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INDIA AT THE UNITED NATIONS:
A POSTCOLONIAL NATION-STATE ON THE GLOBAL STAGE, 1945-1955

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Prior to Indian independence, the Indian National Congress made savvy use of the United Nations as a global stage upon which to establish a sense of inevitability around postcolonial Congress leadership despite the uncertainty of post-independence power sharing in New Delhi. The aspirational postcolonial state staked its claim to moral leadership through anticolonial propaganda, the prominent UN delegate Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's self-representation of modern Indian womanhood, and highly gendered emotional discourses over the issue of racial oppression. Once faced with the *realpolitik* of a fragmented and bloody independence, however, nationalist idealism had to be balanced against the pragmatics of state building. The Indian state, focused on the consolidation of power at home and maintaining legitimacy in the international arena, at times placed domestic concerns above the ideals of the United Nations, becoming complicit in the reinforcement of the nation-state system. The extent of the postcolonial state's affiliation with inherited imperialist aggression was minimized through evasive diplomatic maneuvers and the suppression of information. And as Cold War ideologies clashed at the UN after the Korean War broke out, Pandit and India became caught up in the masculine competition between nation-states. This evolving relationship between the postcolonial Indian state and the emergent United Nations produced the foundations of UN postcolonialism – a gendered cultural construct that emerged in the early years of the UN through both the emotional high of the postcolonial moment and the contradictions of decolonization at the start of the Cold War. This cultural approach argues for a shift away from the more mechanistic organizational histories of the United Nations that fail to consider fully how and where power is produced.

To Julian and Celia

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INTRODUCTION

Indian Congress nationalism and postcolonial internationalism have cast a long shadow over scholarship on India at the birth of the United Nations. The historiography that accounts for them has produced a narrative of Indian exceptionalism that emerges from the ethically elevated path of the Gandhian independence movement and arrives, apparently fully formed, at the UN. The timeline for this story typically begins with Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit fighting for an end to colonialism and racial oppression from the periphery of the UN Charter conference in 1945, and moves in linear fashion toward the Nehruvian foreign policy objectives that allowed India to exercise moral leadership on the global stage via the UN. This project argues that such a neat arc and the cogent and palatable story of India's historical relationship with the United Nations it tells is not the whole story. It virtually ignores the reality of decolonization, minimizing India's self-interest and military power as well as other fractious geopolitical issues that interrupt the clean lines of India's transition from a colonial possession to an aspiring postcolonial world power. What's more, the central role of gender and emotion in the production of the postcolonial nation-state through the UN is invisible in this dominant account.

As my research shows, prior to independence, the Indian National Congress made savvy use of the United Nations as a global stage upon which to establish a sense of inevitability around postcolonial Congress leadership despite the uncertainty of post-independence power sharing in New Delhi. The aspirational postcolonial state staked its claim to moral leadership through anticolonial propaganda, Pandit's self-representation of elite, modern Indian womanhood, and highly gendered emotional discourses over the issue of racial oppression. Once

faced with the *realpolitik* of a fragmented and bloody independence, however, nationalist idealism had to be balanced against the pragmatics of state building. The Indian state, focused on the consolidation of power at home and maintaining legitimacy in the international arena, at times placed domestic concerns above the ideals of the United Nations, becoming complicit in the reinforcement of the nation-state system. The extent of the postcolonial state's affiliation with inherited imperialist aggression was minimized through evasive diplomatic maneuvers and the suppression of information. And as Cold War ideologies clashed at the UN after the Korean War broke out, Pandit and India became caught up in the masculine competition between nation-states. This evolving relationship between the postcolonial Indian state and the emergent United Nations produced the foundations of what I call UN postcolonialism – a gendered cultural construct that turns on both the emotional high of the postcolonial moment and the contradictions of decolonization at the start of the Cold War.

The United Nations Charter, signed at the UN Conference on International Organization in 1945, was an optimistic and future-oriented document. The Preamble was particularly idealistic, committing the new organization to work to preserve international peace and affirming the dignity of all through a commitment to human rights and the promotion of social and economic progress. Born out of the hope for postwar peace as envisioned by geopolitically dominant states, the ideals contained in the Charter nevertheless formed a space through which the millions of colonized and oppressed around the world could place their hopes for relief from imperial power and racial subjugation in the postwar world. Anticolonial and antiracist organizations had grown in number and power throughout the interwar period and many asked for seats at the table at the UNCIO to work to bridge the gap between word and deed and perhaps

reconcile some startling contradictions: What did a commitment to human rights in the Preamble mean when Jan Christiaan Smuts, Prime Minister of a state dependent upon the brutal logic of white supremacy, wrote it? Did the two references to self-determination in the Charter mean that the four original member states that were dependencies – Belarus, Ukraine, the Philippines, and India – could legally proclaim their independence?

The United States responded to requests for participation by granting organizations such as the NAACP access to the meeting halls to “advise” on issues of racial equality, but as private citizens these representatives had no real power in the negotiations.¹ The British, on the other hand, refused to allow representatives of the anticolonial All-India National Congress through the door. Indian representatives hand-picked by the British were already participating at the conference, and the British worked hard to minimize official dialogue about India’s fate. Operating on the sidelines of the “global media frenzy”² surrounding the San Francisco conference, Pandit, who had only recently been released from her last prison stay for her commitment to the Quit India Movement, used her exclusion from the official meeting rooms to turn the spotlight onto her protests demanding an end to colonial rule. Reporters “sent out story after story about the small, beautiful Indian woman who was defying the British Empire, championing the cause of the oppressed, and calling upon the nations to begin at once to live up

¹ See Chapter 1: “Beyond Civil Rights: The NAACP, the United Nations, and Redefining the Struggle for Black Equality,” in Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8-57.

² Roger Normand and Sarah Zaidi, *Human Rights at the United Nations: The Political History of Universal Justice* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 123.

to the noble phrases that were being written into the Charter.”³ Pandit’s was just one voice among many calling for the UN to implement real change in the postwar world.

Just over a year later Pandit headed the reconstituted Indian delegation to the first UN General Assembly in 1946 where she successfully spearheaded passage of a resolution condemning South Africa for racist policies against South Asians there. Sympathetic observers interpreted an independent postcolonial state demonstrating moral leadership at the birth of the UN as proof of the possibilities for the postwar world community to finally address issues of racism, imperialism, and other inequities.⁴ By the time Pandit was elected to preside over the General Assembly in 1953, India had also become a leader of the nonaligned movement both inside the UN through the increasingly effective Afro-Asian bloc and from New Delhi where India sought to mediate Cold War conflicts from an idealistic (yet pragmatic) middle ground.⁵ Throughout this period and into the 1950s – India’s so-called “golden age” of diplomacy – when India’s UN delegations were fairly effective in promoting India’s interests at the UN through both official “parliamentary” and unofficial “corridor” diplomacy despite limited initial experience – they continued to appeal to a position of moral authority.⁶

The first two chapters of this project focus on the Charter conference and the first General Assembly when the Indian National Congress via Pandit embraced the United Nations

³ Anne Guthrie, *Madame Ambassador: The Life of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1962), 125.

⁴ Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 3-4.

⁵ Though he did not initially use the term “non-alignment,” Nehru first made public his commitment “to keep away from the power politics of groups” in what is considered his first foreign policy speech delivered immediately after he became the head of the interim government in September 1946 (“Future Taking Shape,” Broadcast from New Delhi, September 7, 1946, in Nehru, *India’s Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946—April 1961* [Delhi: Government of India, 1961], 2).

⁶ C. S. R. Murthy, *India’s Diplomacy in the United Nations: Problems and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Landers Books, 1993) 3, 29.

as a space through which to build an aspirational postcolonial nationalism. My work takes seriously Cynthia Enloe's insistence on making visible women in international politics. As long as scholars ignore women, she argues, we fail to recognize the many forms of power at work, even in arenas traditionally deemed far removed from women's spheres—such as the military.⁷ Though celebrated in her time, for decades Pandit was marginalized in the historiography. The long-prevailing attitude by (mostly male) academics was revealed in private correspondence with a prominent India/UN scholar who informed me that research on Pandit would likely find she did not “do” much during her tenure at the United Nations. E.S. Reddy, perhaps the most prolific documentarian of Indian foreign policy in the Nehru era, describes the controversial long-time UN delegate Krishna Menon, as “the Indian National Congress’ window to the outside world” throughout this period.⁸ Rena Fonseca, in a 1994 article, identified V.K. Krishna Menon as India’s head of delegation at the time of decolonization with Pandit arriving as a “new representative” in 1952 when in fact the opposite is true: Krishna Menon did not become a UN delegate until after 1950.⁹ More recently Manu Bhagavan has granted Pandit a central role in this history as “the most powerful advocate” of a vision laid out of Nehru and Gandhi to “forge a common destiny for all human kind” through the international organization.¹⁰ While Pandit’s inclusion in the historiography is warranted, Bhagavan’s work exemplifies the exceptionalist

⁷ Cynthia Enloe, *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Pandora, 1989), 197.

⁸ E.S. Reddy and A.K. Damodaran, eds., *Krishna Menon at the United Nations: India and the World* (New Delhi: Krishna Menon National Memorial Committee, 1990), viii.

⁹ Rena Fonseca, “Nehru and the Diplomacy of Nonalignment,” in Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Loewenheim, eds., *The Diplomats: 1939-1979* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 385.

¹⁰ Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2, 1.

narrative and Pandit's successes are used to highlight the superior ideals forwarded by Gandhi and Nehru without regarding to questions of gender or power.

Chapter One, "Rehearsal of UN Postcolonialism: Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit at the UN Conference on International Organization (UNCIO)," demonstrates the ways in which Pandit's gendered performance on the periphery of the meetings in San Francisco established her diplomatic celebrity and lay the foundations of India's aspirations for postwar global moral leadership. My research shows that Pandit did not arrive fully formed at San Francisco, but was complicit in the creation of her own persona quite apart from her male mentors in India. Politically experienced within a national context but a novice on the international stage, Pandit took advantage of the opportunities presented to her to gain increased media attention for her cause. Her calls to end colonial rule and discrimination were not new additions to the discourse of international diplomacy, but her self-conscious performance of a modern, ideal Indian womanhood with intimate ties to both her brother and Gandhi was new, and it captured the imagination of contemporary observers near and far. Letters from Nehru to Pandit support the argument that her personal growth and political sagacity in this context were not prefigured. British imperial discourse had singled out the low status of Indian women as a critical reason for continued colonial rule. Pandit's elite, cultured, and charismatic self-representation provided the perfect future tense for the almost-postcolonial India. Her physical presence and embodied difference attracted an orientalist gaze directed toward her by western observers fascinated with this "diminutive, silvery-haired woman," dressed always in a sari, who could speak with such

force as she “Twist[ed] the Tail of the British Lion.”¹¹ Preoccupation with her exoticism and her ability to present the Indian case through a persona that was read by contemporary observers as more British subject than Indian colonial combined to produce an especially effective avatar for the Congress nationalist cause.

Pandit’s ability to garner support from both well-heeled America supporters and the India lobby in the U.S. meant she was well positioned to represent the Indian cause at the UNCIO that spring. This chapter shows how Pandit’s propaganda in San Francisco bolstered the notion that Congress was the only legitimate inheritor of the postcolonial Indian state. Pandit claimed the Congress represented all of India and presented herself as that organization’s chosen representative. Her main backers in the United States and at San Francisco were Congress supporters. Elite Americans such as Pearl S. Buck who helped Pandit at the start of her U.S. tour had long been supporters of Gandhi and Nehru, and the most powerful India lobbying organizations in the United States were also affiliated with Congress nationalism. Despite some challenges to this predominant position, the voices of other Indian nationalist interests were effectively drowned out: figuratively by the overwhelming press coverage of Pandit that reiterated her legitimacy, and literally when, for example, a heckler at a press conference (an Indian Muslim attached to the official UNCIO delegation) was forced out of the room by other attendees. In these ways, Pandit’s iteration of Indian aspirational postcoloniality abroad pushed aside the very real contests for power at home and reinforced the legitimacy of the Gandhi-Nehru dyad prominently on the global stage.

¹¹ William Moore, “Indian Woman Twists the Tail of British Lion,” April 27, 1945, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6.

The second chapter, “Race, Gender, and Emotion at the Birth of the United Nations General Assembly,” follows Pandit from the periphery in San Francisco into the 1946 Assembly where she led India’s official UN delegation. The only female head of delegation in New York that fall, Pandit was directed by the newly formed interim government (headed by Nehru) to press for the passage of a resolution condemning South Africa for the so-called “Ghetto Law” that discriminated against South Asians in that country. Debate over the issue revolved around an inherent contradiction in the UN system: the Charter called for the protection of equality and human rights but also stated that nothing in the Charter should undermine member states’ domestic jurisdiction.¹² Opponents of the resolution sought to maintain the debate within legal parameters and to protect the legal integrity of the sovereign nation-state from political intervention, but India’s allies refused to accept such a dispassionate categorization. The result was a General Assembly that grasped the power of the majority – against the wishes of some of the creators of the organization – to address human rights issues as political and ethical questions without reference to the International Court of Justice.

My evidence shows that the fight to pass India’s resolution against South Africa took place through competing and highly gendered emotional discourses that both shaped the contest for power and helped alter the political outcome at the birth of the General Assembly. The UN was a space created largely by white, western male diplomats and their mimics who valued logic and control as evidence of mature, masculine, civilized behavior. This emotional community was

¹² Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3-4. Chapter I, Article 2(7) of the UN Charter reads: “Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.” The potential problems that would arise from this contradiction were identified immediately by legal scholars, see Hans Kelsen, “Limitations on the Functions of the United Nations,” *The Yale Law Journal* 55:5 (1946): 997-1015.

disrupted when a competing mode of diplomatic representation emerged over debates on racial oppression and colonialism.¹³ At the center of this drama was Pandit, who was accused of bringing manipulative feminine emotion to bear on what should have been a strictly legal discussion, particularly once she shed tears during her speech before the final vote. My evidence demonstrates the depth of emotion expressed on all sides of this debate, building throughout the session as the various actors adjusted their “emotional displays” in reaction to the changing emotional environment.¹⁴ Pandit’s male opponents expressed intense anger, frustration, and indignation, and resorted to personal insult on more than one occasion. These confrontations unfolded in smoky, packed meeting rooms and in front of the eyes of the world as the debates circulated through heavy press coverage in South Africa, South Asia, and the United States. The 1946 Assembly already was imbued with heightened emotion as member states and the world at large looked to the UN to heal postwar wounds and prevent future conflict. The colonized and oppressed in particular invested hope that this test case would help ensure ideals of the Charter would be used bring an end to imperial rule and white racial domination. Pandit’s fight against racism in South Africa became a proxy through which communities invested in the ideals of the UN framed their own struggles.

The drama playing out on the global stage between the old imperial guard (embodied expertly by Smuts) and the postcolonial aspirant appealed to observers in the contemporary moment for important political reasons. The transnational implications of India’s challenge to the UN Charter and the win over South Africa assured a central role for these moments in a variety

¹³ Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Review Essay: Worrying About Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107:3 (2002): 827.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 842.

of histories.¹⁵ As the first “win” against South Africa in the decades long international fight against apartheid, the 1946 General Assembly remains significant because it “charted the course of future relations between South Africa and the rest of the world.”¹⁶ Though the UN did not have the power of enforcement at that time, the condemnation nevertheless indicates that South African racial law was on the international radar even before the official implementation of apartheid.¹⁷ This story figures also within U.S. civil rights histories because of its import to the movement and its leaders in the ongoing fight for racial equality. Observers in the Black press in the United States focused on the confrontations between Pandit and South Africa’s Smuts as symbolic of the struggle for power between the pre-war imperialist worldview and the possibilities for postwar change. Carol Anderson, Penny Von Eschen, and others have revealed how racial ideologies underpinned the creation of the United Nations and India’s role in challenging that foundation. And the success of the Indian resolution has been identified as a key moment in a postwar “politics in the making” when India and anticolonial allies gathered enough votes to override the intentions of the UN’s framers, establishing the General Assembly as a location where democratic principles could be wielded by smaller and less powerful states and altered the terms of the postwar world order.¹⁸

¹⁵ See for example, Steven D. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 143-150; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 343-346; and Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 180-182.

¹⁶ Thomas Borstlemann, *Apartheid’s Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 77.

¹⁷ Peter Henshaw, “South African Territorial Expansion and the International Reaction to South African Racial Policies, 1939-1948,” *South African Historical Journal* 50 (2004): 70-73.

¹⁸ Carol Anderson, “International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid,” 307-308. See also Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, and Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

The evolving UN postcolonial culture at the General Assembly celebrated India's independent stance against racism within a British Commonwealth nation without real concern for power struggles occurring at home. But at that point in the timeline of independence, the structure of post-independence governance was far from settled. Congress was maneuvering to push the Muslim League and Muhammad Ali Jinnah out of the center, and political partition was by no means inevitable.¹⁹ The choices to send Pandit and to bring the Ghetto Law as the Indian delegation's primary cause were not simply a "brilliant" win for the Nehruvian and Gandhian vision for a postwar world based on human rights.²⁰ Gandhi was reported to have personally asked Pandit to take on the issue in his name. And in Nehru's first radio broadcast to the nation after the formation of the interim government, the South Africa issue was presented as one of the ways in which the aspirational postcolonial nation would reach out to the world.²¹ These were also strategic maneuvers that drew on Pandit's unplanned success in 1945 and were designed to bolster the prestige of a Congress-led postcolonial state. The attention garnered by Pandit's performances on the global stage muted the reality of increasing violence throughout the subcontinent and minimized the contests for power in New Delhi. Smuts's efforts to label India as hypocritical for speaking on behalf of citizens of another country when India had its own religious and ethnic problems gained no traction in the face of overwhelming support for the moral argument in the culture of an evolving UN postcolonialism.

¹⁹ Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 279-280.

²⁰ See Manu Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World*, chapter 4: The New Hope, xx-65, and 1.

²¹ S. Gopal and Uma Iyengar, eds., *The Essential Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Volume I (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 323-324.

Considering the heightened emotion connected to the UN's formation, it is not surprising that Pandit's performances at the United Nations in 1945 and 1946 on behalf of the aspirational postcolonial nation mark the typical beginning of an exceptionalist narrative. In addition to providing the fertile ground upon which interracial solidarities could be built in and around the UN, my work shows that Pandit's diplomatic celebrity helped the Indian National Congress gain a footing in the international arena prior to independence. The "India" that was at the center of these emotional debates was presented as cohesive, self-confident, and future-oriented. The predominant scholarship on Indian foreign policy in this period echoes the Indian nationalist discourse based on moralistic claims and the position of nonalignment that was produced through Pandit, Nehru, and other diplomatic representatives at the UN. Some scholars are positively reverential in their analyses of Nehruvian foreign policy, at times explicitly conflating Gandhian pacifism and Congress nationalism with UN involvement. Usha Sud argues that India's view on global issues were deemed "extremely crucial" by other states because of Gandhi's ability to achieve "independence without bloodshed" and Nehru's commitment to non-alignment, both of which, according to Sud, originated in ancient Buddhist and Hindu philosophies that have always preached pacificism and believed "the world is one family."²² Others adhere to what Srinath Raghavan describes as the "ingenious idealism" explanation.²³ Manu Bhagavan, for example, contends that India worked to "reconfigure the global order through the UN" based on "the Nehruvian faith in 'world organization' to bring about peace and

²² Usha Sud, *United Nations and India: Saga of Cooperation* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1996), 72, ix, 38.

²³ Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 1.

justice.”²⁴ This interpretation remains powerful because these highly emotional historical moments continue to serve contemporary Indian nationalist ideologies that seek to protect the foundations of the postcolonial Indian nation from criticism.

The second half of this research project considers India at the United Nations after independence when the idealism of postcolonial imaginings collided with the reality of decolonization and the challenges of international diplomacy within emerging Cold War politics. The relatively short period of time covered by this research merits close examination because it marks the boiling point between the end of World War II and the beginning of broader decolonization when the postcolonial Indian state was a potent symbol for the possible outcomes in a reconfigured postwar order. After 1947, independent India was no longer a hypothetical: nationalist and internationalist ideals had to be balanced with the pragmatic needs of a functioning state that faced overwhelming issues including famine, poverty, and widespread violence. Indian representatives to the UN could no longer function purely within ideological terms. Postcolonial rule brought with it the challenges that many sovereign nations faced in this period: questions of border control, military defense, health care and protection for refugees, economic development, and so forth. At home, the new state took “over a governmental machine...[that] mirrored that of their imperial precursor,” but it also inherited the internal problems that had been faced by the British. And a sense of insecurity pervaded the region due to the fragmented nature of independence.²⁵ Lines drawn on a map by departing colonial bureaucrats resulted in migration, bloodshed, and terror on a massive scale. Abroad,

²⁴ Manu Bhagavan, “A New Hope: India, the United Nations and the Making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *Modern Asian Studies* 44:2 (2010): 322.

²⁵ S. Mahmud Ali, *The Fearful State: Power, Politics, and Internal War in South Asia* (New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993), 2, 5-6.

nonalignment was central to India's foreign policy, a position Nehru hoped would "both enhance India's prestige and...protect the country from having to commit its strained resources in binding commitments to either bloc."²⁶ The UN remained the primary location through which India enacted its foreign policy, but with state-building as essential as nation-building after independence, India's relationship with the UN was less sanguine.

Chapter three, "Resisting the Global Stage: Postcolonial Nation-Building, the Invasion of Hyderabad, and the UN Security Council, 1948," is concerned with a moment when the Indian government explicitly resisted international scrutiny and became complicit in the production and maintenance of the nation-state system. In the case of South Africa, India's UN delegates drew on a position of moral authority to justify international condemnation on behalf of human rights. But in the case of Hyderabad, domestic concerns outweighed the moral imperatives of the international organization leading India to actively limit the issue's exposure on the global stage to protect the state's self-interest. The Indian leadership had learned from the experience of taking the Kashmir issue to the United Nations Security Council. Nehru had believed that the UN would agree with India's position and work to resolve the crisis without further loss of territory from an already "moth-eaten" state. But international peacekeeping efforts and extensive negotiations failed to solve the conflict and India was left with no choice but to continue to accept at least some UN intervention.²⁷ My evidence shows how handling the Hyderabad threat differently at home and at the UN allowed the Indian state to avoid additional international

²⁶ Fonseca, 378.

