1950 (when Tibet was annexed by the People's Republic of China), India negotiated with Tibet at par with Himalayan states; as an extended projection of her frontiers. Tibet's autonomy was valued not for retaining imperial era hierarchies, but to resuscitate the lost transnational identity that became the philosophical basis of ideating India. Further, the ties between the Indian nationalists and Chinese leaders not only predated independence but barring a few ideological differences, evolved organically with cultural themes and anti-imperialism as the binding factors.

### **Tibet and China in Nehru's imagination**

In Nehru's political/geographical/strategic repertoire, China and Southeast Asia were two key regions of Asia where the Indian 'spirit' had permeated the cultural fabric so deep that the tools of modern statecraft seemed inadequate to capture how India would have looked at Asia. An ideal understanding of the region for Nehru went beyond maintaining peace and friendly ties with other nation-states and much more towards making India synonymous with her immediate neighbourhood. And in his conversations with Chou Enlai in 1954, Nehru emphasised on the

same, stating that the “Ceylonese language is an Indian language and the Ceylonese are Indians”; in Southeast Asia, the “influence of India is greater” and that “culturally Cambodia is more Indian”.<sup>503</sup>

Conscious about the limitations of the modern nation-state on the idea of India itself, he felt that India’s extraterritorial identity had to be defined as consociating with, if not influencing its neighbouring geographies. Even in his communiques with Chinese leaders, Nehru kept positioning India as an amorphous transnational idea, recast as a product of global history, with Asia as the civilizational fountainhead.

Thus, there appears to be no differentiation between Buddhism, China and Tibet in Nehru’s retelling of Asia’s historical journey; these terms were used interchangeably not out of ignorance but to confer linearity to his historical narrative. In Tan Yun-Shan’s writings, even the universalisms defined by Chinese and Indian philosophies had many similarities<sup>504</sup>. In his booklet titled *The Universal Mother in Sino-Indian culture*, Tan Yun-Shan drew attention to common interpretations of the concepts of the Sanskrit term Shakti and Chinese Tai-Chi, the respective spiritual terminologies denoting the absolute and the eternal.<sup>505</sup>

Nehru was also mindful of the fact that till a few years before the 1962 war, centuries of territorial dependency was an important facet of India-Tibet relationship as travellers between Tibet and China had to pass through Indian territory.<sup>506</sup> Such geographical proximity impinged more on India’s international position over Tibet, which in turn hoped to influence the international community’s decision as well. Thus, Nehru remained “torn between his love for Chinese civilization, his empathy towards the Tibetan people, and the need to secure Indian territories” and had confessed to the inherent contradictions in these objectives.<sup>507</sup>

However, besides inheriting a special position in Tibet, India also inherited the British institutional inertia that coupled its Tibet policy with China despite the former’s assertions of independence. Nehru attributed the Indian subcontinent’s centrality in Asia, not to imperial strategies, but to its natural geopolitical preponderance. Defining India as the successor state, Nehru’s imaginary inadvertently found a common ground with British India’s policy of influence over Xinjiang and Tibet. He clarified India’s position in the defence of the McMahon Line,

---

<sup>503</sup> PMML, Minutes of Prime Minister’s talks with Premier Chou held on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1954, MO Mathai Papers, Subject File No. 35, page 14-15.

<sup>504</sup> Chinese scholar and a close friend of Tagore who headed the Cheena Bhavan at Santiniketan.

<sup>505</sup> ‘Notes by Prof. Tan Yun-Shan, Director, Visva Bharati Cheena Bhavana, Santiniketan, India, regarding relations between India and China, 1959’, Department: President Secretariat, Branch: General, File No. 66/4/59, 1959, NAI, page 46-47.

<sup>506</sup> Notes by Prof. Tan Yun-Shan, File No. 130/59, NAI, page 106-7.

<sup>507</sup> T. Sen, ‘Nehru was torn between loving Chinese civilisation and securing Indian border’ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/nehru-was-torn-between-loving-chinese-civilisation-and-securing-indian-border/> (19 Nov 2014). Also see Notes by Prof. Tan Yun-Shan, File No. 130/59, NAI, page 114.

whose alignment he thought could not be altered merely due to its imperial labelling. There was “nothing to discuss about the frontier” with “Chinese government or any other government” since “the McMahon line...was fixed long ago”.<sup>508</sup> However, his concern with the territory, as this chapter argues, went beyond just securing frontiers. Tibet was considered a cultural extension of India, irrespective of its association with China.<sup>509</sup> In other words, there was no conflict in the three objectives (India’s relation with China, Tibet and securing borders) as far as Nehru was concerned, and his China policy could be summarised as an attempt to balance these three facets by locating them in a singular history.<sup>510</sup> In terms of praxis, he sought to maintain diplomatic ties with Tibet despite acknowledging it as a part of China as Tibet’s special relationship with India was as fundamental as its place in the idea of India.<sup>511</sup>

As discussed in the previous chapters, the common underlying theme in the respective imaginations of Nehru, Greater India apologists and the Hindu nationalists was a nation whose geo-body transcended its political boundaries. While Hindu nationalists eventually focused on the more existential questions relating to the communal situation and redefining the Indian identity through homogenous parameters, Nehru explored notional pivots of inheritance to redefine India’s political personality and its relations with the neighbourhood.<sup>512</sup> Complementing the imperial cartography, his mental picture of India’s frontiers and China emerged from a nostalgia for places never visited and a time never known given the overwhelming influence of history on him.<sup>513</sup> As one of Nehru’s biographers states, “in spite of

---

<sup>508</sup> A Realistic Approach to Problems, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 24), page 578.

<sup>509</sup> The Dalai Lama has clarified on many occasions that Tibet’s real concern is not independence but to seek respect for Tibet’s culture and identity. If the Tibetans were to attain such an understanding with the Chinese, it would be acceptable to him. As corroborated by New Delhi’s Tibet policy since independence, India’s concerns over Tibet did not aim at altering Tibet’s relationship with China.

<sup>510</sup> Even after the Communist revolution, India did not contemplate changing its Tibet’s Policy. Nehru felt that India “should give them [Tibetans] such aid as we have been giving in the past.’ At the same time, Nehru was emphatic in cautioning that no measures ‘which might be considered a challenge to the Chinese Communist government or might mean an invasion of Tibetan sovereignty’ should be taken.” Rao, *Fractured Himalayas*, page 80. In its correspondence with China immediately after Tibet’s invasion, the Indian government refuted Chinese accusations of interfering in its domestic affairs and stated that its rights in Tibet and Chinese suzerainty not only had a legal basis but could also co-exist.

<sup>511</sup> Sardar KM Panikkar, India’s first ambassador to China and whom Nehru trusted on China related matters, penned a note on India’s proposed Tibet policy. He wrote that India “recognises Tibet to be under the suzerainty of China, equally she recognizes the autonomy of Tibet and claims the right to conduct direct negotiations and to maintain a diplomatic mission in Lhasa.” See Copy of a Paper Written on Tibet by Sardar Panikkar, Pol. External Department (B), NP S/12/1340, IOR, page 5.

<sup>512</sup> This is not to deny the role of Hindu nationalists in influencing foreign policy matters. Nehru’s Pakistan, Kashmir and Tibet policy was subject to scrutiny by the Jana Sangh and the RSS in the post-independence era.

<sup>513</sup> For instance, writing about his journey to China, Nehru felt how his “mind went back to the long line of illustrious pilgrims and travellers who had journeyed between India and China for thousands of years...across vast deserts and mighty mountains...encountering dangers...but full of enthusiasm and spirit for adventure. In those far-off days they had forged the imperishable links” that bound the two nations together, with Nehru imagining himself yet another link connecting these two ancients. See *Five Years Later*, *SWJN* (Series 1, Vol. 11), page 174.

his insistence on the primacy of the scientific temper...he retained the touch of the romantic...he was fascinated with accounts of travellers...and could take in, in a broad sweep, entire continents and historical ages.<sup>514</sup> Similarly, historian BR Nanda felt that his “assessment was in the larger historical perspective of not ten years but...hundred years. And in such a perspective, his assessment could be correct even if the Chinese did not understand what was happening in their own country”.<sup>515</sup>

As much as the history of India’s transnational linkages fed his thoughts, the awe-inspiring imagery of the northern frontier pulled him away from the “world’s ills...lulled [his] senses” and reminded him of the “folly of men’s ways in the world below”.<sup>516</sup>

An early account of his interest in Tibet can be seen from his letter written to his father during the early days of his incarceration in 1922, wherein he requested books by famous explorers Sven Hedin and Tom Longstaff, known for their expeditions in the trans-Himalayan region and the remote corners of Central Asia. In the same letter, he expressed his desire to travel to Kashmir, Ladakh and Tibet, particularly the Mansarovar lake and Mount Kailash, and further to Afghanistan and Central Asia.<sup>517</sup> His fascination with Tibet and his attachment to the Himalayas were not mutually exclusive. Visiting the Kumaon Himalayas in the 1930s, the view of the Himalayan range could not stop him from thinking about the mountains of Tibet and Nepal, and Kailash Mansarovar which lay just beyond those peaks.<sup>518</sup> Similarly, he described his experience of Kashmir to Madame Chiang Kai-Shek in the following words:

In Kashmir, I was not far from Chinese territory and my thoughts often went to...what was happening there. There was Tibet...and Chinese Turkistan. But the mighty mountains stood as barriers between us.<sup>519</sup>

Unlike China, where the imperial threat was equally Asian (from Russia) as it was European, Indian nationalism could afford to romanticize intra-Asian connections through cosmopolitan interpretations of writings on Fa-Hein, Ibn Batuta or Hiuen Tsang’s travels. They were proof of connected geographies of India and China accompanied by “elements of adventure, travel and exploration”.<sup>520</sup> India’s influence was visible in distant lands of Central Asia and the Chinese frontier, Nehru observed:

Hsuan-Tsang came overland across the Gobi Desert and passing Turfan and Kucha ...Yarkand, crossed the Himalayas into India. He tells us of his many adventures, of the perils he overcame, of the Buddhist rulers and monasteries in Central Asia, and of the Turks there who were ardent Buddhists.<sup>521</sup>

---

<sup>514</sup> S. Mathur and S. Goyal, *Spectrum of Nehru’s Thought* (New Delhi, 1994), page 100.

<sup>515</sup> Oral History Transcript, RK Nehru, Accession no. 324, PMML, page 19.

<sup>516</sup> *Escape*, *SWJN*, (Series One, Vol. 8), page 874-5.

<sup>517</sup> To Father, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1922, *SWJN* (Series one, Vol. 1), page 334.

<sup>518</sup> *Escape*, page 875.

<sup>519</sup> To Madame Chiang Kai-shek, July 11, 1940, *SWJN* (Series 1, Vol. 11), page 341.

<sup>520</sup> Majeed, *Autobiography*, page 10.

<sup>521</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 193-4.

This narrative of centuries-long intellectual exchange as documented in travelogues by Buddhist scholars and pilgrims added an emotional attachment to history. The thought of the seeming continuity of trade and cultural exchange despite a series of invasions faced by both nations, a shared Buddhist Mahayana heritage, the quest for superior knowledge, colonial encounter and episodes of cultural deterioration convinced Nehru about an interlinked destiny between the two nations.

