

Introduction: The Lives of Cold War Afro-Asianism

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Abstract

The Afro-Asianism of the early Cold War can be conceptualised as a living network, nourished by connections created through political activism at both the local and the international level. The “lives” in *The Lives of Cold War Afro-Asianism* refer both to the many different incarnations of Afro-Asianism itself, and to the lives of the women and men who lived Afro-Asianism through their politics, their travels, and their relationships. Afro-Asianist engagement spanned a wide political spectrum, but its solidarities were not without limitations, constraints, and tensions. This introduction shows that, rather than a unified movement, Afro-Asianism functioned as both an affective and an effective banner for rallying a range of anti-imperialist agendas.

Keywords: decolonisation, Cold War, Afro-Asianism, biography, networks

Eighteen months after Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez canal, Rameshwari Nehru, a veteran of Indian social and political activism, rose to a lectern in the spacious auditorium of the University of Cairo to open the first official conference of the Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO). She was seventy-three years of age, and it is easy to imagine that the journey to Cairo had not been an easy one. But it was a journey on familiar terrain. Rameshwari Nehru had first visited Egypt in 1932 and spent time in Cairo and the surrounding countryside on her way to a tour of Europe which included a speech at the League of Nations in Geneva.¹ On this second visit, there was much she recognised, but she found the “climate and colour” to be different now. It was “refreshing to be able to breathe the fresh air of freedom” now that the Egyptian people had “accepted the challenge of their time” and won independence.²

At the conference, Rameshwari Nehru was also surrounded by familiar people. The Indian delegation in Cairo consisted chiefly of her own activist network, despite the fact that it counted different generations among its members. Perin Chandra for instance, was her junior by several decades, but had been her partner in an effort to join the communist and non-communist women’s movements in

the Punjab during the Second World War.³ In a similar vein, Tehminabai Dhage and Rameshwari were some twenty-five years apart in age, but they were connected through their social work with children's institutions.⁴ Other members of the delegation, such as Anup Singh and Perin Chandra's husband Romesh, were long-standing colleagues of Rameshwari in the Indian peace movement.

It was through the peace movement, especially Afro-Asian peace activists calling attention to the intersection of colonial power and nuclear capability, that many of the Cairo delegates had prior connections. Masaharu Hatanaka, for example, was a veteran peace activist who had worked alongside Rameshwari in preparing the "People's Bandung" in New Delhi in 1955 (chapter 7). But he had also attended the 1952 Asia-Pacific Peace Conference in Beijing and in fact had co-written the Japanese delegation's report on the conference.⁵ Similarly, the Chinese delegation to Cairo included famous Chinese poet-official Guo Moruo, whose international trajectory likewise passed through the 1952 and 1955 peace conferences, and the Burmese delegation included U Thein Pe Myint, a Marxist intellectual who had travelled to Delhi several times as part of the Burmese Preparatory Committee for Delhi. That Preparatory Committee had also included, among others, Anatoly Sofronov (chapter 9), a writer who could count himself among Rameshwari's friends, and who continued to move through Afro-Asian conferences after Delhi and Cairo, such as the Afro-Asian Writers Conference in 1958 and the Tricontinental in Havana in 1966.⁶

In fact, the Cairo event, attended by some 550 delegates representing forty-four different Afro-Asian countries, was very much a product of the decolonizing world's involvement in the international peace movement, and indeed of Rameshwari's own anti-imperialist and anti-militarist work. It was she who had first suggested holding an Afro-Asian solidarity conference at a meeting for the "Relaxation of International Tension" in Stockholm in 1954.⁷ The 1955 Delhi conference was a first attempt at a conference of that kind. Several of the members of the preparatory Committee for the Delhi Conference, not least Hatanaka and Sofronov, stayed on to prepare the first AAPSO conference. By the time Rameshwari Nehru took the stage in Cairo, they had worked together for years.