²⁷ Nehru's decision to go the UN continues to be identified as one of his biggest foreign policy mistakes by even his staunchest defenders. See, for example, the essays by Jagmohan, Inder Malhotra, and M.V. Kamath in the volume *Witness to History: Transition and Transformation of India, 1947-1964* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), which was produced through the Nehru Centre.

involvement on the subcontinent at the time and gain control of the historical narrative for decades to come.

This chapter argues that the long suppressed story of Hyderabad at the UN must be recovered in order to more fully understand both the complex nature of UN postcolonialism and the long shadow cast by Partition on the subcontinent. My research demonstrates the various strategies the Indian government and delegates at the Security Council utilized to delegitimize Hyderabad's position and gain control of the historical narrative. At home, the stakes were very high for the fledging Indian state, which had already been fragmented by the partition of British India. Of greatest concern were Kashmir in the North West and the large southern state of Hyderabad, which its Muslim ruler, the Nizam, had declared independent. Congress leaders such as Vallabhbhai Patel, an aggressive advocate for the accession of all princely states, pushed for decisive military action against Hyderabad to create a cohesive state with defensible borders and reduce the threat from Pakistan after the Kashmir region became embroiled in war. Nehru supported greater caution, but his approach did not override an increasingly tense standoff subsumed into the fear – both in the subcontinent and abroad – that the dispute would lead to widespread violence on the scale of Partition. Adding to the emotional weight of the conflict, Hyderabad was characterized by India's leaders as the discursive “heart” of India, without which the new state would fall apart. The Muslim minority that dominated the state was depicted as deranged and dangerous. After a year of high-level negotiations between Delhi and the Nizam, and the escalation of border clashes throughout the region accompanied by increasingly freighted discourse in the press and by governmental leaders, the Indian military invaded and occupied Hyderabad in September 1948. Representatives of Hyderabad attempted to be heard by the

Security Council, but India refused to cooperate, presenting the international community with a *fait accompli*.

My research highlights the ways in which India avoided Security Council intervention by denying Hyderabad's legitimacy as a sovereign state and declaring the issue protected by domestic jurisdiction – a postcolonial invocation of an argument previously utilized to defend South Africa's racist laws and Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. Critics at the UN and in the press in Pakistan, the United States, and the United Kingdom questioned India's justification for the invasion, accusing India of hypocrisy for using superior military power to force a smaller state to accede. But with the direct support of British Commonwealth nations, which did not want India's power further eroded, opposition at the UN failed. Meetings were delayed, information was withheld, and India's reputation was protected. With a virtual press blackout inside Hyderabad, the Indian nationalist version of the story was widely accepted within months. As other scholars have shown, the Indian government actively suppressed evidence of widespread violence in Hyderabad.²⁸ These maneuvers effectively silenced India's internal imperial aggression in the historiography. In seven monographs on India at the United Nations published between 1957 and 2013, only two make a passing reference to Hyderabad, the others do not mention it, even in discussions on the closely related Kashmir case or the broader question of the "peaceful settlement of disputes."²⁹

²⁸ See Omar Khalidi, ed, *Hyderabad: After the Fall* (Wichita, KS: Hyderabad Historical Society, 1988), and most recently A.G. Noorani, *The Destruction of Hyderabad* (London: Hurst & Company, 2014).

²⁹ See *India and the United Nations*, Report of a Study Group set up by The Indian Council of World Affairs (New York: Manhattan Publishing Company, 1957) [none]; Ross N. Berkes and Mohinder S. Bedi, *The Diplomacy of India: Indian Foreign Policy in the United Nations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958) [none]; T. Ramakrishna Reddy, *India's Policy in the United Nations* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1968) [none]; Dhiraj R. Chamling, *India and the United Nations* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1978)

Chapter four, “The Gendered Embodiment of Nonalignment: Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Indian Peacekeeping” looks at two simultaneous performances of India’s postcolonial national character through Pandit at the UN General Assembly and Indian soldiers in the Korean demilitarized zone in the fall of 1953. Since her debut on the global stage in 1945 and her win over South Africa in 1946, Pandit remained a well-known diplomatic figure. She continued to represent the India at the UN and served as ambassador to the Soviet Union and then the United States and Mexico. However, Nehru and male diplomats such the controversial V.K. Krishna Menon had emerged as the most prominent diplomatic representatives of India’s nonaligned foreign policy, an increasingly significant position since the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Pandit’s election as the first female President of the General Assembly has been depicted in typical nationalist narratives as the culmination of what she started on behalf of the aspirational postcolonial Indian nation in 1945 – once relegated to the periphery, India had finally reached the center via Pandit. Certainly Pandit’s achievements deserve to be recognized. She was one of the foremost female diplomats of her generation, serving as one of a tiny minority of female representatives in a still male-dominated environment. But my research shows that at the moment of Pandit’s arrival at the center her power remained constricted by continued preoccupation with her as a cultural object. Within the complex Cold War gender politics of competitive masculine nation-states where Indian nonalignment was often figured as passive and feminine, Pandit remained confined by her feminine representation of Indian diplomacy.

[passing reference on 2 pages]; C. S. R. Murthy, *India’s Diplomacy in the United Nations: Problems and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Landers Books, 1993) [none]; Usha Sud, *United Nations and India: Saga of Cooperation* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1996) [none]; and Manu Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) [discussed on two pages under the heading “Darkness before the dawn,” but without reference to the Security Council discussions].

Pivoting away from the UN, I analyze one way in which the Indian state worked to project a more masculine diplomatic agenda on the global stage through the Custodian Force (India) (CFI), which oversaw the repatriation of prisoners of war in Korea simultaneous to Pandit's tenure as General Assembly President. Beginning with the invasion of South Korea by the North Korean military in June 1950, India had worked at the UN and through traditional diplomatic channels to help negotiate an end to the conflict. As the first proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Korean conflict was a test of Nehru's nonaligned foreign policy in international relations and of the UN's ability to maintain peace. Nonalignment allowed the Indian state to forge a pragmatic middle ground between the two great powers, while also maintaining idealistic ties linking the postcolonial Indian nation to Gandhian non-violence. At the UN, this position provided an attractive alternative to India and other less powerful states that were caught in the Cold War power struggle. Almost immediately after North Korea invaded South Korea, the binary of Cold War politics virtually shut down the Security Council; previous Council functions were shifted to the General Assembly, where the United States and its allies hoped to control the agenda while avoiding the Soviet veto. However, democratic voting at the Assembly had already proven a powerful tool for smaller and less powerful UN member states. From this reconfiguration of UN decision-making emerged the nonaligned Afro-Asian bloc, of which India was an acknowledged leader.³⁰

After three years of war, conflict over tens of thousands of unrepatiated prisoners of war remained the only roadblock to an armistice in Korea. India, led by Krishna Menon's leadership

³⁰ See Andrew J. Rotter, "Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947-1964," *The Journal of American History* 81:2 (1994): 518-542.

at the UN, helped find a diplomatic solution to the impasse. India chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) and staffed the CFI to oversee the prisoners between September 1953 and January 1954. This chapter argues that the deployment of peacekeeping troops provide the Indian state with an opportunity to enact Nehruvian nonalignment through the bodies of male soldiers for both an international and a domestic audience. This operation marked India's status as a fully-fledged state with sophisticated military capabilities and at the same time tied Indian soldiers' actions to Gandhian non-violence. In the historiography of Indian peacekeeping, the CFI is considered the origin of the postcolonial state's commitment to peacekeeping missions as an extension of India's "ancient" history of non-violence. My research shows that the Indian state and its representatives attempted to find a balance between the militarized character of a prison system and upholding the ideal of peacekeeping. On the one hand, New Delhi selected India's most highly decorated British-trained generals to chair the NNRC and lead the CFI, Lieutenant General K.S. Thimayya and Major General S.P.P. Thorat. Both men had prominent positions during Partition and the first Indo-Pakistani war in 1947. On the other hand, the Indian state and major Indian newspapers helped figure the young male soldiers of the CFI as symbols of the Gandhian ideal. The birth of Indian peacekeeping in Korea in 1953 also has been aligned with Gandhian ideology in the small number of scholarly works on the CFI – most of which have been published through the Indian government.

My research brings critical cultural analysis to what is considered an originary moment of the Indian state's commitment to UN peacekeeping operations in Indian historiography. Sandra Whitworth writes about the contradictions of modern peacekeeping and the role it plays in

legitimizing a nation's military and, through affiliation, the nation itself.³¹ In her analysis of gender and modern UN peacekeeping, she argues that in national discourse these missions idealize soldiers as "benign and altruistic" while downplaying any information that contradicts that image. In this respect, the mission becomes more about the creation of national myths than about the mission itself. I situate the historical and contemporary discourse about the CFI and NNRC within this literature. The success or failure of the neutral position in Korea was a test of the UN model of mediation in response to a Cold War crisis. The custodians' mission was less about the prisoners as individuals than it was about the resolution of a conflict that could provoke expanded war. For the Indian nation, the meaning held added import. The use of the military outside national borders was a marker of India's arrival as a fully-fledged state. And yet, the dominant discourse seeks to downplay the actual militarization of "peacekeeping" by minimizing violence during the mission and claiming that the soldiers' uniforms could be transformed into symbols of peace.³²

When Pandit was elected to preside over the 1953 General Assembly, Lebanon's Charles Habib Malik, who had represented his country at every General Assembly since 1945, remembered having to take a back entrance to hear her speak when she was shut out of the UNCIO meetings. He marveled at how far she had come from those days: "You were at San Francisco, but you were outside; you were at the periphery of things," he said. "Today, however,

³¹ Sandra Whitworth, *Men, Militarism, and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 35.

³² See for example, Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, *For the Honour of India: A History of Indian Peacekeeping* (New Delhi: Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research/Army HQ, 2009).

you are at the centre.”³³ Malik’s story represents an aspect of UN postcolonialism that remains central to the “golden age” narrative, namely, that India’s presence at the center equated to a successful exertion of moral leadership on the global stage. With Pandit’s election it might have seemed that India had finally achieved insider status, but Cold War politics assured the major powers at the Security Council remained the only real insiders. Nevertheless Pandit’s presence and the influence of the nonaligned Afro-Asian bloc did alter the politics and culture of the UN. Centering Pandit in this story reveals the extent to which the aspirational postcolonial nation was constructed on the global stage through a woman who became a powerful symbol of India’s future potential. Admiring contemporaries remarked that Pandit combined the best of the East and the West, an observation that indicates her success at embodying a cosmopolitan sophistication that appealed to an international audience without undermining the ideal of Indian nationalist womanhood.³⁴ It also demonstrates that the struggle for power over questions of imperialism and racism were made more potent when a colonized woman led the challenge in the arena of international diplomacy. Pandit’s tears fell precisely into the contested space between the great powers and their challengers; heightening the emotional weight of already high stakes debates. But the trajectory of Pandit’s career at the UN points as well to the limitations of nation-building within the gendered politics of anticolonial nationalism and postwar nation-state politics. Postcolonial India’s foreign policy did not always run parallel to the purposes of the UN as made clear by the military deployment against Hyderabad. And the feminized characterization

³³ Charles Malik (Lebanon), *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, Verbatim Records of Meetings, 15 September—9 December 1953* (New York) [hereafter *General Assembly, Eighth Session*], 180.

³⁴ Suresht R. Bald, “The Politics of Gandhi’s ‘Feminism’: Constructing ‘Sitas’ for *Swaraj*,” in *Women, States, and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?*, Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Ann Tétreault, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 84-85.

of India's nonaligned policy required more masculine embodiments of the state at the UN and in Korea. The following chapters critically evaluate this narrative arc "from the periphery to the centre" and reveal a more complex UN postcolonial culture that is neither straightforward nor so triumphant.

**REHEARSAL OF UN POSTCOLONIALISM:
VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT AT THE UN CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION, 1945**

The skilful timing and unremitting energy of Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit and her supporters in the United States have ensured a floodlight of publicity for India's claims at a time when the peoples of the world are looking anxiously to the conference for formulation of principles and policies which are intended to shape their destinies.

Times of India, 7 May 1945

With such puppets representing India at San Francisco people were naturally disappointed and did not expect much from the Conference, so far as India's interest was concerned. *The only ray of hope was the presence of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit in America.*

R. L. Khipple, *The Woman Who Swayed America*, 1945³⁵

The most important thing to emerge out of the 1945 UN Conference on International Organization (UNCIO) for the Indian nationalist cause was the geo-political and international diplomatic experience gained by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. As a founding member of the United Nations, India had an official delegation at the conference, but the three knighted Indian men selected by the British to represent the colony were considered “stooges” by the large number of anticolonial and antiracist individuals and organizations gathered in San Francisco. The irony of a dependent state joining an organization ostensibly made up of sovereign nations only helped boost attention for Pandit's anti-imperial public speech. Pandit was no novice to politics. As the eldest daughter in India's most famous Indian National Congress family, she had been steeped in the language and action of nationalist politics since childhood. But her debut on the international stage in 1945 provided her with a formative education in diplomacy on a larger scale and

³⁵ R. L. Khipple, *The Woman Who Swayed America: Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit* (Lahore: Lion Press, 1946), 79.

foreshadowed the contradictory nature of UN postcolonialism, which would develop in the coming years. In the making of international diplomatic celebrity, her performance on behalf of Indian independence and anticolonialism writ large in the months surrounding the conference was at the time and continues to be considered “a star-making turn.”³⁶ She was a highly effective and affective avatar for the Indian nationalist cause and she would use the lessons learned in San Francisco to great success when she returned as India’s official head of delegation to the UN in 1946 and beyond. The combination of anticipation surrounding the forming of the UN in San Francisco, a savvy political propaganda machine supported by the India lobby in the United States, and characteristics specific to Pandit as an individual, helped launch a political and cultural force.

Pandit’s presence in the United States in the spring of 1945 was both personal and political. The majority of the Congress leadership remained imprisoned for their participation in the 1942 Quit India Movement, but Pandit had been released due to health concerns in early 1944 shortly before her husband succumbed to illness worsened by his own imprisonment. Because Indian law prohibited women from inheritance, Pandit was left without significant income. She worked for some months organizing famine relief in Bengal, but was personally adrift and in need of financial stability. When lawyer and politician Tej Bahadru Sapru, with the support of Gandhi, invited her to join the Indian delegation to the Pacific Relations Conference to be held in Virginia, USA in February 1945, she combined this opportunity with visits to see her two eldest daughters who were attending Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

When she arrived in New York City in December 1944, Pandit was the first prominent Indian National Congress figure to visit the United States since the start of the war. In response

³⁶ Manu Bhagavan, *India and the Quest for One World: The Peacemakers* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 31.

to her arrival, individuals and organizations sympathetic to the Indian cause welcomed her with open arms. Pearl S. Buck offered her practical help finding accommodation and clothing appropriate to the New York winter. The Chinese Consul General held a reception in her honor where she met the British author W. Somerset Maugham among others. Power couple Henry and Clare Luce Booth gave a dinner-reception at the Waldorf-Astoria that drew “the elite of New York.”³⁷ Eleanor Roosevelt hosted a luncheon in Pandit’s honor. New York’s Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia received her at City Hall. And over 1000 people reportedly heard her speak publicly for the first time at the Indian Independence Day celebration on January 26, an event hosted by the India League of America.³⁸ It became apparent quickly that Pandit was naturally adept at representing the Indian cause in gatherings both large and small.

The social and political culture that undergirded postcolonial Indian politics at the United Nations in 1945 was a “glittering” world made up of international and internationally-minded elite diplomats, activists, and artists. While Pandit’s political and familial lineage gave her entrée to this elite setting, her intelligence and personal charisma assured her staying power. To observers, Pandit moved through this milieu effortlessly, but throughout her first stay in the United States, Pandit was learning how to utilize her political history and distinctive personal characteristics to move her agenda forward. Over these months, Pandit self-consciously created a self-representation that would allow her the most access to and success on the international stage. Her savvy complicity in the appropriation of herself as a symbol helped produce an especially effective diplomatic celebrity.

³⁷ Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1979), 190-191; “Mrs. Pandit,” *India Today* 5:11 (February 1945): 3.

³⁸ “Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit,” *India Today* 5:10 (January 1945): 4; “Events Today,” *New York Times*, 26 January 1945, 19; “India is Visualized Seizing Independence,” *New York Times*, 27 January 1945, 4; “Display Ad 4 – No Title,” *Washington Post*, 29 January 1945, 5.

Since childhood Pandit and her sister, Krishna Hutheesing, were groomed to become exemplary models of the “educated, ‘modern,’ new woman” early twentieth-century Indian nationalism desired.³⁹ For Pandit, her Anglophile education and elite upbringing (made visible and audible through her comportment and speech), mixed with the bravery, strength, and domesticated femininity required of the ideal Gandhian *satyagrahi* was eminently transportable/translatable into the elite social and political culture she encountered in the United States. She occupied a liminal space, a gendered persona at once Eastern and Western that appealed to her influential supporters as well as a broader audience. As an Indian admirer wrote after the 1945 lecture tour:

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, in her self, combines all that is best in the two ways of life—the Eastern and the Western...Her exterior beams with the manners and etiquette of...her European governess—but her heart throbs with the Kashmiri Brahmin blood of her ancestor[s].⁴⁰

Perceived more as an approachable “British subject” than the less comprehensible category of “Indian,” her performance could be consumed comfortably by American audiences. Through her embrace of this self-representation, Pandit gave India its toehold into UN culture even before Indian independence was achieved. And her political legitimacy as the primary spokesperson for Indian interests was greatly enhanced due to her close association with her brother, Jawharlal Nehru, and her family’s decades long relationship with Gandhi. But when one U.S. newspaper declared her the “First Lady of India,”⁴¹ it signaled the arrival of much more than a familial

³⁹ See Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question,” in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., 233-253 (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1989). For more on women and gender in the Gandhian movement, see Suresht R. Bald, “The Politics of Gandhi’s ‘Feminism’: Constructing ‘Sitas’ for *Swaraj*,” in *Women, States, and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?* Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Ann Tétreault, eds., 81-97 (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Ketu H. Katrak, “Indian Nationalism, Gandhian ‘Satyagraha,’ and Representations of Female Sexuality,” in *Nationalisms & Sexualities*, Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds., 395-406 (New York: Routledge, 1992).

⁴⁰ Khipple, 149.

⁴¹ S.A. Haynes, “India Stands For Equality, Leader Tells Baltimoreans,” *Afro-American*, 7 April 1945, 1.

representative; it telegraphed the arrival on the world stage of an Indian woman who was to lay the very foundations of India's ambitions for global moral leadership in the post-war geopolitical order.

Setting the Stage

Pandit arrived in the United States in late 1944 via a circuitous route. With the end of the war approaching, the Indian National Congress leadership felt it was time to send a spokesperson to the United States to garner public support on behalf of their cause. Widowed since January 1944, Pandit found herself alone and without financial support for the first time in her life. Left with no sons and no will guaranteeing her a portion of her husband's inheritance, according to Indian communal law their money and property reverted to her husband's family. Pandit was initially offered only the minimum Rs. 150 widow maintenance and Rs. 50 for her daughters until they married.⁴² Nehru offered what support he could from his prison cell at Ahmadnagar Fort: Rs. 2000 and his encouragement to keep working, try not to worry, and to remember that he considered her and their younger sister, Krishna, "joint-owners" of the family estate.⁴³ Pandit could have pursued a legal case against her in-laws, but Gandhi, an important father figure since her father Motilal's death in 1931, urged her to let the conflict with her in-laws go as "we had more important things to do."⁴⁴ Against her lawyer's advice but with the intent of ending the painful episode, Pandit agreed to accept a small settlement from her brother-in-law. She "signed a document giving up [her] personal claims and that of any unborn grandsons [she] might have,

⁴² Ibid., 179-180.

⁴³ Jawahar to Nan, 13 March 1944, in Nayantara Sahgal, ed. *Before Freedom: Nehru's Letters to His Sister* (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2000), 391 and 395. Letters in the volume date from 1909-1947, with just one letter from 1956.

⁴⁴ Pandit, 181.

and the chapter was brought to a close.”⁴⁵ The question of on-going financial resources remained pressing, and a lecture tour in the United States held the potential for addressing that problem.

In spite of its financial constraints, Pandit’s status as a widow did open up new possibilities for her activism and allowed her increased mobility. In a conversation with Eleanor Roosevelt for *McCall’s* magazine during Pandit’s tenure as Indian Ambassador to the United States in 1950, the two women mused about the particular pressures placed on female diplomats. Responsibilities were two-fold for a woman who was expected to play the roles of both Ambassador and Ambassador’s wife, demands that Pandit said caused physical and emotional strain. She acknowledged that despite its added pressures, widowhood had made her international diplomacy possible. While Minister of Health (the first Indian woman to hold such a position), Pandit traveled to see her husband every weekend, even when they worked in different cities. “But supposing my husband had been alive today?” she asked, “I would never have accepted this position. It would have been putting him into a terrifically awkward situation.”⁴⁶ The timing of her husband’s death contributed to the serendipitous timing of her emergence at the United Nations the following year. Married, she would have been less inclined to perform a role that required independent travel abroad; widowed, she was able to become one of the very few women active at the highest levels of international diplomacy in the 1940s and 1950s.

