

Global Intellectual History in International Relations: Hierarchy, Empire, and the Case of Late-Colonial Indian International Thought

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Abstract:

The Eurocentric critique of the International Relations discipline has brought welcome attention to non-European international thinkers, and anti-colonial or anti-imperial thinkers in particular. Frequently these thinkers and associated movements are rightly described in thematic terms of emancipation, equality, and justice, in opposition to the hierarchical worldview of empires and their acolytes. Notwithstanding the broad validity of this depiction, a purely oppositional picture risks obscuring those aspects of ‘non-European’ international thought that evade simple categorisation. Drawing upon archival material and historical works, this article applies approaches offered by global intellectual history to the works of late-colonial Indian international thinkers, exploring the mixed registers of equality and hierarchy, internationalism and imperialism present in their writings. Concentrating on three ‘sites’ connected by the common themes of

diaspora and mobility: the plight of Indians overseas in East Africa; the concept of 'greater India'; and the international political thought of Benoy Kumar Sarkar, the article complicates the internationalism/imperialism divide of the early twentieth century, showing how ostensibly opposed scholarly communities sometimes competed over similar forms of knowledge and ways of ordering the world. This offers a framework by which the contributions of global intellectual history can be applied to the study of international political thought.

Key words: global intellectual history; International Relations; India; international thought; anti-colonialism; anti-imperialism; hierarchy; empire; diaspora; mobility; circulations

On 19 January 1924, the poet, independence activist, and President of the Indian National Congress, Sarojini Naidu, addressed the East African branch of the INC in Mombassa.¹ The visit marked a growing determination on the part of the INC to internationalise its independence struggle, in part by using the Indian diaspora to

¹ The East Africa Indian National Congress had originally been set up to represent the interests of Indian traders in East Africa but held a semi-formal relationship with the Indian National Congress, sharing correspondence and collaborating on campaigns.

produce and disseminate pro-independence propaganda in foreign capitals.² The Indian community in East Africa was an important constituency. By 1920 an estimated 30,000 Indians living in the region outnumbered the European community by about five to one.³ Despite this numerical advantage, Indians found themselves subject to growing political and economic inequalities, reflected in a 1923 government ruling which maintained the racialised reservation system of the Kenyan Highlands for white European settlers, and overlooked the pre-existing racial segregation of Kenyan townships.⁴ This was in addition to the enactment of the principal of communal electoral franchise, which threatened to divide the Indian community whilst limiting their representation on the Kenyan Legislative Council to just two seats.⁵

It was to the principle of equality and justice that Sarojini Naidu appealed. But it was the means by which she made this appeal that is of concern to the argument in this

² Nehru Memorial Museum Library [hereafter NMML], AICC Instalment 1, Vol. 1, File No. 9, 1922-23, N. S. Hardiker to Working Committee of the Indian National Congress, 'Publicity Work in America: A New but Permanent Plan'. See also (same file) A. Brockway to All India Congress Committee, 20 July 1921, 'Scheme for a Press Bureau in London in Connection with the Indian National Congress and an Estimate of its Cost', pp. 21-7; Rash Behari Bose to AICC, 20 August 1922, pp.73-75.

³ NMML, AICC, Inst. 1, Vol. 1, File No. 4, 1921, B. S. Varma to Lloyd George, 11 December 1920, pp. 7.

⁴ NMML, AICC, Inst. 1, Vol. 1, File No. O-4, 1928, 'Supplement to the Memorandum Submitted by the E. A. I. N. Congress Nairobi to the Hilton Young Commission'.

⁵ NMML, B. S. Varma to Lloyd George, pp. 6-7.

paper. ‘I am standing today for the first time in my life’, she spoke, ‘on the soil of Africa, but none the less, I dare any man, of any nation, to challenge my statement that I stand on the traditional Colony of the Indian people. What makes tradition? what makes policy, what gives rights? what brings duty, what imposes responsibility? It is the historic connection of one race with another, of one country with another, and the longer the connection, the deeper the interest, the more the responsibility and the more indisputable the claim. It does not take a very learned student to realize that naturally and inevitably East Africa is one of the earliest legitimate colonial territories of the ... surplus of the great Indian nation.’⁶

Sarojini Naidu’s views on the position that Indians held in East Africa, as inheritors of an Indian colonial tradition, raise questions as to the way that we study international thought. There can be no doubting the anti-colonial credentials of Naidu, her opposition to British imperial rule, or her commitment to the independence of India, but how can we explain the contradiction between her thoroughgoing anti-colonialism, with an apparently hierarchical conception of the occupation of political space? The response that Naidu simply had a different understanding of the term ‘colony’ merely begs the question as to what that understanding was. This article suggests that one answer can be found in the way that we approach intellectual history in the study of international thought.⁷ The article draws upon ‘global’ intellectual history, and specifically the

⁶ Sarojini Naidu, *Speeches and writings of Sarojini Naidu* (Madras G.A. Natesan, 1925), p. 393.

⁷ What constitutes the ‘international’ in international thought is contested terrain, subject to various forms of boundary policing. This article adopts an expansive

conceptual framework offered by ideas of intellectual ‘circulations’, mediators, and translations, bolstered through recent literature on the global history of knowledge.

Naidu’s speech provides just one example of a wider body of Indian international thought⁸ that has often been subsumed by the teleology of the nation, or by the essentialist categorisation of anti-colonial thought. As a result, the international thought of Indian activists, intellectuals, and scholars has often failed to connect with broader themes of international thinking that were apparent in the opening decades of the twentieth century. This is particularly striking given the often-peripatetic nature of leading Indian international thinkers, and also the transnational reach of the Indian diaspora through which Indian international consciousness was frequently shaped. This article seeks to bring Indian international thinkers more comprehensively into the global intellectual debate on world order, from which they have often been separated. An emphasis on that to which these scholars and activists were generally opposed – i.e.

understanding in which ‘international’ corresponds to any pattern of thought that engages with topics of transboundary movements or interactions – what Justin Rosenberg terms ‘interactive multiplicity’. These interactions may include, but are not limited to, relations between states or empires, encompassing for instance patterns of trade, migration, law, conflict, and so on. Rosenberg, Justin. ‘International Relations in the Prison of Political Science’. *International Relations* 30:2 (2016), pp. 127–53.

⁸ The term ‘Indian’ international thought is used, but is not meant to imply a form of methodological nationalism. These thinkers were frequently transnational in their outlook and intellectual provenance as the arguments below demonstrate.

imperialism – presents a substantialist analysis often framed in terms of ‘anti-colonialism’, or ‘anti-imperialism’, potentially occluding more detailed understandings of their work.⁹ The article points in particular to the mixed registers of equality and hierarchy that were sometimes apparent in Indian international thought, and associated practices. Mixed registers that reflected both longer-standing traditions of hierarchy rooted in South Asian political thought, and also occasionally reflected back the imperial hierarchies that they sought to critique and overcome.

In so doing, the argument does not attempt to ‘call out’ these thinkers and activists as somehow also imperialist, but rather seeks to interrogate the more unexpected content of their ideas. I begin by outlining the basic contours of global intellectual history, showing how it maps onto recent efforts to address the Eurocentrism of the history international political thought. Following this I draw upon three ‘sites’ of Indian international political thought, connected by the common themes of diaspora and mobility: first, the question of the Indian diaspora and how it registered with scholars and independence activists, focusing on East Africa; second, the concept of ‘Greater India’ and its intellectual acolytes; and third, the international political thought of the

⁹ Anthony Bogues, ‘Radical anti-colonial thought, anti-colonial internationalism and the politics of human solidarities’, in Robbie Shilliam (ed.), *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 197–213; Christopher J. Lee, ‘Anti-colonialism: Origins, practices, and Historical Legacies’, in Martin Thomas and Andrew Thompson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, Ebook (Oxford: OUP, 2017).

sociologist, Benoy Kumar Sarkar. The purpose here is not so much to reveal new understandings of these sites, which have been dealt with individually across a range of works in cognate disciplines.¹⁰ Rather, by bringing these sites together the article speaks to the value of global intellectual history in its capacity to imagine new

¹⁰ For example: Sana Aiyar, *Indians in Kenya: The Politics of Diaspora* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015); Susan Bayly, ‘Imagining “Greater India”: French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic Mode’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 38:3 (2004), pp. 703–44; Manu Goswami, ‘Imaginary Futures and Colonial Internationalisms’, *The American Historical Review*, 117:5 (2012), pp. 1461–85; “‘Provincializing’ Sociology: The Case of a Premature Postcolonial Sociologist’, in Julian Go (ed.), *Political Power and Social Theory* (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2013), pp. 145–75; Mario Prayer, ‘Creative India and the World: Bengali Internationalism and Italy in the Interwar Period’, in Sugata Bose and Kris Manjappa (eds), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: AIAA, 2010), pp. 236–59; Luna Sabastian, ‘Spaces on the temporal move: Weimar Geopolitik and the vision of an Indian science of the state, 1924–1945’, *Global Intellectual History*, 3:2 (2018), pp. 231–53; Satadru Sen, *Benoy Kumar Sarkar: Restoring the nation to the world* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2015); Clemens Six, ‘Challenging the grammar of difference: Benoy Kumar Sarkar, global mobility and anti-imperialism around the First World War’, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire*, 25:3–4 (2018), pp. 431–49; Jayashree Vivekanandan, ‘Indianisation or indigenisation? Greater India and the politics of cultural diffusionism’, *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 56:1 (2018), pp. 1–21.

assemblages of international thought that broaden the scope of the history of international political thought without relying upon distinct categories defined in terms of ‘cultural’ otherness, or distinct intellectual trajectories. In short, global intellectual history offers an analytical framework that can reveal ‘global histories’ of international thought that are worthy of the name. Connecting these three sites is the common theme of mobility and diaspora, an empirical theme that gives analytical purchase to the concept of circulations borrowed from global intellectual history.