In this way, participant lists of Afro-Asian gatherings such as AAPSO provide historians with a snapshot of activist networks both regional and international, momentarily frozen in time. It is at the "hybrid" meetings of the Afro-Asian era, where government officials mingled with citizens committed to Afro-Asian solidarity, ranging from dissidents to dentists and dancers, that this is most apparent. It also provides the historian with a vivid demonstration that the Afro-Asianism of the early Cold War era cannot be reduced to any one nation's post-colonial diplomacy.

For these reasons, this book frames the political Afro-Asianism of the period of ca. 1945-1975 as a living network, connected through political activism at the local level as much as the international level. The "lives" in *The Lives of Cold War*

Afro-Asianism refer both to the many different incarnations of Afro-Asianism itself, and to the lives of the individuals who lived Afro-Asianism through their politics, their travels, and their relationships. This book is a look at those lives. Each chapter turns the lens on either a person, a meeting, or an organisation, in order to bring into focus Afro-Asian politics and solidarity at a given point in time and space. This book is not, therefore, an attempt to impose a unity on Cold War era Afro-Asianism where it does not exist. Quite the contrary – it shows that Afro-Asian solidarity functioned as both an affective and effective banner for rallying a wide range of anti-imperialist agendas across the political spectrum.

For Rameshwari Nehru, the “seed of Asian solidarity that has grown so well” and had drawn Africa into its fold, was not the famous 1955 Bandung conference but the New Delhi “People’s Bandung” that took place twelve days earlier.⁸ Yet, “Bandung,” the domain of her more famous relative Jawaharlal Nehru, came to epitomise Afro-Asian solidarity for posterity. Rameshwari’s life was inextricably entwined with Afro-Asianism, yet she was never at the main event with which Afro-Asianism became associated. Jawaharlal and Rameshwari Nehru’s lives, though they spent a lifetime disagreeing about politics in their correspondence, ran on parallel tracks.

Intersecting Lives

The Afro-Asianism of the early Cold War has long remained buried under the narrative of the broader Bandung era, which shaped the historical contours of solidarity, but also homogenised it, hiding from view the different visions of post-colonial worldmaking that co-existed alongside the Bandung project. Jawaharlal Nehru’s every move before, at, and after the Bandung Conference has been the subject of historical scrutiny. Historians have used the plentiful documentation of the conference, among other things, to gauge India-China relations, assess India’s position in Asia, and trace foreign policy shifts.⁹ As recent work has shown, however, the political formations of the period evolved in a much broader context of Afro-Asian interactions.¹⁰ The Afro-Asianist formations which Rameshwari Nehru and her colleagues inhabited were not rooted in state power, but were nevertheless adjacent to it. It is an unfortunate by-product of Cold War era scholarship that they have not attracted much historical attention. Bandung, by contrast, is etched into the world’s historical memory as representative of a moment of decolonial possibility.

As we have argued elsewhere, the veneration of the Bandung conference and associated diplomatic arenas has obscured other transnational interactions emerging alongside it.¹¹ It was not just post-colonial leaders, but activists, intellectuals, and artists, who converged to participate in a process of post-colonial ‘worldmaking’:

to end colonialism, to envision a more equitable social order, and to find ways of securing a lasting peace. This set of actors experimented with new ideas and techniques for intellectual and cultural expression to create new visions of the nation and of the world order. They wrestled with communist, socialist and democratic ideas in circulation, constantly reformulated their political loyalties, and built up networks of intellectual and radical sociability. Christopher Lee's depiction of the Bandung era as one that contained "the residual romance of revolution, as well as the realpolitik of a new world order in the making," very much holds for the Afro-Asian engagements in this volume.¹²