Given these circumstances, when Gandhi, out of prison since June 1944, and Sapru, President of the Indian Council for World Affairs, approached Pandit to speak on behalf of India in the United States, she was free to go. The only hurdle remaining was governmental permission to travel. The British had confiscated her passport and seemed unlikely to reissue it in the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

foreseeable future.⁴⁷ Ultimately, she found a way around British restrictions on her mobility and entered the United States without a passport. In her memoirs Pandit describes Edith Pao, the American wife of the Chinese Consul General in Calcutta, inviting her to attend a consulate dinner for the American Air Force. There, Pandit was introduced to the chief of the Allied Air Command in the Eastern region. With approval from U.S. Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, she boarded a U.S. army plane in December 1944, U.S. visa in hand. The British, concerned about the impact of Indian propagandists in America, nevertheless were unable to prevent Pandit's entry into the United States. If the American government gave her access, the best the British could do was track her movements and send their own counter-propagandists to lessen her impact.⁴⁸

After Christmas holidays spent with her daughters, Pandit left for the Pacific Relations Conference (PCR) in Virginia, one of five Indian delegates attending as non-voting observers. She attended lectures and meetings and had the opportunity to mingle with other delegates from all over the world. Throughout her travels, Pandit wrote to her brother about her experiences. In February, Nehru responded to her letter about the conference and shared his insights about these types of international meetings. Pandit having apparently expressed frustration with the lack of definitive action at the conference, he conceded, "You are perfectly right in saying that these conferences do not decide anything important or solve any of the world's problems."⁴⁹ Yet the conference was by no means a waste of Pandit's energies. It was during the PCR that she began

⁴⁷ Ibid., 186.

⁴⁸ Pandit was also monitored throughout her trip. For example, someone who attended one of Pandit's debates forwarded a letter to the Foreign Office describing how the debate "quickly developed into a discussion on whether England should give up India" (Marika Sherwood, "India at the Founding of the United Nations," *International Studies* 33:4 (1996): 412). And in one letter Nehru mentions Amarnath Jha being sent by the Indian Government to the United States "to put their side as unofficially and gently...as possible" in a letter to Pandit (Jawahar to Nan darling, 20 March 1945, *Before Freedom*, 465).

⁴⁹ Jawahar to Nan, 27 February 1945, *Before Freedom*, 454.

to attract the media attention that would become ubiquitous in the coming months and years. According to one biographer, her few opportunities to talk in Virginia gained “favorable news releases, which created interest in the woman from India.”⁵⁰ And a *Washington Post* columnist predicted that the “brilliant, colorful Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit” was certain to be “spotlighted.”⁵¹ Even before the main event started in San Francisco, she had begun to make an impression on observers, one that would propel her into international diplomatic celebrity in service to the Indian nationalist cause.

Word of Pandit’s successes reached Nehru in prison half a world away via news reports, friends’ updates, and much-delayed letters she wrote to him throughout her journeys. The letters Nehru wrote to her in this period provide a glimpse into how he viewed her experiences as a training ground for future endeavors. Writing from Ahmadnagar Fort (Maharashtra) and later Bareilly Jail (Uttar Pradesh), government censors constrained his ability to be explicit about political issues. International mail delivery was also highly unpredictable; letters often were months in transit. As a result, Pandit would not have received her brother’s letters in time to act immediately on his advice. Nevertheless, the letters demonstrate Nehru’s recognition of his sister’s growing effectiveness on the global stage. In a late January 1945 letter, he wrote he had been following her travels in press accounts and had “no doubt” she would improve the “minds and outlooks” of the American people on the Indian issue. On a more personal note, he also hoped the experience would help Pandit grow in confidence and develop new “ideas and energy” for the work ahead.⁵² In a letter from February, he mentioned that cables containing brief extracts of her statements had “rather upset the composure of people in New Delhi and Whitehall,” a

⁵⁰ Anne Guthrie, *Madame Ambassador: The Life of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1962), 120.

⁵¹ Genevieve Reynolds, “Berge Denounces Cartels,” *Washington Post*, 19 January 1945, 12.

⁵² Jawahar to Darling Nan, 31 January 1945, *Before Freedom*, 445.

testament to the wide circulation of her anticolonial critiques.⁵³ An early April letter conveyed Nehru's pleasure at that Pandit was "making good and impressing people" and that she seemed to be "finding" herself:

You are growing in mind, in outlook, in self-assurance, and in a friendly and favourable atmosphere your capacities are developing. One must of course have ability and capacity but almost equally important is the chance and opportunity to develop them... What delights me is that you are taking full advantage of this and thus making yourself fitter for the vast amount of work that lies before us. Keep growing and learning, flexible in mind and body, and yet always with that hard steel-like something which tempers us and keeps us straight and anchored, and gives us a sense of real values.⁵⁴

Even before Pandit made her most lasting impression at the UNCIO in San Francisco, her talent at speaking effectively on behalf of the Indian cause to audiences outside the subcontinent had become apparent.

Global 1945

Physically distant yet inextricably linked to the bloody battlefields of the Second World War, San Francisco became an unlikely location of diplomatic import when delegates from fifty countries met to debate the structure of the proposed United Nations in late April 1945. Newspapers in the previous months had been filled with momentous stories drawing readers' attention to happenings in locations across the globe embroiled in the war. The Allies had won the Battle of the Bulge, firebombed Dresden and Tokyo, and freed Manila from Japanese occupation. Franklin Delano Roosevelt died just weeks after being sworn in for an unprecedented third term, leaving the untested Harry S. Truman to lead the emerging superpower. As battles continued on numerous fronts in Asia, Europe, and the Pacific that spring, concentration camps including Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, and Flossenbürg were

⁵³ Jawahar to Darling Nan, 27 February 1945, *Before Freedom*, 456.

⁵⁴ Jawahar to Nan darling, 10 April 1945, *Before Freedom*, 469-470.

liberated, revealing the horror of genocide perpetrated by Germany. The war had been long and grueling, and it had effected a large portion of the world's population.

At the same time, governments and leaders were developing a vision for the postwar world. In February the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain walked away from the Yalta Conference with a signed agreement on the reorganization of postwar Europe. The Arab League formed in Cairo in March, creating an important regional political power. Now, San Francisco had been selected as the location for the United Nations Conference on International Organization and invitations were sent to founding member states to convene at the end of April.⁵⁵ With the reality of gruesome warfare and massive civilian casualties in the sixth year of this global war as its backdrop, diplomats converged on the City by the Bay. A second world war in a generation was ending and an international organization was being built, in the words of President Truman at the opening session, to “provide the machinery which will make future peace not only possible but certain.”⁵⁶

At the center of power in San Francisco were those delegations representing the Big Four – China, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States – with the reality of a bipolar power struggle emerging between the latter two increasingly obvious. The document presented to member states for their consideration had been hashed out amongst these powers during the Dumbarton Oaks talks (August 21-October 7, 1944).⁵⁷ Invited delegations from the other

⁵⁵ It was a given the United States would host the conference for several reasons: Roosevelt's passion for the organization, the lack of active warfare in the country, and the fact that the U.S. government offered to pay all costs save the delegates' personal expenses. San Francisco was chosen because of a dream U.S. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius had during the Yalta Conference. See Schlesinger, *Act of Creation*, 111-112 and 61.

⁵⁶ “Address by President Harry S. Truman,” 25 April 1945, *The United States and the Peace, Part II: Verbatim Record of the Plenary Sessions of the United Nations Organization on International Organization*, San Francisco, April-June 1945 (Washington, D.C: The United States News, n.d.), 29-A.

⁵⁷ “The United Nations Dumbarton Oaks Proposals for a General International Organization (For the Use of the Delegates),” Doc. I, G/1, May 17, 1945, *United Nations Conference on International Organization, San Francisco 1945*, Documents 1-2, Part 1 (1945). See also Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

founding nations were allowed to put forward, debate, and vote on amendments to the Dumbarton Oaks proposals. Unsurprisingly, the draft Charter reflected the contradictions of an organization guided by powerful governments seeking to protect their own sovereignty while simultaneously extending new powers to an international organization. A prime example of this tension was the belief expressed by many smaller member states that the power of the veto at the Security Council was a “defect” written into the draft Charter.⁵⁸ With deference to the greater responsibility for the war and the enormous power held by the Big Four, the other member states nonetheless resented the veto and hoped for a larger, more inclusive Security Council with regional representation.⁵⁹ Time would prove their fears well-founded: the insistence on the part of the Big Four (plus France) to maintain the veto in the Charter contributed directly to frequent deadlock at the Council throughout the Cold War years.⁶⁰

Though the fight over the veto was among the most heated of the conference, the delegates faced many more disputes over the organization of the UN Charter. The smaller countries submitted thousands of revisions to the Dumbarton Oaks proposal, and the Big Four put forward more than 20 joint amendments of their own. In order to address these questions, the conference was divided into four major commissions each with several sub-commissions tasked to discuss sections of the draft plan and any relevant amendments. The commissions met for six weeks, working longer and longer hours as the end of the conference neared. The official Indian delegation submitted no substantive amendments, but it was honored with the selection of Sir

⁵⁸ “Address by Alberto Lleras Camargo, Chairman, the Colombian Delegation,” *The United States and the Peace, Part II: Verbatim Record of the Plenary Sessions of the United Nations Organization on International Organization*, San Francisco, April-June 1945 (Washington, D.C: The United States News, n.d.), 42. Delegates from other South American countries, Australia, Egypt, and others also raised concerns about the veto in their plenary remarks.

⁵⁹ On the battle over the veto, see Schlesinger, 193-225.

⁶⁰ Since 1989, the Security Council has made on average one decision per week, a drastic improvement over roughly one decision per *month* in the first four decades of its existence (Peter Wallensteen and Patrik Johansson, “Security Council Decisions in Perspective,” in *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, edited by David M. Malone [Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004], 18.)

Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar (1887-1976), a lawyer and politician from southern India, to serve as the first chair of the Economic and Social Council committee. Debate over major issues was vigorous including over the status of regional organizations, the establishment of permanent members on the Security Council, and the scope of the Economic and Social Council. But the deck was stacked against smaller countries in more ways than one. First, the Big Four had veto power over any amendment. While they were willing to negotiate behind the scenes and make some compromises, they would not allow their power to be undermined considerably. Also, in Stephen C. Schlesinger's assessment, most of the smaller nations were "resigned to whittling down the dominance of the big nations, but not driving them out of the organization." A compromised system outweighed the possibility of no organization at all.⁶¹

Inside the meeting halls at the UNCIO roamed many observers representing a wide variety of interest groups. Their hope: to impact decisions on specific issues. Individuals and organizations without official representation in the conference halls hoped to wield some influence on the direction of the postwar world order even in the face of great power dominance. British journalist Alistair Cooke noted the presence of these interest groups, which he described as "unpopular crusaders for small nations and lost causes, drilling away underneath the official whirl in the hope of deepening the foundations of the peace." These included the Serbian Orthodox church in Yugoslavia, spokesmen for the Armenian question, the American League for a Free Palestine, and Friends of Republican Spain.⁶² Near the end of the conference the *Christian Science Monitor* noted that those such as the Venezuelans calling for the repudiation of Spain's Franco, whether "ill-timed or right-timed... have made it clear that multitudes are seeking a

⁶¹ Schlesinger, 172.

⁶² Alistair Cooke, "Big News and Little News: Contrasts at San Francisco," *Manchester Guardian*, 29 May 1945, 4.

peace based on moral considerations.”⁶³ From within the political landscape of the United States, the NAACP also asked for a seat at the table during the San Francisco conference. The U.S. government granted access to the NAACP along with 41 other interest groups, inevitably diminishing the influence of any one organization when so many were allowed to attend. As private citizens these representatives could observe and lobby from inside the meeting halls, but they had no direct influence in negotiations.⁶⁴

These events in San Francisco echoed a similar phenomenon at the formation of the League of Nations in 1919 when activists from across the globe gathered in Paris to speak out against racial and colonial oppression and create a “new order” as the world emerged from the First World War.⁶⁵ The question of racial equality became a highly contested issue as a result. Those “seeking to combat racial discrimination in the world needed a powerful and officially recognized voice at the peace conference itself,” and so they looked to the Japanese delegation.⁶⁶ These men had received instructions from the Japanese government to make clear that cooperation with the League would be predicated on the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the covenant.⁶⁷ When the League of Nations Commission, designated to produce the League’s Covenant, sidestepped the first attempt to include such language, the issue went global, drawing emotional reactions from both inside and outside the meetings.⁶⁸ Japan’s initially nationalist

⁶³ “Peace and Justice Sought for Minorities,” *Christian Science Monitor*,” 12 June 1945, 9.

⁶⁴ See Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 50-51.

⁶⁵ Both the U.S. and the British attempted to restrict the mobility of activists suspected to stir the waters in Paris. See Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 77; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 59-60; and David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 567.

⁶⁶ Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 79.

⁶⁷ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Color Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 287; and Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 16-17.

⁶⁸ Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 95.

proposal was transformed into a “universal crusade”⁶⁹ as millions around the world hoped for change, including participants in the Pan-African Congress organized by W.E.B. Du Bois to run parallel to the Paris talks.⁷⁰

For defenders of white supremacy from North America and the white British settler colonies, even vague language on the subject of equality was cause for alarm in 1919. The Australian Prime Minister William Hughes put up the most vocal opposition to the Japanese proposal, allowing U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and South Africa’s Jan Christiaan Smuts to lay the blame for the language’s omission on Hughes’ shoulders.⁷¹ Despite intense rounds of diplomatic talks and an “eloquent and moving” final appeal by Japan’s Baron Makino, proposed language on racial equality was left out of the final Covenant.⁷² In the end, the dominance of white, western male diplomacy in Paris won when the limited structure of the new organization successfully excluded competing interests. The real decisions were not made at the more democratic plenary meetings but “by the leaders of the great powers, who met in an increasingly smaller group as the conference stretched on.”⁷³ Small states could not override the intentions of the League’s framers, and in regards to racial equality the great power statesmen were unwilling “to recognize that this issue might be of intense concern to millions of people throughout the world.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the debates did succeed in producing a “heightened emotional awareness of race” and questions of imperial power around the globe.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Lake and Reynolds, 287.

⁷⁰ “Memorandum to M. Diagne and Others on a Pan-African Congress to be Held in Paris in February, 1919,” *Crisis* 17:3 (1919): 224-225. For an extended discussion of Japan’s complicated motivations for bringing the issue of racial equality to the Commission, see Shimazu, “Chapter 4: Japan’s Status as a Great Power,” 89-116. On Du Bois and the Pan-African Congress, see Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 561-580.

⁷¹ Lake and Reynolds, 302; and Goolam Vahed, “Race, Empire, and Citizenship: Sarojini Naidu’s 1924 Visit to South Africa,” *South African Historical Journal* 64:2 (2012): 330. See also Shimazu, 125-136, and 154-157.

⁷² Lake and Reynolds, 301.

⁷³ Manela, 57.

⁷⁴ Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 96.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

While governments selected their delegations and gave permission to various groups to have insider access in San Francisco in 1945, and news outlets assigned reporters to cover the creation of the UN Charter, activists with a diverse array of political interests also mobilized on the fringes of this new conference. Among these many interest groups were the India League of America and the National Committee for India's Freedom who were lobbying for Indian independence and together selected Pandit to represent their cause. The context for the discussion of race and empire was quite different at the end of the Second World War than it had been in 1919. These issues could not be shunted aside so easily by European leaders. Though in the words of Mark Mazower "the UN was designed by, and largely operative as an instrument of, great power politics," the make-up of the new international organization and its rhetoric was nevertheless more inclusive than had been the League of Nations and its Covenant.⁷⁶ The colonial nations had made many promises to their dependencies to gain their participation in the war effort; the Allies could not have triumphed without the financial support and enormous influx of soldiers from the colonized world. Furthermore, the principles that emerged from the Atlantic Charter, which formed the basis of the 1942 "Declaration of the United Nations" and then were carried over into the Preamble of the UN Charter, stated a commitment to a postwar world in which nation-states would work together effectively to not only avoid war but also to promote human rights and justice.

The Preamble was particularly idealistic, committing the new organization to work to preserve international peace, and affirming the dignity of all through a commitment to human rights and the promotion of social and economic progress. Born out of the hope for postwar peace as envisioned by geopolitically dominant states, the ideals contained in the Charter also

⁷⁶ Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empires and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 10.

formed a space through which millions of colonized and oppressed peoples around the world could place their hopes for a reconfiguration of power in the post war world. These millions sought relief from the imperial power and racial subjugation that the League of Nations had failed to end. The UN Charter gestured toward these goals, but its effectiveness remained untested. Questions of racial equality and imperial power were addressed differently in 1945 than they had been in 1919, though without satisfactory outcomes for those looking to the UN as an instigator of real change. The question of colonies and trusteeships was not on the agenda at all at Dumbarton Oaks, and as for human rights, the Big Four “concurred that the most innocuous place to insert language on the subject was in the section on the responsibilities of the Economic and Social Council. The Council would ‘promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,’ but have no power to enforce them.”⁷⁷ In San Francisco, Du Bois and the NAACP were successful in getting the United States to submit proposals on human rights and colonialism, but that delegation did little to get those proposals passed. A human rights commission was established, but was years away from effective intervention. As for the question of imperial power, though the rhetoric espoused the ideal of self-governance and equality of nations, the UN Charter in the end did not include language espousing the goal of independence for all. The new Trusteeship Council took over from the League’s mandate system as a supervisory system, leaving power once again in the hands of the imperial states. As Mazower points out, “European powers were reasserting their control over their colonial possessions in Southeast Asia even as the San Francisco conference met, and American anticolonial rhetoric dwindled as the war came to a close and the importance of good transatlantic relations with

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*, 36.

major West European powers,” especially Great Britain and France, “became obvious in Washington.”⁷⁸

Anticolonial activists inside and outside the meeting halls were dissatisfied with the continued dominance of imperial powers, lending Pandit and the Indian question even broader interest and support. The stage at San Francisco could not have been better set for Pandit’s introduction to world diplomacy. April 1945 was a liminal moment in both world history and in the history of South Asia. Much remained unsettled on both fronts, and yet the basic outlines of the future were becoming increasingly clear: Germany’s defeat was imminent and important gains were being made on the Asian-Pacific front. In India, much of the Congress leadership remained imprisoned, but the devolution of imperial control was clearly on the horizon. Nehru was finally released from prison in June, and he immediately set about negotiating the terms of British withdrawal. The same combination of uncertainty and hope contained in Indian nationalist’s desires also infused the UN Charter conference. By making parallels between the UN’s goals and India’s desire for freedom, Pandit would draw on the emotional center of this threshold moment to gain support and attention from a wide array of observers.

“Acid Test” of the UN Charter

Underpinning Pandit’s message at San Francisco was the representation of India as “the pivot of the whole system of imperialism and colonialism.” How India’s fate was addressed at this moment, therefore, would be “an acid test” of the principles of the United Nations, “and the continued denial of India’s freedom by Britain [would be] a negation of those principles and of

⁷⁸ Mazower, 150.

the sacrifices that have been made” to win the war.⁷⁹ Pandit’s words echoed a statement Gandhi made to the press in the days leading up to the conference: “The freedom of India will demonstrate to all the exploited races of the earth that their freedom is very near and that in no case will they henceforth be exploited.”⁸⁰ This theme linking India’s freedom to the ideals of the United Nations would become a common one throughout Pandit’s tenure at the UN in the coming years. But in 1945, it clashed with the goals of the official Indian delegation, the members of which also hoped to gain Indian independence eventually, but were willing to cooperate in San Francisco on the creation of the Charter without reference to specific colonies at that time.

Pandit’s highly visible presence outside the meeting halls of at the San Francisco conference disrupted the script envisioned by the British and the official Indian delegation. As had happened at the League of Nations, India’s official representatives to the UN Charter conference were not affiliated with either the All-Indian National Congress or the Muslim League, the two most prominent Indian nationalist organizations. The British instead had selected delegates who were sympathetic to continued colonial involvement in the subcontinent: three knighted Indian men with long histories of cooperation with the metropolitan and colonial governments. Sir V. T. Krishnamachari (1881-1964) was almost twenty years senior to Pandit. He had been the Diwan (finance minister) of the Indian princely state of Baroda throughout the inter-war period and had served as an Indian delegate to a number of bodies including the League of Nations and several Round Table Conferences. Sir Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar had been a prominent leader of the nationalist Justice Party (est. 1916), which had its roots in the

⁷⁹ William Moore, “Challenger: Indian Woman Twists the Tail of British Lion,” *Chicago Tribune*, 27 April 1945, 6; “Leaders Speak for Colored Peoples: Colonial Hopes Soaring Upward as the Result,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 3 May 1945, 1; P.L. Prattis, “Mme. Pandit Makes Stirring Plea for Freedom of India at San Francisco,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 May 1945, 5; Khipple, 81.

⁸⁰ “Gandhi Disowns Parley Delegates,” *New York Times*, 18 April 1945, 15.

organized efforts to curtail the dominance of the Hindu Brahmin caste in social, religious, and political spheres beginning in the nineteenth century.⁸¹ Mudaliar had most recently served as one of two Indians appointed to Churchill's War Cabinet and would go on to represent India at the UN after independence. Sir Malik Firoz Khan Noon (1893-1970), the youngest of the three representatives, was born in Lahore and educated at Oxford.⁸² Noon was the High Commissioner to the UK from 1936 to 1941, and then became first Indian to hold the defense portfolio on the Viceroy's Council (1942-45).⁸³ These three men, accomplished though they were, represented a stark contrast to Pandit's youthful appearance and more radical speech. Had it been up to the British government, no Indian nationalists or Indian journalists would have been allowed to attend the Charter conference to challenge the official delegation.⁸⁴ The British and Indian governments had collaborated to prevent opponents from reaching San Francisco, a policy that was only partially successful. Pandit was already in the United States when the conference was announced, of course, and she had already proven her effectiveness as a spokesperson for the Indian cause. As a result, the conflict between the official delegation and independence activists was not prevented, and news of the conference and Pandit's performance did circulate to India.

Congress connections in the United States made Pandit's work more effective. With the support of the India League of America and the Committee for India's Freedom, she was invited to help make the San Francisco conference "India conscious."⁸⁵ Due to the inability of other

⁸¹ Kasinath K. Kavlekar, *Non-Brahmin Movement in Southern India, 1873-1949* (Vidyanagar, Kolhapur: Shivaji University Press, 1979), 121-133.