Such romanticism with the territories beyond colonial India's boundaries was reflected later in India's official attitude on the question of imperial frontiers inherited from the empire. Tibet became intrinsic to Indian national identity, not just from the prism of history and culture but also from the feelings that the northern mountainous landscapes evoked for Nehru.

Devoid of any territorial claims, Tibet's importance was nevertheless repeatedly highlighted through a cultural discourse that evolved purely out of a constant intermingling of people, traders and religious scholars. Because of these connections, Chinese policies in Tibet became India's concern even as it relinquished its colonial privileges and recognised China's control over Tibet. Responding to allegations on Indian expansionism in Tibet, Nehru clarified that "as result of" its expansionist policy, "the then British Government in India established certain extra-territorial rights in Tibet. When India became independent, we inherited some of these rights. Being entirely opposed to any such extra-territorial rights in another country, we did not wish to retain them..."<sup>522</sup> As a goodwill gesture, the Government of India also "quietly renamed" the Agency in Lhasa as a consulate in 1952, "emphasising that it had no political interest in Tibet."<sup>523</sup>

Although Nehru downplayed the seriousness behind Communist China's territorial ambitions, he was well aware of its expansionist tendencies. Again, it was China's history and not its Communist leadership that was responsible for its aggression, he felt. In a detailed note from June 1954, he articulated his observations regarding Chinese policy:<sup>524</sup>

Although communism may be a tool [for this policy]...Chinese expansionism has been evident during various periods of Asian history for a thousand years or so. We are perhaps facing a new period of such expansionism. Let us consider that and fashion our policy to prevent it...

He was convinced in the initial years that the Communist revolution in China represented a way of expressing Chinese nationalism and the solution to it lay in redefining the Sino-Indian ties in their old civilizational framework.<sup>525</sup>

---

<sup>522</sup> Happenings in Tibet, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*, Vol. Four (Delhi, 1964), page 188.

<sup>523</sup> S. Dutt, *With Nehru in The Foreign Office* (Calcutta, 1977), Page 87.

<sup>524</sup> Important Points Mentioned by the Dalai Lama, Subimal Dutt Papers, Subject File No. 6, PMML, page 5.

<sup>525</sup> In a BBC broadcast, Nehru said that "China had taken a new shape" and whether we like it or not, "a great nation has been reborn". However, he also expressed regret for some of its actions on the external front. No amount of revolutionary changes could alter the historical facts that made China a civilizational power, he had felt. See VK Krishna Menon S/W by him - no. 3, PMML, page 22. On another

## China-India Ties During the Transfer of Power

Around the time of independence, the Congress leadership remained preoccupied with the more existential problems in northern India and Kashmir compared to the northeast or the Kashmir-China frontier. It is apparent from the archival records that the Indian foreign office assumed a greater role in day-to-day discussions on inheritance and the boundary in the northeast.<sup>526</sup> As massive rioting engulfed parts of India in 1947, Nehru also took note of the destruction caused by the Chinese civil war to justify the case for partition in India. Such similarities reinforced the belief that there was hardly any difference between the forces of nation-building in India and China.

In 1947, a note by the External Affairs Department outlined India's future policy on Tibet. A contradictory policy was adopted, where India would continue supporting Tibet's autonomy, but it was to be kept in consideration that Indian support should not antagonize China.<sup>527</sup> The relationship with Tibet was ought to be based on the 1914 convention with the McMahon line as the official border in order to pre-empt China from asserting its own claims:

If we fail to make them reaffirm the convention of 1914, the Chinese would then have some right to ask us to quit Tibet, on the pretext that that is Tibet's own wish, and that would be the prelude to claims on Bhutan and Sikkim.<sup>528</sup>

It is worth noting Chiang kai Shek's choice of Luo Jialun, a scholar with knowledge of Tibet, Xinjiang and the frontier as Nationalist China's first ambassador to India in 1947.<sup>529</sup> Ambassador Luo Jialun headed Tsing Hua University and Central University and happened to be the ideal candidate to use his "experience as a scholar to promote cultural exchanges between China and India".<sup>530</sup> He is known for his poem *Chant for Indian Freedom* that celebrated India's independence. He also published a paper, titled *Chinese Sources for Indian History*, during his tenure in India.<sup>531</sup> In his account, Luo takes credit for suggesting that the

---

occasion, Nehru expressed that he had no doubts that the Chinese "expansionism would have come if by any chance the Kuomintang had become a strong and a unified state". See PM's Note on Visit to Bhutan, Subimal Dutt Papers, Subject File no. 101, PMML, page 7.

<sup>526</sup> The Assam Government (still under British officials) had already embarked on a proactive policy to extend administration up to the McMahon line; "in Dihang, British military patrols were sent up each year to turn back the Tibetan tax collectors...In the Subansiri region a policy of...winning tribal goodwill...was initiated...In the Tawang tract...British armed posts had been established...to the south of Se La". See Lamb, *The China-India border*, page 166.

<sup>527</sup> New Delhi, Question of any corresponding changes in India's relations with Tibet and Bhutan as a result of India's future constitutional position, File No. 12(4)-NEF/1947, External Affairs Department, NAI, page 8.

<sup>528</sup> Question of any corresponding changes, NAI, page 51.

<sup>529</sup> F. Tien Sze, 'An Assessment of Ambassador Luo Jialun's Mission to India: 1947-9', *China Report*, 50/3 (2014), page 191.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

Indian government incorporate the Dharma Chakra in the Indian national flag.<sup>532</sup> Simultaneously, as a historian of China's frontiers, he had the instructions to communicate China's perspective on Tibet and the frontier territories that were transferred to India. As the foreign office (then Ministry of External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations) prepared to inherit the colonial apparatus in Tibet, it faced opposition from both Tibetans and the Chinese. The Tibetan leadership not only questioned the McMahon line but also claimed parts of Sikkim, Darjeeling and Ladakh, attracting criticism from Nehru.<sup>533</sup> After Tibet's incorporation into China, the Maoist leadership reiterated these claims in its capacity as an inheritor of Tibet's rights.

This is not to vindicate the Chinese point of view which too had its share of exaggerations and false claims, but to point out that the Indian leadership's attempts to give a national history to certain imperial practices, that grew out of contingency when China was too weak to assert its border claims.

The fact that Indian policymakers did not even consider the grievances of Tibetans or Nationalist China's border claims seriously till the Maoist revolution speaks much about their actual perceptions of the frontier. While cultural ties, security and a cautious approach to the communist regime remain major highlights of Nehru's China policy, this chapter has separately theorised Nehru's spatial understanding of the frontier and Tibet.

As discussed in the third chapter, the demography of colonial India's frontiers (where a majority of inhabitants were mostly Muslims, Buddhists and tribals) also fed the nationalist discourse on secularism and inclusiveness. The support for inheritance also had strong cultural undertones as India renegotiated its treaties with the Himalayan states and expanded its administration along the McMahon line.<sup>534</sup>

As Nehru highlighted, India's surrender of its special rights in Tibet was proof of his sympathies with China's colonial experiences. What impressed Nehru was Chou en Lai's denial of reports that the Chinese state had imposed communism on Tibetans. The Tibetans were too backward to be subjected to socialism, he told Nehru. Further, Nehru initially took

---

<sup>532</sup> Tien Sze, 'An Assessment', page 193. Also See T. Chung, *Himalaya Calling* (New Jersey, 2015), page 217-8.

<sup>533</sup> In October 1947, Tibetan authorities sent a telegram asking for the return of such as "Sayul and Walong and in direction of Pemakoe, Lonag, Lopa, Mon, Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and others on this side of river Ganges and Lowo, Ladakh etc. upto boundary of Yarkhim". See 'China's claim on Bhutan as her vassal state', Department: EA Branch: NEF, File No.20(8) NEF/55, NAI, page 5. Not only was it impossible to "imagine such claims", Nehru felt that if these claims were to be "taken literally, the Tibetan boundary would come down to the line of the river Ganges". See Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China, 26 September 1959, Notes, Memoranda and letters Exchanged and Agreements signed between The Governments of India and China (White Paper II), page 57. See <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper2NEW.pdf>

<sup>534</sup> In line with this policy, Tawang, an area in present day Arunachal Pradesh, was brought under Indian administration in 1951. It had previously paid taxes to Tibetan officials.

the Chinese anxieties over Tibet as driven by western interventions and a fear of India's collusion with the imperial forces.

This was different from the imperial origins of the frontier alignments as Nehru felt they merely reflected India's historical claims. Perhaps the greater threat that the imperial legacy posed to India was the memory of the empire that threatened independent India's relationship with China and Tibet, which had been "settled for centuries by history, geography, custom and tradition".<sup>535</sup> On the other hand, for the Chinese leadership, inheritance only reinforced memories of the British policy of Tibet's subservience and the Indian troop deployments in Chinese treaty ports to protect British interests.

The British empire, in using India's frontiers to influence what was its traditional sphere of influence, stripped India of any moral authority over these geographies in the postcolonial era. As seen from Nehru's China/Tibet policy in the first few years, new India initially hoped to legitimize its geocultural imagination through such inheritance.

At the peak of imperial dominance, the British still acknowledged China's role in Tibet and three decades later, the Asian Relations Conference acknowledged the same when Nehru acquiesced to China's protests after inviting Tibet as an independent entity.<sup>536</sup>

### **Epistemic Divergences in the Sino-Indian Border Negotiations**

The non-violent nature of Indian independence perplexed the Communist leadership in China which probably saw it as incomplete since it lacked violent zeal against imperialism.<sup>537</sup> Independent India's leadership was accused of sympathizing with imperialism since it was seen as peacefully renegotiating its ties with the west and accepting imperial symbols in its policymaking and governance.<sup>538</sup> Moreover, contrary to Indian beliefs, the Himalayas had no

---

<sup>535</sup> Letter from the Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China, 26 September 1959, *White Paper II*, page 50. <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper2NEW.pdf>

<sup>536</sup> After the first world war, Japan's challenge to the Asian balance of power and its aggressive inroads into China did not go unnoticed. Mindful of Japanese ambitions and anti-British propaganda in China, Britain was more cautious about excluding China from its Tibet policy. See I. Klein, 'British Imperialism in Decline: Tibet, 1914–21', *The Historian*, 34/1 (1971), page 100-105.

Simultaneous efforts at maintaining Tibet as a buffer without antagonizing China resulted in limited arms support to Tibet and underdefined frontiers.

<sup>537</sup> Nehru became the first non-communist statesman to visit China in 1954. In his talks with Mao, Nehru was asked whether India's struggle for independence could be termed as a revolution. In his response, Nehru highlighted the weakening of imperial powers as a consequence of the second World War, paving the way for freedom of colonized nations. In a sense, Nehru deflected the justification for emancipation away from violent revolution by highlighting broader global forces at play. See Minutes of Prime Minister's Talks with Chairman Mao on the Evening of Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1954, M.O. Mathai Papers, Subject File No. 35, PMML, Page 24-25.