Adom Getachew's characterisation of anti-colonial nationalism as 'worldmaking' – as an attempt to create institutions that would secure a world of non-domination – has shed light on the gravity of the task of decolonisation.¹³ We add that we must also widen our conception of worldmaking beyond the domain of leading intellectuals and statesmen. As David Featherstone has argued, "solidarities from below" have always been central to "making the world anew" and yet have been "frequently marginalised and actively silenced."¹⁴ For this reason, the Afro-Asian Networks Collective from which this volume has emerged, started by placing the focus on large-scale but under-recognised events and gatherings – the 'Other Bandungs'.¹⁵ We sought to examine how Afro-Asianism was lived by men and women – the latter having too often been written out of its story, and that of internationalism as a whole.¹⁶ In doing so, we add to an emerging social history of internationalism, moving beyond the realm of state relations to investigate associational life, interpersonal relationships, gender dynamics, and cosmopolitan mentalities.¹⁷ The Collective's findings bore out that the boundaries between state and non-state were often blurred, and that Afro-Asianism had deep local and vernacular roots, consisting as much of solidarity as well as of political competition and racial hierarchy.¹⁸

In our research practice, we were driven by the same spirit of solidarity that motivated the individuals we studied. We argued that these networks should not be studied by lone scholars, but are best examined collaboratively, especially in terms of archival inquiry.¹⁹ We brought the Collective together in the archives of the International Institute of Social History to study conference booklets, brochures, publications, and the archives of bodies such as the International Confederation of Trade Unions. We drew on specialised local and linguistic knowledge, from research in the Cold War era archives of the United States and the Soviet Union, to national, institutional, and personal archives in New Delhi, Nairobi, Calcutta, Cairo, Yangon, Lahore, Jakarta, and Bandung. We shared documents, engaged in ongoing conversations through workshops and discussions, and wrote up our findings together in real-time. We hosted a half-day festival in Bristol on Afro-Asian connections, featuring a panel between historians and activists on the legacies of the Bandung era, short films, Nigerian and Indonesian food, and a hybrid performance of West

African and Bengali dance. We created a travelling exhibition, which eventually made it to the “Africa-Asia: a New Axis of Knowledge” conference in Dar Es Salaam. Looking back, these events are a reminder of the power and outreach of the cultural events that accompanied the conferences of the Afro-Asian era, which scholars are now beginning to explore.²⁰ We created a data visualisation of our findings, aided by the voluntary support of scholars all over the world working on the Tricontinental Conference, the All-Africa People’s Conference, and the Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference.²¹ For this collection, we welcomed a new group of scholars into the Collective with an online seminar series, providing feedback based on our respective regional and linguistic expertise and methodological vantage points.

In *The Lives of Cold War Afro-Asianism*, we center the individuals and groups who inhabited these spaces. The network visualisation that we collectively created has given us a picture of a much wider world, before, besides, and beyond Bandung. The ways in which, as noted above, the AAPSO delegates were connected ahead of the Cairo Conference, is best accessed through this dataset. The ability to bring into view, at the click of a button, the diverse professional, class, and political backgrounds of individuals who attended Afro-Asian events and gatherings has irrevocably moved us away from the narratives of “national” and “institutional” positioning within Afro-Asianism. But it has also broadened the category of Afro-Asian political actors, not least in terms of gender. Naoko Shimazu has argued that the Bandung conference was not only emblematic of diplomatic theatre but an arena where the most ‘visible’ diplomacy, at least according to textual sources, was conducted by men.²² By highlighting women’s Afro-Asian political trajectories, several of the chapters in this volume recover some of this less ‘visible’ diplomacy.

The Collective’s earlier essays on “Other Bandungs” provide the backdrop for the “Afro-Asian moment” in this volume, but they are now interwoven with lifestories, such as that of Gita Bandyopadhyay, a leading member of the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) who began organising mill workers in the Bengal Delta; of J.C. Kumarappa, the Gandhian economist and political activist seeking connections with China; of Lakdar Brahimi, who sought support for Algeria’s liberation struggle in Southeast Asia; of Eqbal Ahmad, whose scholarship drew him to activism against the wars in Algeria and Vietnam; or of Francisca Faggidaej, an Indonesian activist-in-exile and leading Afro-Asian internationalist. These life stories provide key insight into the lived realities of Cold War Afro-Asianism. They help us to see how individuals pursued solidarity networks outside their own national borders; how individuals carried on the promises of Afro-Asian gatherings in different places; and what ideas succeeded in bringing individuals from such varied backgrounds together. This shifts the conversation onto the individuals that made this moment – whether they were inspired by its promises or, as the chapter on Eqbal Ahmad shows, disillusioned by its failures.