⁸² Wolfgang Behn, *Concise Biographical Companion to Index Islamicus: An International Who's Who in Islamic Studies from its Beginnings down to the Twentieth Century*, Bio-Bibliographical Supplement to Index Islamicus, 1665-1980, Volume Three, N-Z (Boston: Brill, 2004), 33.

⁸³ *Who Was Who in America with World Notables, Volume V, 1969-1973, With Index to All Who Was Who Volumes* (Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, 1973), 535.

⁸⁴ "India Press Gag Implied; Plans for Sending Newsmen to San Francisco Canceled," 16 April 1945, *New York Times*, 24.

⁸⁵ Sherwood, "India at the Founding," 423.

Indian activists to leave the subcontinent and the two main Indian lobby groups' political affiliation with the Gandhian tradition, the All-India National Congress version of Indian nationalism dominated in San Francisco. Pandit's political speech and the printed propaganda released on her behalf claimed Congress was the only legitimate representation of the Indian peoples' desires, and that Pandit herself was a recognized spokesperson for the party. This nationalist narrative denied the fact that the Congress faced stiff opposition at home from the Muslim League in areas with large Muslim populations and in ongoing negotiations with the British government. It also silenced the existence of other organized political organizations (more radical and more conservative) that did not support the Congress platform, including the right-wing Hindu Mahasabha and the Scheduled Castes Federation representing the Dalit community. The coherence of Indian Congress nationalist dominance projected through Pandit's unofficial diplomacy at the San Francisco conference belied a much more tenuous reality on the ground in India.

Three letters to the editor from the *Times of India* in May and June of 1945 outline some of the expressed frustration at the idea of Pandit's representation of the Indian people as a whole given that she had not been elected by any Indian constituency. Ramprakash Roy pointed out that Pandit did not represent the diverse spectrum of political interests organized throughout India such as the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Radical Democratic Party, or the Scheduled Castes' Federation.⁸⁶ Other letter writers focused specifically on the Congress-League power struggle. Mahmud A. Wazifadar argued "that unless the major question of Congress-League unity is solved once and for all India cannot be represented by any major party or

⁸⁶ Ramprakash Roy, "Reader's Views: Mrs. Pandit," *Times of India*, 5 June 1945, 4.

individual.”⁸⁷ Another writer quoted “a distinguished Indian publicist” as saying, “If the world Press seeks truth and not mere sensation they will resist the propaganda wiles of this Indian ‘nationalist’ siren and examine more closely the Muslim charge that the freedom for which the Indian Hindu Congress so loudly clamours is freedom to oppress.”⁸⁸ This critique turned the American press’s fascination with Pandit as a womanly warrior on its head, depicting her instead as a *femme fatale* who was luring men to a dangerous conclusion with her beauty and charm.

A heckler at Pandit’s biggest press conference at the end of April highlights Pandit’s inability to remain insulated from the realpolitik of competing Indian nationalisms. Just after she delivered a short statement to an estimated 200 journalists and prepared to answer their questions, “a persistent Muslim” began asking questions, insinuating that Congress had been responsible for “violence and sabotage” during the Quit India movement in 1942. Rather than address the accusation, Pandit asked if the questioner was a journalist. Admitting he was not, he was forced to leave the room.⁸⁹ Speculation abounded about how he gained access to the press conference. Malik Firoz Khan Noon remembers in his autobiography that this press conference held very high stakes for the Muslim man who asked Pandit the “awkward question.” He was in fact a “brave stenographer” for the Indian delegation, and when “he walked out all cameras clicked. No one ever got such publicity as he did.” Noon claims that this man’s actions were so well-known and so widely criticized by the Congress Party that the stenographer could not find a job in government after independence and instead attempted to change his identity, opening a store in Connaught Place in Delhi. “When Partition came,” Noon writes, he became a victim of communal violence, and “was left for dead from sword wounds. He still carries the mark of a

⁸⁷ “Letter to the Editor 1—No Title,” *Times of India*, 22 May 1945, 4.

⁸⁸ J.D.J., “Freedom From Fear: To the Editor,” *Times of India*, 29 May 1945, 4.

⁸⁹ “British Policy in India; Mrs. V. Pandit’s Criticism,” *Times of India*, 28 April 1945, 9; William Moore, “Challenger: Indian Woman Twists the Tail of British Lion,” *Chicago Tribune*, 27 April 1945, 6.

sword would on his face.”⁹⁰ R. L. Khipple later wrote that the stenographer’s efforts “boomeranged, and Mrs. Pandit received much wider publicity than she would have otherwise received.”⁹¹

Noon was the only of the three Indian representatives reported to directly address Pandit and others’ criticism of the delegation’s independence, though he chose to engage more directly with Gandhi’s leadership in India than with Pandit’s representation in San Francisco. When asked about her by reporters, Noon was dismissive, referring to her as a “charming lady” without any direct comment on her political positions.⁹² He later refused to comment on the memo she submitted to the UN steering committee saying “he did not want to criticise a lady.”⁹³ In early May, at a press conference described “as one of the most animated at San Francisco,” Noon presented his views on Indian independence. The journalists present, a majority of whom seem to have been more sympathetic to the Congress position, challenged his statements, and it was reported that the event sometimes felt like “a political debate rather than a press conference.”⁹⁴ First, Noon accused Gandhi of being too influenced by “reactionary and orthodox Hindus,” who made him “bigoted and narrow-minded” with a political stance “half a century out of date.”⁹⁵ Noon blamed Gandhi for rejecting the Cripps proposal, undermining the Allied war effort, and inciting communal violence through the Quit India movement in 1942.⁹⁶ He further suggested the elder statesman should step aside and allow Nehru to take control of the Congress since

⁹⁰ Firoz Khan Noon, *From Memory* (Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd., 1966), 179.

⁹¹ Khipple, 81.

⁹² “British Policy in India; Mrs. V. Pandit’s Criticism,” *Times of India*, 28 April 1945, 9.

⁹³ “Sir F.K. Noon,” *Times of India*, 11 May 1945, 9.

⁹⁴ “Pandit Nehru Should Supersede Mr. Gandhi’: Sir F. Khan Noon’s Views,” *Times of India*, 4 May 1945, 5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*; William Moore, “Report India Settlement is Growing Near,” *Chicago Tribune*, 3 May 1945, 10.

⁹⁶ This accusation should be considered at minimum disingenuous given that as a member of the Executive Council Noon expressed his own criticisms of the Cripps plan in 1942 (Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, 78-79). The Muslim League was as skeptical of the Cripps Plan as Congress, though for different reasons, and both major parties officially rejected the plan (Jalal, 72-81).

Nehru was “the one man in the Congress who is likely to have the breadth of vision to see the Moslem point of view and come to an understanding with the Moslems.”⁹⁷ When asked why Nehru was still in prison if his leadership would be so effective, Noon replied that Congress’s civil disobedience had been “a misnomer for rebellion,” and that he hoped “sincerely” Nehru would be released soon. “[T]he final question shot challengingly at Sir Firoz as the conference broke up was, ‘Is not the Government of India controlled by the British?’ Reply (in an equally challenging tone): ‘That is absolutely wrong’.”⁹⁸

Noon’s comments circulated back to India and reportedly caused “great concern among Indian nationalist circles.”⁹⁹ In answer to the press conference, Gandhi said he would fulfill Noon’s wish if the Congress prisoners were released.¹⁰⁰ Further, he said there was no need for Nehru “to come to the front. He is in the front. The Government of India would not let him work as he would. He and I are friends. But we are no rivals. We are both servants of the people and the platform of service is as big as the world.”¹⁰¹ One “former member of the Congress Working Committee said in an interview: ‘It is very amusing to see Sir Firoz Khan Noon deposing Mahatma Gandhi. The people’s leaders are not appointed by some high authority, as [he] has been appointed to represent India at San Francisco against the declared wishes of the country.’”¹⁰² Shortly after the San Francisco conference, Noon joined the Muslim League, and he became Jinnah’s special envoy after independence.¹⁰³ He briefly served as Pakistan’s Prime

⁹⁷ P.L. Prattis, “Charge and Counter...Delegate Labels Gandhi A Traitor to Allied Cause,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 May 1945, 12.

⁹⁸ “Pandit Nehru Should Supersede Mr. Gandhi’: Sir F. Khan Noon’s Views,” *Times of India*, 4 May 1945, 5.

⁹⁹ “India Honoured At San Francisco,” *Times of India*, 3 May 1945, 5.

¹⁰⁰ “Fulfil Your Wish By Releasing Leaders’: Mr. Gandhi’s Offer to Sir F. Noon,” *Times of India*, 5 May 1945, 5; “Gandhi Agrees on Retirement with Proviso,” *Chicago Tribune*, 5 May 1945, 6.

¹⁰¹ “Fulfil Your Wish By Releasing Leaders’: Mr. Gandhi’s Offer to Sir F. Noon,” *Times of India*, 7 May 1945, 8. The title used for this article was identical to one used two days earlier.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁰³ *Chronology of International Events and Documents* 1:5 (August 27-September 9, 1947): 112. For extended explanation of the ramifications of Noon’s action, see Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, 144-145.

Minister from December 1957 to October 1958, before being ousted by the first declaration of martial law in Pakistan's history.¹⁰⁴ Though he gained some publicity, Noon was less visible than Pandit, who garnered much more positive coverage from the mainstream media in the United States and India, her Congress-inflected calls for independence overriding the statements of a vocal critic from outside the Congress's circle of power.

“The Woman Who Swayed America”

From prison, Nehru tracked his sister's actions through North American newspaper clippings as best he could. Simultaneously with U.S. audiences, Nehru was a consumer of what James W. Carey describes as an invented cultural form—American print culture—which conveys “dramatic action in which the reader joins a world of contending forces as an observer at a play.”¹⁰⁵ Pandit's savvy complicity in the appropriation of herself as a symbol combined with the gaze of American print culture to produce an especially effective diplomatic celebrity. Upon his release in June, he began forming an interim government, and he wrote to her a personal assessment of her successes: “You know that your work in the States has been very greatly appreciated here by all kinds of people. You have done a splendid job, as perhaps no one else could have done in the circumstances. The immediate consequences of what you have done may not be obvious but I am sure that the remoter consequences will be considerable.”¹⁰⁶ He made a decidedly accurate prediction. Her success at drawing both elite supporters and large crowds to the Indian cause in the United States led Pandit herself, Nehru, and others to recognize the

¹⁰⁴ *Pakistan Horizon* 19:4 (1966), 339.

¹⁰⁵ James W. Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” in Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*, revised edition (New York: Routledge, 2009), 17.

¹⁰⁶ Jawahar to Nan, July 24, 1945, *Before Freedom*, 490.

potential of her effectiveness on the world stage. San Francisco served as a rehearsal for Pandit's future diplomatic career, and she worked to negotiate a persona fit for the task at hand.

One challenge Pandit faced was how to tread a course between representing the whole of India through her speech and highlighting her own position in Indian cultural and religious hierarchies. Nehru for one encouraged her to use Hindi when speaking to Indian audiences in the United States, presumably to signal a level of authenticity to the diasporic South Asian community there.¹⁰⁷ One U.S. paper printed a picture of her in a moment of “Calm Before the Storm” before one press conference, an image that served to ground Pandit's actions within a Hindu-inflected spirituality strongly identified with the political symbolism of the Congress. In the photo, Pandit and an unnamed man face one another across a narrow table. On the right side of the image, the “sister of India's great nationalist leader” smiles serenely over clasped hands held close to her chin. With hands clasped at his chest, the man bows to Pandit from the left of the image, eyes cast down.¹⁰⁸ He wears one of the most ubiquitous symbols of individual Congress affiliation: the Gandhi *topi*. This close-fitting cap made of white *khadi* (homespun cloth) and pointed in the front and back, first became popular during the Non-Cooperation movement as one aspect of what Lisa Trivedi calls Gandhi's contribution to the “visual vocabulary of national community.”¹⁰⁹ By 1945, the *topi* was “an established visual symbol of dissent” used widely by Indian nationalists.¹¹⁰

Pandit also negotiated her physical representation of modern Indian womanhood (and thus the modern Indian nation). The relationship between her and her clothing offers one clear example of the co-production of a persona designed for public consumption. While arranging her

¹⁰⁷ Jawahar to Darling Nan, 31 May 1945, *Before Freedom*, 481.

¹⁰⁸ “Calm Before the Storm,” *Chicago Defender*, 26 May 1945, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing Gandhi's Nation: Homespun and Modern India* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 40.

¹¹⁰ Trivedi, 147. See extended description of the history of the *topi*, pp. 123-133.

lecture tour with the New York-based Clark Getts Lecture Bureau, Mr. Getts wanted to discuss her attire since the “American public... would expect someone from India to look exotic and to wear bright clothes and fine jewels.”¹¹¹ Though she refused to alter her rather subdued style, her usual selection of gray or pastel saris, her wedding ring, and a watch, were “exotic” enough in the U.S. context to merit significant press attention. Early in her lecture tour, Pandit articulated a level of frustration with the constant comments on her attire and its links to gender differences between the United States and India. Discussing the many women who hold high posts in India, she argued, “They got the jobs... not because they were women but because they were better than the men. And these... are not women whose clothes are described every time they enter the legislative assembly.”¹¹² By refusing to alter her simple style to please her lecture sponsor, Pandit established some distance between herself and the orientalist gaze. However, in a 1949 interview Pandit was more reflexive about the sari as a cultural symbol. “Everybody admits that the sari is the most graceful dress for women... But I find that in traveling, climbing in and out of airplanes, the sari is a confounded nuisance, and I’d like to wear skirts or slacks. But society demands that I wear a sari.” The male reporter refused to allow her the last word on the issue. Despite her “silver hair” and nationalist politics, he assured his readers, the “attractive younger sister of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru” remained beautiful. “She looks as good in the sari as the sari looks on her.”¹¹³ American, Indian, or otherwise—it is apparent that the sari played an integral part in the performance of an acceptable Indian womanhood in all of these contexts.

The more prominent Pandit became on the world stage, the more pronounced the attention to her attire, culminating in a virtual frenzy of descriptions during her early days at the

¹¹¹ Pandit, *Scope of Happiness*, 192.

¹¹² Leonard Lyons, “Broadway Bulletins,” March 10, 1945, *Washington Post*, 5.

¹¹³ Robert Trumball, “Mrs. Pandit Urges U.S.-Indian Links,” April 24, 1949, *New York Times*.

UN. William Moore's coverage during the Charter conference was the first by a U.S. reporter to rely heavily on visual description to emphasize Pandit's visceral impact on contemporary observers. His first article, combining political reporting with not so subtle sexually-charged language was headlined, "Indian Woman Twists the Tail of British Lion":

Folding her dazzling white robe [no buttons, no zippers] (sic) around some alluring curves, Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit of India moved into Anthony Eden's hotel today and began twisting the British lion's tail... Thus was the Indian question which many say will be the test of the basic principles of international organization brought out into the open as the conference was beginning its work.¹¹⁴

Another article by Moore two days later featured an interview with Pandit who warned that America should help India versus the British in order to avoid a war against imperialism.

Invoking another prominent Eastern woman, Moore described his interviewee as:

a diminutive, silvery haired woman who speaks with force that recalls the chill fury with which Madame Chiang Kai-shek once brought the American congress to tears, was wearing a sheer black robe, so folded that its silver edging fell about her wrists and spiraled downward.¹¹⁵

For Moore, Pandit's political message was inextricably linked with her appearance, made more exotic, and thus more intriguing, because of her "native" costume. Wrapped in yards of silk or cotton cloth, Pandit embodied a certain type of "Eastern" womanhood that made compelling "dramatic action" for consumers of her as news.¹¹⁶ The same would remain true throughout Pandit's diplomatic career at the UN, with her sari and her gender dominating initial coverage of her election as President of the General Assembly in 1953.

Pandit's voice was as significant as her appearance in translating Indian womanhood to a Western audience. Nehru initially expressed some concern about her speaking voice. He wondered in one letter, "how does your accent, intonation etc go down there? You tell me that

¹¹⁴ Moore, "Indian Woman Twists the Tail of British Lion," April 27, 1945, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 6.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., "Two Spokesmen of Freedom Denounce Reds and British," April 29, 1945, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10.

¹¹⁶ Carey, 17.

your voice has been liked. That I can understand easily enough for you have a good speaking voice. But what of the special dislikes of Americans regarding the English way of speaking.”¹¹⁷ Her speaking voice did merit attention, though not negatively. In one 1945 article she was described as having an “Oxonian accent,” insinuating a connection to the upper class education her father, her brother, and other nationalist leaders obtained in England though Pandit herself was not educated in England. A reporter at her first press conference as Ambassador to the United States in 1949 expressed surprise that Pandit “spoke flawless English...in a low, well-modulated voice ‘without a trace of accent.’”¹¹⁸ Anyone familiar with Pandit’s personal history would have been wholly *unsurprised* by her command of English. She spoke “with the cultured English” the “wealthy, aristocratic Brahmin,” common to the Nehru family.¹¹⁹ Pandit became literate in English even before learning to read and write Hindi, and her father insisted his children speak with “a pure English accent.”¹²⁰ One of the most successful Oxford-educated lawyers in India before converting to Gandhian nationalism after the First World War, the family patriarch “was of the view that unless we all turned ourselves into English people, there was no chance for us in the world.”¹²¹ During her childhood the entire family lived according to British standards Monday through Friday: they ate European food with utensils while sitting at a dining room table; dressed only in European clothing; and spoke English exclusively. Only on the weekend did the children experience the Kashmiri Brahmin food, language, and culture that their mother continued to maintain in a separate portion of the family estate.

¹¹⁷ Jawahar to Nan, 10 April 1945, in *Before Freedom*, 465.

¹¹⁸ Moore, “Indian Woman Twists the Tail of British Lion,” April 27, 1945, *Chicago Daily Tribune*; Guthrie, *Madame Ambassador*, 140.

¹¹⁹ Poppy Cannon, in *Sunlight Surround You, A Birthday Bouquet*, edited by Chandralekha Mehta, Nayantara Sahgal, and Rita Dar (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1970), 154. The three editors of this volume were Pandit’s daughters.

¹²⁰ Pearl S. Buck, “Woman of the World,” *United Nations World* 1:2 (1947): 25.

¹²¹ Sri Prakasa, in *Sunlight Surround You*, 24.

In addition to establishing an effective persona for herself, Pandit also worked to cement her legitimacy as the main spokesman for Indian interests beyond her close association with Nehru and Gandhi. One paper even declared her the “First Lady of India,” as if Nehru were already Prime Minister.¹²² In San Francisco Pandit consistently claimed to speak on behalf of all of India, taking for granted that her political party already spoke as the representatives of the Indian people as a whole. In one statement she declared she was “chosen by her compatriots in [the United States] and Canada as the sole spokesman for their cause.” She also spoke, she said, for the Indian National Congress, “which represents an overwhelming majority of all the peoples of India.”¹²³ As the most visible of those aligned against the official Indian delegation at San Francisco, she was described in the American press as a more legitimate spokesman for India than Krishnamachari, Mudaliar, and Noon. She contrasted her own status against that of the official Indian delegates who were not representative of Indian interests at all, but were simply nominated by the British. W.E.B. Du Bois agreed with this assessment of the three “Indian Stooges.” In an article in the *Chicago Defender*, Du Bois described himself and the NAACP’s Walter White running away from a photo-op with the official Indian delegates. Since they “in no way” represented the Indian people, Du Bois wrote, “[i]t would have been a calamity for us to be photographed with them.” Instead, the two activists lunched with Pandit, who he described as “a charming women in every way; physically beautiful, simple and cordial, [who] represents as few people could, nearly 400 million people, and represents them by right of their desire and her personality, and not by the will of Great Britain.”¹²⁴ Walter White heaped on even

¹²² S.A. Haynes, “India Stands For Equality, Leader Tells Baltimoreans,” *Afro-American*, 7 April 1945, 1.

¹²³ P.L. Prattis, “Mme. Pandit Makes Stirring Plea for Freedom of India at San Francisco,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 May 1945, 5.

¹²⁴ W.E.B. DuBois, “DuBois, White Run From Photo with India Stooges,” *Chicago Defender*, 12 May 1945, 5.

greater praise in his assessment of Pandit at the end of the San Francisco conference, an extraordinary passage worth quoting at length:

Imagine, if you will, an exquisitely featured face of lovely reddish brown surmounted by a semi-circle of silver hair brushed backward and upward to that it looks like a halo when the sun shines through it. Imagine laughter as spontaneous and gay as that of a healthy child filled only with the joy of living and darkened by none of life's heartaches and tragedies. Imagine beautifully kept hands which dart and flash with the color and skill of a bird in flight, lending just the need emphasis to words spoken with a throaty richness in flawless English. Imagine the transition with unbelievable speed from gayety to somber, moody fury against the suave exploiters of her people—a change of mood so startling that Helen Hayes, the great actress, was moved to describe its possessor as 'a bright shining flame.'

The relationships Pandit forged with Black American leaders such as Du Bois and White in San Francisco because of her ability to present herself as the only legitimate representative of the Indian cause translated into powerful solidarities around questions of racial equality and anticolonialism when Pandit returned to the UN in 1946 as head of India's delegation.

The Future

Pandit capitalized on her family history, natural charisma, and gripping oratory in order to present a compelling personification of modern India at the birth of the United Nations. To Western audiences this fair-skinned, sari-wearing Indian woman with perfectly coiffed hair, the sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, and a non-violent protestor who had been thrice imprisoned for civil disobedience embodied both the intriguing otherness of India and the possibility of India's future. Her future press attaché once referred to "her mass appeal in the Western world" as a "phenomenon."¹²⁵ These observers, perhaps most familiar with Katherine Mayo's negative depiction of Indian women in *Mother India*, were struck by the particular combination of

¹²⁵ Shiv Shastri, in *Sunlight Surround You*, 84.