<sup>538</sup> Sardar Patel noted this tendency shortly after the Maoist revolution. India had done "everything we could to assuage Chinese feelings... it continues to regard us with suspicion", he wrote to Nehru. See D. Das, *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, 1945-50, Volume 10 (Ahmedabad, 1971), page 336.

cultural significance for the Chinese civilization, let alone for the Maoists.<sup>539</sup> China's Seventeen Point agreement with Tibet contained provisions with subtle references that were hostile towards India. Cognizant of Indian sympathies for Tibet, the first article of the agreement called upon the Tibetans to "drive out invading imperialist forces...and return to the...family of the motherland [PRC]".<sup>540</sup> This was also noted by the officer in charge of Indian Mission in Lhasa, who viewed the specific article as having "ominous implications" for India.<sup>541</sup> However, if read along with the fourteenth point that called for establishing peaceful co-existence with neighbouring countries, it offered contradictory signals to India, given China's anxieties over India's influence over the Tibetans.<sup>542</sup>

Nevertheless, the first half of the 1950s witnessed elaborate cultural exchange programs, which do not appear to be superficial given the efforts and itineraries involved.<sup>543</sup> In 1955, when the Indian delegation visited China, Chou En Lai took a personal interest in curating its itinerary, attending several events in-person and honouring Indian artists.<sup>544</sup> In addition to Peking (Beijing) and coastal provinces, the Indian troupe performed in Urumchi, Kashgar, Szechuan and Shaanxi that lie near the Sino-Mongolian border (Tibet was excluded from the itinerary).<sup>545</sup> Indian delegations were permitted to perform in Sinkiang, even though India had allowed asylum to Uygur dissidents who fled the region after its takeover by Maoists. Isa Yusuf Alpetkin and Amin Bughra, Uygur leaders from the Kuomintang, who later founded Uygur ethnonationalist movements in exile, fled Kashgar after the communist takeover and stayed in Indian administered Kashmir till 1954.

Karunakar Gupta highlighted an interesting duality that characterized India's use of inheritance in its relationship with China wherein "Nehru was agreeable to disowning the extra-territorial rights in Tibet inherited from the Simla Convention [but] on the other hand, he was determined to maintain the McMahon Line of the Simla Convention".<sup>546</sup> If understood beyond

---

<sup>539</sup> D. Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries* (California, 1969).

<sup>540</sup> J. Lama, *The Seventeen Point Agreement: China's Occupation of Tibet*, *Origins* (Ohio, 2021). <https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/seventeen-point-agreement-seventy-years-china-s-occupation-tibet>

<sup>541</sup> 'Sikkim & Tibet (Reports)', 1951, Department: External Affairs, Branch: FEA, File No. 80-R&I/51, NAI, page 41.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid

<sup>543</sup> That said, China's discomfort with freedom of expression was visible to Nehru after the first cultural delegation to China submitted its report. While appreciative of the economic progress, Nehru's sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit - who also headed this delegation in 1952- noted that the nature of the itinerary "had been planned without any references to [their] wishes" and that the "picture of the New China as shown... was...a limited one". See 'Reports by Shrimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, leader of the Indian Cultural Delegation to China', 1954, Department: President Secretariat, Branch: General, File no. 136/54, NAI.

<sup>544</sup> 'Visit of an Indian Cultural delegation to China in 1955', 1955, Progs., Nos. 1(22)-FEA, 1955 (Secret), NAI, page 27-28, 58, 63 and 68.

<sup>545</sup> 'Visit of an Indian Cultural delegation', NAI, page 11, 26.

<sup>546</sup> Gupta, 'Sino Indian Agreement', page 696.

the discourse of Westphalian modalities, the Panchsheel, for India, did not disconnect Tibet from the Indian imagination as India cited trade, pilgrimage, and spiritual ties as its special interests in Tibet.<sup>547</sup> Similarly, India's acceptance of China's historical suzerainty over Tibet could not shut it from India since the bond existed irrespective of its relationship with China.<sup>548</sup>

The Asian Relations Conference arguably marked Nehru's initial attempts to define a soon-to-be independent India's relationship with Tibet and China. That China and Tibet were separately invited to the conference made it apparent that India would ideally see them if not as separate nations but as distinct cultural geographies. Nevertheless, Tibetan accounts believe that Hugh Richardson, British India's then-representative to Tibet, while handing over the invitation, called on the Tibetans to use the platform to demonstrate their independence from China.<sup>549</sup> A separate invitation to Tibet in the conference invited protests from the Chinese government which wanted to prevent any discussion on Tibet's political status on that occasion. Nehru too clarified that the conference was merely a cultural and not a political gathering.

Nehru appears to have overlooked how the colonial encounter changed the balance of power in the region and altered the Sino-Tibetan relationship as well. Britain's aggressive foray into Tibet transformed China-Tibet ties from those of "symbolic language and ceremonial behaviour, into one of political subordination and structural domination" or a relationship of patron-priest into that of power politics.<sup>550</sup> The view can be traced back to accounts of colonial officials who noted that until the Tibet expedition of 1904, China did not show interest "in the areas between the Outer Line and the Himalayan ranges".<sup>551</sup> From claiming nominal overlordship over Tibet to establishing direct administration, the British encounter changed the way China looked at Tibet. After 1904, China began incorporating territories under Tibetan control with the plan to "convert Tibet firmly into an obedient province of China".<sup>552</sup> The imperial government restored but demoted the Dalai Lama as a loyal and submissive Viceregent bound by the laws of the sovereign state. Unlike the previous expeditions in the past, when the Chinese entered Tibet only to restore order, the 1910 expedition was aimed at taking over the administration of Tibet.

---

<sup>547</sup> For Zhou Enlai, these special rights/interests emerged out of unequal treaties during the colonial era. As the empire and old Chinese administration ceased to exist, there was no need for such arrangements. See Message to Zhou En-lai, *SWJN* (Second Series, Vol. 23), page 485-6.

<sup>548</sup> Speaking at Parliament in December 1953, Nehru stated that "at no stage in Tibet's history, to my knowledge... was the suzerainty of China denied" and in all of independent India's correspondence with China over Tibet, this fact was implicit. See The Indo-Tibetan Frontier Issue, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 24), page 581.

<sup>549</sup> C. Arpi, 'Fifty Years Ago: The Asian Relations Conference', *Phayul* <https://www.phayul.com/2007/03/16/16010/>

<sup>550</sup> D. Norbu, *China's Tibet Policy* (Surrey, 2001), page 148-9.

<sup>551</sup> Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, page 120.

<sup>552</sup> Richardson, *Tibet*, page 98.

Working in the confines of the administrative vocabulary passed on by the empire, independent India could not factor in these complexities beyond the concepts of suzerainty or sovereignty. Similar to the British understanding of this relationship, these considerations were lacking on part of the Indian leadership as well.

In 1949, the Kuomintang government too expressed concerns over multiple visits by the Tibetan Trade delegation to India.<sup>553</sup> The Chinese leadership, questioning the McMahon Line's validity, denied Tibet as having any authority to discuss border issues with India. Even the draft of a Commercial Treaty proposed by China in late 1947 had references to the frontier and Tibet.<sup>554</sup>

Till early 1950s, India's official maps, which were carried over from the British era, depicted its northern frontier in the western and middle sectors as undemarcated.<sup>555</sup> It was only in 1954, the new *Survey of India* map showed a boundary after Nehru felt that the Panchsheel Treaty had provided an understanding – if not a solution - that India could demonstrate its position internationally. Writing to the Indian Ambassador to the US, Nehru had expressed his satisfaction that Panchsheel had enabled India to gain a friendly frontier and more importantly it had “an implicit acceptance of that frontier”.<sup>556</sup> Nehru was convinced that India could focus on bolstering its defences, intelligence capabilities and improving administrative control along the frontier.<sup>557</sup> This, in no way demonstrates Nehru's disregard for Chinese sensitivities but could be termed what S. Gopal referred as ‘Remiss diplomacy’, where Chinese acquiescence was assumed as an acceptance by not raising the issue at all.<sup>558</sup>

There are, however, divergent views on the rationale behind the new map, with scholars like Stanley Hoffman claiming that the doors for negotiations were closed whereas the then intelligence chief BN Mullick interpreted the decision as signalling an openness to negotiate.<sup>559</sup> Here, Rao noted that the “move was more in the character of seeing the nation as an encompassed cartographic space”, an argument that links cartography with the broader field

---

<sup>553</sup> Y. Yang, ‘Controversies over Tibet: China versus India, 1947-49’, *The China Quarterly*, 111/Sept., (1987), page 413-14, 407-20.

<sup>554</sup> Titled Sino-Indian Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, it proposed that both the contracting parties “enter into negotiation for the conclusion of an agreement for the delineation of frontiers, between China and India”.

<sup>555</sup> Raghavan, ‘Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute’, page 3882.

<sup>556</sup> S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, Volume Two (Delhi, 1979), page 181.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Writing to the secretary general, Ministry of External Affairs in December 1953, Nehru stated that “the attitude we should take up in regard to the frontier [is that] we should not raise this question. If the Chinese raise it we should express our surprise and point out that this is a settled issue”. See The Beijing Conference, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 24), page 598. Sir GS Bajpai, on the other hand, advocated raising the boundary issue with China along with the warning that the Chinese considered the McMahon Line a scar left by imperialism and could try settling the border by means that might “not be either to our liking or interest”. As it transpired, his advice was overruled. See K. Gupta, ‘Hidden History of the Sino-Indian Frontier I—1947-1954’, *EPW*, 9/18 (1974), page 725.

<sup>559</sup> Rao, *Fractured Himalayas*, page 178 (online version).

of persuasive visual technologies and the necessity for having modal conceptions of territory to bolster patriotism.<sup>560</sup> For Nehru, the frontier question had to be disconnected from populism for both security related reasons and his personal attachment with the issue, which possibly explains why he did not make the border negotiations with China public till 1959 when tensions escalated.

Throughout the border negotiations, the fundamental disagreement between the two sides emerged from their respective understanding of history. For the Chinese leadership, it was India's deliberate inability to rectify the British policy that turned Tibet into Britain's sphere of influence.<sup>561</sup>

### **Sino-Indian Boundary: A Millenia old Hindu frontier?**

In March 1947, as Nehru utilized the Asian Relations Conference to propagate his ideas on India's role in Asia, the Muslim League had pointed out to the Congress's use of Hinduism in its geopolitical vision of Asia. The cultural discourse surrounding the Conference drew criticism from the League which understood the event as a "thinly disguised attempt on the part of the Hindu Congress to boost itself politically as the prospective leader of the Asiatic peoples...[or in other words] as the sole cultural representative of this vast sub-continent...".<sup>562</sup> If not in the case of Pakistan and Kashmir, India's assertion of her Hindu identity resonated later in its China policy.

To base the Sino-Indian relationship on history and culture meant that the vocabulary of bilateral relationship had elements of Buddhism, Hinduism as well as the empire. While Nehru invoked Buddhism as the binding thread between the two nations, the need to connect the Himalayas with India's cultural individuality brought back Hinduism in his discourse on Sino-Indian ties. It was the sanctity of the Himalayan frontier that characterized much of Nehru's thought on the Sino-Indian border issues. In the appendix attached to the memorandum by the Indian embassy in China to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, India's claims over the Himalayan frontier were supported by references from the Riga Veda (the earliest reference source from 1500 BC), the Vishnu Puran, Kena Upanishad, the Mahabharata, Ramayana, the

---

<sup>560</sup> Ibid, S. Ramaswamy, 'Visualising India's geo-body: Globes, maps, bodyscapes', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 36/1-2 (2002), page 152.