International Thought, Global Intellectual History, and International Relations

The study of international thought has previously been something of a late-developer when it comes to its engagement with intellectual history. The political theorists of the ‘Cambridge School’ of contextualist intellectual historians naturally privileged the state and its domestic capacities, leaving international theory and thought underdeveloped – as famously acknowledged by Martin Wight.¹¹ The emergence of the ‘historiographical turn’ in the early 2000s has given way to a blossoming of histories of international

¹¹ David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Martin Wight, ““Why Is There No International Theory?””, in Martin Wright and Herbert Butterfield (eds), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), pp. 17–34.

political thought in recent years, sustained by contributions from intellectual history,¹² and an IR discipline more sympathetic to critical theoretical approaches and their attendant emphasis on linguistics, subjectivity, and the philosophy of history. Responding to the Eurocentric critique of the field, attention has increasingly turned to the extra-European world.¹³ These are important developments, some of which have connected with what has been termed ‘global intellectual history’, although this has often been underspecified.

In simple terms global intellectual history offers a response by intellectual historians to the ‘global history’ movement that gathered pace in the early 2000s. But what makes

¹² William Bain and Terry Nardin, ‘International relations and intellectual history’, *International Relations*, 31:3 (2017), pp. 213–26; Duncan Bell, ‘International Relations: The Dawn of a Historiographical Turn?’, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 3:1 (2001), pp. 115–26; Ian Hall, ‘The history of international thought and International Relations theory: from context to interpretation’, *International Relations*, 31:3 (2017), pp. 241–60; Edward Keene, *International Political Thought: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2005).

¹³ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Alina Sajed and Timothy Seidel, ‘Introduction: Escaping the Nation? National Consciousness and the Horizons of Decolonization’, *Interventions*, 21:5 (2019), pp. 583–91; Robbie Shilliam, *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

global intellectual history ‘global’? Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori provide a useful threefold heuristic.¹⁴ *Universalist* interpretations continue the longstanding tradition of seeking to explain macro-historical or ‘global’ transformation through the mobilizing power provided by thought. Hegelians provide a European example, but so too might Confucianist, black African cosmopolitan universalists, and (more recently) liberal universalists such as Francis Fukuyama.¹⁵ *Comparativists* on the other hand, seek to compare ideas and thinkers across spaces and through time, broadening the geographic scope of intellectual comparison, and responding to the call ‘to attend to non-western intellectual histories with a rigor commensurate with the scholarship on western intellectual histories’.¹⁶ Recent work on ‘non-western’ and ‘global’ international thought reflect such approaches, rightly seeking to address the Eurocentrism of the field.¹⁷ One critique here however, is the potential for implicit or explicit analytical

¹⁴ Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, ‘Approaches to Global Intellectual History’, *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 3–30.

¹⁵ Mamadou Diouf and Jinny Prais, “‘Casting the Badge of Inferiority Beneath Black Peoples’ Feet’’: Archiving and Reading the African Past, Present, and Future in World History’, in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (eds), *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 205–26; Moyn and Sartori (2013), p. 6; Or Rosenboim, *The Emergence of Globalism: Visions of World Order in Britain and the United States, 1939–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

¹⁶ Moyn and Sartori (2013), pp. 6–7.

¹⁷ Amitav Acharya, ‘Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds: A New Agenda for International Studies’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014), pp. 647–59; Shilliam (2010).

bifurcations delineating the world into categories of west/non-west, centre/periphery, and empire/colony, thereby viewing the world ‘through the colonial state’s eyes and through its archive’.¹⁸

Often ‘global’ operates as a shorthand for ‘extra-European’, giving the illusion of geographic diversity, whilst territorializing thinkers either through a teleology of the nation, or wider re-territorializations of ‘Asian’, ‘Islamic’, or ‘Latin American’ regionalisms.¹⁹ These categorizations are understandable, and in some ways unavoidable, but this should not be at the cost of restricting the intellectual agency of individual thinkers to think beyond the categories to which their work has been subsequently hitched. Ironically, such totalising interpretations contravene one of the original admonishments of the contextualist school of intellectual historians against the mythology of doctrines and coherence: ‘history becomes a pack of tricks we play on the dead’, with writers and thinkers attributed to thoughts and doctrines they may not have been intending to think, or lines of action they may not have intended to pursue.²⁰

¹⁸ Kris Manjapra, ‘Introduction’, in Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (eds), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010a), p. 2. Julian Go and George Lawson, *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁹ Christopher Murray, ‘Imperial dialectics and epistemic mapping: From decolonisation to anti-Eurocentric IR’, *European Journal of International Relations*, Firstview (2019).

²⁰ Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, *History and Theory*, 8:1 (1969), p. 3.

As Frederick Cooper highlights, political mobilizations against empire developed more varied repertoires than those defined solely in terms of a community or nation, encompassing those mentioned above, as well as ‘attempts to reform and restructure the imperial unit itself, *often by turning imperial ideology into a claim on the rulers of empire*’,²¹ or what has been termed ‘counter-preaching’.²² So for instance, Adom Getachew’s delineation of anti-colonial from imperial futures includes federalist visions of pan-Africanism,²³ yet these ideas were entangled with co-present debates that traversed imperial, colonised, and non-imperial worlds, including federalist notions of ‘Greater Britain’, and ideas of the United States of India.²⁴ This need not detract from the power of anti-colonial renderings, but rather highlights ideas that traversed geographic and political boundaries. The ideal of ‘anti-colonial’ thought need not be taken as a set of ideas that ‘get up and do battle on their own behalf’.²⁵ The point here

²¹ Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Univ of California Press, 2005), p. 11. Emphasis added.

²² C. A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

²³ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

²⁴ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the future of world order, 1860-1900* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009); Merve Fejzula, ‘The Cosmopolitan Historiography of Twentieth-Century Federalism’, *The Historical Journal*, 64:2 (2021), pp. 477–500.

²⁵ Skinner (1969), p. 11.

is not to dismiss such abstractions, but to ask how we might otherwise conceive of the intellectual histories behind them. This may mean considering other patterns through which these ideas moved around the world, exploring their dissemination across and between spaces that do not match current maps of power.²⁶ As a result we may find alternative means of understanding the development of international thought on a global scale.

The third approach to global intellectual history, which offers most to the analysis in this article, is to concentrate on ‘intermediaries, translations, and networks’; emphasising ‘an implicit holism according to which cultural, social, linguistic, civilizational, or geographical boundaries are always occupied by mediators and go-betweens who establish connections and traces that defy any preordained closure’.²⁷ For the purposes of this paper we shall refer to these approaches under the general category of *circulations*.²⁸ Such an approach draws in part on postcolonial theory’s

²⁶ Moyn and Sartori (2013), p. 19; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 31:3 (1997), p. 735.

²⁷ Moyn and Sartori (2013), p. 8.

²⁸ K. Raj, *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007); Kapil Raj, ‘Networks of knowledge, or spaces of circulation? The birth of British cartography in colonial south Asia in the late eighteenth century’, *Global Intellectual History*, 2:1 (2017), pp. 49–66.

interest in the colonising and hybridizing processes through which knowledge accompanied imperial expansions.²⁹

In Homi Bhabha's terms then, 'What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'inbetween' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation'.³⁰ To build on this, we might dissolve this coming together of its analytical priors of essentialised identities, and question the teleological end point of 'hybrid' forms. The constitution of John Stuart Mill's 'civilized' states, Hobbes' state of nature, and Grotius' law of the sea, all depended on what Steinmetz refers to as the 'relational whole' of imperial-colony relations – circulations of knowledge and experience, tied up in historical contexts that require

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 2012); Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism* (New Delhi: OUP India, 2009); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1992); Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003); Edward W. Said, *Culture And Imperialism* (Random House, 2014).