Pandit's charismatic femininity and powerful political speech.¹²⁶ For the Congress's nationalist project she embodied the ideal "modern Indian womanhood, lovely, graceful, intelligent, poised and thoroughly feminine," and thus reflected the position the Congress leaders believed postcolonial India deserved to assume in world politics.¹²⁷ According to British diplomat Philip Noel-Baker, "if India could produce such women, India could herself most assuredly control her national affairs."¹²⁸ Pandit embodied this space in a moment in which the contingencies of history combined with the power of print culture allowed her to appropriate her own representation and project herself, and India, as legitimate actors on the world stage. The San Francisco conference was a major diplomatic event garnering attention from around the world. But it was the drama taking place outside the meeting halls via Pandit that predicted the nature of UN postcolonialism that would take root in 1946 through the Indian delegation's fight against racism in South Africa. In other words, the Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit of 1945 was the perfect future tense for both the aspiring Indian postcolonial state and the ideals of the UN itself.

¹²⁶ This was an argument made by Lyra Robero, a South African Indian observer at the UN in 1946 during Pandit's debates with Smuts over racist policies in South Africa (Robero, "When All American Went to Hear Mrs. Pandit," *The Passive Resister*, 31 July 1947). On the transnational circulation of Mayo's book see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹²⁷ J. R. D. Tata, in *Sunlight Surround You*, 71.

¹²⁸ Philip Noel-Baker, in *Sunlight Surround You*, 54-55.

RACE, GENDER, AND EMOTION AT THE BIRTH OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 1946

The color and colonial issues hang like a spectre over the entire
proceedings of the United Nations General Assembly.

Chicago Defender, 2 November 1946

Near the end of June 1946, UN Secretary General Trygve Lie received a petition signed by Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, head of India's delegation to the first part of the first session of the UN in London in the winter of 1946.¹²⁹ In the document, Mudaliar requested that the question of the treatment of Indians in South Africa be included on the General Assembly's provisional agenda. The letter offered a brief history of Indian indentured laborers' emigration to South Africa and argued that they had "progressively suffered discrimination and deprivation of elementary rights ever since 1885," culminating with the passage of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act on 2 June 1946.¹³⁰ Referred to as the "Ghetto Act" by its opponents, the provisions of the new law severely limited South African Indians' access to land ownership and occupancy. It also extended representational rights to Indians via "European" proxies. A growing South African Indian passive resistance movement had responded with mass meetings, marches, and the occupation of disputed land. The letter informed the Secretary General that because the Ghetto Act constituted a repudiation of past agreements, India had terminated trade with South Africa and recalled its High Commissioner in protest. The situation was "likely to

¹²⁹ "Annex 1: Treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa: Text of letter from the Indian delegation requesting the inclusion of an item on the agenda (document A/149)," *Official Records of the Second Part of the First Session of the General Assembly. Joint Committee of the First and Sixth Committees. Summary Record of Meetings 21-30 November* [hereafter Joint Committee] (Lake Success, NY: 1947), 52-53. Sir Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar (1887-1976) represented India at the San Francisco Charter conference in 1945 and at the first General Assembly session in January-February 1946. He also served as the first chair of the UN Economic and Social Council.

¹³⁰ "Annex 1," 52.

impair friendly relations between India and South Africa,” which, according to the UN Charter, allowed the Indian government to submit the question for consideration by the General Assembly.¹³¹ In response to India’s request, the treatment of Indians in South Africa appeared on the first General Assembly agenda. This agenda item came to be considered the “most hotly debated”¹³² issue at the UN that fall by contemporary observers, and according to scholars today it “change[d] the terms of the debate and international norms” at the birth of the Assembly.¹³³

For the newly formed interim Indian government, the South Africa case was a debut of India’s aspirational postcolonial leadership on the global stage. Lacking military and economic strength, and plagued by poverty, famine, and growing communal violence, India could nevertheless “exert moral leadership” in the world.¹³⁴ No matter the outcome of the debates, simply having the issue heard at the UN would both boost confidence in the interim government at home and garner international support for Jawaharlal Nehru’s foreign policy vision that included antiracism, anticolonialism, and respect for human rights. As the newly appointed Vice President of the Indian interim government, Nehru made an important foreign policy speech in late September 1946, wherein he named the South African Indian resolution the most important for the Indian delegation at the upcoming UN General Assembly, calling it a “moral and human

¹³¹ “Annex 1,” 53.

¹³² Barnett Nover, “Fifth Freedom: Opening Pandora’s Box,” *Washington Post*, 10 December 1946, 11.

¹³³ Carol Anderson, “International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid: The NAACP’s Alliance with the Reverend Michael Scott for South West Africa’s Liberation, 1946–1951,” *Journal of World History* 19:3 (2008): 307-308. See also Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 166-172; Lorna Lloyd, “‘A Most Auspicious Beginning’: The 1946 United Nations General Assembly and the Question of the Treatment of Indians in South Africa,” *Review of International Studies* 16:2 (1990): 131-153; Gerald Horne, “Race From Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of White Supremacy,” in *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988*, edited by Brenda Gayle Plummer, 45-66 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (2009).

¹³⁴ See C.S.R. Murthy, *India’s Diplomacy in the United Nations: Problems and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Landers Books, 1993).

issue” that could not be ignored.¹³⁵ In addition, the South African Indian resolution related to other resolutions addressing human rights at the 1946 Assembly, in particular the condemnation of racial persecution and discrimination, and the affirmation of genocide as an international crime.¹³⁶ The Indian delegation also led the fight that session against South Africa’s bid to annex the mandate of South West Africa (Namibia) rather than submitting it as a trusteeship. In almost simultaneously running committee meetings dealing with the South African Indian question and South West Africa, India’s fight against racial discrimination became linked to an argument against aggressive imperialism; evidence from each used to bolster the other.¹³⁷

In a continuation of the rhetoric surrounding Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit’s campaign at the Charter conference a year before, anticolonial and antiracist activists around the globe considered India’s leadership and the implications of their case against South Africa a test for the UN Charter’s idealistic language of rights and freedoms; a hopeful precedent for future international scrutiny of other countries’ racist policies and imperial aggression. African American observers correlated the “trial” of South African racism at the UN with a possible future trial of U.S. racism and the Jim Crow South.¹³⁸ Also, the African National Congress and South African Indian passive resisters welcomed a verdict on South Africa’s racist ideology and

¹³⁵ “Foreign Policy of India; Closer Relations with Nations; Diplomatic Corps to be Formed; Goodwill Mission for Middle East,” *The Statesman*, 27 Sept 1946, 1, 4, and 9.

¹³⁶ “Persecution and Discrimination,” A/RES/103(1), Plenary, Draft A/187, A/PV.48, 19 Nov 1946, <http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/1>. [accessed 25 August 2015]; and A/Res/96(1), A/PV.55, “The Crime of Genocide,” 11 December 1946, <http://research.un.org/en/docs/ga/quick/regular/1> [accessed 25 August 2015]. See Mark Mazower, “The Strange Triumph of Human Rights, 1933-1950,” *The Historical Journal* 47:2 (2004): 379-398.

¹³⁷ Before the session began there was speculation that India would oppose annexation because of the ghetto law (“South African Vexed with Indian Problem,” Dateline: Pretoria, *New York Times*, 25 August 1946, 13). See also, Henry S. Hayward, “Race Relations Involved in U.N. Assembly Over South-West Africa: Smuts Faces Hard Test in Lake Success Decision,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 November 1946, 8.

¹³⁸ See Louis Lautier, “Capital Spotlight,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 November 1946, 10 (also published as Lautier, “In the Nation’s Capital,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, 9 November 1946, 4B); and “Smuts’ Annexation Demand is Boomerang; Delegates Expose South African Misrule,” *New Africa* 5:10 (November 1946): 2.

imperialist desires at the world “tribunal” of the United Nations.¹³⁹ The possibility of India’s draft resolution passing provided evidence to back up the notion that the UN was categorically different than the League of Nations, and not just because this time around the United States had committed to the organization’s success. Nationalists objected not only to continued colonial rule at the League, but also the exclusionary politics of that organization. The presence of a delegation representing the (almost) independent India averted similar reactions in 1946, lending the UN an air of inclusion—the colonized alongside imperial powers—unlike any other international organization in the past.

For other stakeholders, the implications of India’s case against South Africa were more threatening. The British were loath to have a “family quarrel” between Commonwealth members aired on a global stage.¹⁴⁰ Some legal scholars, in line with the South African and British stance, warned of the ramifications of the General Assembly overreaching its jurisdiction at its very inception. What South Africa and its supporters had argued was a domestic issue best suited for the International Court of Justice could open the door to further critique of South Africa’s and others’ racist policies.¹⁴¹ And in South Africa, white peoples’ anger over UN condemnation

¹³⁹ See Ashwin Choudree, “South Africa Turns Against Its Indians,” *The Passive Resister*, 21 October 1946; and J.C., “Passive Resistance—A World Problem,” *The Passive Resister*, 28 October 1946, 2. Due to internal conflicts over the goals and methods of the passive resistance movement, South African Indians sent two competing delegations to support the Indian delegation at the UN and publicize the conditions in South Africa. A.I. Kajee and P.R. Prather represented the moderate position willing to negotiate with the South African government, and H.A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee represented the more radical activists (see “Kajee, Christopher, Pather... Represent Nobody,” *Passive Resister*, 4 November 1946, 1).

¹⁴⁰ See Lorna Lloyd, “‘A Family Quarrel’: The Development of the Dispute Over Indians in South Africa,” *The Historical Journal* 34:3 (1991): 703-725. Canada’s failure to support India’s position was derived from the same fears (see Peter Henshaw, “Canada and the ‘South African Disputes’ at the United Nations, 1946-1961” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 33:1 (1999): 1-52).

¹⁴¹ For contemporary legal analyses of the issue see Hans Kelsen, “Limitations on the Functions of the United Nations,” *The Yale Law Journal* 55:5 (Aug 1946): 997-1015; L.B. Schapiro, “Domestic Jurisdiction in the Covenant and the Charter,” *Transactions of the Grotius Society* 33, *Problems of Public and Private International Law* (1947): 1195-211; N.A., “The ‘Domestic Jurisdiction’ Limitation in the United Nations Charter,” *Columbia Law Review* 47:2 (1947): 268-279; and Leland M. Goodrich, “The United Nations and Domestic Jurisdiction,” *International Organization* 3:1 (1949): 14-28. See also Lloyd, “‘A Most Auspicious Beginning’”; Mazower, *No Enchanted*

marked a turning point in the country's political landscape, leading to a renewed consolidation of white supremacist ideology there.¹⁴²

As the debates surrounding South Africa became subsumed within broader disputes over race, empire, and human rights, the elevated stakes for all concerned were reflected in heightened emotion both at the Assembly and in newspaper coverage. For those who were invested in the UN fulfilling its promises to protect human rights and promote self-determination, the emotional language invoked at the UN, especially when expressed by delegates from once-colonized nations, was celebrated as evidence of change. Conversely, for those defending the status quo through a dependence upon rational, legal decision-making, emotional displays signified an irrational, politicized, dangerous response. Embedded in the narratives of imperialist ideologies is the notion that the control of emotion is linked to civilizational progress.¹⁴³ This “grand narrative” produces a dichotomy wherein “emotion” marks a dividing line between civilized and savage, maturity and childishness, masculinity and femininity, white and other—and in this case, legal and political.¹⁴⁴ Historians of emotion make a compelling case for emotion as category of analysis, given that, as Nicole Eustace argues, “emotional expression is a fundamental form of social communication critical to the exertion and

Palace; and Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹⁴² See D.N. Ghosh, “Indians in South Africa,” *India and World Affairs* 2:4 (1947): 189-194; G.H. Calpin, *Indians in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1949); Lloyd, “A Most Auspicious Beginning”; Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle*; and Saul Dubow, “Smuts, the United Nations, and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 43:1 (2008): 45-74.

¹⁴³ See Margrit Pernau and Helge Jordheim, et al., *Civilizing Emotions: Concepts in Nineteenth-Century Asia and Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁴⁴ Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Review Essay: Worrying About Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107:3 (2002): 827. See also Catherine A. Lutz, “Engendered Emotion: Gender, Power, and the Rhetoric of Emotional Control in American Discourse,” in Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 69-70.

to the contestation of power.”¹⁴⁵ Martin Francis makes a further case for linking political and cultural histories through the analysis of emotional discourse when he argues that emotion is part and parcel of the discursive economy of formal politics, one that shapes the contests for power and the nature of political outcomes.¹⁴⁶

This chapter argues that the United Nations General Assembly in 1946 was the ground upon which competing “emotional communities” clashed both inside and outside the meeting rooms over issues concerning empire and race.¹⁴⁷ The traditional emotional community of high international diplomacy, a space largely created by white western male diplomats and their mimics who valued logic and control, was disrupted when a new and more emotive diplomacy expressed through postcolonial representatives evolved through the debates over South Africa’s racial oppression and imperial desires. On one side of the Indian complaint against South Africa was the presumption of a legalistic and “unemotional” diplomatic rhetoric deemed appropriate for international assemblies. South Africa’s Jan Christiaan Smuts and Britain’s Sir Hartley Shawcross in particular were appalled by what they perceived as overly emotional manipulation brought to the issue; a position that in part drove their effort to maintain the debate within “legal” parameters and precedence and push the resolution to the Sixth (Legal) Committee and on to the International Court of Justice.¹⁴⁸ However, for many other delegates and outside observers, South Africa’s continued adherence to the rhetoric of white supremacy and the civilizing mission put it grossly out of step with the post-war shift toward human rights and fundamental freedoms. Smuts’s reputation as a world statesman and his authorship of the idealistic UN Charter

¹⁴⁵ Nicole Eustace, Eugenia Lean, et al., “AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions,” *American Historical Review* 117:5 (2012): 1525.

¹⁴⁶ Martin Francis, “Tears, Tantrums, and Bared Teeth: The Emotional Economy of Three Conservative Prime Ministers, 1951-1963,” *Journal of British Studies* 41:3 (2002): 355-56.

¹⁴⁷ See Rosenwein, “Review Essay.”

¹⁴⁸ See Dubow, 67-68, 70.

Preamble could not insulate his country's policies from angry comparisons to Nazism and the Jim Crow U.S. South. And the South African delegate G. Heaton Nicholls's efforts to explain South Africa's position in the racialized terms of the civilizing mission precipitated the most personally scathing exchanges of the session and generated an increase in newspaper coverage.

When it came time for the interim Indian government to select a head of delegation for the first UN General Assembly scheduled to meet in New York City in October 1946, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit was the top choice of both the British and Indian leadership.¹⁴⁹ Though this would be ostensibly India's first independently selected delegation to an international conference, with India still officially under British rule, the appointment "had to be confirmed by...London" and "credentials sent from the Court of St. James's."¹⁵⁰ Pandit's performance in 1945 during the UNICO in San Francisco had demonstrated her effectiveness as an international diplomat. In the few whirlwind weeks surrounding the UNICO, Pandit had drawn large audiences, impressed world leaders, and drawn a great deal of press attention. Her personal charm and family connections, intelligence and wit, Western bearing and Eastern exoticism produced a compelling identity during that unofficial debut on the world stage. Possibly "influenced by the inconveniences for himself and his Government of her self-appointed role at San Francisco" and keen to avoid the power struggles that ensued over her unapproved 1945 trip, the Viceroy to India Lord Wavell insisted Pandit head the 1946 UN delegation.¹⁵¹ Gandhi and Nehru concurred. In her memoirs Pandit remembers: "I was not to argue with any of the three men. A decision had been taken in the best interests of India, and nothing more was to be said." Upon accepting the position, Gandhi then told her he had selected her to "handle" the treatment

¹⁴⁹ Brittain, *Envoy Extraordinary*, 78.

¹⁵⁰ Guthrie, *Madame Ambassador*, 128.

¹⁵¹ Brittain, *Envoy Extraordinary*, 76.

of South Asians in South Africa on the UN agenda, since he “knew that I would do it as he would wish,” using truth and ethics as a guideline. When she met with Lord Wavell that same day, he told her that her “name had come to mind as soon as Gandhiji suggested inscribing the South African item on the Agenda.” Pandit’s effective embodiment of a modernized Indian nation provided an occasion for a familiar collaboration between British and Indian (male) elites over the ground of Indian womanhood. Though Pandit expresses bitterness in her memoirs about the ultimate failure of the UN to live up to the promises of its Charter, she remembers the successful vote against South African discrimination in 1946 as “a moment in time when it seemed possible to remold the world to a design in which justice, equality, and opportunity would help establish the peace for which exhausted humanity had yearned.”¹⁵² Indeed Pandit herself embodied those possibilities as she carried the question of South African racialized discrimination against Indians to the United Nations, what was described by one delegate at that time as “the highest and most far reaching rostrum in the world.”¹⁵³

Leading the Indian delegation, Pandit came to occupy the emotional center of opposition to the South African and British legalist argument, allying herself with and being embraced by a multi-racial global audience seeking justice through the United Nations. Pandit’s race and gender immediately differentiated her from the white male-dominated diplomatic community, and her calls for justice and an end to oppression from such a prominent stage drew crowds who flocked to meeting rooms to witness this Indian woman standing up to imperialist power. The only female head of a delegation, Pandit both embodied and symbolized an emerging postcolonial culture at the UN and the changes coming to post-war world governance. Her strategic uses of

¹⁵² Pandit, *Scope of Happiness*, 206-7, 209.

¹⁵³ Bianchi (Chile), *Official Records of the Second Part of the First Session of the General Assembly. Plenary Meetings of the General Assembly, Verbatim Record. 1946* [hereafter Second Part Verbatim] (New York: United Nations, 1947), 116.

race, gender, and emotion, and the ways in which those categories were attributed to her, influenced the outcome of the debates. African American observers in particular capitalized on the emotional drama to ally with Indian nationalist representatives like Pandit.

To understand more fully why this historical moment has held such import it is essential to investigate the friction between powerful white, colonial diplomacies and the possibilities of a new postcolonial diplomacy that centered the question of race and colonialism through racially diverse delegations. Taking seriously emotion as a historical force co-constitutive of race and gender reveals a new understanding of the structures of power at work in the earliest moments of the UN General Assembly. India's claim for South African Indians was the first test case for human rights as enshrined in the UN Charter, and the battle for that case was carried out in competing and highly gendered emotional discourses at the site of the UN. The drama both shaped the contest for power and the nature of the political outcome at the birth of the General Assembly. It was this highly visible global public spectacle that, to some extent, impacted the fates of party politics at home and helped shape the founding moments of UN postcolonialism.

“It is not to be supposed...that this session of the General Assembly will be tranquil and unexciting.”

Times of India, 24 October 1946

Apart from any particularly controversial issues, the 1946 UN General Assembly was infused with an emotional politics derived from its post-war context. In the period immediately following the Second World War, promises made by the colonial powers, horror over Nazi atrocities, and the specter of atomic war helped foster a renewed urgency to the perception of interdependence between nations and peoples and the drive to end racism and colonialism. Member states and observers around the world placed great hope in the possibility of the newly

formed United Nations to contain conflict and establish a permanent peace. When the founding member states met in London in January 1946 to begin the process of bringing the UN Charter to life, the session took place in a city bearing stark evidence of the war's brutality and many delegates expressed the importance of the UN's mission by evoking the horrors endured during the war under Nazi occupation, a "descent into hell" that had destroyed cities, towns, and farms, and exterminated millions.¹⁵⁴ The UN offered a salve to the wounds of war; a way to make the extreme sacrifices worthwhile. "Surely," the Canadian delegate Louis Saint-Laurent insisted, "this organization is the protest, uttered as with one voice by all civilized peoples, against futile mass slaughter and against the mass destruction of material wealth created for the benefit of mankind."¹⁵⁵ India's delegate characterized the UN like a phoenix rising out of the ashes of the League of Nations.¹⁵⁶ And other delegates believed that the Charter, while imperfect, was nevertheless better, bigger, and stronger than the League's Covenant, and offered realistic, practical means to safeguard peace.¹⁵⁷

Alongside these messages of hope delegates voiced concern that the words of the Charter and the meetings of UN bodies would not be enough to ensure success—there would need to be action. They emphasized that the workings of the General Assembly were public on a global scale: that the "eyes of the world" were watching raised the stakes of their endeavors.¹⁵⁸ As "the highest and most far reaching rostrum in the world," the General Assembly was a "magnetic pole attracting all eyes and towards which converge the hopes of all nations in the world, which see

¹⁵⁴ Clement Attlee (United Kingdom), *Official Records of the First Part of the First Session of the General Assembly. Plenary Meetings of the General Assembly. Verbatim Record*, 10 January-14 February 1946, Central Hall, Westminster, London (hereafter First Part Verbatim) (Lake Success: The United Nations), 40; Wincenty Rzymowski (Poland), First Part Verbatim, 155; Willem Schermerhorn (The Netherlands), First Part Verbatim, 130; Kuzma Kiselev (Beylorussian Soviet Socialist Republic), First Part Verbatim, 15th plenary.

¹⁵⁵ Saint-Laurent (Canada), First Part Verbatim, 200.

¹⁵⁶ Mudaliar (India), First Part Verbatim, 214.

¹⁵⁷ See de Blanck (Cuba), 244; Kardelj (Yugoslavia), First Part Verbatim, 13th plenary.

¹⁵⁸ Taqizadeh (Iran), First Part Verbatim, 120. See also Saint-Laurent, Canada, 200-203.

this organization as the ultimate court of appeal for the salvation of mankind.”¹⁵⁹ Some portion of the “millions” to whom the delegates referred included war refugees, famine victims, and others seeking action on material solutions to post-war emergencies; other observers were anxious for a policy to control atomic power and the creation of political and judicial mechanisms to prevent future global war. But another significant portion of these “untold millions” were those seeking the implementation of the ideals of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and self-determination enunciated in the Atlantic Charter and the UN Charter. In the wake of the war’s destruction, when “the rights of the human person” and the “fundamental concept of life on our planet” had been at stake, delegates argued there was now a need for an “international moral code.”¹⁶⁰ This conviction was summarized most vividly by the Brazilian delegate: “If the guns are to be silent forever, the heart of man must first be disarmed; it must be drained of all prejudice as to race, nationality and religion; it must be purged of the sin of ambition and pride; and it must be filled instead with hope and brotherly feeling.”¹⁶¹

When delegations met again for the second part of the General Assembly session in New York in late October 1946, the new organization was emerging fitfully within the jagged ends of war. The Nuremburg Trials had ended on October 1, and the Paris Peace Conference only on October 15, which had forced a delay of the Assembly’s opening. Having focused largely on procedure at the London session, in New York the UN now faced debates over major, divisive issues including the control of atomic power, disarmament, and the fate of Palestine. Despite these divisions and difficulties, UN delegates continued to publicly express unanimity on two significant points: the future of world peace depended upon their success, and the eyes of the

¹⁵⁹ Bianchi (Chile), First Part Verbatim, 116; Saka (Turkey), First Part Verbatim, 186.