<sup>561</sup> These thoughts were reflected in Chou en Lai's letter to the Indian Prime Minister in 1959. He reiterated "From the early days, Britain harboured aggressive ambition towards China's Tibet region. continuously instigated Tibet to separate from China, to put under its control a nominally independent Tibet. When this design failed, it applied all sorts of pressures on China, intending to make Tibet a British sphere of influence while allowing China to maintain so-called suzerainty over Tibet. In the meantime, using India as its base, Britain conducted extensive territorial expansion into China's Tibet region, and even the Sinkiang region." See Letter from the Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 8 September 1959, *White Paper II*, (New Delhi, 1959), page 40. <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper2NEW.pdf>

<sup>562</sup> G. Sabharwal, 'In Search of an Asian Vision: The Asian Relations Conference of 1947', in A. Acri, K. Ghani, M. Jha and S. Mukherjee (eds.), *Imagining Asia(s)*, (Singapore, 2019), page 62, 60-90.

Gita and so on. The note emphasized the significance of the Hindu identity of the Himalayan landscape, stating that “Tibetan and Chinese influences...never gained a permanent footing on the Indian side of the Himalayas throughout the centuries of Hindu rule in India. The Himalayan regions often changed hands, but it was almost always between Indian rulers”.<sup>563</sup>

An interesting facet was that this note also elaborated on the Hindu past of Kashmir as proof of Indian claims over the valley, which otherwise was missing from the Indian narrative vis-a-vis Pakistan.<sup>564</sup> Despite inheritance as the guiding theme, the role of religion marked the contrasts on India’s position on Kashmir and the Sino-Indian border. Despite Kashmir’s Hindu past and Nehru’s Kashmiri identity, he based India’s claim over Kashmir on the instrument of accession, India’s successor identity, and India’s secular ethos. Even the gradual erosion of Kashmir’s autonomy under Nehru’s leadership stemmed from his own insecurities due to rising nationalist sentiment in the valley rather than any religious motivations. Even if his love for Kashmir had a sentimental value, it remained a personal matter and Kashmir’s Hindu past was never part of India’s stance since India’s successor status was adequate to claim the entire state. But the sanctity of the Himalayas was central to Sino-Indian talks, to the extent that India even laid normative claims to the areas around the holy Kailash Mansarovar lake.

While the Chinese leadership cited unequal treaties from the British era to discredit India’s claims, for Nehru, India and her frontiers were not products of empire, since they attested to India’s geopolitical contours since time immemorial (as discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis). Similarly, inheritance was not an imperial legacy since the departure of the British also freed India to recover her historical rights over its peripheries. The *Survey of India* maps from the nineteenth century and imperial cartographic missions were used as evidence of India’s historical claims to Aksai Chin and the McMahon Line through maps drawn by William Johnson, George Hayward, Robert Shaw or Aurel Stein to reiterate India’s ancient frontier alignments.<sup>565</sup> The use of these sources as references became contentious for the Chinese negotiators, who found it difficult to factor in the legal incorporation of imperial policies as part of Indian nationalist history.<sup>566</sup> The Indian foreign office, in a note to the Chinese embassy

---

<sup>563</sup> Memorandum given by the Embassy of India to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 30 October 1959, *White Paper II*, page 169. <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper2NEW.pdf>

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Note given by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, to the Ambassador of China in India, 23 October 1959, *White Paper II*, page 32. <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper2NEW.pdf>

<sup>566</sup> “It should not have been necessary to discuss the British policy of aggression and expansion in modern history, as the history of India itself, the history of India’s adjacent countries which had once been a part of British India or its dependency, the history of China, and, in particular, the history of China’s Tibet region bordering adjoining India, all bear witness to this policy”. The legacy of such intrigues was being actively pursued as frontier policy after independence. See Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to the Embassy of India in China, 26 December 1953, *White Paper III*, page 107. [https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SWJN\\_Volume\\_60-2.pdf](https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SWJN_Volume_60-2.pdf)

stated the same, that “the records of British rule in India, which are now accessible and open to examination, show that the British only extended their authority over those territories which were historically and traditionally parts of India”.<sup>567</sup>

India’s rigid attitude appears comprehensible not simply out of availability of better legal evidence but the faith that the frontier was synonymous with the unity of India and could not be traded away. The developments since the eighteenth century might have been important in accumulating the documented evidence, but the acknowledgement of Indian claims also required the acceptance of India’s origins in antiquity. Nehru and Hindu nationalists were unanimous in the belief that India’s frontier demarcations were not derived from any imperial (both British and pre-British kingdoms included) practice but had sacred origins.

While it was the common imperial experience that brought Indian nationalists closer to China, the disagreements over imperial frontier demarcations caused much deterioration in the bilateral ties. The Sino-Indian border negotiations (as understood from the White Paper series), besides informing us on India’s boundary perceptions also throw light on Nehru’s sense of territorial identity and its rootedness in objective historical facts and mythology alike.

Both, the border issue and the early years of India’s Tibet policy revealed how Indian territorial identity found itself deeply rooted in primarily Hindu as well as Buddhist and imperial constructs. It was not an imperial legacy in the sense of a passive inheritance but a conscious acknowledgement of ancient India’s geopolitical orbit by the Raj that independent India had inherited. Despite India’s formal recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet in the Panchsheel agreement (1954) and its subsequent surrender of extra-territorial rights (India agreed to withdraw its military escorts from its trade missions in Yadong and Gyantse), Tibet continued to occupy the Indian imagination. Doubtful of Chinese assurance to maintain Tibet’s autonomy, Nehru believed that the “very nature of Tibetan geography, terrain and climate” would make “a large measure of autonomy...almost inevitable”, insinuating at its territorial connectivity with India.<sup>568</sup>

Citing inheritance, India even claimed territories as far as Minsar (near Kailash Mansarovar) as part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>569</sup> The unquestionability surrounding imperial frontier practices was implicit in Indian perceptions to the extent that Indian policymakers did not question the contradictions in imperial frontier policy or even the narratives surrounding the Simla Conference.

---

<sup>567</sup> Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peking, to the Embassy of India in China, 27 April 1962, *White Paper VI*, page 53. <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper6NEW.pdf>

<sup>568</sup> Das, *Sardar Patel’s Correspondences*, X, page 344.

<sup>569</sup> India was ready to give up the claim if pressured by the Chinese side. Nevertheless, it would be raised to apprise the Chinese of the claims India too wished to forego despite the proof.

A constant refrain in Nehru's position on the McMahon line and the broader frontier alignment was that the border existed for thousands of years. The civilizational identity and the significance of the Himalayas in the Hindu faith meant that China and India had to negotiate issues under the weight of a shared past of thousands of years. In a way, Nehruvian idea of India made it "impossible to distinguish romanticism from history and the latter from mythology".<sup>570</sup> A key example was Nehru's own attempts at convincing the Chinese leaders that "the Mahabharata entitled him to the McMahon Line".<sup>571</sup> Understood in this context, the treaties of the last few centuries presented to the Chinese side were not to be seen in isolation but as proofs affirming centuries old facts. Statements recorded in old documents were drawn upon to reaffirm that the frontiers were as old as the imagined concept of India itself. Responding to the Chinese claims that the border was never delimited, Nehru highlighted that the borders were not only recognized by "history and tradition, but also by records of [British] surveys", a fact that he reaffirmed in his talks with Chou en Lai as he recalled an old visit to Ladakh.<sup>572</sup> A note by the Indian Foreign Secretary to the Chinese ambassador in 1958 cited the Boundary Commission of 1847-9, wherein the latter was informed that the boundaries were "sufficiently and distinctly fixed so that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing them".<sup>573</sup>

## Conclusion

For the Sino-Indian frontier, inheritance threw a complex set of challenges with the rising assertiveness of Maoist China. Unlike the Kashmir problem, the claim to McMahon Line was premised on history and not as much on virtue or legality. Despite the realization that tensions between China and Tibet were accentuated by the British interventions, Independent India preferred its position on Tibet as a continuation of the colonial practise, yet it attempted to distinguish the empire's extraterritorial rights in Tibet from cultural and economic exchanges that had validated India's cultural claims over Tibet for centuries. Nehru assumed that the weight of shared heritage would restrain China from contesting Indian claims over the Himalayan space or its continued presence in Tibet. Further, the absence of a democratically

---

<sup>570</sup> P. Anderson, *The Indian Ideology* (London, New York, 2013), page 174.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> In his talks with Chou, Nehru said that the border "has been surveyed and precisely defined and described in numerous accounts...as a young man...Forty-four years ago, I went to Ladakh...I was interested in knowing about Ladakh and I studied, out of interest, books, charts, etc., regarding that area. This is only to show how firm this idea has been through this long period". See Nehru-Chou talks I, *SWJN* (Series 2, Vol. 60), page 20.

<sup>573</sup> Informal Note given by the Foreign Secretary to the Chinese Ambassador, 18 October 1958, *White Paper I*, page 30. <https://www.claudearpi.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/WhitePaper1NEW.pdf>

elected leadership in China was not a consideration in his thoughts as he felt that the forces of Chinese politics were guided by the forces of history.

But unlike the Kashmir dispute that prompted India to prepare a comprehensive legal documentation for the perusal of the UN and the international community, Nehru believed that India was not obliged to furnish any proof for the frontier with Tibet/China that was both sacred and synonymous with India's timelessness. And unlike the princely state of Kashmir (where legality and popular legitimacy were the primary concerns despite Kashmir's territorial importance), there were no intermediaries other than the frontier's eternity and that of India. Nehru further believed that India's successor identity would be beneficial to the Chinese as it would restore what he believed to be their natural relationship. This attitude also defined the border negotiations where the Indian side relied on old Hindu texts to justify its claims. Deliberate or not, Nehru's attitude towards the frontier struggled to separate imperial inheritance from the transfrontier cultural linkages that once characterized precolonial ties with China and Tibet. This anomaly showed up in bilateral ties wherein India willingly relinquished its extraterritorial rights in Tibet, but remained firm on retaining the McMahon Line. Nehru was willing to cede space to Chinese perspectives on Tibet and frontier, since he believed China to be an equal stakeholder in Asia's destiny thus any intercourse with China was to be inter-civilizational. Like India, he had faith in China relying on shared heritage to make sense of its borders with India. With this conviction, Nehru went ahead with finalizing the northern frontier with China in 1954.<sup>574</sup>

The broader issue in this case study pertains to the complexities in imagining India as a transnational project. Nehru's idea of India remains partially understood if limited to his anticolonial discourse or focus on secularism or international law alone. Secularism could be understood as a context-specific term invoked as a response to the Muslim League or Hindu nationalist politics. Although Nehru was not averse to deploying Hindu aspects of Indian identity in an abstract sense, the dispute over the Himalayan watershed marks a significant episode where faith was invoked with utmost clarity. This chapter also contested the view that Nehru's rigid stance on the McMahon Line was merely a product of public pressure as well as the view that it was only populism that fuelled his China Policy. Rather, in his determination to redefine the McMahon line as India's traditional border, Nehru gave Indian territoriality a distinct Hindu identity.

---

<sup>574</sup> The line was finalized in March 1953 and formally adopted in 1954. It included "the whole of Hunza...the Shaksgam valley...[and] almost the whole of Aksai Chin". The line also claimed territories beyond the Karakoram watershed (Shaksgam valley and the Qarakash basin), both due to "strategic needs" as well as India's inheritance of Mir of Hunza's jurisdiction over the Shaksgam valley. See *The Frontier of Kashmir (Hunza and Ladakh) with China (Sinkiang)*, Subimal Dutt Papers, File no. 78, page 160-2.