The Practice of Solidarity

Afro-Asian solidarity was at its most emphatic at the large conferences that marked this era, and thus is a major part of the story we tell. As a recent volume on international conferencing has shown, conferences were “one of, if not the key location in which internationalism emerged in the post-war world.”²³ In the Bandung era, they provided occasions to meet and put forward collective visions for a decolonised world, by and for Asians and Africans. They were arenas of solidarity and friendship as well as contestation and conflict.²⁴ While Bandung has for so long been heralded as the defining moment of decolonial worldmaking, it was one of a much larger series of conferences and gatherings, characterised by diverse political and ideological formations. With each gathering, Afro-Asianism gathered steam across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, calling for anti-colonial solidarity and peace amidst continuing oppression and the threat of nuclear war. Between such events, the hard work of Afro-Asian solidarity was enacted by individuals and small transnational committees of activists engaged in the work of publicizing, networking, and advocacy.

In his opening speech at the Bandung conference, Sukarno referenced the League Against Imperialism in Brussels in 1927 as the meeting point where many of its delegates had met for the first time. This was not true of Sukarno himself, who never travelled outside the Dutch East Indies, but whose political imagination was nonetheless shaped by tracts and texts circulating in an age in motion.²⁵ The authors of a recent volume on the League, also in this book series, remind us that seeing the organisation as a precursor to Bandung blinds us to the specificity of the historical moment of 1927, and the promise of a united left that included communists, socialists, anti-colonialists, and trade unionists. As Michael Goebel has argued, Paris, along with Berlin, proved to be an interwar hub of anti-colonial internationalism, the erstwhile homes of the itinerant LAI.²⁶ Both Goebel and the authors of the LAI volume have argued that the LAI was – barring a few notable exceptions – a homosocial space.²⁷ But the Paris of the postwar era, as the home of the new WIDF, was a hub of leftist organising among Asian and African women.²⁸ In chapter 3, Adeline Broussan examines the role of the WIDF in Paris as a site where Vietnamese and Algerian women engaged French women through “grass-roots diplomacy,” resulting in an early anti-colonial orientation in the leftist French women’s movement to which the larger movement did not catch up for years.

The interconnected web of conferences that we track emerged, in part, from the 1947 Asian Relations Conference in Delhi, which was itself born out of the various pan-Asian projects of the interwar era, and out of which sprang different trajectories of activism.²⁹ *The League Against Imperialism – Lives and Afterlives* has commented on the continuity of anti-imperialist ideas, as well as the continued urgency of those

ideas, into the Cold War era. But the Asian Relations Conference represents a departure in other ways. The centre of gravity for the anti-imperialist gatherings of the postwar period lay in Afro-Asia itself. The new hubs of Afro-Asianism were cities like Accra, Cairo, Jakarta, Delhi and Rangoon.³⁰ Some of the practical and bureaucratic obstacles to mass gatherings in Africa or Asia, many of which had been insurmountable in the interwar years, had been removed. Meanwhile, the emerging Cold War meant that new geographical barriers emerged. Here too, the 1947 New Delhi conference served as the first meeting place for socialist leaders involved in the planning of the Asian Socialist Conference, making Rangoon into a (under-recognised) hub of anti-colonial solidarity (chapter 4) through which Ghanaian intellectuals such as James Markham passed en route to the Bandung Conference (chapter 5).