¹⁶⁰ Ulloa (Peru), First Part Verbatim, 170; Saka, First Part Verbatim, 187. See also in First Part Verbatim: De Souza Dantas (Brazil), 115; Guerrero (El Salvador), 138; Schermerhorn (The Netherlands), 130; and de Rosenweig Diaz (Mexico), 151.

¹⁶¹ De Souza Dantas, First Part Verbatim, 115.

world remained focused on their deliberations. These two presumptions both united the delegates in common cause and altered the emotional tenor of the Assembly itself. Alistair Cooke, journalist for the *Manchester Guardian*, conveyed the sense that the second part of the first session was “fateful”: “If it fails the United Nations will be damned as misbegotten... That is why, though many delegates have voiced portentous hopes for this meeting, [British delegate] Mr. Philip Noel-Baker was not too fanciful in calling it ‘probably the most important meeting ever held in the history of mankind.’”¹⁶²

Noel-Baker’s concerns at the UN focused mostly on issues such as armaments and atomic power, but for others the “hope of the world” invested in the UN lay not only in the control of the implements of war, but in the potential for the Charter to alter the relationship between imperial powers and dependent peoples and to end racial discrimination. Before the Assembly session even began, the Indian case against South Africa was identified as the trial case to determine “how much solid substance” there was in the Charter’s language of human rights and fundamental freedoms, while simultaneously challenging the limits of its language on domestic jurisdiction.¹⁶³ Opponents and proponents of the South African Indian case early on identified the stakes involved, including the possibility of “international discord of a particularly explosive nature.”¹⁶⁴ As the South African Indian case preceded through the mechanisms of the organization under intense international press coverage, conflicting discourses on issues of race, colonialism, and the meaning of the Charter came to dominate the emotional center of a summit

¹⁶² Alistair Cooke, “The United Nations Assembly: Hopes and Fears at Flushing Meadow,” *Manchester Guardian*, 23 October 1946, 4.

¹⁶³ “United Nations May Get Petition to Act on South Africa Discrimination,” *New Africa*, 5:4 (April 1946): 1; Chapter I, Article 2(7) of the UN Charter reads: “Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter.” This clause proved to be one of the most controversial in the original UN Charter.

¹⁶⁴ “India and the U.N.,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 25 June 1946, 20.

already deemed of global importance. The two central protagonists, Pandit and Jan Christiaan Smuts, used public statements immediately prior to the session to establish their differing positions in the strongest possible terms, foreshadowing the vehemence of the coming debates. Speaking to the Belgian Parliament in mid-October Smuts warned of UN “Busybodies” interfering in domestic affairs, “Ideologists may use UNO for their purposes as a platform for publicity and propaganda,” which could shake confidence in the organization and impede its “prospects of good service for peace.”¹⁶⁵ Invoking the ideology of European civilizational superiority, Smuts urged confidence in “Europe, the concept of Europe, its unity, its glory, and renaissance... There lies the true road to wholeness, to sanity, to our lasting peace.”¹⁶⁶ Asked to respond to Smuts’s speech in a press conference immediately before leaving India for New York, Pandit wholly rejected his arguments. “The fate of the world depends on the fact that all nations must cooperate as equals in reshaping the future. If this basic fact is unrecognized, the human race is doomed,” she warned.¹⁶⁷ In an enunciation of multi-racial solidarity that would mark her time at the UN, Pandit declared, “The black man today is on the march. The racial issue in South Africa breeds the germs of a World War III.”¹⁶⁸ The issue for both sides went well beyond the scope of the question; the specter of war lending it added emotional weight.

The first serious challenge to the Indian resolution by South Africa and its supporters began in the small, crowded General Committee meeting with Smuts’s request to strike the item

¹⁶⁵ “‘Strange’ Use of Veto in Security Council: ‘Basis for Hope of World Peace Endangered,’” *The Statesman*, 14 October 1946, 1.

¹⁶⁶ “UNO Interference in Domestic Issues: Marshal Smuts’s Warning,” *Times of India*, 15 October 1946, 9.

¹⁶⁷ “Coming U.N.O. General Assembly Meeting: Mrs. Pandit on Indian Delegation’s Task,” *The Statesman*, 15 October 1946, 4.

¹⁶⁸ “‘Indian Issue Not Internal Affair’: Mrs. Pandit’s Reply,” *Times of India*, 15 October 1946, 9. Other sources echo the ominous warning of future war emerging from race conflict. See for example, M. R. Rau, “Letter to Editor: Men Must Fight,” *The Statesman*, 13 July 1946, 4; A. M. Wendell Malliet, “World Fronts,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 November 1946, 10; and “Dictator Smuts Demands Rule of New Territory,” *Chicago Defender*, 23 November 1946, 6.

from the agenda completely. He argued that the language in Article 2(7) on domestic jurisdiction protected South Africa from intervention. His position garnered little support.¹⁶⁹ The “heated interchanges and parliamentary maneuvering” over the next two-and-a-half-hours focused on Britain’s Sir Hartley Shawcross’s proposal to have the item sent to the Sixth Committee (Legal).¹⁷⁰ This proposal was the first of many efforts led by South Africa, Britain, and the United States to preempt a vote on the floor of the Assembly in 1946 by asserting that the matter was a legal issue and should be decided by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, India and its supporters continued to argue that as a human rights question India’s case was both legal *and* political, which would allow for debate in the First Committee (Political and Social) and a vote on the floor of the General Assembly.¹⁷¹ The wide gulf between the two sides prompted a debate that “was as tense as such things ever get without an open explosion into personalities.”¹⁷² In the end the General Committee voted to have the item heard by a Joint Committee of the First and Sixth Committees, evidence of the structural impact the opposing opinions had on the function of the Assembly at the outset.

The day following the contentious General Committee debates, Pandit delivered her opening speech to the Assembly. Representing a nationalist Indian delegation with a vocal anticolonial and antiracism agenda, and as the first woman to address the UN in opening remarks, Pandit’s rise to the podium was weighted with historical significance. Her speech “before a hushed and crowded hall” brought a message of hope and inspiration on behalf of an

¹⁶⁹ “Russia Withdraws Request to Cancel Veto Debate,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 26 October 1946, 1.

¹⁷⁰ Henry Hayward, “India-South Africa Rift Goes to U.N. Committees,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 25 October 1946, 7.

¹⁷¹ As the only Indian delegation member present at the General Committee meeting, M. C. Chagla played a prominent role in arguing the legal case for the resolution’s inclusion on the agenda and pushing for a hearing by the First Committee. For a personal assessment, see Chagla, *Roses in December: An Autobiography* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973), 234.

¹⁷² Alistair Cooke, “The Assembly’s Rights,” *Manchester Guardian*, 26 October 1946, 7.

aspiring postcolonial state that Pandit emphasized had at long last assumed its rightful place in international politics.¹⁷³ She pledged India's dedication to speak on behalf of those millions looking to the UN for peace and freedom by fighting against racism and imperialism in all its guises. "The sufferings, the frustration, the violation of human dignity and the challenge to world peace, freedom and security that empire represents must be one of the prime concerns of this parliament of the world's peoples," she proclaimed. It was for these reasons that India had brought the issue of the treatment of Indians in South Africa to the UN. Neither "local nor narrow," the South African Indian case related directly to the cause for which the war had been fought. "The bitter memories of racial doctrines in the practice of States and Governments are still fresh in the minds of all of us," she said. "Their evil and tragic consequences are part of the problems with which we are called upon to deal." Her speech ended with a call to delegates that acknowledged the role of emotion within the formal politics of the UN's work: "Let us recognize that human emotions and the needs of the world will not wait for an indefinite period. To this end let us direct our energies and, reminding ourselves that in our unity of purpose and action alone lies the hope of the world, let us march on."¹⁷⁴

Foreshadowing the extended ovation Pandit would receive after her final dramatic comments on the South African Indian resolution in December, her opening speech elicited a remarkable emotional response at the Assembly. "[T]hunderous applause," the "most enthusiastic" of the Assembly to date, greeted the conclusion of her speech "from the assembly and the galleries."¹⁷⁵ By all accounts her speech was considered "brilliant" and compelling.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Richard Newcomb, "Equal Treatment for Indians Claimed: Mrs. Pandit Attacks South African Policy at UNO," *Times of India*, 28 October 1946, 8.

¹⁷⁴ Pandit, Second Part Verbatim, 732-733, 734.

¹⁷⁵ Newcomb, "Equal Treatment for Indians Claimed"; "Woman Delegate Draws Applause," *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 October 1946, 7; 731: "To S.M. Smuts," Vol. 80, no. 147, Waldorf Astoria Hotel, New York, 27

The Calcutta (Kolkata) newspaper *The Statesman* reported to Indian readers that Pandit's "appeal" was covered prominently in both New York and Washington newspapers.¹⁷⁷ It was not only her words that compelled, however. As fellow Indian delegate Justice Chagla commented tellingly after the session, "her charm, beauty, and eloquence literally swept the United Nations off their feet."¹⁷⁸ U.S. papers in particular conveyed a romanticized, orientalist attraction to Pandit, directly linking her physical beauty, physical stature, and "native dress" with her effectiveness as a diplomat. A *Boston Globe* reporter identified her as one of the two most compelling orators at the UN, "her clear, gentle but bell-like voice" able to hold the "minds of those in the great hall."¹⁷⁹ Another observed that Pandit's "colorful native attire, poise, and delivery quickly attracted the attention of delegates, public, and press alike—as a pleasant contrast to the three days of masculine oratory" that had come before.¹⁸⁰ This was reinforced especially in comparison to Smuts who reportedly sat silently, staring at his hands while the "fragile but militant" Pandit made her "eloquent plea" on behalf of the oppressed.¹⁸¹ "This old, famous statesman, confronting the new voice of India in the person of this graceful woman," a *Boston Globe* reporter commented, "was a sight to be seen."¹⁸² The notion that Pandit embodied "the new voice of India" in contrast to the silent, seemingly isolated Smuts was a powerful observation that carried throughout press coverage of the debates.

October 1946, Jean Van Der Poel, ed., *Selections From the Smuts Papers, Volume VII, August 1945-October 1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 105.

¹⁷⁶ C. S. Jha, *From Bandung to Tashkent: Glimpses of India's Foreign Policy* (Delhi: Sangram Books (India) Pvt Ltd, 1983), 26.

¹⁷⁷ "Action Urged on Franco Spain," *The Statesman*, 28 October 1946, 5. For example, "Colonial Freedom is Urged by India," Oct 26, 1946, *New York Times*.

¹⁷⁸ "'United India Can Play Bigger Part': Mr. Chagla On Work at U.N.," *Times of India*, 8 January 1947, 7.

¹⁷⁹ "British Plan Atomic Accord; U.S. Soviet Rift Inspires Dramatic Move in U.N.; Woman From India Draws Applause by Thrilling Appeal," *Boston Globe*, 26 October 1946, 5. The other "most compelling" orator was Philip Noel-Baker.

¹⁸⁰ "Woman Delegate Draws Applause."

¹⁸¹ Richard Dier, "S. Africa 'Unfit' to Grab New Area," *Baltimore African-American*, 2 November 1946, 18.

¹⁸² "British Plan Atomic Accord."

Even when male Indian delegates briefly took the spotlight, Pandit ultimately remained at the center of the gendered emotional discourse. A case in point is Sir Maharaj Singh's role in spearheading the almost unanimous opposition to South Africa's request to annex the mandatory territory of South West Africa (Namibia) rather than submitting it as a trusteeship under the UN Charter.¹⁸³ As Smuts and Singh exchanged increasingly personalized barbs throughout the course of the debates at the Trusteeship Committee, the two sides revealed their positions on issues of race, empire, and the purpose of the UN Charter, raising tensions in the weeks before the Joint Committee met on the question of South African Indians. Drawing on the right to self-determination, Smuts insisted that the inhabitants of South West Africa had freely expressed their desire for incorporation through referenda (for whites) and tribal meetings (for natives). Smuts argued that the region was already unified geographically and culturally with the Union of South Africa, and so annexation would fulfill "an historical evolution" for the mandated territory.¹⁸⁴

Singh, who claimed expertise on the issue given his three years as the Indian representative to South Africa, refuted Smuts's statements, arguing that the Union practiced racial discrimination against South West African natives through segregation, disenfranchisement, limitations on movement and choice of occupation, and limited access to arable land. Newspaper reports highlighted Singh's personalized responses to Smuts. The *New York Times* deemed it "a vehement attack," while the *Times of India* called Singh's "slashing

¹⁸³ South Africa's desire to annex South West Africa was long-standing. See Peter Henshaw, "South African Territorial Expansion and the International Reaction to South African Racial Policies, 1939-1948," *South African Historical Journal* 50 (2004): 65-76.

¹⁸⁴ "Statement by Field Marshal Smuts," Fourteenth Meeting, 4 November 1946, *Official Records of the Second Part of the First Session of the General Assembly. Fourth Committee: Trusteeship, Part I. Summary Record of Meetings, 1 November-12 December 1946* (hereafter Fourth Committee) (Lake Success, NY: 1947), 65. For full text see document A/C.4/41, Annex 13a, "Statement by Field-Marshal the Right Honourable J.C. Smuts, representative of the Union of South Africa," 235-244.

attack” both “incisive and challenging.”¹⁸⁵ In one “dramatic moment” Singh reportedly turned to other “non-European delegates sitting nearby” telling them that if they visited South Africa they would be subject to segregation in restaurants, on public transportation, and in movie theaters.¹⁸⁶ Delegate after delegate supported India’s opposition to annexation in their respective opening comments.¹⁸⁷ Having observed these “barbed words” directed at South Africa, one reporter reflected, “One could feel sorry for [Smuts] the warrior who seemed to sense that the shadows were beginning to fall across his greatest dream, white supremacy.”¹⁸⁸ James Bottomley, the British representative, was the only delegate to speak in support of the South African proposal.¹⁸⁹

Despite the overwhelming opposition to annexation by delegates to the Trusteeship Committee, Smuts responded explicitly to what he called an “indictment” by Singh who, Smuts claimed, had “given a one-sided and distorted picture of the situation in the Union.” Expanding on an argument laid out in South Africa’s memorandum submitted in defence of their treatment of Indians, Smuts challenged the legitimacy of India’s claims to speak on behalf of human rights and fundamental freedoms given India’s own deep caste and religious divisions. Singh’s charge of discrimination, Smuts argued, “came with ill grace from the representative of a country like India where social discrimination was the very basis and pattern of society.”¹⁹⁰ The rather bland official summary of Smuts’ comments fails to adequately convey the character of Smuts’s response, which was referred to in news reports as “a devastating reply” and a “blistering attack

¹⁸⁵ “Annexation Plans Assailed by Indian,” *New York Times*, 6 November 1946, 20; Richard Newcomb, “India Champions Cause of Subject Peoples: Spirited Opposition To South African Request,” *Times of India*, 7 November 1946, 3.

¹⁸⁶ A.M. Wendell Malliet, “Indians Blast Plan of Smuts,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 November 1946, 3; “Discrimination in S.-W. Africa: A Reply to General Smuts,” *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1946, 8. See also, “India Fights Smuts’ African Annexation,” *Chicago Defender*, 16 November 1946, 1.

¹⁸⁷ This includes comments by Chieh (China), 78; Rey (Haiti), 84; Novikov (USSR), 91; and Cisneros (Cuba), 97.

¹⁸⁸ Rayford W. Logan, “Logan Analyses World Assembly Action,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 December 1946, 28

¹⁸⁹ Bottomley (UK), Fourth Committee, 100.

¹⁹⁰ Smuts (South Africa), Fourth Committee, 101.

upon India.”¹⁹¹ Smuts offered detailed descriptions of the “social ostracism and humiliation” endured by India’s depressed classes, and the “terrifying phenomenon” of communal clashes that had killed or injured thousands in the last few months.¹⁹² “I speak not in anger but in pain and sorrow and in deep sympathy with India’s suffering millions,” Smuts was quoted as stating, “but no less in deep solicitude for the people of South Africa.”¹⁹³ This emotional attack on the Indian position swayed no supporters in the committee room.

The day following Smuts’s response the U.S. delegation announced their unwillingness to support annexation, essentially dooming the request. Still, Singh “felt obliged to reply” to Smuts’s remarks “since it had contained a criticism of the Indian statement” from earlier in the discussion. Singh’s comments reiterated his direct knowledge of conditions in South Africa, and replied to criticism of the Indian caste system by contrasting the direct representation of “depressed classes” in local and central governmental bodies in India compared to the very minor indirect representation of natives in South Africa.¹⁹⁴ After the meeting Singh took one last personal swipe at Smuts, “I do not in the least object to the vehemence of the language used [by Smuts]. I feel he must have been piqued at the fact that an Asiatic delegation was the first to protest against his proposal to annex South-west Africa.”¹⁹⁵ Over the course of seven Trusteeship Committee meetings, Singh and Smuts “continued the acrimonious exchange” over minority rights, annexation, and India’s caste system, resulting in what a *Rand Daily Mail* report

¹⁹¹ “South African Claims Before the Assembly,” *London Times*, 14 November 1946, 4; Frank S. Adams, “Smuts Warns U.N. Bar on Annexation Won’t Deter Nation,” *New York Times*, 14 November 1946, 1.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ “South African Indians’ Lot,” *The Statesman*, 14 November 1946, 1. See also the emphasis on Smuts’s comment in “A Contrast With India: Making a Life for All Sections,” *London Times*, 14 November 1946, 4.

¹⁹⁴ Singh (India), Fourth Committee, 110-111.

¹⁹⁵ Henry S. Hayward, “Trusteeship Puzzle,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 November 1946, 6. The same comment is quoted in: “U.S.A. Opposes Annexation of S.-W. Africa by Union,” *The Statesman*, 16 November 1946, 1.

concluded was likely “one of the most gruelling [sic]” weeks Smuts had ever experienced.¹⁹⁶ Another U.S. periodical reported Smuts “was visibly shocked, humiliated and dejected by the sharpness and virtual unanimity with which the delegates around the conference table assailed his government.”¹⁹⁷ Smuts’s private correspondence affirms this impression. Before the Joint Committee meetings on the South African Indian question began on 21 November, he already had conceded defeat in at least one private letter. Calling his “mission to U.N.O. a failure,” he wrote, “I can but bow my head and accept the blows which come my way.”¹⁹⁸ The emotionally charged language and increasingly personalized attacks on both sides served to heighten the drama unfolding between India and South Africa at the Assembly and in the international press as the Joint Committee meetings approached.

“The storm which has been brewing for some weeks over the problem of Indians in South Africa broke violently yesterday over General Smuts’s head.”

Rand Daily Mail, 23 November 1946

When the Joint Committee of the First and Sixth Committees met it had only one item to discuss: “The treatment of Indians settled in the territory of the Union of South Africa.” With Pandit representing India and Smuts again leading the South African delegation, these debates quickly overshadowed the heated exchanges between Singh and Smuts at the Trusteeship Committee. Observers had been disappointed earlier in the month when “[i]n ten seconds of hushed drama” Smuts had elected not to deliver a pre-circulated speech on the floor of the

¹⁹⁶ Hayward, “Trusteeship Puzzle”; “19 Nations Will Examine Union’s Case on S.-W.A.,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 16 November 1946, 9.

¹⁹⁷ “Smuts’ Annexation Demand is Boomerang,” *New Africa* 5:10 (November 1946): front page.

¹⁹⁸ Smuts to M.C. Gillett, 17 November 1946, in *Selections From the Smuts Papers*, 111.

Assembly when the General Committee's proposed agenda came up for debate.¹⁹⁹ As a result, the Joint Committee meetings were the first time that Pandit and Smuts appeared in face-to-face debate. Anticipation was high and the meetings produced a surge in coverage of the issue facing the committee. The small, "low-roofed, red-carpeted committee room" was not large enough to contain the number of spectators who filled the room to overflowing in order "to hear the battle between India and South Africa."²⁰⁰ The space was "heavy with cigarette smoke and was as uncomfortably warm as the engine-room of a tramp steamer," creating an "oppressive atmosphere [that] tended to increase the feeling of tension" in the room.²⁰¹ The crowds were not disappointed. As the debates unfolded under close scrutiny, the major players' discourse increased in intensity, and one particularly "shocking remark" precipitated the most passionate and bitter exchanges at the Assembly, propelling Pandit further into the center of the gendered emotional discourse.²⁰²

Surrounded by an Indian contingent that overflowed its allotted seats, Pandit opened the first day of debate with a speech that, in one admiring commentator's estimation, "violated all the rules of diplomatic protocol which forbid the voicing of unpleasant truths, especially if they deal with the treatment of 'backward' peoples by nice, noble white people."²⁰³ Pandit "presented India's case in a soft, low voice," and read her statement "in a clear deliberate tone."²⁰⁴ As she spoke, Smuts "sat quietly," listening "attentively, moving his hands only now and then to brush

¹⁹⁹ "India's Complaint Against South Africa," *The Statesman*, 2 November 1946, 1. See "Smuts Delays Statement on Indians," *Rand Daily Mail*, 1 November 1946, 1; "Discussion by UNO Of The India-Union Problem," *Times of India*, 2 November 1946, 9; and "Smuts Withdraws Speech," *The Passive Resister*, 11 November 1946.