## Concluding Remarks

Balraj Madhok, one of the founders of the Jana Sangh noted that “it is wrong to say that foreign policy of Pt. Nehru, particularly in relation to our immediate neighbours Pakistan, Tibet and China, represented a national consensus”.<sup>575</sup> Born in Skardu (formerly part of the Princely State of Jammu and Kashmir presently under Pakistan), Madhok’s formative years in Kashmir (and subsequent ouster from Jammu and Kashmir) and western Punjab, and the impact of the first Indo-Pak war fed into the Jana Sangh’s institutional outlook on Akhand Bharat (Undivided India). A closer insight into the Jana Sangh’s reactionary thought reveals a similar pattern to that of Nehru, even when the former’s ideas had a Hindu identity as the genesis of nationalist thought as opposed to the latter. Hindu nationalists believed that since independent India was founded on the acceptance of partition and secular foundations, the geopolitical agency that underpinned the idea of India was severely weakened. Without her extended frontier, India would remain a contained geography, unable to realise its spiritual and territorial self. The anguish was not limited to the loss of territory but rather the inability to influence the Asian discourse in absence of deep peripheries that once linked India with Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. Thus, geography was not an abstract determinant in imaging the nation, but was tied to India’s historical role as a dominant power in Asia. What was notable in late nationalist discourse was that it blurred the distinctions between civilization and Indian empires of the past and episodes of India’s geopolitical influence over Asia became the basis of Nehru’s position in the ToP negotiations. Both, empire and civilization, were responsible for conferring an international character to the Indian nation, which in turn fed into the narrative of unity. For Nehru, there was no substantial difference between the Indian empire and Indian civilization; both were quintessential in imagining subcontinent’s geography and were seen as collectively contributing to the making of India’s international identity. His idea of India was essentially a product of their complementarity. Ashokan India thus became a model state for Nehru precisely due to the perfection he envisioned in imperial-cum-civilizational power during his rule. The Mauryan Empire, despite its territorial expanse, also precipitated a civilizational churning and it was under Ashoka that the message of Buddhism went beyond India’s frontiers. The idea of India, thus had distinguished characteristics in the sense that it remained peaceful, influenced distant cultures and presented a tolerant image of pre-British empires.

The colonial era is another example where the nationalists’ understanding of the empire’s interface is observed with greater clarity. Despite the opposition to British rule, the centralized apparatus of the Raj with its international status was appropriated by the new Indian state since the British too were seen as acquiring the traditional role of preceding empires, or what belonged to the Indians. It was the British invasion and the misuse of the Indian subcontinent

---

<sup>575</sup> B. Madhok, India’s Foreign Policy, *India Quarterly* 23/1 (1967), page 3.

for predatory geopolitics (as against India's underlying geopolitical potential) that was opposed by the nationalists. Among the myriad ideas defending Indian unity, Nehru's role as the first Prime Minister of independent India was instrumental in transforming the Indian imaginary into a political reality.

With these perspectives in mind, this thesis investigated the role of international themes in constructing the idea of India. Collectively, themes like India's historical role in influencing cultures across Asia, past conquests by Indian kings, India's geopolitical role in the colonial era and colonial India's international legal status in the inter-war years played an instrumental role in imagining India's international influence. This became the basis of Nehru's demand for united India. This thesis theorised Nehru's thoughts on the idea of India in context of the discursive influence of foreign policy. The research commenced with the hypothesis that the idea of a united India was best supported by its successor identity to colonial India, given the dearth of domestic attributes of unity. Besides highlighting his unique role in the freedom movement, this thesis focused on his intellectual contribution to state-making wherein he redefined the idea of India as an international concept wherein it was impossible to imagine India without articulating its role in global history and its position in Asia.

This thesis studied Nehru's thoughts and specifically his idea of India through the interaction of the national and international aspects of political identity. Largely responsible for deliberating on Indian National Congress's foreign policy from the late 1920s, he transformed the role of international affairs and foreign policy in imagining the nation.

To Nehru, the international sphere also underpinned India's territorial identity as the subcontinent's neighbouring geographies were integral to imagining a united India. It was argued that foreign policy was not simply an attribute of the Indian statecraft but rather its constituent or the means to imagine the Indian nation-state. In other words, as an idea, India was conceptualized to exist in the true sense only if the subcontinent's geopolitical position was instrumentalized to influence the Asian neighbourhood. Therefore, it is for these reasons that the Indian leadership made the passage of Indian Independence Act conditional to recognizing India as a successor entity to British India. For the Indian leadership, this status allowed it to legitimize the appropriation of princely states into independent India and simultaneously take over the colonial apparatus in Tibet, Xinjiang and other Himalayan States.

Indian secularism was defined by Nehru as an attribute of Indian culture rooted in history. Not only it was a socio-cultural phenomenon but a strategic factor in giving India its transnational character. For him, Indian society's secular character found a territorial expression as elements of Buddhism and Hinduism broadened the Indian cultural geography into China and Southeast Asia. By identifying the story of India with the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, Nehru seemed to go against the Hindu imaginaries, but these themes helped India's identification with a historical unitary state. Nevertheless, he did not delve much

into exploring Muslim India's transnational character, which could have potentially added to the international imaginings that Nehru gave to the idea of India.

In the subsequent chapters, the thesis researched on the implications of India's successor identity on its own evolution as a state and on its neighbourhood. In the case studies on Kashmir and China/Tibet, this thesis discussed how India's policies revolved around its successor identity as against the oft attributed narratives of realpolitik or idealism, narrowing any scope for practical negotiations. On one hand, Pakistan's use of Islamic sentiment prevented Nehru from claiming Kashmir as part of the Hindu cultural space. Following the tribal invasion and India's complaint in the United Nations, the Indian government could no longer claim Kashmir as a historical and cultural space. Rather, the instrument of accession and India's provisional control of Jammu and Kashmir became the basis of Indian claim. The state's legitimate accession to the Indian union became the mainstay of the Indian narrative. In doing so, the Indian leadership defined itself as taking the baton from the Dogra State, an act whose finality was questioned by the National Conference. Such focus, complemented with the implementation of doctrinaire socialism in state, ruled out any attempts towards emotional integration of the very people Nehru fought for. On the other hand, continuity manifested differently in the case of China. As it was highlighted in the fifth chapter, India's assertions emerged in the backdrop of the legal ambiguities left over by the empire. Given the context, ancient history and Hindu texts became the guiding light to reclaim India's frontiers. The Himalayas, due to their sacred stature in the Hindu imagination, were an integral unit of India's sacred geography and could not be traded off. The border negotiations with China eventually compelled Nehru to support India's territorial claims based on the Hindu past.

In the realm of foreign policy, India's interests in Asia were not simply consigned to material or cultural issues alone but to redefine it as the mother country for the whole of Asia. To some extent this idea appeared to grow into a conviction following independence, as India used its successor identity to retain its membership in the United Nations as well as the colonial diplomatic apparatus beyond the frontiers, besides emphasising its spiritual connections with the Tibetans and Himalayan states. In Nehru's own imagination, the fulfilment of this objective required a statesman who shared the conviction that the idea of India was as much international as it was domestic, both culturally and territorially. Thus, the responsibility of steering India's external affairs, by default, fell on the head of the government (or the Prime Minister in the Westminster parlance) itself. As Kira Hujju stated in her recent book, even though "executive control over foreign policy was a long-held Viceroyal convention, but Nehru's intimate involvement with the diplomatic cadres was unparalleled".<sup>576</sup> Until 1956, "he

---

<sup>576</sup> K. Hujju, *The making and unmaking of cosmopolitan elites: hierarchy, diversity, and Indian diplomats in international society*, Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (University of Oxford, 2020), page 52-3.

met each probationer individually” and would “convene even with junior Deputy Secretaries, and with Joint-Secretaries ‘as a matter of course’ – an impossible thought in the post Nehruvian Foreign Service”.<sup>577</sup>

Notwithstanding his faith in the supremacy of constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy, an impersonal approach was insufficient to understand or govern India. The ideal leader of independent India - in this case Nehru - had to be mindful of the complexities which went beyond institutional tools of statecraft in order to capture the national imaginary. As seen, the first few years of neighbourhood policy and evolution of India as a state had a strong Nehruvian footprint.

Besides legitimizing unity, India’s successor status allowed her to claim its millennia old continuous history and special rights (if not territory) beyond the Himalayan frontier. Although partition was a tragedy, Indian leadership made peace by making Pakistan’s legal identity subservient to that of undivided India. This underlying belief in Greater India propelled this research with the further question whether there was a common underlying theme connecting India’s statehood and India’s policy towards its neighbouring countries. Concepts like NAM, idealism or Realism (and its accompanying theoretical variants) partly explain Indian foreign policy but do not reflect Nehruvian thought in its entirety.

To support this argument, the basis of India’s unity and extraterritoriality was theorized as having a common source of inspiration, that is, the empires of the past. India’s past was unidimensionally reconstructed as a chronology of empires beginning with the Mauryas all the way up to the British empire. The overlaps between the geocultural expanse of the Mauryan phase and the empire’s territorial limits attested to a united India with a documented history of over two millennia. Independent India’s legal and political identity was collectively defined with Mauryan symbols and colonial inheritance, making transnational identity implicit in its political project. In the eyes of Nehru, the idea of India and its manifestation into the Indian Independence Act of 1947 was understood as a nominal proclamation of India as an empire that eventually bore a nation-state. In owning an imperial identity, the intangible attributes of Indian national and civilizational identity found a territorial expression.

In an international perspective, independent India, that retraced its identity in Ashokan symbols (as it was highlighted in the third chapter), also represented an aspiration to influence the international domain, which was possible only after it attained unity. Only after its political unification, it would be possible to resuscitate Buddhist or Hindu cultures that could permeate India’s neighbouring territories.

Despite the contribution of Hindu sacred geography in ideating India’s unity and international identity, Nehru’s secular leanings and the horrors of partition made him naturally predisposed

---

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

towards Buddhism. The Buddhist faith was “essentially international, a world religion”, he had confessed.<sup>578</sup>

Buddhism not only gave independent India an empirical past, but it also allowed India to appropriate the history of Pakistan and the broader subcontinent. The Non-Alignment Movement, which became the lynchpin of Nehru’s international projection, was in fact built on the tenets of Mauryan Buddhism.

Nehru’s version of India’s historical journey also reveals how he synthesized the role of Hinduism with Buddhism as imperial and civilizational markers of unity. While conscious of not defining Hinduism as the basis of India’s unity, there were instances where the atemporal nature of Hinduism contributed to India’s legal and territorial identity. In the case study on the Sino-India border dispute, the fifth chapter highlighted multiple statements by Nehru and senior officials in the Indian foreign office defending the legitimacy of the McMahon line by quoting Hindu texts.

Colonial India’s influence over trans-Himalayan territories, the Middle East and Southeast Asia became ingrained in nationalist thought as British India emerged as a sub-empire. While Nehru condemned India’s exploitation as a base for imperial geostrategic designs, he also understood that India’s centrality in the Asian balance of power lay in its unity under a single authority. A transnational identity had to be conditional to the appropriation of political unity, implying the indispensability of foreign policy in the nation-building project.