Beijing offers another point of departure as an early hub of Afro-Asian solidarity. As Elisabeth Armstrong shows in an earlier examination of the 1949 Conference of Asian Women in Beijing, the WIDF's first conference in Asia, this new generation of women from across Asia and North Africa engaged in a "solidarity of commonality" that explicitly recognised the imbalances between women of the world.³¹ In our earlier special issue, Rachel Leow examined the 1952 Asia-Pacific Peace Conference, which drew together delegates from South and Southeast Asia, as well as Latin America, betraying the enormous reach of solidarity networks in this era, particularly around the burgeoning international peace movement.³² While these early conferences contained few African delegates, they laid the groundwork for Beijing as an anti-colonial and socialist hub. It was also a place of socialist hospitality: as Taomo Zhou shows in chapter 14, it was China that housed and provided generous social welfare packages to exiles of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) for decades after the 1965 coup that decimated the Indonesian left. While scholars have recently examined China's role as a reference point for East African diplomats and intellectuals in the 1960s,³³ Yasser Nasser shows how Indian intellectuals saw 1950s China as offering solutions for India's social and economic ills, and an alluring alternative to American and Soviet development models (chapter 6). Central to Kumarappa's praise for China and his belief in Gandhian self-sufficiency, as Nasser argues, was his own commitment to the international peace movement at a time of superpower competition.

Turning back to Bandung, the place, Wildan Sena Utama examines a 'forgotten Bandung' – the Afro-Asian Students' Conference in 1956, one year after the famed Asian-African Conference (chapter 10). This conference perhaps most immediately captured the 'Bandung spirit', choosing the resort town as its venue due to the symbolic power of the 1955 conference. Utama turns the conversation away from the Cold War lens by highlighting the diverse ideological viewpoints of participating students – even if, on balance, the conference does show the increasingly leftward orientation of the Afro-Asian movement after Bandung.

The 1958 Afro-Asian Writers' conference in Tashkent, sponsored by the Soviet Union, likewise shows this orientation. As Rossen Djalalov shows in his recent book on Second-Third World connections in the realm of literature and cinema, ignoring Cold War dichotomies "obscures as much as it reveals", and fails to recognise the way both the Third World and Second World were mutually constitutive of each other, and how ideological affinities with the Soviet Union could give way to a "more pragmatic appreciation of its resources".³⁴ The real benefit of the gathering, whatever the intentions of its Soviet planners to showcase a distinctly Soviet site of modernity, decolonisation, and friendship, was to create what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o called 'links that bind us': literary connections across the South, enabled by the ability to meet fellow Afro-Asian writers face-to-face.³⁵

Some of the other chapters in this volume similarly disrupt the conventional geographies of Afro-Asianism. Hanna Jansen examines the role of scholars and writers in Soviet engagements with the Afro-Asian solidarity movement (chapter 9). These were built on strong personal ties, especially on the part of the Central Asian members of the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa, as evidenced by the Afro-Asian engagements of writers like Mirzo Tursunzoda or Bobodzhan Gafurov. Jansen's chapter makes clear that, even as Central Asia was receding from view in western cartographies of Asia, it emerged in alternative forums as part of new regionalist formations.³⁶

Such new regional arrangements, signalled by the All-African People's Conference in Accra in 1958, signalled the demise of the Afro-Asian project on the African continent and the popular appeal of Nkrumah's pan-Africanism over Nasser's Afro-Asianism. At the same time, new cartographies extended the Afro-Asian remit, as with the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana, which established the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was at the Tricontinental where Francisca Faggidaej (chapter 14) found herself stranded in the wake of the 1965 coup in Indonesia, stripped of her citizenship for her vocal critique of Suharto's role in the coup. Unmoored, without a nationality, Fidel Castro granted her honorary citizenship to Cuba, the passport with which she entered Beijing, and began a long exile in China.