³⁰ Bhabha (2012), p. Loc 469.

excavation rather than simple categorization.³¹ These relations cut both ways. Rather than seeking to identify the essence of ‘Indian’ international thought in contrast to imperial thought, locating it within an ongoing, unequal, and power-laden dialogue allows us to identify commonalities including those relating to ideas of hierarchies of power.

The circulations approach also evokes the ‘histories from below’ tradition, including those that have demonstrated the constitutive effects of labour circulations on formations of class at a national and transnational scale, as highlighted in the first empirical example offered below.³² More recent literature has stressed relational understandings of knowledge circulations: in-between spaces, contact zones, trading zones, and ‘cosmopolitan thought zones’.³³ Such works resist categorizing intellectuals

³¹ Milinda Banerjee, ‘How “dynasty” became a modern global concept: Intellectual histories of sovereignty and property’, *Global Intellectual History*, (2020), pp. 1–32; Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Duke University Press, 2015); George Steinmetz, ‘Social Fields, Subfields and Social Spaces at the Scale of Empires: Explaining the Colonial State and Colonial Sociology’, *The Sociological Review*, 64:2 (2016), pp. 98–123.

³² Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso Books, 2002); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1977).

³³ Johannes Feichtinger, Anil Bhatti, and Cornelia Hülmbauer (eds), *How to Write the Global History of Knowledge-Making: Interaction, Circulation and the Transgression of Cultural Difference* (Springer International Publishing, 2020); Pratt (1992); Peter

in terms of their spatial, cultural, economic, or political designations, thereby avoiding the trap of authenticity and notions of purity. Rather than a place ‘in between’, the intermediate evokes instead ‘the dynamic of *being* itself, as an open process of circulation and historicity’ – the intermediate has an ontological status of its own.³⁴ Rather than knowledge defined in terms of essence or location, it is understood ‘as a co-product, resulting from migration, colonial encounter and research travel’.³⁵

Such an ontology of ‘becoming’ does not seek to flatten hierarchy, nor deny power.³⁶ Indeed the very presence of hierarchies of knowledge and status can be productive of rearticulations of subjects and objects. For instance, Shruti Kapila shows how Indian revolutionaries adopted Herbert Spencer’s sociological works as a means of advancing their claims to the inherently corrosive societal effects of imperialism.³⁷ Nalini Bhushan and Jay Garfield have shown how Indian philosophers articulated the ‘Bengal Renaissance’ through European vernaculars, in order to speak back to European

Galison, *Image and Logic: Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (eds), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁴ Manjapra (2010), p. 7.

³⁵ Feichtinger et al. (2020), p. 15.

³⁶ Raj (2017).

³⁷ Shruti Kapila, ‘Self, Spencer, and Swaraj: Nationalist Thought and Critiques of Liberalism, 1890-1920’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 4:1 (2007), p. 109.

philosophers who denied the validity of South Asian philosophical traditions.³⁸ In these cases, agents operating across difference could use knowledge and status hierarchies as a means of moving towards perceived goods, sometimes resulting in unexpected alliances – as the example of the East Africa Indian National Congress debates on Indians in Kenya demonstrates below.³⁹ In Ashis Nandy’s terminology, we might view this as symptomatic of ‘colonised minds’, but we can also read Nandy in other ways, focussing instead on what he termed ‘defensive redefinitions’. As he puts it, the study of epistemic imperialism is not about dismissing the ‘gullible and hapless’ colonised intellectual sphere, but about calling attention to hegemonic knowledge, and the possibilities and limits of its subversion,⁴⁰ a variant perhaps of what elsewhere has been termed ‘epistemic insurgency’.⁴¹

³⁸ Nalini Bhushan and Jay L. Garfield, *Minds Without Fear: Philosophy in the Indian Renaissance* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁹ Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals Across Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014); David Motadel, ‘The Global Authoritarian Moment and the Revolt against Empire’, *The American Historical Review*, 124:3 (2019), pp. 843–77; Prayer (2010).

⁴⁰ Nandy (2009), p. xvi.

⁴¹ Catherine Walsh, ‘Political-Epistemic Insurgency, Social Movements and the Refounding of the State’, in Mabel Moraña and Bret Gustafson (eds), *Rethinking Intellectuals in Latin America* (Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert S.L.U, 2010), pp. 199–211.

Such an approach allows greater agency to subordinated groups, and their capacity to productively navigate multiple hierarchies. One tactic here is what postcolonial theorists refer to as ‘strategic essentialism’: ‘provisionally accepting essentialist foundations for identity categories as a strategy for collective representation in order to pursue chosen political ends’.⁴² Frequently, this results in a culturally essentialist narrative of (for instance) ‘Hindu’ variants of philosophical reflection, or ‘Indian’ conceptions of territorial space, as shown in the case of ‘Greater India’, discussed below. The use of European exemplars and chronologies as a benchmark here was often a tactic of proving ‘Asian’ intellectual equivalence or even as a means of demonstrating the prior achievements of Asian thought ‘before Europe’ as it were; as the third section below on the international political thought of Benoy Kumar Sarkar also demonstrates.

We can conceive these sites as ‘cosmopolitan thought zones’, emerging ‘from the aspiration to build conceptual and linguistic bridges, through acts of translation and interpretation, often between highly different and politically unequal social communities in order to move towards a perceived good’.⁴³ This allows us to view such works as having ‘transgressed the colonial duality’,⁴⁴ beyond binaries of colonial/anti-colonial; imperial/internationalist; East/West; metropolitan/periphery; or universalist/particularist, *even when such works traded in these essentialist narratives.*

⁴² Raksha Pande, ‘Strategic Essentialism’, in Douglas Richardson et al. (eds), *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology* (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), pp. 1–6.

⁴³ Manjapra (2010), p. 3.

⁴⁴ Manjapra (2010), p. 2.

We may thereby understand how these texts operated as an assemblage of thought, irreducible to any single geography of knowledge, and yet comprehending the notion that global intellectual histories need not lose sight of their local contexts.⁴⁵

These three approaches to global intellectual history are already present in the history of international political thought to some degree, but not always explicitly so. Drawing upon histories of international thought from an Indian perspective, in what follows I offer three ‘sites’, linked by the common theme of mobility and diaspora, that show how the approaches offered by global intellectual history can lead to new interpretations of the movements, intellectual communities, and individual scholars contributing to what we can broadly term ‘Indian’ international thought.

‘Indians Overseas’: The Circulations of Indian International Thought

Following the abolition of slavery within the British Empire in 1833, plantation owners in the colonies sought to address the resulting labour deficit by turning to indentured labour. In the Indian ocean region, Indian labourers constituted a majority component. Criss-crossing the region, and reaching colonies beyond, was a vast circulatory labour

⁴⁵ Janaki Bakhle, ‘Putting Global Intellectual History in its Place’, in Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori (eds), *Global Intellectual History* (Columbia University Press, 2013).

network fuelling this ‘plantation complex’.⁴⁶ Alongside these networks were pre-colonial and para-colonial movements of merchants, traders, and religious communities whose presence not only predated European colonialism, but in some ways provided a foothold for it.⁴⁷ The plight of these communities was an ongoing source of activism in India, driving a demand for an independent Indian foreign policy long before independence, one that would represent and defend their interests.⁴⁸ Accordingly, one of the principal influences on Indian international thought in the twentieth century was the long-standing presence and treatment of ‘Indians overseas’.

Frequently, when viewed from this perspective of South Asian international thought, world order in the early decades of the twentieth century was profoundly hierarchical - a story of imperial dominance, justified and sustained by hierarchies of capital, class, and race. Indian scholars working within the nascent field of political science, such as Benares Hindu University Political Scientist, S. V. Puntambekar, predicted the re-partitioning of the world shaped by a new cohort of imperialist powers - Germany,

⁴⁶ Kris Manjappa, ‘Plantation Disposessions: The Global Travel of Agricultural Racial Capitalism’, in Sven Beckert and Christine Desan (eds), *American capitalism: new histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), pp. 361–87.

⁴⁷ Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (University of California Press, 2008).

⁴⁸ NMML, Jawaharlal Nehru, 13 September 1937 ‘A Foreign Policy for India’, AICC Instalment 1, Vol 1, File No. 8, 1927.

Russia, and Japan – under a ‘racial, religious, cultural, or political order’.⁴⁹ His colleague, C. Narayan Menon, elaborated the ‘stages’ of exploitation evident across the colonies with political discrimination feeding economic discrimination. Referring specifically to the Kenya Highlands Order, which excluded Indian populations from land and political rights, he highlighted racial hierarchies that created a situation in which ‘Anarchist Jews professing no nationality have been welcomed but the brown citizens of the Empire are debarred’.⁵⁰

This racial persecution also motivated the concerns of scholar-practitioners. The origins of the *satyagraha* campaign of Mohandas Gandhi in the treatment of Indians in South Africa, provides a well-known example. But this was an ongoing concern of the India National Congress’ Foreign Department, and international affairs communities within India both before and after independence.⁵¹ There was a narrative contact between Indians overseas and depictions of world order from the Indian perspective.