In the third chapter, this thesis highlighted that it was the international identity that legitimized Indian identity as indivisible and reduced the scope for dissent. As different linguistic and ethnic groups agitated for safeguards and special rights in return for their allegiance to the new nation-state, Nehru feared that Indian identity could not be subject to a social contract as regional/ethnic affiliations were trivial matters in India’s historical journey. Further, he felt that “in developing a foreign policy” consultations were welcome but would end up making it a “question of debate”, suggesting “that we should reduce the conduct of these high affairs relating to foreign policy to frequent consultation and debate”.<sup>579</sup>

If not similarities, there are strong parallels between Nehru and Curzon, as Durga Das and AG Noorani observe. Both justified the need for an influential foreign policy with unitary authority as a precondition. For both, frontiers were more than just territories to be defended, they were markers of the nation’s civilizational identity. However, what Curzon aspired to achieve with military power was considered attainable through projecting normative or Gandhian facets of its transnational identity to the international community. For Nehru, it was theoretically possible to imagine India in a Curzonian construct and yet operate it on Buddhist

---

<sup>578</sup> Nehru, *Discovery*, page 138.

<sup>579</sup> A Realistic Approach to Problems, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 24) page 573.

or Gandhian principles. As mentioned in the third chapter “the only constant was the Indian spirit, an abstract culmination of the cultural plurality that defined India’s domestic and neighbouring spaces”.

The influence of foreign rulers played a significant role in shaping the interpretations of Indian history in the Hindu and Muslim political discourse. The Delhi Sultanate and Mughal era were reminiscent of Muslim dominance and political consolidation of India, whereas for Hindu nationalists it was an age of humiliation. For the British, as Thomas Metcalf demonstrates in his book *Ideologies of the Raj*, while there were multiple interpretations of Indian history that were published by British scholars and writers over the years, they were united in accommodating the existence of the Raj in India and defending the “imposition of British rule its necessary culmination”.<sup>580</sup> While Nehru challenged the notion that India was best ruled by foreign entities, the British or the Mughals were not vilified in his version of Indian history. Notwithstanding their contributions and pitfalls, the main message was that the endurance of these empires had an important message, that stability lay in centralization, which was key to empire-building. In turn, the legitimacy of the empires emerged from their capability to influence foreign lands. Reimagining India as a successor to these empires, in theory, could also reconcile her past with unpleasant memories as the new state did not base its identity on a sense of vengeance.

On the policy front, India found itself entangled in the colonial outlook and nomenclatures towards its neighbouring countries. This is not to argue that India blindly adopted these policies, but to highlight the preponderance of colonial vocabulary that became a limitation for independent India’s policymakers. Despite a cosmopolitan approach to questions of international significance, Nehru’s understanding of the neighbourhood suffered from the limitations emerging from imperial lexicons and the tendency to view the neighbourhood as an extension of India.

The last two chapters analysed the problems arising out of these interpretations of unity and inheritance that compelled India to redefine nationhood. India’s policies on Kashmir and China brought out paradoxical interpretations on succession. In Kashmir, the instrument of accession became the basis of Indian claims. In a few years’ time, inheritance and populism stood in contradiction as Sheikh Abdullah pressured Nehru to honour Kashmiris’ demand for self-determination. Moreover, the legality of succession was contested by Abdullah as he believed it was the Kashmiris who were successors to the Dogra state.

On the other hand, the situation in Tibet momentarily conjured Nehru to reassess independent India’s successor identity itself. He came to the realization that while India did not “wish to pursue the old British policy” and that it was “out of date”, but India “could not rid

---

<sup>580</sup> T. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994), page 67.

itself of it”.<sup>581</sup> Although India “enjoyed certain rights” in Tibet and there was a “tendency to hold on to whatever we could” because “there was no alternative”.<sup>582</sup> A “certain trace of old outlook continued” despite India’s attempts to get rid of the colonial policy.<sup>583</sup>

The acceptance of Partition and Chinese control over Tibet were understood as transitory phases in the long temporal journey of a nation. The retreat of the empire and the intensification of the Cold War were responsible for these developments but decolonization offered an optimism to reimagine Greater India in the *longue durée* even as Pakistan and Tibet disappeared from the Indian geocultural horizon. An ahistorical space like Pakistan would eventually join India once the contradictions in its national project would show up with time. Thus, Nehru’s conviction in India’s successor identity was not confined to what Ayesha Jalal terms as mere “fiction of India’s political unity surviving the subcontinental division”, but was rather conditioned by the inevitable linkage between history and the future he foresaw for Pakistan.<sup>584</sup>

Similarly, Tibet’s subjugation was resented, but not unexpected since it was “the historical policy of China towards Tibet” to exert influence over Tibet, irrespective of Communism.<sup>585</sup> It was true that Tibet was indispensable to the concept of Indian transnational identity but it was simultaneously part of China’s imperial imagination for centuries. Like India’s response to sub-nationalist or separatist tendencies at the onset of independence, the Chinese, for Nehru, were justified in subjugating the Tibetans. Communist or non-Communist, Nehru and likeminded policymakers felt that China would have the same policy as her views on Tibet stemmed from historical factors, and specifically those tied to Chinese conceptions of empire and phases of overlordship over Tibet.

The Sino-Indian border, including the McMahon line was defined as inseparable from Hinduism. While Buddhism was an undercurrent in Sino-Indian ties, India’s individuality could be expressed through its Hindu identity. Eventually, it was the sanctity and not the legality of the Himalayan frontier that became India’s bargaining position.

The evolution of India’s political personality in the first decade since Indian independence can thus be understood through tracing Indian history in the geopolitical apparatus left behind by the Raj. While populism and the legal cover provided by India’s successor status provided a relatively smooth integration of most of the princely states, India’s border disputes did not just result in territorial losses, but produced contradictory conceptions about continuity itself.

---

<sup>581</sup> Subimal Dutt Papers, Subject File No. 101, PMML, page 17.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> A. Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge, 1995), page 16.

<sup>585</sup> A Perspective on Tibet, *SWJN* (Second series, Vol. 40), page 617.

The disputes with Pakistan and China, as mentioned above, were addressed in the context of India's unitary yet transnational identity.

In 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was incarcerated for questioning Nehru's doublespeak on the issues of self-determination for the people of Jammu & Kashmir. The talk of Pakistan returning back to India loomed large in the political discourse but its communal origins discouraged Nehru from devising any active long-term policy on such lines as preferred the matter to be left to the course of history. By 1954, a new map of India was published where India's northern borders were unilaterally defined with a cartographic certitude as the McMahon line assumed the status of a sacrosanct border. These decisions were not only consequential in setting the stage for future tensions with India's principal neighbours, but also acquainted Nehru with the practicalities of statecraft, exposing the incompatibility of the intellectual concepts in shaping policies. As against the theoretical foundations of Nehru's idea of India, independent India found it difficult to accommodate its historico-legal identity with its neighbourhood that was otherwise integral to its geographical imagination. In an international environment characterized by the Cold War and a hostile neighbourhood, it was impractical to locate one's national identity in international themes. Nevertheless, Nehruvian India found solace in appropriating the international identity of the Raj, thus settling for a symbolic empire.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary Sources**

#### **Archives and Manuscripts**

##### **Delhi**

##### **National Archives of India**

External Affairs Section

President Secretariat

States Department

##### **Prime Ministers Museum and Library**

##### **Individual Collections**

B.N. Rau Papers

Gopalaswamy Ayyangar Papers

Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (pre-independence)

Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (post-independence)

Meherchand Mahajan

Krishna Menon Papers

M.O. Mathai Papers

Subimal Dutt Papers

SP Mookerjee Papers

##### **Oral History**

Apa Pant

BP Koirala

BPL Bedi

KC Johorey

KPS Menon

PN Jalali

Roy Bucher

##### **London, India Office Library, British Library**

India Office Records

Political Collection

Powell Papers

War Series

##### **Personal Memoirs**

PJ Keen

##### **Broadlands**

**Middle East Centre Archive, St. Antony's College (University of Oxford)**

Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith Papers

**Printed**

- Abdullah, S. M. and Singh, K., *Flames of the Chinar* (New Delhi, 1995)
- Abdullah, S. M., Sadiq, G. and Sarabhai, M., *Sheikh-Sadiq correspondence* (New Delhi, 1958)
- Bazaz, P.N., *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir: Cultural and Political, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Delhi, 1954)
- British Somaliland and Sokotra* (London, 1920)
- Carter, L., *Mountbatten's Report on the Last Viceroyalty* (New Delhi, 2003)
- Constituent Assembly of India Debates: Official Report (12 Vols, 1949)
- Curzon, G., *The Place of India in the Empire* (London, 1909)
- Defending Kashmir* (Delhi, 1949)
- Gandhi, M., *My Socialism* (Ahmedabad, 1959)
- Gundevia, Y.D. and Abdullah, S., *The Testament of Sheikh Abdullah* (Michigan, 1974).
- Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches* (5 Vols, Delhi, 1964)
- Mahajan, M., *Accession of Kashmir to India (The Inside Story)* (Solapur, 1969).
- Nag, K., *Greater India* (N/A, 1926)
- Nehru, J., *The Discovery of India*, (Delhi, 2004 [1946])
- , *Glimpses of World History*, (Delhi, 2004 [1934-5])
- , *Kashmir 1947-1956 – Excerpts From Nehru's Speeches* (Delhi, 1956)
- , *Jawaharlal Nehru's speeches* (Delhi, 1954).
- , *One Nation, One Heart* (Delhi, 1963)
- , *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937-1940* (London, 1941)
- , 'The Unity of India', *Foreign Affairs*, 16/2 (1938), page 231-43
- , Inter-Asian Relations, *India Quarterly*. 2/4 (1946). page 323-7
- Notes, Memoranda and letters Exchanged and Agreements signed between The Governments of India and China 1954 –1959* (14 Vols, 1959-62)
- Papers Relating to the Cabinet Mission in India 1946* (Delhi, 1946)
- Report of the Indian States Committee, 1928-29* (London, 1929)
- Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50*, D. Das (ed.), (10 vols, Ahmedabad, 1971-4)
- Savarkar, V. *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu* (City, 1969)
- Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, S. Gopal et al. (ed.), (74 vols, Delhi, 1984-)
- The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, (100 vols, Delhi, 1958-84)

*The Transfer of Power 1942-7: Constitutional Relations between Britain and India*, N. Mansergh et al. (eds), (12 vols, London, 1970–82)  
*White Paper on Indian States* (2 Vols, Delhi, 1948-50)

## Secondary Sources

- Abraham, I., *How India became Territorial* (California, 2014)
- Acharya, A., 'Asia is not one', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 69/4 (2010), page 1001-13.
- Ahmad, K., *Kashmir: Exposing the Myth Behind Narrative* (New Delhi, 2017).
- , *Kashmir: Looking Back in Time* (New Delhi, 2021).
- Anand, RP., 'The Formation of International Organizations and India: A Historical Study', *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 23/1 (2010), page 5-21.
- Anderson, P., *The Indian Ideology* (London, New York, 2013).
- Anghie, A., *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge and New York, 2004).
- Ankit, R., *The Kashmir Conflict* (Oxon, 2016).
- Appadorai, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy, 1947-72* (Delhi, 1981)
- Arpi, C., 'Fifty Years Ago: The Asian Relations Conference', *Phayul*,  
<https://www.phayul.com/2007/03/16/16010/>
- Azad, M., *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version* (Madras, 1988)
- Babay, S., 'Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode', *Modern Asian Studies*, 38/3 (2004), page 703-44
- Baxi, U., 'The Recovery of Fire: Nehru and Legitimation of Power in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25/2 (1990), page 107-112
- Bayly, C., 'The Ends of Liberalism and the Political Thought of Nehru's India', *Modern Intellectual History*, 12/3 (2015), page 605-626
- Bayly, S., 'Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode', *Modern Asian Studies*, 38/3 (2004), page 703-44
- Behera, N., *Demystifying Kashmir* (Delhi, 2007)
- Bhagavan, M., 'The Hindutva Underground: Hindu Nationalism and the Indian National Congress in Late Colonial and Early Post-Colonial India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43/37 (2008), page 39-48
- , *India and the Quest for One World* (New Delhi, 2012)
- , 'Princely States and the Hindu Imaginary: Exploring the Cartography of Hindu Nationalism in Colonial India', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 67/3 (2008), page 881-915
- Bhattacharya, S., *Talking Back: The Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse* (Delhi, 2012)