Two years later, the 1968 Cultural Congress in Havana further marked the city as a destination for Afro-Asian intellectuals, as shown by Ali Raza (chapter 11). Through the writings of Pakistani authors, he shows how the Cultural Congress of Havana convened writers devoted to the cause of national liberation movements, drawn by the promise of a new and equitable society offered by Castro's Cuba. Raza shows how intellectuals in Pakistan subverted their country's diplomatic alignment to the US in important ways. His chapter offers further proof of the limited analytical value of Cold War binaries. This is also the case in Tycho van der Hoog's chapter on North Korean cultural diplomacy in Southern Africa (chapter 12). This chapter brings into

view the many reasons why Southern African liberation movements partnered with North Korea, vividly demonstrating that to frame these solely as communist alliances deprives both sides of agency. It also risks hiding from view the longer-term consequences of these relationships. DPRK support for these movements extended into the 1970s and 1980s, and has resulted in current economic relations, particularly with regard to construction projects, showing that the Afro-DPRK relationship cannot be reduced to a “curiosity” at the intersection of decolonisation and Cold War. The lens of Afro-Asian solidarity, by contrast, allows for a more capacious view of political and ideological difference within such engagements.

Forging Connections

This flurry of transnational activity in the 1950s and 1960s was enabled by the material contours of mobility and communication in this era. The increasing availability of air travel shortened distances across the Afro-Asian region, while the short hops on 1950s air routes allowed participants to work their way to a conference through multiple stops, not only getting to know the territory in between but also using those intervals to build personal relationships.³⁷ It is no coincidence that many of the 1950s conferences took place along the transcontinental air routes of the era. Leaders and literati who travelled to such conferences wrote of their experiences at airports, on airplanes, on layovers which both connected them to the landscape of Afro-Asia, and betrayed the enormity of the challenge of creating a more equal world.³⁸ Train travel invited its own narratives of humour and social critique, as Armstrong reveals in the intimate letters of Gita Bandyopadhyay’s train journey with the German WIDF contingent. Letters and travel narratives stitched together the strange and the familiar as encounters with new terrain, new people were shared with intimate contacts or a broader transnational sisterhood. These could also serve a political purpose: as Nasser notes, Kumarappa’s travelogues of China were published for Indian intelligentsia and government leaders, extolling the state’s ability to provide for the welfare of its citizens, instil discipline and patriotism, and carve out a unique Asian historical trajectory built on the industry of the peasantry. This was pitted in contrast to Kumarappa’s more contemptuous view of Tokyo – slick with wide avenues, cars, and “double-buses”, its harbours filled with American ships.

Aside from the financial, practical and cultural dimensions of this new era of transnational friendship and solidarity, there were also crucial political constraints. Both colonial and post-colonial governments restricted the movements of activists and intellectuals across these borders. These ranged from the confiscation of passports, to refusal of visa and travel permission, to power play. The most famous

case of the latter is probably British, French and American strategising over their response to the Bandung plans, resulting in the British advising Kwame Nkrumah not to attend Bandung.³⁹ The annulment of Fanggidaj's passport while in Havana in 1966 was one example of the way in which Afro-Asianists suffered from growing restrictions from Asia's new authoritarian regimes in the 1960s. Similarly, in Raza's chapter, the Pakistani poet and recipient of the Lenin Peace Prize, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, is invited to the 1968 Havana Congress but unable to leave the country under Ayub Khan's military dictatorship; it is only because he is based in London that Pakistani writer Abdullah Malik is able to attend. Zhou's attention to the passport thus reminds us of both the materiality and the "spatiality of internationalism", and the ways in which this era was marked by the rise of new borders and definitions of the relationship between citizenship and territory – even as Afro-Asian internationalists sought desperately to supersede them.⁴⁰

Ronald Burke has shown in his work on "emotional diplomacy" that US official assessments of such gatherings were often disparaging and dismissive of the "unreasonable enthusiasm" of Afro-Asian delegations.⁴¹ But as Rachel Leow has argued, attention to the emotional registers of Afro-Asianism is a crucial part of any effort to more fully recover the subaltern dimensions of the Cold War.⁴² Amza Adam thus centers the affective pull of the Bandung Moment in his examination of the emotional registers in Pakistani intellectual Eqbal Ahmad's Afro-Asian activism. In "subalternizing" the Cold War, the importance of lived Afro-Asian connections is crucial. Ranging from the journeys of African students to Asia examined by McCann, to the Afro-Asian stage that was Havana in Raza's chapter, or conversations between Soviet Central Asian intellectuals and their Asian and African peers in the halls of UNESCO examined by Jansen, these interactions often ran counter to established notions of the directions of Cold War international traffic.