Yet these circulations were also productive of more varied repertoires of thought than those defined by simple imperial opposition. Early European explorers in East Africa

⁴⁹ S. V. Puntambekar, ‘India and the Changing Politics of Asia’, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 2:3 (1941), p. 312.

⁵⁰ C. Narayana Menon, ‘The Indians Abroad’, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 1:2 (1939), p. 206.

⁵¹ NMML, Rammanohar Lohia, 19 March 1938, ‘India and the World’, AICC Instalment 1, Vol. 1, File No. FD7 – Part II, 1936; C Kondapi, ‘Indians Overseas’, *India Quarterly*, 1:1 (1945), p. 71.

were accustomed to the predominance of Indian merchants within regional coastal economies. The rupee was the currency of trade, and Indian-run trading houses connected ports to markets across the Indian ocean littoral. As Winston Churchill remarked following his visit in 1907: ‘The Indian was here long before the British Official’.⁵² Earlier representatives spoke ‘two colonizations – Indian and European – with a shared role in ‘civilizing’ the ‘native’ population with East Africa offering the potential to become the ‘America of the Hindu’.⁵³ As British influence in East Africa grew, managing the competing interests of European, Indian, and ‘native’ communities came to feature in imperial policy debates as well as amongst Indian interest groups of various kinds. The aftermath of the Boer War, and then the First World War, both increased claims for European land occupancy - partly as a result of demobilization - creating the conditions for a distinctly racialized debate over the relative status of ‘imperial subjects’ in colonies, particularly over rights to land and political representation. This produced an array of contradictory, but also sometimes complementary positions among Europeans and Indians alike.

By 1918, senior British officials were frankly assessing the viability of declaring the recently conquered territories of German East Africa, Tanganyika (Tanzania), as a colony for India. A policy memo, supported by the Secretary of State for India, E. S. Montagu, spoke favourably of the Indian ‘pioneer’, suited to the climate, and whose lower civilizational status relative to Europeans would better ‘civilize’ the African

⁵² Aiyar (2015), p. 39.

⁵³ Aiyar (2015), p. 24; Metcalf (2008), pp. 178, 174.

‘native’, thus sharing ‘the White Man’s Burden’.⁵⁴ Although rejected on grounds of principle by Gandhi, these proposals found favour with Gandhi’s political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Other prominent advocates included the leader of the Shi’a Isma’ili community, The Aga Khan, and ‘intermediary capitalists’ such as the prominent East African merchant Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee.⁵⁵ These latter two ‘sub-imperialists’,⁵⁶ mediating between colony and empire, reflected back imperial hierarchies in their arguments, sometimes explicitly.⁵⁷ For The Aga Khan, Indian settlers induced a more effective ‘civilizing effect’ on the ‘native’ by virtue of the Indian’s lower civilizational standing relative to Europeans: ‘He [the African] does not in fact learn from the European planters’, he claimed, ‘because their methods are so far above his head’.⁵⁸ Both he and Jeevanjee traded in class hierarchies that justified the claim of Indian merchants to imperial citizenship on the grounds of their ‘well-to-do’ status, in contrast to the ‘lower classes’ of Indian labourers, who nonetheless were more fitted to the sanitary conditions of ‘native’ towns.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Theodore Morison, ‘A Colony for India’, *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 84:499 (1918), pp. 434, 441.

⁵⁵ HRH Aga Khan III, *India in Transition: A Study in Political Evolution* (London: Phillip Lee Warner, 1918) Chapter 13; Herbert Luthy, ‘India and East Africa: Imperial Partnership at the End of the First World War’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 6:2 (1971), pp. 78–83.

⁵⁶ Aiyar (2015); Luthy (1971).

⁵⁷ Khan III (1918), p. 127.

⁵⁸ Khan III (1918), p. 127.

⁵⁹ Aiyar (2015), Chapter One; Khan III (1918), p. 132.

The Aga Khan's support for an Indian colony went beyond Tanganyika, envisaging a broader federation of East Africa. Here, he used the language of 'imperial duty'.⁶⁰ Yet this was not simply a case of imperial cheerleading. We can read this discussion over the prospects of an Indian colony as a cosmopolitan thought zone. An aspiration for equal treatment for Indians produced shared ideas on an Indian role in imperialism that transgressed the colonial duality. In common with others who supported this project, the Aga Khan advocated for a 'higher imperialism', echoing Gokhale's earlier call for the recovery of the 'true spirit' of a more 'noble imperialism' that placed equality of citizenship above racial hierarchies.⁶¹ These were examples of 'counter-preaching'; turning imperial ideology into a claim on the rulers of empire.

By the late 1920s, the legal and constitutional position of these communities was of growing concern. The Hilton-Young Commission of 1927, called for by the then Colonial Secretary Leo Amery, considered the possibility of a 'closer union' or federation between the dependencies of East and Central Africa, including Kenya and Uganda. This threatened to shift the constitutional balance of the region in favour of European settler communities, whilst incorporating greater legislative representation for 'native' communities.⁶² The sizable Indian communities therefore risked becoming further marginalized.

⁶⁰ Khan III (1918), p. 127.

⁶¹ Luthy (1971), p. 73.

⁶² *Bulletin of International News*, 'The Hilton-Young and Wilson Reports on East Africa', 6:10 (1929), pp. 3–13.

These events drew in the nascent Foreign Department of the INC and Jawaharlal Nehru himself, through the agency of U. K. Oza, a prominent publicist, editor, and activist on behalf of the EAINC. Oza argued for the consideration of ‘the whole question of our colonial policy from the viewpoint of India’, reminding Nehru that the plight of Indians overseas reflected back on the independence struggle in India.⁶³ In the ensuing policy note, supported by a memorandum submitted by the EAINC to the Hilton-Young Commission, the stance of the Indian communities was clarified. Outlining their grievances, the memorandum described the long history of Indian settlement and ‘colonization’ of East Africa, ‘one of the natural outlets for Indian expansion’, citing approvingly Lord Salisbury’s late nineteenth century call for an ‘intelligent and industrious race’ to populate the territory.⁶⁴ Responding to the racist anxieties of European settlers, the memo argued that Indian communities did not threaten European ‘culture and civilization’ but rather could be seen as existing on a plane of civilizational equivalency with Europeans. As the report suggested, the ‘achievements of poets like Tagore, ... of statesmen like Sastri and Sinha, of educationalists like Sir Sayed Ahmed, of industrialists like the Tatas, and of innumerable well-known Indian merchants, engineers and administrators’ proved their ability ‘to adapt the ancient civilization of India to the ... modern world’ and ‘their right to a place in the front rank with the

⁶³ NMML, AIIC Inst. 1, Vol. 1, File No. FD-8, 1929, U. K. Oza to Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 April 1929, pp.113-4.

⁶⁴ NMML, AIIC Inst. 1, Vol. 1, 1928, ‘Memorandum on the Federation of British East African Territories and Constitutional Changes in Kenya’, pp.83.

leaders of European civilization.’⁶⁵ Indeed, one concession that the EAINC offered to the commission was the acceptance of a ‘civilization franchise’ whereby electoral representation was contingent upon an ability to read or write English, and possession of property of the value of at least £250.⁶⁶ Oza went further in suggesting that placating European fears and ensuring the ‘unalloyed preservation of their culture and civilization’ should in turn entail the defence of Indian ‘culture and civilization’ against becoming ‘entirely Europeanised’.⁶⁷

According to the EAINC, the role of Indian communities in developing the colony was what justified their claim to an ‘important voice’ in any political changes in Kenya.⁶⁸ Their role in government service was one area of development, at least until ‘Africans ... become competent to perform the duties now carried out by Indians’.⁶⁹ Indian Traders, meanwhile, were cast as ‘the pioneer of civilization’ ... ‘bringing new and desirable articles to the notice of the Natives, [creating in them] a desire to acquire such

⁶⁵ NMML, ‘Memorandum on the Federation of British East African Territories ...’, p.87.

⁶⁶ NMML, AIIC Inst. 1, Vol. 1, File No. FD-8, 1929, ‘A Note on the Indian Position in East Africa’, p.61.

⁶⁷ NMML, ‘A Note on the Indian Position in East Africa’, p.67.

⁶⁸ NMML, ‘Memorandum on the Federation of British East African Territories ...’, p.87.

⁶⁹ NMML, ‘Memorandum on the Federation of British East African Territories ...’, p.84.

commodities and [stimulating] them to work harder and to better their condition.⁷⁰ Indian communities were (according to Oza), ‘living side by side with a very imitative race of men’,⁷¹ and ‘in closer touch with Natives than Europeans’,⁷² justifying one of the central claims of the EAINC for a greater role in the administration of ‘native affairs’: on the land boards, the welfare portfolios of the Executive Council, and the Legislative Council.