²⁰⁰ "Seven Countries Attack South Africa in UNO," *Rand Daily Mail* 23 November 1946, 9; "Obligations of South Africa," *Times of India*, 27 November 1946, 7; "India's Plea Against S. Africa Debated by U.N.O. Assembly: Dramatic Duel Between F-M Smuts and Mrs. Pandit," *The Statesman*, 23 November 1946, 1.

²⁰¹ "Nicholls Defends S.A. in Fortright Fashion at UNO," *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 Nov 1946, 9.

²⁰² "Personalities at UNO: Editorial," *The Statesman*, 2 December 1946, 4.

²⁰³ "Seven Countries Attack South Africa in UNO"; Walter White, "People, Politics and Places: Strike at the Heart," *Chicago Defender*, 23 November 1946, 15.

²⁰⁴ "India's Plea Against S. Africa Debated by U.N.O. Assembly"; "Seven Countries Attack South Africa in UNO."

aside the fog of smoke put up by M. Manuilsky [Soviet delegate] who chain-smoked cigarettes throughout the proceedings.”²⁰⁵ Pandit did not focus on legal issues, but instead called attention to the moral dimensions of the issue.²⁰⁶ In “gently phrased but telling accusations,” she argued that by passing the Ghetto Act, South Africa had violated the principles of fundamental freedoms and ran counter to the resolution against the abolition of racial and religious persecution passed unanimously by the General Assembly the previous week.²⁰⁷ Presenting the treatment of Indians as a “world problem,” Pandit called on the UN “to exercise their collective wisdom and to employ their moral sanction in the interest of justice.” She also preempted expected criticism of Indian social conditions, calling that a “dangerous” and “unjust” argument given that “India was doing her utmost to remedy as quickly as possible the social evils which were the heritage of the past.”²⁰⁸

After a “flurry of conversation” following the end of Pandit’s speech, “an expectant silence fell again” as Smuts delivered his opening remarks. Reporters described an intense atmosphere: “The only sound in the room was the slow, even-toned voice of General Smuts, and the only movement was that of the translators, in the glass-fronted cubicles behind General Smuts who were turning the speech into Russian, Chinese, French and Spanish.”²⁰⁹ After congratulating Pandit for the “ability and gravity” of her speech, Smuts re-emphasized the point he had made in his speech to the Belgian Parliament and which animated his and Shawcross’s determination to have the case sent to the International Court of Justice: “the exploitation of domestic issues by foreign States as a political weapon would determine, to a large extent, the

²⁰⁵ “India’s Plea Against S. Africa Debated by U.N.O. Assembly”; “Seven Countries Attack South Africa in UNO.”

²⁰⁶ Pandit, Joint Committee, 2.

²⁰⁷ “India v. South Africa,” Editorial, *The Statesman*, 25 November 1946, 4; A/RES/103(I), “Persecution and Discrimination,” passed unanimously on 19 November 1946.

²⁰⁸ Pandit, Joint Committee, 3.

²⁰⁹ “Seven Countries Attack South Africa in UNO.”

future issues of peace and war.”²¹⁰ In “quiet but emphatic tones,” he stressed that the Charter language on domestic jurisdiction disallowed all UN intervention in domestic affairs with the exception of Security Council enforcement.²¹¹ Furthermore, because the 1927 and 1932 Cape Town Agreements between South Africa and India were “joint *communiqué*,” they did not create treaty obligations that would justify interference. In answer to the claim that the language of human rights and fundamental freedoms could justify intervention in domestic affairs, Smuts argued that at this time there was no specific “international recognized formulation” of rights, so no specific obligations existed under the current Charter. In any case, he denied that South Africa had in fact “infringed any of those elementary human rights.”²¹² “At the conclusion of his statement,” Smuts, “raising his voice slightly, moved his formal resolution” to refer the resolution to the Court.²¹³ “When the statesman who wrote the noble words of the preamble to the Charter” ended his speech, “there was little applause.”²¹⁴

The remainder of this first meeting of the Joint Committee was spent debating the Chair’s proposal to create a sub-committee to determine the legal question, rehashing the arguments set forth in the General Committee meeting the month before.²¹⁵ The Argentinean delegate was the only committee member to speak in the Chair’s defense. Emotions ran high for the many delegates who agreed with Pandit’s contention that this was a worldwide issue and well within

²¹⁰ “Indians in S. Africa: Smuts Questions U.N. Competence,” *London Times*, 22 November 1946, 3; Smuts, Joint Committee, 3.

²¹¹ “India’s Plea Against S. Africa Debated by U.N.O. Assembly.”

²¹² Smuts, Joint Committee, 3, 4. According to Saul Dubow, the language of human rights and personal or fundamental freedoms meant significantly different things to Smuts and those who believed in universal rights, leading to Smuts’s characterization by contemporaries and in the historical record as a hypocrite. Despite the high rhetoric of “faith, values, and personal dignity” he wrote into the Preamble, within Smuts’ worldview his “list of human rights pertained to basic—that is, minimal—needs,” not political equality (Dubow, “Smuts, the United Nations, and the Rhetoric of Race and Rights,” 66).

²¹³ “Annex 1e,” Joint Committee, 132.

²¹⁴ G.H. Calpin, *Indians in South Africa*, 246.

²¹⁵ The Chinese delegation submitted a formal draft resolution for the creation of a sub-committee on 28 November. Annex 1g, Joint Committee, 133.

the Assembly's purview. While shouting his position, Manuilsky's "waving arms almost knocked off" Smuts's glasses.²¹⁶ Delegates argued that no sub-committee was needed to determine the competency of the General Assembly to hear the issue; international treaties had been violated, which moved the matter out of domestic jurisdiction. Furthermore, the principles of the Charter were not being applied by South Africa, even though by signing the Charter member states "had made a certain renunciation of their sovereignty."²¹⁷ Once again comparisons to Nazi policies were made when the Iranian delegate reminded the committee that "the common struggle against hitlerism [sic] and fascism was that those regimes were based on racial discrimination."²¹⁸ Wellington Koo (China) warned in particularly vivid terms that failure to take action would leave "a running sore...in the body politic of the world."²¹⁹ After the meeting adjourned without a decision, people crowded around Pandit to shake her hand and congratulate her for her speech.²²⁰

The second meeting of the Joint Committee, once again host to a "standing room only" crowd, would prove to be highly contentious, embroiling all sides in increasingly dramatic and personalized exchanges.²²¹ Indian delegate M. C. Chagla opened the debate, emphasizing the history of negotiations between India and South Africa on the issue and pointing out South Africa's obligations as a signatory to the UN Charter.²²² According to *The Statesman*, Chagla turned to speak directly to Smuts, drawing a provocative parallel between South African policies and Nazi Germany:

²¹⁶ "Seven Countries Attack South Africa in UNO."

²¹⁷ Bartos (Yugoslavia), Joint Committee, 6.

²¹⁸ Entezam (Iran), Joint Committee, 8.

²¹⁹ Koo (China), Joint Committee, 7.

²²⁰ "India's Plea Against S. Africa Debated by U.N.O. Assembly."

²²¹ "Mrs. Pandit Resents Remark on Indian Delegates," *The Statesman*, 27 November 1946, 1.

²²² Chagla (India), Joint Committee, 10.

On behalf of my countrymen, I express deep gratitude to FM Smuts for not—to use an expression which has rather painful connotations—liquidating my community in his country. If I may summarize FM Smuts’ arguments, they come to this: ‘In my own country I can do what I like. I can treat a racial minority as the Germans treated the Jews. I can shut them up in ghettos. I can violate the principles of the Charter and yet the UNO cannot call me to order.’²²³

If the Indian resolution was defeated, Chagla warned, “it would mean that the United Nations was prepared to tolerate the doctrine of a master race, which so many nations fought victoriously in the last war at tremendous cost.”²²⁴ Overshadowed by print coverage of subsequent meetings and intense focus on Pandit, Chagla’s comments nonetheless increased the tension in the Joint Committee room. The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that many delegates, anticipating a strong reaction from South Africa’s G. Heaton Nicholls, kept an eye on him throughout Chagla’s “insistent and sarcastic speech,” “almost as a looker-on stares at a man who has been hit in the face to see whether he will hit back and start a fight.”²²⁵

With tensions high, “the pink-complexioned and white-haired septuagenarian” Nicholls spoke to defend his country’s position against what he referred to as the exploitation of a political weapon by the Indian government.²²⁶ His speech marked yet another ratcheting up of the emotional discourse in the committee. Early in his comments Nicholls argued that the picture presented of South African conditions “is as false as those who painted it,” when in fact the

²²³ “Mrs. Pandit Resents Remark on Indian Delegates.”

²²⁴ Chagla, Joint Committee, 11. See also, “Britain Backs Smuts’ Plea to U.N.O.,” *Irish Times*, 26 November 1946, 1.

²²⁵ “Nicholls Defends S.A. in Fortright Fashion at UNO,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 November 1946, 9.

²²⁶ “South Africa on Defensive: Keen Tension Among Indian Delegates,” *Times of India*, 27 November 1946, 1; Nicholls (South Africa), Joint Committee, 17. No South African delegate gave an opening speech at the New York General Assembly session. However, like his Joint Committee comments, Nicholls’s opening speech at the General Assembly’s London session was a reiteration of white supremacist ideology based on the idea that the white Europeans of South Africa were pioneers who had struggled against barbarism in a “civilizing mission.” “South Africa,” he proclaimed, “leads the van...[of] progress towards civilization” in Africa. Therefore, he argued, South Africa acts as a spokesman for all of “Africa,” which he emphasized was “black” Africa, explicitly excluding North Africa and Ethiopia. Though the last fifty years had brought some civilization to a continent “steeped in primordial savagery,” Africa still needed to be “tamed,” and was an “almost virgin field” and “testing ground” for science and industry (Nicholls (South Africa), First Part Verbatim, 181-182).

South African policy to promote evolutionary progress in the natives had proven successful.²²⁷ Pandit, rising from her seat, interrupted him with “a heated protest”: “I object! No member has a right to say this!”²²⁸ Once the Chair brought the room back to order, Nicholls spoke for another hour articulating the white supremacist ideology of racial evolution underpinning South Africa’s “great experiment in human government,” an experiment that was threatened by the presence of the South African Indian population. It was important to understand, he argued, that until the Europeans arrived, there had been centuries without any evolution in central and southern Africa. Because their “religious customs formed a serious counter-influence to the spread of Christianity,” the presence of a growing Indian population in South Africa, had been “alarming,” especially to the inhabitants of Durban. He also echoed Smuts’s philosophical standing on the definition of fundamental rights, arguing that contrary to claims made in support of the Indian resolution, “[p]olitical rights are not fundamental. Such an argument,” Nicholls continued, “was tantamount to saying that the more progressive races should be retarded by the less progressive if, in fact, they constituted a majority.”²²⁹ His comments reportedly brought Pandit to her feet on at least one other occasion and “caused busy whispered consultations between most of the chief delegates and their advisers time and time again.”²³⁰ After the meeting adjourned Pandit told a reporter, “The delegate for South Africa was intolerably rude and I am surprised that anyone in this August Assembly should lower the level of debate in the manner in which he has done.”²³¹

Nicholls opened debate at the third meeting by offering an apology to “the charming lady’ heading the Indian delegation” for the “false” comment, stating it “was in no way a

²²⁷ Nancy MacLennan, “Court Test Urged on India U.N. Case,” *New York Times*, 26 November 1946, 12; and “Delegates Bitter Over African Case,” *New York Times*, 27 November 1946, 6; Nicholls, Joint Committee, 17.

²²⁸ “Indians in South Africa: Sir H. Shawcross’s Advice,” *London Times*, 26 November 1946, 4; MacLennan, “Court Test Urged on India U.N. Case.”

²²⁹ Nicholls, Joint Committee, 17-21.

²³⁰ “Nicholls Defends S.A. in Forthright Fashion at UNO.”

²³¹ Newcomb, “South Africa on Defensive.”

personal reflection on any members of the Indian delegation.”²³² But the damage had been done. Pandit, who later recalled thinking Nicholls’s “aim seemed to be to humiliate India by accusations that were entirely irrelevant,” took full advantage of the opening for a counter-attack against the white supremacist rhetoric of the civilizing mission.²³³ In a meeting marked with “[l]aughter and recrimination,” Pandit utilized the content and tone of Nicholls’s speech to “flay” South Africa’s racial ideology and “excoriate” the history of British imperialism.²³⁴ Expressing a feeling of insult on behalf of her delegation, she took particular exception to the way in which Nicholls used his speech “‘by attempting to ridicule’” Indian social and religious customs.²³⁵ In response to his comment on Indian polygamy, “she smilingly remarked: ‘I was not aware that polygamy, whether sanctioned by law or not, was confined to the East.’ Delegates and spectators burst into gales of laughter.”²³⁶ Pandit also used his words against him to challenge the notion that Christianity assumes the inferiority of non-white peoples. Were Jesus Christ alive today, she pointed out, he “would be a prohibited immigrant” to South Africa under the Immigration Act of 1933.²³⁷ Furthermore, the “claims made for European civilization in South Africa” were hollow, given the “barbaric state of the native inhabitants.” “[F]ortunately for the world” the British Empire from which white South Africans claimed descent, “was now in process of liquidation.”²³⁸ Nicholls had “contended that segregation was essential to Western standards of life,” but the question facing the committee, Pandit argued, was “whether Western civilization is

²³² “Delegates Bitter Over African Case”; Nicholls, Joint Committee, 21-22.

²³³ Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 211.

²³⁴ “Delegates Bitter Over African Case”; “South African Delegate Flayed By Mrs. Pandit,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 8 December 1946, 1; “Delegates Bitter Over African Case.”

²³⁵ “Mrs. Pandit’s Spirited Reply to South African Spokesman,” *The Statesman*, 28 November 1946, 1; Pandit, Joint Committee, 24.

²³⁶ “Delegates Bitter Over African Case.”

²³⁷ “U.N. Debate on S.A. Indians: Mrs. Pandit’s Sharp Comment,” *London Times*, 27 November 1946, 3; and “South African Delegate Flayed By Mrs. Pandit,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 8 December 1946, 1; and Pandit, Joint Committee, 25.

²³⁸ “U.N. Debate on S.A. Indians.”

going to be based on the theory of racial supremacy or whether the barriers imposed between men and women on grounds of color are to be broken down and justice and equality to be considered the due of all.”²³⁹ In submitting their resolution, Pandit denied that the Indian delegation had utilized the issue “as a lever in her political struggle against the British”; they “were fully conscious that grave and momentous issues were involved and that on their proper solution would depend the future of a large section of the human race.”²⁴⁰ “Some spectators applauded loudly” at this comment.²⁴¹ In conclusion, she expressed hope “that the discussions would not be influenced by passions and prejudices, but that an attempt would be made, with understanding and good will, to remove a blot which affected all nations equally.”²⁴² At the end of the meeting, delegates once again “crowded round Mrs. Pandit and expressed” their support.²⁴³

Nicholls’s comment and Pandit’s response became the focus of press coverage, with particularly gendered discourse infusing editorial responses from Calcutta (Kolkata) and Johannesburg. The *Rand Daily Mail* editorial board had responded immediately to Nicholls’s first speech, chastising him for “poor debating” by taking on a role “a little too dramatic for the occasion,” and correctly predicting that the “false” phrase “was certain to cause quite an unnecessary ripple on the never very restful waters of Lake Success.” The board dismissed Pandit, referred to only as “the woman leader of the Indian delegation,” as an unequal opponent. Her comment on Nicholls’s rudeness was described as “a woman’s way of accusing the

²³⁹ Pandit, Joint Committee, 26; “Mrs. Pandit’s Spirited Reply to South African Spokesman.” See also Pandit, Joint Committee, 24. She extends this critique in a comment at the 50th plenary that it was not the Indians in South Africa “who have lowered the standard of western, or any, civilization,” an oblique yet biting retort to the South African government’s racist ideology (Pandit, Second Part Verbatim, 1019).

²⁴⁰ Pandit, Joint Committee, 26.

²⁴¹ “Delegates Bitter Over African Case.”

²⁴² Pandit, Joint Committee, 27.

²⁴³ “Russia’s Assurance of Support at U.N.O.,” *The Statesman*, 28 November 1946, 7.

delegate,” much as a Lady Macbeth had done when “stung by her husband’s tactless observation.”²⁴⁴ *The Statesman* took a slightly different view, arguing that “Mrs. Pandit and the rest of India’s delegation” were right to feel personal offense at Nicholls’s “shocking remark,” which had crossed from “the critical to the offensive.” Not be forgotten, however, were Chagla’s “extravagant” comments that were better suited to “the language of a school debating society where young boys are eager to be clever in speech, not of the Parliament of Man.”²⁴⁵ Tempering this perspective slightly in an editorial three days later, *The Statesman* conceded that the “lack of decorum” on the part of “India’s spokesmen” had been provoked by remarks that “bordered on the scurrilous.” The outcome was not all bad, however: “Despite the lowering of the standard of debate by such unedifying episodes, these general exchanges probably cleared the air and permitted outsiders to form an independent opinion, which the event shows to be not unfavourable to India.” A moral victory had been won simply by having the case heard.²⁴⁶

With Nicholls’s “false” statement the dynamite in the South African Indian issue had exploded, and in one reporter’s estimation the Joint Committee “reached more bitter depths than any committee in the history of UNO.”²⁴⁷ The next two meetings consisted of vigorous debate over content and procedure, and revealed in highly emotional registers the struggles for power over the subjects of race and empire. Pandit verbally attacked both the imperialism represented by Britain’s Shawcross and the racism Nicholls continued to defend, further solidifying her position as defender of the oppressed. Shawcross, calling for “an impartial and dispassionate examination of the facts,” “pleasantly rebuked” Pandit for her comment about the “liquidation of the British Empire,” reminding her paternalistically, “India would not be free to make her plea

²⁴⁴ “False Note,” Editorial, *Rand Daily Mail*, 27 November 1946, 6. See also, L.W. Ritch, “Overstating His Case,” Letter to the Editor, *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 December 1946, 8.

²⁴⁵ “Personalities at UNO.”

²⁴⁶ “India v. South Africa II,” Editorial, *The Statesman*, 5 December 1946, 6.

²⁴⁷ “Latin America Supports Smuts at UNO,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 28 November 1946, 9.

to the United Nations if this British Commonwealth had not played its part in defeating the Germans.”²⁴⁸ Pandit, in turn, “vigorously criticized” him for supporting South Africa on the issue.²⁴⁹ Referring to Shawcross’s “international reputation as Britain’s chief prosecutor” at the Nuremburg trials, she remarked cynically, “Today he is a *defendant* in a similar case—only a really brilliant lawyer could do something like that.” Nicholls and Pandit also “argued passionately” with each other according to news reports.²⁵⁰ Insisting he “did not sneer at Indian” religion or social customs, Nicholls pointed out he was emphasizing the difficulties facing the South African government “in its use of the native population.”²⁵¹ “The abolition of discriminatory measures in South Africa,” he insisted, “would result in exploitation of the natives, who would soon lose their land to Indians and Europeans. Equality of rights would thus oppose the aims of the Charter.”²⁵² In response, Pandit “denounced” Nicholls for claiming the question at hand was different from the fundamental freedoms in the Charter when in fact this was “a great moral problem.”²⁵³ “There could be no question of ‘fundamental’ and ‘non-fundamental’ freedoms,” she insisted, “freedom was indivisible, and should be enjoyed by all peoples, whatever their colour.”²⁵⁴

At the final Joint Committee meeting, it was obvious much negotiation had taken place outside the meeting room. Pandit opened debate with an “ameliorating speech.”²⁵⁵ “Speaking in soft warm tones,” she withdrew the harsher Indian draft resolution in favor of a more subdued

²⁴⁸ Shawcross, Joint Committee, 36; Nancy MacLennan, “Briton Questions Russian ‘Equality’,” *New York Times*, 28 November 1946, 2.

²⁴⁹ “Debate on India’s Complaint Against South Africa,” *The Statesman*, 30 November 1946, 7.

²⁵⁰ “African Dispute Delayed a Year,” *New York Times*, 29 November 1946, 2. My emphasis.

²⁵¹ “No Decision Yet On India’s Case Against South Africa,” *Times of India*, 30 November 1946, 8.

²⁵² Nicholls, Joint Committee, 44.

²⁵³ “African Dispute Delayed a Year.”

²⁵⁴ Pandit, Joint Committee, Fifth Meeting, 28 November 1946, 44, 45.

²⁵⁵ “India Wins Point on South Africa,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1946, 5.

joint French/Mexican resolution.²⁵⁶ Smuts, speaking for the first time since the first Joint Committee meeting, “Stoutly...opposed the resolution.”²⁵⁷ Reiterating his stance that the matter was protected by the domestic jurisdiction clause, he called again for a court decision, and in a new maneuver said he would agree to have the Court send “a commission of enquiry to South Africa so as to establish the true facts in order to arrive at its determination of the law.” Demonstrating the insult taken by the tenor of the debates, he emphasized, “After an attack which had included a suggestion that the Government of South Africa occupied a position comparable to that of Nazi war criminals it could not agree to an enquiry of any political body.”²⁵⁸ Chagla responded that Smuts had made no real concession and that while India would consider allowing the General Assembly to send a commission of enquiry, it would continue to reject Court participation. Debate once again “sparkled with procedural fireworks.”²⁵⁹ In the end the Chair ruled that the resolutions would be voted upon in the order in which they were submitted to the Committee, placing the joint French and Mexican resolution first. The Committee passed the joint resolution 29 to 19 against with 6 abstentions. When the meeting adjourned Pandit was yet again “overwhelmed with congratulations” as “delegates crowded round her.”²⁶⁰

Immediately following adjournment, in an encounter reported in the United States, India, and South Africa, Pandit edged her way through the crowd to Smuts and shook hands with “the loser in the hard-fought battle” in a gendered gesture of deference.²⁶¹ In response to his question

²⁵⁶ “India and South Africa Asked to Report to Next Assembly,” *The Statesman*, 2 December 1946, 5.

²⁵⁷ “India Wins Point on South Africa.”

²⁵⁸ Smuts, Joint Committee, 48.

²⁵⁹ “India Wins Point on South Africa.”