Similarly, in the following chapters, these different "pulls" of cultural and intellectual traffic from Moscow, Beijing, Cairo, Hollywood, and London nourished the dynamism of the age, but also constituted new and grievous splits, particularly on the left. In Lewis' and McCann's chapters, Asian and African socialists distinguished themselves from the communist parties with whom they had once been aligned by denouncing the Soviet Union and its "totalitarian" and "imperialist" impulses. While they drew on models of the welfare state, they also voraciously criticised the colonial policies of European socialists. Abou-El-Fadl shows how the 1957 Cairo conference, far from being a front for Soviet communism, was an occasion for Nasser to carefully navigate the relations between the Soviet Union and China, while Egyptian intellectuals continued to cultivate relationships with African and Arab liberation movements. These actors, then, were not puppets and passive recipients of the propaganda battles of the Global Cold War, but actively seized, challenged, and created new currents of thought.

The events and gatherings of the Afro-Asian era gave rise to new publications, creating new communities of solidarity: the Asian Socialist Conference produced *Socialist Asia* and the *Anti-Colonial Bureau*; AAPSO and the Afro-Asian Women's Conference produced the *Afro-Asian Bulletin* and *Bulletin of the Afro-Asian Woman*; the *Afro-Asian Journalist* was based first in Jakarta and then Beijing.⁴³ Other publications were linked to one specific Afro-Asian gathering, such as the Indonesian collection of poems for the second Afro-Asian Writer's conference, which are interspersed between this book's chapters.⁴⁴ The cover art of these publications, meanwhile, spread Afro-Asianism's aesthetic further, a feature of the movement we have sought to highlight with the cover of this present volume.⁴⁵ While the dissolution of older networks forged in the 1950s indicates the failures of Afro-Asianism at the inter-state level, it also shows that it was in the cultural sphere that Afro-Asianism left its most important legacies, as well as its most lingering divisions.

In recovering these narratives of conferences and gatherings, we must also acknowledge the ephemeral quality of the Afro-Asian era and the fragility of its internationalism in the 1950s, both at the diplomatic and non-state level. By the end of the 1950s, a number of Asian socialists were marginalised, jailed, exiled, their parties banned or dissolved. As Cairo became the new leader of AAPSO and the Afro-Asian world after 1957, Indians began to gradually pull away from the organization. Meanwhile, the second "Bandung" in Algiers in 1965 stalled. The first generation of post-colonial leaders passed away or was removed from power, the Vietnam War and Arab-Israeli conflict continued to escalate, and new regionalisms took precedence. Nkrumah, who emerged as a leader of pan-African movements and rival to Nasser, was deposed in a coup in 1966 during a state visit to China and North Vietnam.

Afro-Asianism thus was never one movement. It had multiple incarnations, and lived many lives. At its heart, our research collective has sought to trace the convergence of networks of decolonisation through the web of Afro-Asian engagements. This has meant looking below and beyond the conventional framings of the Cold War and entrenched, state-centric narratives about winners and losers in the post-colonial world. The intellectuals, artists, writers, activists, and political operatives who traversed these routes met, in many cases for the first time, in the various hubs of the Afro-Asian world to envision and make a world after empire.⁴⁶ Their relationships were fraught with tension, hierarchies, and conflict, but they were also characterised by solidarity, affect, and intimacy. While they left a much lighter, and often grainier, archival footprint than the political elites of Bandung, these gatherings provide us with a far more nuanced understanding of the post-colonial world and its multi-directional pulls. Tracking their movements uncovers the vitality of world peace movements, the everyday work of anti-colonial solidarity,

and converging journeys to the new meccas of the Third World. Afro-Asianism was brittle and easily disrupted by post-colonial governments and Cold War propaganda battles, but its lives left important imprints on both cultural production and international engagements of the post-colonial world.