The case of Indians in East Africa shows how circulations of labour communities and the racial cleavages this produced were exacerbated by imperial reform, laying the foundations for the navigation of this particular set of hierarchies. In this case, mobility and diaspora created a policy environment that demanded the confronting of the differential treatment of ‘Indians overseas’. But also one that required solutions (intellectually as well as politically) to the question of Indian land occupation in colonised spaces. These solutions tied together multiple political constituencies and agendas transnationally, as highlighted in the works of U.K. Oza, The Aga Khan, and Alibhai Mulla Jeevanjee. Such figures were placed in an intellectual and political intermediary position between imperialism and anti-colonialism. The EAINC and their affiliates were clearly opposed to East African federalism on the grounds that it presented a centralization of power in the hands of a non-official majority of Europeans,

⁷⁰ NMML, ‘Memorandum on the Federation of British East African Territories ...’, pp.84-5.

⁷¹ NMML, ‘A Note on the Indian Position in East Africa’, p.68.

⁷² NMML, ‘Memorandum on the Federation of British East African Territories ...’, pp.97.

yet the proposals of the closer union project to advance race relations through attending to ‘native’ development placed Indian communities as intermediaries, requiring them to reflect back hierarchical imperial language of colonisation, civilization, race, and class as a means of defending and advancing their own position.

One of the consequences of a circulatory approach to global intellectual history is that knowledge formations may take on different characteristics in different locations: they do not travel unchanged. Individual agents, scholars, knowledge entrepreneurs, activists, and thinkers differentially calibrate their messaging and ideas. This underscores a key contribution of circulatory approaches to international thought – an emphasis on multiplicities of interactions between knowledgeable agents continually adjusting their outputs to changed circumstances, audiences, and projects. As some historians of knowledge have implied, this presents knowledge as less a modular construction of individual elements being bolted together, but rather an assemblage of thought and practice, inherently provisional, evading stable categorisation, and shaped by multiple transactions with material and non-material elements.⁷³ The language of hierarchy in this case was partly a response to political necessity, but it also provides a reminder of the tensions of imperial rule for anti-colonial thought and action that can be better captured through a global intellectual history approach. These languages of hierarchy were evident elsewhere.

Imperialism, Hierarchy, and ‘Greater India’

⁷³ Feichtinger et al. (2020).

One of the striking features of global international thought at the turn of the nineteenth century was the proliferation of meta-geographical imaginaries. These were produced in significant part through mobility and intellectual exchange. Though emerging at different times, the ‘pan’ movements (-Asianism, -Islamism, and -Africanism) came about in part through ‘anti-western’ transnational solidarities. As Cemil Aydin reminds us, however, Pan-Asianism would also produce imperial variants in the form of the Japanese co-prosperity sphere.⁷⁴ More straight-forwardly imperial imaginaries were apparent in the reform movement of “Greater Britain”, yet this too was a mobile imaginary echoing in ideas of Greater Germany, Greater Syria, and Greater France.⁷⁵ Anti-imperial avatars were also apparent in the form of ‘Greater India’, a spatial concept that seized the imagination of activists and intellectuals alike, continuing to resonate today in the Hindu nationalist rhetoric of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

Greater India was a polyvalent idea containing overlapping polemical and scholarly purposes, including overlaps with the presence and plight of the Indian diaspora. Many of those who wrote from the position of Indians overseas, including the labour networks explored in the previous section, echoed the idea of an expanded geographical zone of Indian consciousness and the shared cultural complex of India, the Gulf, and East Africa.⁷⁶ The Aga Khan, for instance, pointed to the ‘natural tendency toward external

⁷⁴ Aydin (2007).

⁷⁵ Bayly (2004); Vivekanandan (2018).

⁷⁶ Bose (2009); U. K. Oza, *A Rift in the Empire's Lute: Being a History of the Indian Struggle in Kenya from 1900 to 1930* (Nairobi, 193-?).

expansion on the part of the most advanced Indian races’ and that India had never been ‘self-contained’,⁷⁷ One early proponent was the later leader of the nationalist Hindu Mahasabha, Bhai Parmanand. Described in one account as an ‘Eastern Seely’,⁷⁸ Parmanand outlined his conception of greater India in a 1912 article in the Calcutta-based periodical *Modern Review*.⁷⁹ For him, ‘Greater India’ was directly linked to the Indian diaspora, and in particular the ‘poor emigrants’ driven overseas to better themselves, in the process reaffirming ‘Hindu’ identity. Parmanand’s vision derived from his own travelling epistemology, a result of the para-colonial circulations within which he moved, echoing – from a colonial standpoint – *Greater Britain*, Charles Dilke’s 1868 travelogue that gave rise to the term.⁸⁰ As a leading member of the Bengali revolutionary group the *Arya Samaj* he had been an emissary to South Africa and Burma, before being exiled overseas, travelling to Europe, British Guiana, and

⁷⁷ Khan III (1918), p. 114.

⁷⁸ *The Review of Reviews*, 45:267 (1912), p.274. John Robert Seely was author of *The Expansion of England* (1883) and a prominent exponent of ‘Greater Britain’. Bhai Parmanand studied for an MA at King’s College London, writing a thesis on ‘The Rise of British Power in India’, at the same time that Har Dayal studied a similar topic at Oxford University. The two collaborated and will likely have encountered Seely’s work in their studies. Emily C. Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu Revolutionary and Rationalist* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1957), p.19; Bhai Parmanand, *The Story Of My Life* (Lahore: The Central Hindu Yuvak Sabha, 1934), p.33; Chris Moffat, *India’s Revolutionary Inheritance: Politics and the Promise of Bhagat Singh* (Cambridge: CUP, 2019), p.45.

⁷⁹ Bhai Parmanand, ‘Greater India’, *Modern Review*, XI:2 (1912), pp. 152–6.

⁸⁰ Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009).

eventually West Coast America where he helped to found the militant Ghadar network amidst the disenfranchised immigrant labour communities of California. These experiences provide the backdrop to his advocacy of the labour diaspora and the establishing of overseas enclaves on behalf of Indians. After centuries of decline, accelerated by foreign occupation, Parmanand saw in the ‘colonisation’⁸¹ by Indians of spaces elsewhere a path to the rejuvenation of India’s national spirit. Channelling the ethos of what Manjapra has termed ‘*swadeshi* internationalism’,⁸² he extolled the travelling virtues of this mobile community: ‘There is no national progress without foreign travel. Sea-sickness is the best national tonic.’⁸³

Parmanand provides an example of a type of exilic internationalist, produced – in this case – through his movements ‘inbetween’ imperial and extra-imperial circulations. But this was a genre of internationalism that also carried with it a sense of the local. Rather like the subjects of Benedict Anderson’s study of Filipino anarchists, such figures often provided a vector for a form of transnational localism, a variant of what Tim Harper has termed the ‘village abroad’.⁸⁴ In contrast to the merchant elites of East Africa and

⁸¹ Parmanand (1912), p. 153.

⁸² *Swadeshi* translated variously as ‘home production’ or ‘of one’s own country’. Kris Manjapra, ‘Knowledgeable Internationalism and the Swadeshi Movement, 1903-1921’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42 (2012), pp. 53–62.

⁸³ Parmanand (1912), p. 156.

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, *The Age of Globalization: Anarchists and the Anticolonial Imagination* (London: Verso Books, 2013); Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (UK: Penguin, 2020).

their tacit approval of race, class, and civilizational hierarchies, for Parmanand this mobility resulted in a more communalist identity politics demanding the defence of specifically Hindu culture against the perceived ingress (particularly apparent in the colonies) of Christian orthodoxy – a set of ideas later adopted by the Hindu Mahasabha and ultimately the Hindu Nationalist BJP. Parmanand’s hierarchical communalism, expressed as an international vision of ‘greater India’, was in this sense transnationally produced.

For others, such as the celebrated poet and prominent *swadeshi* internationalist Rabindranath Tagore, ‘greater India’ exhibited a more abstract and cosmopolitan vision of self-renewal through international contact. In his book *Greater India*, Tagore centred the metaphor of ‘the village’ as impoverished through colonial rule of the cultural nourishment of ‘the river’ of international engagement.⁸⁵ This he explored through a vernacular politics of conceptual translation – a cosmopolitan thought zone populated by concepts of state and society. Echoing the writings of other peripatetic revolutionaries, including Har Dayal⁸⁶ and Bhai Parmanand, Tagore too lamented the crippling of the *Samaj* (social body); the set of social institutions wherein lay the ‘heart of the nation’. This was to draw a distinction with England, to show that ‘the seat of life of different civilisations is differently placed in the body politic’.⁸⁷ For in England, ‘to save the state is to save the country, and for India to live is to preserve her social

⁸⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *Greater India* (Madras: Everymans Press, 1921), pp. 2, 67–70.

⁸⁶ Har Dayal, ‘The Social Conquest of the Hindu Race’, *Modern Review*, VI:3 (1909), pp. 239–48.