Blau, A., 'Interpreting Texts', in A. Blau (ed), *Methods in Analytical Political Theory* (Cambridge, 2017), page 243-69

———, 'Textual context in the history of political thought and intellectual history', *History of European Ideas*, 45/8 (2019), page 1191-1210

Blyth, R., *The Empire of the Raj* (New York, 2003)

Bose. S., *A Hundred Horizons* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2009)

Bose, S., *Kashmir – Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Massachusetts, 2005)

Carnell, M., 'India from Colony to Nation-State: A Re-Reading of India's Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia, c.1945-1955' (PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2012)

Chakrabarti, D and Majumdar, R., *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition* (Oxford, 2007)

Chakrabarty, D., *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, 2008)

Chandra, B., 'Nationalist Historians' Interpretation of the Indian National Movement', in S. Bhattacharya and R. Thapar (eds.), *Situating Indian History* (Delhi, 1986)

Chatterjee, P., *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton, 1993)

———, *Empire and Nation* (New York, 2010)

———, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Tokyo, 1986)

Chaturvedi, V., 'Rethinking Knowledge with Action: V. D. Savarkar, The Bhagavad Gita, and Histories of Warfare', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7/2 (2010), page 417-435

Chung, T., *Himalaya Calling* (New Jersey, 2015)

Cohen, S., 'India and the Region', in D. Malone, C.R. Mohan and S. Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, (Oxford, 2015), page 341-55

Corfield, C., *The Princely India I knew* (Madras, 1975)

———, 'Some Thoughts on British Policy and the Indian States, 1935-47', in C.H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright, (eds.), *The Partition of India* (London, 1970), page 527-34

Darwin, J., *The Empire Project* (Cambridge and New York, 2009)

Das, D., *India from Curzon to Nehru and After* (New York, 1970)

Devji, F., *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (London, 2013)

———, *The Impossible Indian* (London, 2012)

Dutt, S., *Dutt, With Nehru in The Foreign Office* (Calcutta, 1977)

———, 'India and the Himalayan States', *Asian Affairs*, 11/1 (1980), page 71-81

Eck, D., *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York, 2011)

Eggleston, F., 'The Kashmir Dispute and Sir Owen Dixon's Report', *Australian Outlook*, 5/1 (1951), page 3-9

*Eminent Parliamentarians Series: Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah* (New Delhi, 1990)

Frankel, F., *When Nehru Looked East* (New York, 2020)

Geary, 'World Heritage in the Shadow of Zamindari', in D Geary, M. Sayers and A. Amar

(eds), *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site* (Oxford, 2012), page 141-52

Getachew, A., *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, 2019)

Ghosh, S., 'British Penetration of Intransigent Tibet', *The Tibet Journal*, 4/1 (1979), page 7-16

Gill, B.G., 'India's Trade with Tibet: Early British Attempts', *The Tibet Journal*, 25/4 (2000), page 78-82

Gopal, N., *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History* (Massachusetts, 2013)

Gopal, S., *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (Massachusetts, 1976)

———, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Volume Two* (Delhi, 1979)

Goswami, M., 'Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms', *The American Historical Review*, 117/5 (2012), page 1461-85

Grewal, J.S., *Master Tara Singh in Indian History: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Politics of Sikh Identity* (New Delhi, 2017)

Gupta, K., 'Sino-Indian Agreement on Tibetan Trade and Intercourse', *EPW*, 13/16 (1978), page 696-702

———, 'Hidden History of the Sino-Indian Frontier I—1947-1954', *EPW*, 9/18 (1974), page 721-6

———, 'The McMahon Line 1911-45: A British Legacy', *The China Quarterly*, Vol 47(1971), page 521-45

Guyot-Réchard, B., 'Reordering a Border Space: Relief, Rehabilitation, and Nation-Building in Northeastern India after the 1950 Assam Earthquake', *Modern Asian Studies*, 49/4 (2015), page 931-62

Huju, K. *The making and unmaking of cosmopolitan elites: hierarchy, diversity, and Indian diplomats in international society*, Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (University of Oxford, 2020)

'Indian Political Thought in the Global Age: Shruti Kapila in conversation with Faisal Devji (uploaded 26 Mar 2022) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SxTW1I2zXM> (25 April 2023)

Jafri, N., 'Pakistan's Trade with India', *Pakistan Horizon*, 5/2 (1952), page 86-96

Jalal, A. *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia* (Cambridge, CUP), 1995

Kapila, S., 'Global Intellectual History and the Indian Political', in Darryn McMahon and Samuel Moyn (eds.), *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2014), page 253-274

Karnad, B., 'An Elephant With a Small Footprint The Realist Roots of India's Strategic Thought and Policies', in K. Bajpai, S. Basit and V. Krishnappa (eds), *India's Grand Strategy: History, Theory, Cases* (New Delhi, 2014), page 200-33

Karunakaran, K., *India in World Affairs*, (New Delhi, 1952)

Kaviraj, K., *The Imaginary Institution of India: Politics and Ideas* (New York, 2010)

Kennedy, A., 'Realism and Idealism Combined', in D. Malone, C.R. Mohan and S. Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2015), page 100-15.

Khilnani, S., 2021. *Panoptical Views on Politics: Nationalism — Prof. Sunil Khilnani* [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WnBaSVI7ek&t=216s>

Klein, I., 'British Imperialism in Decline: Tibet, 1914–21', *The Historian*, 34/1 (1971)

Krishna, S., 'Cartographic Anxiety: Mapping the Body Politic in India', *Alternatives*, 19/4 (1994), page 507-21

Lahiri, H., 'Tagore's Asianist Discourse: Reception and Resistance in Chowdhury', in Pradipta Shyam and Sandip Kumar Som (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore Revisited: Essays on Tagore* (Kolkata, 2012), page 26-40

Lama, J., The Seventeen Point Agreement: China's Occupation of Tibet, *Origins* (Ohio, 2021) <https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/seventeen-point-agreement-seventy-years-china-s-occupation-tibet>

Lamb, A., *Birth of a Tragedy* (Hertingfordbury, 1994)

———, *The China-India Border* (London, 1964)

Leake, E., 'Where National and International Meet: Borders and Border Regions in Postcolonial India', *The International History Review*, 44/4 (2021), page 1-18

Legg, S., 'An international anomaly? Sovereignty, the League of Nations and India's princely geographies', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 43 (2014), page 96-110

Levi, W., 'Bhutan and Sikkim: Two Buffer States', *The World Today*, 15/12 (1959), page 492-500

Lone, S.R., 'The princely states and the national movement: The case of Kashmir (1931–39)', *Studies in People's History*, 4/2 (2017), page 183–196

Louro, M., 'Where National Revolutionary Ends and Communist Begins: The League against Imperialism and the Meerut Conspiracy Case', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 33/3 (2013), page 331-344

Majeed, J., *Autobiography, Travel and Postnational Identity: Gandhi, Nehru and Iqbal* (New York, 2007)

Madhok, B., *Kashmir and Ladakh: Problem and Solution* (Delhi, 1987)

———., India's Foreign Policy: The Jana Sangh View, *India Quarterly*, 23/1 (1967), page 3-7

Majumdar, R., *The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. 13: The Struggle for Freedom* (Bombay, 1952)

Malhotra, J., 'Border Conflicts in South Asia: India's Himalayan Boundary Disputes', *Strategic Analysis*, 31/5 (2007), page 879-902

Manjapra, K., *Age of Entanglement* (London and Massachusetts, 2014)

Mansergh, N., 'The Partition of India in Retrospect', *International Journal*, 21/1 (1966), page 1-19

Mathai, M., *My days with Nehru* (Delhi, 1971)

Mathur, S. and Goyal, S., *Spectrum of Nehru's Thought* (New Delhi, 1994)

Maxwell, 'Jawaharlal Nehru: Of Pride and Principle', *Foreign Affairs*, 52/3 (1974)

Mehra, P., 'Managing India's Nepal Policy: The Raj and After'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29/15 (1994), page 849–852

Mehta, J., 'Catalysing Graduated Modernisation Through Diplomacy: NEHRU'S VISIT TO BHUTAN-1958', *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 6/2 (2002), page 84-103

Mehta, P., 'India and the UN', *Indian Journal of International Law*, 41/4 (2001), page 451-465

Mehta, P.B., 'Still Under Nehru's Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Frameworks in India', *India Review* 8/3 (2009), page 209-33

Menon, V.P., *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Bombay, 1956)

———, *The Transfer of Power in India* (Bombay, 1957)

Metcalf, B., *A Concise History of Modern India* (Cambridge, 2012)

Metcalf, T. *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1994)

Mitra, S.K., 'British Policy in Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet', *Indian Historical Review*, 1/2 (1974), page 105-122

Moore, R., *Escape from Empire* (Oxford, 1984)

———, 'Mountbatten, India and the Commonwealth', *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 19/1 (1981), page 5-43

Moraes, F., *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* (Mumbai, 2007)

Mukherjee, N., *Spatial Imaginings in the Age of Colonial Cartographic Reason: Maps, Landscapes, Travelogues in Britain and India* (Abingdon, 2021)

Mukherjee, R., *India's Diplomacy in Kashmir: An Historical Perspective* (New Delhi, 1990)

Mullard, S., *Opening the Hidden Land: State Formation and the Construction of Sikkimese History* (Leiden, 2011)

Nagendra, H., *India and the International Court of Justice* (London, 1971)

Nanda, B.R., *History of Modern India* (Delhi, 2002)

Narayan, B., *India's Foreign Policy and its Neighbours* (New Delhi, 2007)

Navlakha, G., 'Bharat's Kashmir War', *EPW*, 26/51 (1991), page 2951-55, 2957-62

Nayar, K., *Crossing the Lines: Kashmir and India-Pakistan Relations* (Delhi, 2002)

Nettl, J., 'The State as a Conceptual Variable', *World Politics*, 20/4 (1968), page 559-92.