Notes

- ¹ Om Prakash Paliwal, *Rameshwari Nehru: Patriot and Internationalist* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1986), 20.
- ² “Speech by Mrs Rameshwari Nehru,” *Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958), 55.
- ³ Paliwal, *Rameshwari Nehru*, 21.
- ⁴ B. Suguna, *Women’s Movement* (New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House, 2009), 147.
- ⁵ Hirano Yoshitarō and Hatanaka Masaharu, *Ajia wa kaku uttaeru: Ajia Taiheiyō Chiiki Heiwa Kaigi no kiroku* (Asia Appeals: a Note on the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference) (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1953).
- ⁶ Connections drawn from the authors’ *Afro-Asian Networks Visualised*, accessed through www.afroasiannetworks.com. For further elaboration, see below.
- ⁷ D.N. Sharma, *Afro-Asian Group at the UN* (Allahabad: Chaitanya, 1969), 30.
- ⁸ “Speech by Mrs Rameshwari Nehru,” *Afro-Asian People’s Solidarity Conference*, 56.
- ⁹ Standard works from this perspective are G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment* (London: Faber, 1966); See also Seng Tan and Amitav Acharya (Eds.) *Bandung Revisited: the Legacy of the Asian-African Conference for the International Order* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008).
- ¹⁰ For India-China relations in the immediate post-1949 period specifically, see Tansen Sen, *India, China, and the World: a Connected History* (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017); Arunabh Ghosh, *Making it Count: Statistics and Statecraft in the Early People’s Republic of China*, esp. chapter 7 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Tansen Sen and Brian Tsui (eds.), *Beyond Pan-Asianism: Connecting China and India, 1840s-1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).
- ¹¹ See Su Lin Lewis and Carolien Stolte, “Other Bandungs: Afro-Asian Internationalisms in the Early Cold War,” *Journal of World History* 30:1 (2019): 1-19; See also Elisabeth Armstrong, “Before Bandung: The anti-imperialist women’s movement in Asia and the Women’s International Democratic Federation” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41: 2 (2016): 305-331; Katharine McGregor and Vanessa Hearman, “Challenging the lifeline of imperialism: Reassessing Afro-Asian solidarity and related activism in the decade 1955–1965” in Luis Eslava, Michael Fakhri, Vasuki Nesiiah (eds.), *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Past and Pending Futures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 161-176; Quito Swan, “Blinded by Bandung? Illuminating West Papua, Senegal, and the Black Pacific” *Radical History Review* 131 (2018): 58-81.
- ¹² Christopher J. Lee, “Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung”, in Christopher J. Lee (ed.), *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010): 1-42.
- ¹³ Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

- ¹⁴ David Featherstone, *Solidarity: Hidden histories and geographies of internationalism* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2012).
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- ³⁸ Ibid.
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- ⁴⁰ Jake Hodder, Stephen Legg and Mike Heffernan, “Introduction: Historical Geographies of Internationalism, 1900–1950,” *Political Geography* 49 (2015): 4-5.
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- ⁴² Leow, “A Missing Peace.”
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- ⁴⁴ Bintang Suradi (transl.), *Indonesia Sings of Afro-Asia* (Jakarta: League of People’s Culture Indonesia, 1962).
- ⁴⁵ We were fortunate to have the help of Sandev Handy from Sri Lanka’s Museum of Modern Art, and Fadiyah Nadwa Fikri from the National University of Singapore, who joined us in Amsterdam for a new iteration of the project.
- ⁴⁶ Here of course we borrow from Lee, *Making a World After Empire*.