⁸⁷ Tagore (2003), p. 5.

institutions.’⁸⁸ The privileging of the *Sarkar* (the government) as the overseer of societal functions had thereby established a state form that was a foreign entity, discordant with, and alienated from, the social institutions of the *Samaj*.

The solution, for Tagore, was to be found through a grand convocation of the *mela* (village meeting), conceived not as a turn to localism but as an international recovery of the ‘self’ and a reintegration into the universal: ‘The *mela* is the invitation of the village to the world into its cottage home. ... the village forgets its narrowness ... Just as in the rains the water-courses are filled with water from the sky, so in *mela* time the village heart is filled with the spirit of the Universal.’⁸⁹ Here Tagore was also enacting a travelling epistemology; a striving for a cosmopolitan universalism resulting from his extensive foreign travel and trips of cultural exchange.⁹⁰ Greater India, for Tagore, served a restorative purpose, overcoming isolationism through what Pan-Asianists would later term ‘cultural contact’, and a realisation of humanity’s true ‘*shakti*’ (forces).

Tagore’s vision of a Greater India corresponded to a wider scholarly movement that was also a product of global intellectual connections sparked in part by a desire amongst Indian scholars to transcend a perceived intellectual colonisation by specifically British intellectual mores. Those scholars associated with the Calcutta-based scholarly network the ‘Greater India’ society, which included Rabindranath Tagore, forged strong

⁸⁸ Tagore (2003), p. 11.

⁸⁹ Tagore (2003), p. 11.

⁹⁰ Bose (2009); Sachidananda Mohanty, *Cosmopolitan Modernity in Early 20th-Century India* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 2018).

connections with French Indologists, as Susan Bayly has shown.⁹¹ Yet these intellectual ties reached beyond Europe, encompassing North America (especially anthropologists studying Pacific cultures at the University of Hawaii), South America, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia.⁹²

Kalidas Nag, one of the leading acolytes of the Greater India society who had travelled with Tagore in his oceanic voyages of the mid-1920s, pursued the reclamation of India's status in universal history through more scholarly modes. This included India's claim to a spirit of internationalism, one that straddled the conceptual duality of 'international' and 'imperial' orders. For Nag, Indian internationalism was evident from the first recorded transcripts of the ancient *Vedic* texts, which preached 'peace and spiritual unity' in contrast to the '*economic internationalism* of exploitation' or the '*imperialistic internationalism* of compulsion'.⁹³ This was aptly demonstrated in the 'divine cosmopolitanism' of the Buddha, and later in the 'practical internationalism' of the Ashokan dynasty. As he wrote:

Thus from the beginning of the Christian era, India started playing her role of internationalism not only through her lofty academic philosophy or through the vigorous propagation of a royal personality, but as a whole people following mysteriously a divine impulse, an ecstatic inspiration to sacrifice the Ego for

⁹¹ Bayly (2004).

⁹² Kalidas Nag, *India And The Pacific World* (Calcutta: Book Company Ltd., 1941).

⁹³ Kalidas Nag, 'Greater India (A Study in Indian Internationalism)', *Greater India Society Bulletin*, 1:1 (1926), p. 5.

the All. This grand movement of spiritual conquest, this noble dynamic of *cultural imperialism* – a legacy of Asoka [*sic*] – soon won for India the inalienable empire over the vast continent, right across Tibet and China to Korea [*sic*] and Japan on the one hand and across Burma and Indo-China to Java and Indonesia on the other. The history of this phenomenal progression ... is full of profound lessons for students of internationalism.⁹⁴

(Re)claiming ‘international India’ thereby required a reckoning with India’s imperial pasts, one narrated across the internationalism/imperialism binary. The position of the Ashokan empire between the Hellenic and Mongolian worlds was according to Nag, ‘the *first great causeway of Love and Illumination* between the Orient and the Occident, the first code of progressive imperialism and the first basis of constructive internationalism.’⁹⁵ In this account, the language of ‘cultural colonialism’ and ‘colonies’ was celebrated as part of a benevolent imperialism, fostering an internationalist spirit between strategically essentialized civilizations. The dialogue that such texts had with European anthropologists, orientalists, and collators of ‘colonial knowledge’ also contributed to the recycling of Orientalist stereotypes and representations of the ‘other’.⁹⁶ Zoological modalities were apparent in the representation of Tibetans by Kalidas Nag as in a ‘state of savage isolation ... naturally primitive and gross by temperament’. This also applied to what he termed the ‘Indian colonies’ of Cambodia and Vietnam and the ‘Malay races’ of the South East Asian

⁹⁴ Nag (1926), p. 20. Emphasis added.

⁹⁵ Nag (1926), p. 13. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁶ Bayly (2004).

archipelago.⁹⁷ This tension between a celebration of empire and a critique of (European) imperialism was not left hanging. Kalidas Nag was not the only writer to implicitly delineate a narrative protocol⁹⁸ of ‘good’ imperialism (‘cultural’; ‘spiritual’; humanistic; apolitical) and ‘bad’ imperialism (aggressive; territorial; exploitative; violent). The former described, for instance, the expansion of the Ashokan dynasty; the latter the ‘primitive aggression’ of the Zoroastrian period of Indian-Persian contact, as well as the modern epoch of European imperialism.⁹⁹ Here again, was an example of defensive redefinition and counter-preaching – reimagining India’s ‘imperial’ past, in distinction to European forms, to stake a claim for emancipated internationalist future.

Through global intellectual history we can read the idea of greater India beyond only an expression of cultural chauvinism or nationalist exceptionalism, and more as part of a wider cosmopolitan thought zone generated by circulations of peoples and ideas. Building on the effects on international thinking produced by labour circulations, explored in the earlier section, ideas of greater India overlapped with these circulations, taking inspiration from them as an example of how space and cultural hierarchies could be reimagined and reworked. Greater India offered a heterotopia¹⁰⁰ of India’s possible futures, multiply realised and ‘generated by the pragmatic need to get things done in

⁹⁷ Nag (1926), pp. 34–5, 39–40.

⁹⁸ Himadeep Muppidi, *The Colonial Signs of International Relations* (London: Hurst & Company, 2012).

⁹⁹ See for example: Nag (1926), pp. 11–7; 21; 25.

¹⁰⁰ Nile Green, ‘The Waves of Heterotopia: Toward a Vernacular Intellectual History of the Indian Ocean’, *The American Historical Review*, 123:3 (2018), pp. 846–74.

communities with highly different others.’¹⁰¹ For Parmanand the racialised exploitation of Indian communities in overseas colonies produced an alternative hierarchy, where ‘greater India’ resided in the exclusive protection of Hindu communities – a hierarchy ultimately reflected back into Indian society itself. But such particularism was also evident in the more avowedly universalist renderings of greater India by Rabindranath Tagore – a vision of cultural recovery through international contact. This vision was one that drove the more historical scholarly exploits of the Greater India Society.

The idea of greater India was thus clearly an instance of international thought broadly conceived; produced transnationally, speaking the language of the ‘international’, yet suffused too with co-present themes of hierarchy *and* universalism, in both a normative and analytical sense. Whilst we might read these texts as instances of an anti-colonial geographical imagination, there is a need, as Sugata Bose writes, ‘to distinguish a loftier aspiration of universalism (not a universalist boast) from the haughtier expression of cultural imperialism, even though the line between the two occasionally became blurred’.¹⁰² It is this ‘blurring’ that global intellectual historical analysis can account for, placing this genre of avowedly ‘Indian’ international thinking into wider circulations of people and ideas that comprised global patterns of international thought apparent at this time.

The Cosmopolitan Thought Zones of Benoy Kumar Sarkar

¹⁰¹ Manjapra (2010), p. 1.

¹⁰² Bose (2009), p. 246.

A striking feature of Indian scholarship contributing to international thought in the first half of the twentieth century was the mobility of its leading acolytes. Figures such as the Bengali sociologist, Benoy Kumar Sarkar, travelled widely, including prolonged trips to America, Europe, and East Asia. His 1949 lecture tour in America encompassed 25 university and college appearances as well as numerous meetings with commercial bodies, financiers, chapters of the Federal Reserve, learned societies, and Indian diaspora associations. These trips also fostered connections with American intellectual elites including the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey at Columbia University; sociologists Talcott Parsons and Carle Zimmerman at Harvard; and political scientist Raymond Buell at Indiana University, to name just a few. Sarkar also attended a Harris Foundation conference on South Asia in Chicago alongside political scientists Quincy Wright and Hans J Morgenthau.¹⁰³ His earlier trips to America yielded multiple articles in leading American political science journals including the *Journal of Race Development*, *Political Science Quarterly*, and *The American Political Science Review*, the latter featuring an article on a 'Hindu Theory of International Relations'. In recognition of his contributions to *JRD* he was invited onto the board of editors, alongside W. E. B. Du Bois.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *India in America: The Diary of Professor Benoy Sarkar's Travels and Lectures in the U.S.A., March 7-June 22, 1949* (Craft Press, 1949).