Nightingale, P and Skirne, C.P., *Macartney at Kashmir* (London, 1973)

Noorani, A., *The Kashmir Question* (New Delhi, 1992)

———, *Constitutional Questions in India* (New Delhi, 2005)

———, *Indian Government and Politics* (New Delhi, 2010)

- , *India's Constitution and Its Working* (New Delhi, 2011)
- , *Democracy and Constitutionalism in India* (New Delhi, 2006)
- , *The Kashmir Dispute 1947-2012* (New Delhi, 2013)
- , 'Kak and Sheikh', *Frontline*. 10 Sept 2010. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article30181714.ece> (15 Oct. 2023)
- . 'Of Jinnah and Junagadh', *The Hindu*. 13 Oct 2001 <https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30159825.ece> (15 Oct. 2023).
- Norbu, D., *China's Tibet Policy* (Surrey, 2001)
- Nussbaum, M., *The Clash Within* (Cambridge, 2007)
- Ober, D., 'From Buddha Bones to Bo Trees: Nehruvian India, Buddhism, and the poetics of power, 1947–1956', *Modern Asian Studies*, 53/04 (2019) page 1312-1350
- Omissi, D., *Indian Voices of the Great War* (Basingstoke, 1999)
- Pande, B., *The Great Game in the East: India, Tibet and China 1904-1947* (London, 2010)
- Pandit, J., *India, Pakistan and the Quest for Peace in Kashmir* (New Delhi, 2004)
- Pandit, K., *The Kashmir Crisis: 1947-1965* (New Delhi, 1967)
- Parashar, A., *Politics of India's Borderlands* (New Delhi, 2015)
- Parry, J., 'Orientalism and Empire', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36/2 (1994), page 297-321
- Patel, B., *The State Practice of India and the Development of International Law* (Leiden, 2016)
- Phadnis, A., *Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (New Delhi, 2004)
- Phadnis, U., *Towards the Integration of Indian States. 1919-1947* (New York, 1968)
- Poddar, S., *India and the Cold War: Diplomacy, Development, and the Politics of Nonalignment* (New Delhi, 2011)
- Pryor, C., 'Bodh Gaya in the 1950s Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahant Giri and Angarika Munindra', in D Geary, M. Sayers and A. Amar (eds), *Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on a Contested Buddhist Site* (Oxford, 2012), page 110-8
- Purushotham, S., *From Raj to Republic* (California, 2020)
- , 'History and Temporal Sovereignty in the Thought of Jawaharlal Nehru' in Edelstein D and Wheatley, D (eds), *Power and Time: Temporalities in Conflict and the Making of History* (Chicago, 2020), page 335-54
- , 'Jawaharlal Nehru, Indian Republicanism, and the Commonwealth', in Saul Dubow and Richard Drayton, (eds.), *Commonwealth History in the Twenty-First Century*, 1st ed. (Cham, 2020), page 143-59
- Raghavan, P., 'The Making of the India–Pakistan Dynamic: Nehru, Liaquat, and the No War Pact Correspondence of 1950', *Modern Asian Studies*. 50/5 (2016), page 1645-1678
- , 'Establishing the Ministry of External Affairs', in David Malone, C. Rajamohan and

Srinath Raghavan, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2015), page 80-91

Raghavan, P., Bayly, M., Leake, E. and Paliwal, A., 'The Limits of Decolonisation in India's International Thought and Practice: An Introduction', *The International History Review*, 2022 page 1-7

Raghavan, S., *The People's War: India's Struggle for Freedom* (New Delhi, 2010)

———., *India's War: 1947-1948* (New Delhi, 2014)

———., *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Harvard, 2013)

———. 'Sino-Indian Boundary Dispute, 1948-60: A Reappraisal', *EPW* 41/36 (2006), page 3882-92

Rai, A., 'Nehru and the Making of Modern India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46/3 (2012), page 683-704

Rajan, M., 'Indian Foreign Policy in Action, 1954–56', *India Quarterly* 16/3 (1960), page 203-36

Rajan, R. 2018. *Jammu and Kashmir Dilemma of Accession: A Historical Analysis and Lesson* (New Delhi, 2018)

Rajashekara, H.M., 'Nehru and Indian Federalism'. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 55/2 (1994), page 135-148

Rajkumar, *The Background of India's Foreign Policy*, (Delhi, 1952)

Ramachandra, S., *The Indian Political System* (New Delhi, 2012)

Ramaswamy, S. 'Visualising India's geo-body: Globes, maps, bodyscapes', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 36/1-2 (2002), page 151-89

Rao, N., *The Fractured Himalaya: India Tibet China 1949-62*, (Gurugram, 2022)

Ray, H., *The Return of the Buddha: Ancient Symbols for a New Nation* (London, 2014)

Ray, S., 'History, Memory, and Territory in Colonial India', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 34/3 (2008), page 380-400

Raza, A., Roy, F and and Zachariah, B., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds and World Views 1917-39* (India, 2015)

Reddy, A., *The Indian Union and its Foreign Policy* (New Delhi, 1960).

Reddy, A., *India and its Neighbours* (New Delhi, 1974).

Reddy, K., 'India and the United Nations', *International Studies*, 7/1 (1967), page 1-18

Riccardi, T., 1975. Sylvain Levi: The History of Nepal. Part 1. *Kailash – Journal of Himalayan Studies*. 3(1). page 5-60

Richardson, H., *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962)

Rizvi, J., *India and International Law: Historical Perspectives* (New Delhi, 1993)

Rose, L., 'India, China, the Himalayan Border States and Afghanistan: 1947-57'. *South Asian Survey*, 4/1 (1997), page 81-94

———, 'India and Sikkim: Redefining the Relationship', *Pacific Affairs*, 42/1 (1969), page 32-46

Roy, A., *The Life and Times of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi, 2006)

Roy, M., *India's Borderland Disputes: Kashmir and Beyond* (New Delhi, 2002)

Sabharwal, G. 'In Search of an Asian Vision: The Asian Relations Conference of 1947', in A. Acri, K. Ghani, M. Jha and S. Mukherjee, *Imagining Asia(s)* (Singapore, 2019), page 60-90

Sagar, R., 'Before Midnight: Views on International Relations, 1857-47', in D. Malone, C. Rajamohan and S. Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford, 2015), page 65-79

Saikia, A., *India and the International System* (New Delhi, 2007)

Sarkar, S., *Modern India, 1885-1947* (Calcutta, 1983)

Sayeed, K., 'Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute', *Asian Survey*, 6/8 (1966), page 563-575

Schaffer, R., 'The Legacy of Partition in Kashmir', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 18/2 (1995), page 217-238

Schofield, V., *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War* (London, 2003)

Seal, A., *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1968)

Sen, T. 'India's Recognition of the People's Republic of China', *China and Asia*, 3/2 (2022), page 186-201

———, 'Nehru was torn between loving Chinese civilisation and securing Indian border', Times of India, 19 November 2014. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-edit-page/nehru-was-torn-between-loving-chinese-civilisation-and-securing-indian-border/>

Skinner, Q., *Visions of Politics, Vol. 1*, (3 vols, Cambridge, 2002)

Shakoor, R., 'India-Pakistan Conflict over Kashmir: Historical and Political Dimensions', *Pakistan Horizon*, 53/2 (2000), page 57-70

Shani, O., *Communism and Nationalism in India: The Congress, the Left and the Making of Modern India* (Cambridge, 2012)

Sharma, B., *Kashmir: The Untold Story* (New Delhi, 2006)

Sharma, C., *The Himalayan Borderlands: Security, Culture and the Politics of Identity* (London, 2010)

Sharma, R., *India and the United Nations* (New Delhi, 1991)

Sidhu, W., Regional Peace and Security, in S. Chesterman, H. Owada and B. Saul (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Law in Asia and the Pacific* (Oxford, 2019), page 94-123

Silk, J., The Victorian Creation of Buddhism, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 22/1 (1994), page 171-196

Singh, K., *Kashmir: Roots of Conflict, Paths to Peace* (Cambridge, 2005)

Singh, M., *The Politics of India's Borders* (New Delhi, 2011)

Singh, S., *India and the UN: History and Practice* (New Delhi, 2000)

Singh, Z., *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies during the Cold War* (New Delhi, 2018)

Sinha, A., *The Kashmir Dispute: Past, Present and Future* (New Delhi, 2010)

Sinha, A.C. 'The Bhutan State Congress: First Political Stirrings', Himal  
<https://www.himalmag.com/cover/the-bhutan-state-congress-first-political-stirrings>  
 ———, Political Development and Strategic Security in Bhutan, *Dialogue*, 11/1 (2001)

Sinha, R., *India's Himalayan Frontier: Politics, History and Security* (New Delhi, 2015)

Sinha, S., 'India and Tibet: Policy and Relations', *Asian Survey*, 18/9 (1978), page 879-895

Smith, A., *India: A History* (London, 1998)

Snedden, C., *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris* (London, 2015)

Sohal, A., 'Pure Kashmir: Nature, Freedom and Counternationalism', *Modern Intellectual History*, 19/4 (2021) page 1106-1133

Stolte, C., 'Enough of the Great Napoleons!' Raja Mahendra Pratap's Pan-Asian projects (1929–1939)', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46/2 (2012), page 403-22

Stolte, C and Fischer-Tine, H., 'Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54/1 (2012), page 65-92

Subedi, S., India-Nepal Security Relations and the 1950 Treaty: Time for New Perspectives, *Asian Survey*, 34/3 (1994), page 273-84

Subrahmanyam, S., *Europe's India: Words, People, Empires* (Cambridge, 2017)

Talbot, I., *Pakistan: A Modern History* (London, 2009)

Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay* (City, 1992)

Tanwar, R., *Be Clear Kashmir will Vote for India' Jammu & Kashmir 1947-1953: Reporting the Contemporary Understanding of the Unreported* (New Delhi, 2019)

Taseer, B., *The Kashmir of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah* (Lahore, 1986)

Thakur, R., 'India's Diplomacy in the United Nations', *International Studies*, 38/2 (2001), page 1-18

Thakur, V., 'The Colonial Origins of Indian Foreign Policymaking', *Economic & Political Weekly*, 49/32 (2014), page 58-64

Thapar, R., *India: Past and Present* (New Delhi, 2013)

Tharoor, S., *Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India* (London, 2017)

Thayil, M., *The Historical Geography of Kashmir* (New Delhi, 1991)

The Tibet Conundrum: Part 1. The Annexation. Samvad with Claude Arpi (uploaded 8 October 2022) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4DzhilMFQQ&t=801s> (26 March 2023)

Tilak, B., *Arctic Home in the Vedas* (Bombay, 1925)

Tien Sze, F., 'An Assessment of Ambassador Luo Jialun's Mission to India: 1947–9', *China Report*, 50/3 (2014), page 189-201

Tinker, H., 'The Contraction of Empire in Asia, 1945-48: The Military Dimension', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 16/2, page 218-33

Tripathi, D., *India and the Himalayas: History, Politics and Culture* (New Delhi, 2002).

Vajpeyi, A., *Righteous republic* (Massachusetts, 2012)

Vohra, R., *The Making of India's Foreign Policy: Kashmir, 1947-1965* (New Delhi, 2010).

Wagle, N., 'India's Border Conflicts and Security Concerns', *Strategic Analysis*, 33/5 (2009), page 743-762

Wilder, G., *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World* (Durham, 2014)

Wirsing, R., *India, Pakistan, and the Kashmir Dispute* (City, 1998)

Wolpert, S., *A New History of India* (Oxford, 2004)

———., *India* (Berkeley, 2009)

Wriggins, W., *India's Kashmir Problem* (New York, 1970)

Yang, Y. 'Controversies over Tibet: China versus India, 1947-49', *The China Quarterly*, no. 111 (1987), page 407-20

Young, R., *Reshaping the Nation: India's Foreign Policy and National Identity* (New Delhi, 2015)

Zaheer, H., 1988., *The times and trial of the Rawalpindi conspiracy 1951* (Karachi, 1988)

Zinkin, T., 'Indian Foreign Policy: An Interpretation of Attitudes', *World Affairs*, 7/2 (1955), page 179-208