¹⁰⁴ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *Greetings to Young India: Messages of Cultural and Social Reconstruction* (Calcutta: N.M. Raychowdhury & Company, 1927), p. vii.

A more focused study of thinker such as Sarkar builds on the movements of peoples and ideas explored above, allowing greater focus on the shared intellectual spaces they occupied. Presented with these examples of scholarly mobility, it is tempting to derive an argument of emulation, derivativeness, or diffusion of ‘western’ or European knowledge. Yet the complex intellectual co-constitutions that resulted from these interactions, show that a simple analytical bifurcation of west/non-west, or colonial/anti-colonial does not suffice. Indian international thought, although necessarily parasitic upon ‘western’ traditions, found spaces for epistemic insurgency and defensive redefinition. Often these scholars drew lines of comparison precisely to highlight divergent conceptual or ontological positions, even if seeking to contribute to a more conventional modernist conception of political or social science. More specifically, as this section shows, through these shared spaces we see how hierarchical conceptions of the world in an analytical and normative sense, did not necessarily drop out in the critique of empire. One example of this was in the critique of knowledge.

As often-acknowledged, the social and political sciences, and histories upon which these thinkers drew, were beset by their own assumptions as to the intellectual and cultural vitality of geographic zones. The ‘*Leitmotif*’ of B K Sarkar’s 1922 essay collection, *The Futurism of Young Asia* was described by him as ‘a war against colonialism in politics and against “*orientalisme*” in science’.¹⁰⁵ Over half a century before Edward Said, Sarkar targeted Max Mueller, Schopenhauer, and the entire edifice

¹⁰⁵ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Futurism of Young Asia: And Other Essays on the Relations Between the East and the West* (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1922), p. iv. Emphasis in original.

of what he termed ‘Eur-American’ colonial knowledge as having systematically cast Asia as a synonym for immorality, sensuousness, ignorance, and superstition’.¹⁰⁶ Yet precisely because of the ‘shared dwelling’ of this cosmopolitan thought zone - notwithstanding the ‘incongruities of power’ by which it was beset¹⁰⁷ – the re-enacting of languages and patterns of hierarchy were also apparent.

Sarkar’s 1919 *American Political Science Review* article provides a good example. Drawing upon the *Vedic* texts, as well as the fourth century BC writings of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* and Kamandaka’s *Nitisara*, Sarkar identified ‘a hierarchy or graded rank of states’ linked to the contemporary ranking of ‘first class powers’, ‘great powers’, and ‘small nations’, and reflected in the Hindu texts through the annual income ranking of ancient Indian states and the theory of political *yajnas*, sacrifices, and rituals.¹⁰⁸ As he explained, these status identifiers expressed the sovereign scope of individual rulers: kings, emperors, and then ‘universal monarchs exercising sovereignty over a large number of princes as the lord of an imperial federation’.¹⁰⁹ This last category anticipated a future state of sovereign paramountcy or *sarva-bhauma* (the ruler of the whole earth), a concept that Sarkar compared to the universal authority claimed by Hildebrand for the Papacy, and even futurist visions of ‘permanent peace’; ‘the pious

¹⁰⁶ Sarkar (1922), p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Manjapra (2010).

¹⁰⁸ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, ‘Hindu Theory of International Relations.’, *American Political Science Review*, 13:3 (1919), pp. 411–2.

¹⁰⁹ Sarkar (1919), p. 412.

wishes for a ‘parliament of man’ or the now popular ‘league of nations’.¹¹⁰ Status hierarchies tied up in the language of civilization were also apparent in the ‘chief centres of ancient civilisation’, namely India, Persia, China, Egypt, Babylon, and Greece, whose contributions to the ‘culture of humanity’ was influenced by their ‘intercourse with the civilised and barbarous peoples’ of other territories.¹¹¹

The point here was not necessarily that Sarkar advocated the reestablishment of these patterns of order, this was more of an analytical rather than normative use of hierarchy. But in contrast to Nag, it is notable that Sarkar did not insist on the inherently pacific nature of past Indian expansions, nor of the pacific ideology of Hindu political thought. His elaboration of the *mandala* doctrine is exemplary in this regard. Described as underpinning the ‘Hindu idea of the “balance of power”’, drawing upon Kautilya, the *mandala* system was based around the cult of the *vijigeesoo* or ‘aspirant to conquest’, anticipating an innate drive by ambitious rulers to dominate a given international grouping. Making comparisons with Hobbesian anarchy Sarkar described this doctrine as presenting a political science as ‘essentially a science of enmity, hatred, espionage and intrigue, and an art of a thousand and one methods of preparedness for the “the next war”’.¹¹² It was against this doctrine that the state of sovereign paramountcy or *sarva-bhauma* was offered as a theoretical alternative, a more normative hierarchical vision of legitimate authority.

¹¹⁰ Sarkar (1919), p. 411.

¹¹¹ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Science of History and the Hope of Mankind* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1912), p. 24.

¹¹² Sarkar (1919), p. 407.

Both Sarkar and Nag's reclamation of 'international India' show how imperialism, internationalism, and hierarchy featured in mixed registers in the texts and interpretations of Indian international thought. They also demonstrate some of the challenges of making arguments of equivalency with more European idioms of international theory. The claim to internationalism through the imperial histories of Indian cultural-linguistic expansion and the renaissance of the Hindu *Vedic* texts was partly an attempt to recover the intellectual vitality of Indian political theory from the oblivion of orientalist portrayals of India as the realm of superstition and spirituality. In order to do so, both Nag and Sarkar made arguments that drew upon existing ways of ordering the world – they staked claims to internationalism as a normative good, but also courted imperial hierarchies as part of their analytical and normative claims. In this sense, the cosmopolitan thought zones they occupied drew upon common understandings of an internationalist 'good', and the *co-presence* of imperial orders – a nod towards the possibility of a global intellectual history of international thought that spans imperial and non-imperial spaces.

However, both of these writers also offered fundamental ontological and epistemological stances that make cross comparison with wider intellectual histories harder to achieve. Firstly, both were seeking to unseat European intellectual dominance. Therefore, despite the shared 'good' of broadening the horizons of historical understanding, both carried an inherent scepticism towards European categories of knowledge, including history. Sarkar perhaps demonstrates this most clearly in *The Science of History and the Hope of Mankind*. In his critique of European knowledge, he decried the 'breaking up of the province of knowledge into several departments and

the relegation of each to a separate treatment’, arguing ‘the sciences have become specialised and their scope greatly narrowed.’ In the field of history he suggested a ‘principle of isolation and specialisation’ had forced a narrowing on ‘the *statal* life of a people ... the political affairs of a community, e.g., administration of the state, international diplomacy, wars and treaties, expansion and secession of territories’.¹¹³ Whilst this had given rise to ‘an altogether new branch of learning, viz. Political Science’, such ‘specialised activities’ had ‘withdrawn the attention of scholars from the study of the hopes and aspirations of man, the progress and decay of civilisations, and the ultimate aims and losses of humanity.’¹¹⁴ In effect, history – and by extension Political Science – had lost its humanity.

In its place, Sarkar advocated for a more holistic, neo-Hegelian, vernacular conception of ‘world forces’ (*visva-shakti*). ‘Human life’ he argued, ‘is ... influenced and controlled by the forces and substances in the universe. The growth, development, and liberty of Man depend on the resultant of all the mutual relations between the various agencies of the social and physical environments. It is the interaction of all friendly and inimical world-forces that gives to each human being its peculiar external characteristics and endows it with its proper mental and moral outfit.’¹¹⁵ Rooted in his reading of Indian political philosophy, *visva-shakti* offered an almost historical sociological reading of the forces of world history and world politics viewed as contingent upon a particular time and space. Accordingly, there was nothing inevitable

¹¹³ Sarkar (1912), pp. 8–9.

¹¹⁴ Sarkar (1912), p. 11.

¹¹⁵ Sarkar (1912), pp. 17–8.

about the superordinate status of European powers in the period of history within which he was writing, but rather they benefitted from a particular concatenation¹¹⁶ of world forces which not only enabled their position of material superiority but justified this position based upon an entire edifice of scholarly knowledge.

Sarkar's work was therefore partly about highlighting the interplay between the reality of European imperialism and material power, co-determined by the power of ideas. This is significant since he was not so much critiquing the *presence* of hierarchy so much as explaining its particular manifestation in the here and now. As he wrote: 'Subjection and independence, progress and degeneration, national achievement and decay ... cannot be explained solely by the heroism or degeneracy of the nations themselves. These were not the results of isolated movements, but were the joint-products of the whole process of human affairs.'¹¹⁷ Thus there was a limit to his epistemic critique. Certainly it was about re-establishing a status of equality in the intellectual vitality and political position of the 'East', but closer attention reveals that this was not about rendering all hierarchical forms as necessarily illegitimate but rather explaining their historical progeny in time and space.

¹¹⁶ To adopt the phraseology of Buzan and Lawson. Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Sarkar (1912), p. 32.

This *humanization of history* as Kalidas Nag would later term it,¹¹⁸ indicated the deeper emancipatory project animating such works, innovating within a framework of knowledge whilst simultaneously attempting to transcend it.¹¹⁹ It connected with a wider doctrine of *shakti-yoga* or ‘energism of man’, a signifier of a ‘transformative political agency’ as Manu Goswami describes it.¹²⁰ *Shakti-yoga* offered a return to a more humanist ontology within a wider dialogue on matters of history and internationalism; one that transcended nation-states and their borders with an appeal to shared human spirit. But one that also stressed the radical and transformative potential of the human (and perhaps masculine) spirit. ‘The causes of revolutions’, Sarkar wrote, ‘lie mostly in the power of transforming the surrounding conditions, e.g., that by which man can alter the relation of the world-forces with one another and bring about new international arrangements’.¹²¹

The concept of *shakti-yoga* in its emphasis upon the embodied transformative power of great leaders also aligned Sarkar (as occasionally with other South Asian thinkers, including Tagore and Gandhi) with ideas associated with European fascist movements led by Mussolini and Hitler.¹²² Sarkar, in particular, provides a good example of a

¹¹⁸ Kalidas Nag, ‘The Humanisation of History’, *Modern Review*, XXXII:2 (1923).

¹¹⁹ Sen (2015).

¹²⁰ Goswami (2012).

¹²¹ Sarkar (1912), pp. 70–1.

¹²² Prayer (2010); Benjamin Zachariah, ‘Rethinking (the Absence of) Fascism in India, c. 1922-45’, in Sugata Bose and Kris Manjapra (eds), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones:*

thinker located in the intermediate realms of proto-fascism (resurrected today in certain strains of Hindu nationalism) and anti-colonial thought, without necessarily being reducible to either. In Benjamin Zachariah's terms, he drew upon a 'fascist repertoire'.¹²³ His own elaboration of 'greater India' captured the spirit of a 'Young India' commandeering these 'world forces' (*visva-shakti*).¹²⁴ For him, greater India was 'a unit of enlarged experience and thought-compelling discoveries'; 'wherever on earth there lives an Indian, there is an India'.¹²⁵ At the vanguard of this he identified, by name, the energism of man (*shakti-yoga*) embodied in Sarojini Naidu, Bhai Parmanand, Har Dayal, M. K. Gandhi, and Rabindranath Tagore, among many others.¹²⁶ Accordingly, humanist internationalism offered a more expansive framework for envisaging intersocietal interactions, one which would transcend the rigidities of emergent (European) disciplinary forms, including Political Science, taking the study of the international away from the 'mystical associations' of nationalities, nation-states, and the certainties of interstate geopolitical visions. On the other hand it also corresponded, indeed privileged the histories of societal and cultural expansion that Indian thinkers had extracted from the histories of 'Greater India'.¹²⁷ It intersected, through intellectual circulations occupied by such mediators as Sarkar, with a more

South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 178–212.

¹²³ Benjamin Zachariah, 'At the Fuzzy Edges of Fascism: Framing the *Volk* in India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38:4 (2015), pp. 639–55.

¹²⁴ Sarkar (1922), p. 303.

¹²⁵ Sarkar (1922), p. 359.

¹²⁶ Sarkar (1922), pp. 301–7.

¹²⁷ Benoy Kumar Sarkar, *The Politics of Boundaries and Tendencies in International Relations* (Calcutta: N. M. Ray Chowdhury, 1926), pp. 7–8.

authoritarian strand of Indian international thought, co-present with emancipatory possibilities.

Conclusion

In light of the arguments presented in this paper Sarojini Naidu's 1924 address to the East Africa Indian National Congress makes more sense. In presenting East Africa as the 'legitimate colony' of the Indian people, Naidu was operating as a mediator within the circulatory movement of Indian overseas communities. Navigating the contested terrain of what constituted legitimate 'colonisation' Naidu traversed a cosmopolitan thought zone that sought to advocate for the status of diasporic communities who had been subject to the hierarchies of imperial governance through an appeal to a benevolent understanding of colonisation. This was in part a geographical imaginary that evoked an expanded conception of Indian political space, one rooted not in the notion of nations and borders, but in the commercial, cosmopolitan, 'cultural', and affective ties that diaspora communities had established worldwide. This was one variant of what others referred to as 'greater India'. Despite its benevolent subtexts, as the section above has shown, this appeal to greater India was an argument that was inescapably entangled in notions of political space that were imperial in some form, showing how ideas of empire and hierarchy were not the preserve of European imperial states but were part of the furniture of international imaginaries, both imperial and 'anti-imperial', in the early twentieth century.

The writing of international thought in a 'global' mode ought not to be enslaved by the categories and concepts we have found it useful to work with in other areas of the

International Relations discipline. This includes those of nation/nationalist, empire/imperialist, race/racist, and anti-colonial/anti-colonialist. Thinking beyond these categories does not mean to imply that they are invalid, but rather to point to another way of understanding how our ideas of the world exceed our categories about that world through multiple overlapping and connected affinities, tensions, compatibilities and frictions. A global intellectual history of international thought provides a more detailed and sympathetic reading of the individual histories we use to construct these concepts, whilst moving us more faithfully towards a ‘global’ International Relations that avoids being repopulated by categories that pulled it apart in the first place. It also helps us to transcend the binary categories that keep individual thinkers in analytical separation from one another, allowing previously marginalised thinkers into a more expanded conversation on international thought broadly conceived, and providing a more thorough analysis of those aspects of international thought that evade simple categorization.

What are the implications of these arguments for International Relations? Firstly, the global intellectual history approach holds broad applicability. Intellectual trends that have previously been read within a particular geo-cultural episteme may take on a more expansive resonance. For example, transnational networks and patterns of migration seeded realism as an ‘American’ theoretical approach, notably through the escape of Jewish intellectuals from Nazi Germany in the 1930s.¹²⁸ Yet the ‘power worship’ that

¹²⁸ Johan Heilbron, Nicolas Guilhot, and Laurent Jeanpierre, ‘Toward a transnational history of the social sciences’, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 44:2 (2008), pp. 146–60.

George Orwell identified in wider literary cultures at this time transcended these circulations, registering with anti-imperial movements elsewhere keen to re-impose their own status in a clearly hierarchical world order.¹²⁹ We can speak of realism as part of a wider transboundary circulation of ideas encompassing ‘anti-colonial’ thinkers beyond Europe, connected through a variety of intellectual collaborations and co-dependencies.

Second, global intellectual history allows us to reconceive international thought as a *relational assemblage*: inherently provisional and corresponding to multiple intellectual and material circulations and entanglements. The themes of mobility and diaspora, seen through the corresponding example of labour movements drawn upon in this paper highlights this. Other avenues for the exploration material/non-material assemblages might include the interface with technology including transport and communications,¹³⁰ the natural world,¹³¹ or with popular and literary culture.¹³² To reiterate: these entanglements are not necessarily geo-culturally specific - they were felt on a global scale.

¹²⁹ George Orwell, *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 141, 264, 266.

¹³⁰ Bell (2009). See especially Chapter Three.

¹³¹ Keiichi Omura, Grant Jun Otsuki, Shiho Satsuka, and Atsuro Morita (eds.), *The World Multiple: The Quotidian Politics of Knowing and Generating Entangled Worlds* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

¹³² Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Duke University Press, 2006).

Finally, the arguments presented in this paper explicitly do not refute the burgeoning and valuable work being done to recover histories of anti-colonial and extra European thought. Rather it offers an alternative ontological, and in some sense methodological approach that helps interpret those instances of ‘anti-colonial’ thought that are not cast simply in terms of counter-hegemonies. In turn, we might address what Ida Roland Birkvad terms the ‘progressive bias’ in existing literature.¹³³ Crucial here is to recognise that at times anti-colonial thought contained within it the seeds of later chauvinist and nationalist strains of political thought. By ignoring these more uncomfortable lineages a space opens up for the unproblematic recovery of these thinkers by contemporary political elites in order to claim such thinkers under a sanitised vision of ‘post-western’ international thought. The move to ‘globalise’ IR must contend with the politicisation of ‘non-western’ thinkers, particularly by authoritarian regimes. If we wish to have a scholarly conversation on these intellectual histories, we must pay attention to all lineages including more problematic intersecting and entangled histories to show how contemporary observers might seek to manipulate and narrate them in a partial manner, and to prevent a vivisection of intellectual history for an entirely different purpose.

¹³³ Ida Roland Birkvad, ‘The Ambivalence of Aryanism: A Genealogical Reading of India-Europe Connection’, *Millennium*, 49:1 (2020), p. 62.