²⁶⁰ “India and South Africa Asked to Report to Next Assembly”; and “UNO Committee Calls on S.A. and India to Settle Dispute,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 2 December 1946, 1. *The Statesman* and the *Rand Daily Mail* ran identical articles covering the Joint Committee’s last meeting.

²⁶¹ “India Wins Point on South Africa.”

regarding her satisfaction with the vote, she replied only that she was glad the issue had gotten its hearing. Smuts complimented her for her “very good” statement, but admonished her for referring to “South African war criminals,” a reference she “quickly denied.” “What I said,” she corrected, “was ‘Crimes in South Africa were similar to those which led to war.’” He replied: “God forbid.” As he turned to leave he “said warmly: ‘My dear child, you and I have to fight hard the world.’”²⁶² In her memoirs Pandit recalls a similar encounter in the delegates’ lounge when she approached Smuts to ask his “pardon” if anything she had said “was not up to the standard Gandhiji had imposed” on her. She remembers Smuts taking both of her hands in his and saying, “My child...you have won a hollow victory. This vote will put me out of power in our next elections, but you will have gained nothing.”²⁶³ The *Times of India* “hoped that the handclasp...was the symbolic beginning of more harmonious relations between the two great countries.”²⁶⁴ In fact, the encounter was symbolic of much more. Seeking Smuts’s “pardon” in such a public manner allowed Pandit to demonstrate respect for the elderly statesman, while at the same time emphasizing India’s win on the point. Smuts’s reaction, far from conceding the point, reiterated his position as a paternalistic imperialist. Referring to Pandit as a child, Smuts highlighted not only their age and gender differences, but he also presumed a superior understanding of the consequences of the vote.

“The emotions are strange masters.”

By the time the resolution “The Treatment of Indians in Union of South Africa” reached the floor of the United Nations General Assembly on 7 December 1946, various bodies of the

²⁶² “India and South Africa Asked to Report to Next Assembly”; and “UNO Committee Calls on S.A. and India to Settle Dispute.”

²⁶³ Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 211.

²⁶⁴ “Success for India,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 3 December 1946, 6.

Assembly had been occupied with India's complaint for weeks. Beginning with the official request for an agenda item in June, and stretching through days of increasingly tense committee meetings in late October and November, the final plenary vote on the subject was now imminent. Opening the debate, Smuts contained his remarks to the legal argument South Africa had pressed throughout the session: that the International Court of Justice should rule whether the Assembly had jurisdiction given the language of domestic jurisdiction enshrined in the Charter. A "mere political forum" such as the Assembly, he argued, had no right to "pass judgment" on a juridical question. Because no sovereign state should be denied its right of access to the courts, the only option was to send the matter to the Court for an advisory opinion. "To condemn a Member State of the Organization on very grave charges by such a vote would," he argued, "be monstrous."²⁶⁵ His speech was met with silence.²⁶⁶

In contrast, Pandit delivered a wide-ranging, emotive speech that inspired enthusiastic applause from the Assembly. In an appeal "to the conscience of the world," she stated that India had brought this issue "before the bar of world opinion" only after years of negotiation, protest, and appeal. South Africa had indicted itself with its own words, and as a signatory of the Charter that state was obligated to honor its commitments. Rejecting the legal argument altogether, she argued the issue was now a question of "the defense of the law, ethics and morality of nations." If the Assembly was blocked from action because of the domestic jurisdiction clause, "the Charter would be a dead letter, and our professions about a free world, free from inequalities of race, free from want and free from fear, an empty mockery." Far from what Smuts deemed "a mere political forum," the delegates to the General Assembly "are the trustees of the future,

²⁶⁵ Smuts, Second Part Verbatim, 1008-1009.

²⁶⁶ A headline in one South African paper read: "UN Assembly Cheers Mrs. Pandit, Greets Smuts with Silence" (cited in G.H. Archambault, "U.N. Vote Weighed by South Africans: Moral Onus of Verdict Backing India Noted in Comment," *New York Times*, 10 December 1946, 3).

architects of a new world.” “Millions of voiceless,” she declared, “are looking to us for justice, and it is only on the foundations of justice that we can create a new world order.”²⁶⁷

Inspired by Pandit’s soaring, idealistic language, many delegates who followed her responded in kind to the emotion she had expressed, and concurred that the issues at stake in the South African Indian resolution resided at the heart of the UN project. De la Colina of Mexico argued that human rights and fundamental freedoms had been purposefully inserted throughout the Charter and there was no doubt that this language forbid discrimination. “It constitutes a postulate of the new international order,” he insisted, “despite the protagonist of racialism.”²⁶⁸ The Philippine delegate called on his peers not to turn their backs on India on this moral question by sending the resolution to the Court.²⁶⁹ Invoking the history of World War II and Nazi discrimination, the Polish delegate stated simply, “we cannot remain indifferent.” “Failing to accept the resolution would deny justice to India, justice to Asia, justice to coloured people.”²⁷⁰ But Britain’s Shawcross took issue with the emotional turn in the debate and specifically targeted Pandit for his derision, characterizing political appeals to emotion as irresponsible and dangerous diplomatic tactics:

We have heard, yesterday and today, some very brilliant appeals to our emotions by practiced political orators. They have very rightly been applauded. Yesterday, we allowed Field-Marshal Smuts, who has devoted his whole life to the service of liberty and humanity, to pass in silence. The emotions are strange masters. But, this is not a matter for stirring up our emotions, which are so easily stirred up. This is a matter which we must try and deal with quite coldly and dispassionately and with a full sense of responsibility, not only to our political followers, but to our own Organization and, perhaps not less, to the Indians in South Africa.

²⁶⁷ Pandit, Second Part Verbatim, 1016-1019.

²⁶⁸ De la Colina (Mexico), Second Part Verbatim, 1024.

²⁶⁹ Romulo (Philippines), 51st Plenary, 8 December 1946, 1029.

²⁷⁰ Winiewicz (Poland), Second Part Verbatim, 1038, 1040.

The question according to Shawcross was how the domestic jurisdiction clause related to human rights and freedoms, which had to be decided authoritatively by the Court. “To give an emotional and a political answer to that question is to strike at the very roots of the rule of law,” he intoned. “Mrs. Pandit has said that all she asked was justice. But is that all that is asked for here, or is what is sought an emotional political verdict swayed by eloquence and oratory?”²⁷¹

Later that evening in a second session of the plenary that ultimately stretched until almost one in the morning, Pandit rose as “the chamber applauded her heartily” to respond to Shawcross’s comments and make one final plea on behalf of the resolution.²⁷² Her comments marked the apex of the debates’ emotional discourse:

[W]ith all the sincerity at my command, the gratitude not only of the people of India and the Indians in South Africa, but of the millions in every country whose hearts have been warmed and whose minds are eased by this impressive expression of world opinion in defence of justice and fundamental human rights... We shall remember this and know, in a way that cannot be forgotten, that justice, truth, and the oppressed have friends in every country and under every climate. This is all I want to say. I shall make no appeal. I left it with your conscience yesterday. I am content to let it rest there.²⁷³

She was reportedly moved to tears.²⁷⁴ The response in the room was electric. In “the warmest demonstration yet” of Pandit’s popularity at the Assembly, a “burst of clapping greeted the end of her remarks and continued until she had reached her seat.”²⁷⁵

When the final vote was taken past midnight, it was “an intensely dramatic moment.”²⁷⁶ “A hush fell” as votes were taken by voice.²⁷⁷ When the chair announced that the resolution had

²⁷¹ Shawcross, 51st Plenary, 8 December 1946, 1033, 1035, and 1036.

²⁷² “World Opinion Supports India,” *The Passive Resister*, 13 December 1946, 4.

²⁷³ Pandit, Second Part Verbatim, 1046.

²⁷⁴ Bottomley to Addison, 10 Dec. 1946, PRO, DO 35/1892(WR208/5/29, cited in Lloyd, “A most auspicious beginning,” 148; “Mme. Pandit’s Tears, UN Vote Beat Smuts,” *Chicago Defender*, 14 December 1946, 2; and “Tearful Plea Made by Woman Delegate in India-Africa Row,” *Boston Globe*, 9 December 1946, 2.

²⁷⁵ “India Wins Her Case Against South Africa,” *The Statesman*, 10 December 1946, 1. See also “Big Ovation For Mrs. Pandit,” *Times of India*, 9 December 1946, 1.

²⁷⁶ Kumar Goshal, “As An Indian Sees It: Action on French-Mexican Resolution Proves Small Nations Are Not Toadying to Anglo-American Whims,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 December 1946, 6.

²⁷⁷ “India Wins Her Case Against South Africa”; and Goshal, “Action on French-Mexican Resolution.”

achieved the necessary two-thirds majority, “there was a mighty roar of applause that drowned out the rest of the announcement. Delegates rushed to Mrs. Pandit to congratulate her.”²⁷⁸ Kumar Goshal, writing for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, bemoaned the lack of widespread radio coverage because simply reading about the events at the UN failed to convey the “sheer theater” in the room when “the verdict went against Smuts.”²⁷⁹ One paper reported that the response was “the greatest display of enthusiasm and satisfaction yet recorded by the United Nations General Assembly.”²⁸⁰ The Indian delegation was “jubilant,” and “[i]t was some minutes before order was restored.”²⁸¹ Not everyone was excited with the outcome, of course. Shawcross’s frustration with the context of the debates spilled over into his comments on the agenda item addressed immediately following the South African India vote. “I am happy to think,” he snidely remarked, “that the present matter is not one which is likely to arouse feeling or take up the time that was occupied by the last question.”²⁸²

Extra-UN reaction to the South African Indian resolution’s passage was as contentious and intense as the debates themselves, reflecting the competing interests of stakeholders in the debates over racial discrimination at the birth of the UN. For opponents, the presumption of a UN diplomacy based on western, masculine logic was overwhelmed by what Smuts labeled a “flood of emotion” on the issue of race expressed by the “multi-plex” Assembly, a thinly-veiled reference to the UN membership’s racial diversity.²⁸³ Like Shawcross’s vehement criticism of

²⁷⁸ Goshal, “Action on French-Mexican Resolution.”

²⁷⁹ Goshal, “As an Indian Sees It: Radio Networks Missed Opportunity to Provide for Broadcasts of United Nations Sessions,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7.

²⁸⁰ Howard S. Hayward, “U.N. to Consider India’s So. African Plea,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 December 1946, 6.

²⁸¹ Jha, *From Bandung to Tashkent*, 28; and Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 210; Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 211.

²⁸² Shawcross, Second Part Verbatim, 1062. Agenda item: “Presence of armed forces of Members of the United States on non-enemy territories: report of the First Committee: resolution.” By the time this agenda item was taken up it was well past midnight and the Assembly had been in session for close to seven hours without recess.

²⁸³ “Smuts Says Union Will Defend Her Rights To Utmost,” *Rand Daily Mail*, 19 December 1946, 1, 4.

Pandit's appeal during the debate, critics of the Assembly's "political" decision expressed anger and fear over the consequences of an uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) passion taking over the Assembly. In an analysis published just days after the final vote, *Washington Post* commentator Barnet Nover wrote that the debate over racial discrimination had been "a highly emotional explosion," where "representatives of nations, races and people who have felt themselves the victims of racial discrimination gave vent to long pent-up feelings of anger and irritation against those who have deemed themselves superior beings." But, he wondered, had this idealism "opened a Pandora's box whose contents may plague the U.N. for a long time to come"?²⁸⁴ Certainly the *New York Times* editorial board believed so. Still referring to racial discrimination in South Africa as "alleged," the *Times*'s reaction was one of outrage at the "political blunders" that undermined two founding principles of the UN Charter: sovereign equality and domestic jurisdiction.²⁸⁵ The *Washington Post* conceded that the "remarkably free" enunciation of the "deep concern of millions of people all over the world" about racial discrimination proved that the General Assembly was "unbossed," but the decision against South Africa had also "created a precedent that might keep the United Nations in a constant state of turmoil."²⁸⁶

The "flood of emotion," emanated at least in part from the person of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, culminating with her "fortuitous" tears before the final vote.²⁸⁷ Some observers wondered: had this striking, eloquent Indian woman somehow manipulated the emotions of the mostly male Assembly? Skepticism at the power of her tears circulated in South African political discourse enough to prompt President of the African National Congress A.B. Xuma to assure a

²⁸⁴ Nover, "Fifth Freedom."

²⁸⁵ "U.N. and Sovereignty," Editorial, *New York Times*, 12 December 1946, 28. The editorial board's view was in line with the main concerns of the great powers coming out of the Dumbarton Oaks conversations (see Roger Norman and Sarah Zaidi, *Human Rights at the UN: The Political History of Universal Justice* [Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008], 114.)

²⁸⁶ "World Forum," Editorial, *Washington Post*, 17 December 1946, 8.

²⁸⁷ Lloyd, "A most auspicious beginning," 148.

joint African/Indian audience in February 1947 that the win was attributable to justice at the UN, not sentiment. “No woman’s tears were shed,” he declared.²⁸⁸ Distrust of Pandit’s uniquely feminine diplomacy endured well past the debate itself. At the 1947 General Assembly a reporter declared Pandit “as practiced and experienced in staging her appearances before the Assembly as anyone in Hollywood... She knows what to say and how to say it, and she twists votes out of men who very likely had no intention whatever of voting as she wanted them to. She is a fiery, emotional speaker who knows the tricks of oratory and uses them with consummate skill.”²⁸⁹

In stark contrast, India’s proponents lauded the Assembly’s decision, embracing the legitimacy of India’s “notable triumph” and its meaning for the power of global multi-racial solidarity through the UN.²⁹⁰ The vote was often cast as “a personal victory” for Pandit.²⁹¹ The prospect of liberation from the interrelated problems of racial oppression and colonialism seemed more promising to anticolonial and antiracist observers when UN delegates from Asia, Africa, and Latin America spoke out on the floor of the General Assembly against aggressive imperial expansion and the violation of human rights. *The Passive Resister* called the vote “a complete victory not only for the Indian people but also for democratic peoples throughout the world and a victory for the United Nations’ Organisation itself.”²⁹² South African Indians, an external emotional community with perhaps the most at stake in the UN debates, glorified Pandit’s embodiment of their local cause on the global stage. A full-page editorial cartoon in *The Passive*

²⁸⁸ “Dr. A. B. Xuma in Durban: At the Bantu Social Centre,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 15 February 1947, 15. Xuma traveled to the U.S. in late October 1946 and stayed throughout the UN session at the YMCA in Harlem. He met with leaders in the African American rights and Pan-African movements such as Du Bois, Yergan, and Robeson, privately lobbied UN delegates on the South West Africa issue, and was supportive of South African Indian passive resisters and Indians at the UN. His travel was likely supplemented by funds from the South African Indian Congress. See Steven D. Gish, *Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African* (NY: New York University Press, 2000), 143-146, and 148-150.

²⁸⁹ Carlyle Holt, “Vishinsky No. 1 Actor in Passing U.N. Show,” *Boston Globe*, 23 November 1947, C18.

²⁹⁰ “India’s Victory,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 11 December 1946, 4; and “Decisions Confirmed,” Editorial, *The Statesman*, 11 December 1946, 4.

²⁹¹ “India Scores Over South Africa,” *Times of India*, 10 December 1946, 1.

²⁹² “Editorial: UNO Shows the Way,” *The Passive Resister*, 13 December 1946, 2.

Resister in mid-November depicted Pandit as goddess-like, her stern but dignified visage filling the sky above a small, anonymous, jack-booted embodiment of “racialism” standing on the ground, hands raised in a gesture of fearful surrender. Beside Pandit’s image hovers a quote from her opening speech: “Millions look to us to resist and end imperialism in all its forms, even as they rely on us to crush the last vestiges of fascism and nazism.”²⁹³

Another keenly interested community with unique attachments to the issues of race and empire embedded in the South Africa cases was the African American press. Coming in the midst of rising violence and terrorism against Blacks in the United States, which the federal government had failed to stem, the language of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the UN Charter pointed to the possibility for international action against racial discrimination in the United States. While the U.S. government worked to insulate its domestic racial relations from international scrutiny, activists were working to do just the opposite.²⁹⁴ The birth of the United Nations provided Black activists a focal point for organizing with like-minded individuals and organizations around the world—and the selection of New York as the UN’s permanent home heightened the possibilities for engagement. Penny Von Eschen’s and Carol Anderson’s work document the major African American rights organizations’ involvement in, and reaction to, the 1946 debates, demonstrating the significance of the “wins” to the movement and its leaders including Max Yergan, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Walter White. But what made this moment of possibility “visible and defining” was in part the emotional tenor of the print culture discourse surrounding it. The Black press was heavily invested in the outcome at the Assembly; their

²⁹³ Editorial Cartoon, *The Passive Resister* (Johannesburg), 18 November 1946. For the context of the quote from Pandit’s UN speech, see above, and Second Part Verbatim, 733.

²⁹⁴ Paul Lauren Gordon elaborates on the ways in which American race relations were exposed to the world when the U.S. became a global power after World War II. See Gordon, “Seen From the Outside: The International Perspective on America’s Dilemma,” in *Window on Freedom*.

readers constituting one particularly anxious section of those “eyes of the world” looking to the UN for justice.²⁹⁵

While most in the Black press capitalized on the drama of the South African debates to ally with Pandit and other Indian nationalists in common cause, some observers were skeptical of the UN’s capacity to act. A few directly challenged India’s legitimacy based on its own history of caste discrimination and imperialism. Prominent Black intellectuals expressed the most skepticism about the UN’s possibilities in the lead up to the October start of the Assembly, convinced that the organization, dominated by Anglo-American imperial power, would fail on issues of human rights and colonialism just like the League of Nations. Writing for the NAACP’s *Crisis*, George Padmore, for example, deemed the change from the League’s mandate system to UN trusteeship as “a purely technical transaction...modified and refurbished to accommodate the conflicting ideologies of the Great Powers.”²⁹⁶ India’s success throughout the session, however, tempered critical attitudes by early December. The Jamaican writer A. M. Wendell Malliet initially lacked confidence in *any* “so-called world organizations composed as they are of...men of evil intentions, bad faith, and hypocritical purpose.” As early as the Dumbarton Oaks Conference (1944) he had “damned the whole thing as an institution which was being conceived

²⁹⁵ Press coverage was by no means the only way that African Americans left their mark on the first UN sessions. Just a few weeks before the official Indian petition reached the UN Secretariat in June, the National Negro Congress (NNC) had delivered its own petition calling for UN intervention on behalf of the 13 million Black Americans subject to prejudice, violence, and discrimination (National Negro Congress, *A Petition to the United Nations on Behalf of 13 Million Oppressed Negro Citizens of the United States of America* [New York: National Negro Congress, 1946]). The UN did not respond to the NNC petition, but activists believed that with the right formulation the UN would ultimately hear the U.S. case. Throughout the fall of 1946 Du Bois and his allies kept a close eye on the India/South Africa debates while they worked on a more extensive NAACP-sponsored petition to submit to the UN the following year. See Du Bois, ed. *An Appeal to the World: A Statement on the Denial of Human Rights to Minorities in the Case of Citizens of Negro Descent in the United States of America and an Appeal to the United Nations for Redress* (New York: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1947); and William L. Patterson, *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United States for Relief From a Crime of the United States Government Against the Negro People* (New York: International Publishers, 1951).

²⁹⁶ George Padmore, “Trusteeship: the New Imperialism,” *Crisis*, October 1946, 302.

in iniquity and would, therefore, be born in sin.”²⁹⁷ But Malliet believed in the possibility of change at the UN. He conceded that out of the losses of World War II had come “the Atlantic Charter, the promise of the Four Freedoms, and finally the Charter of the United Nations,” which affirmed the “fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person so eloquently.”²⁹⁸ Knowing no help would come from the “Anglo-Saxon nations,” he prayed “that at least one black or brown man” at the UN would step in to force the proposal to annexation of South West Africa to be dropped and address South Africa’s “black stain of dishonor on human civilization.” After the session ended, Malliet expressed a more positive note about the prospects for the UN. Smuts’ “humiliating defeat” was “a victory,” and Malliet was relieved that the vote on the Indian case against South Africa “ended in a verdict of ‘guilty.’”²⁹⁹

St. Clair Drake, a sociologist and activist writing for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, voiced the most explicit skepticism not of the UN itself, but of India’s role as a leader in the fight and its relationship to Black Africa/ns. His short essay in August 1946 is a critical complication of the response of the Black press to India and race issues. In contrast to the dominant discourse of triumphal solidarity at the UN across multi-racial lines, Drake called into question India’s commitment to racial equality, pointing to the ways in which Indian and African solidarities were, in Antoinette Burton’s formulation, “strained at best across the landscapes of decolonization.”³⁰⁰ While he was impressed by Pandit’s “warmth” toward the Black community during her 1945 U.S. visit, and acknowledged that Mudaliar, India’s lead delegate at San

²⁹⁷ A. M. Wendell Malliet, “World Fronts,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 9 November 1946, 10.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹⁹ Malliet, “Little Nations Deal Blow To Ambition Of Gen. Smuts,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 14 December 1946, 1, 24. For an in-depth understanding of U.S.-based Caribbean intellectuals’ transnational activism in this period, see Michelle Ann Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

³⁰⁰ Antoinette Burton, *Brown Over Black: Race and the Politics of Postcolonial Citation* (Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2012), 2.

Francisco, had spoken “openly and consistently against color prejudice,” Drake pointed to troubling instances of Indian discrimination and exploitation at home and abroad. In U.S. colleges Indian students had “a tendency to shun Negroes as though they were lepers.” In India, there was “one theory of the origin of Indian caste which says that the upper caste was originally a superior white people who had to organize a caste system ‘to protect their blood’ against inferior Indian blacks.” Drake also expressed concern about the history of exploitative Indian moneylenders in eastern and southern Africa. Where the Indians fully committed to racial equality when its leaders protested against British mistreatment themselves but not natives? “When Gandhi and Nehru support the fight against jim-crow [sic] of Indians in Africa, but fail to speak out against the terrible exploitation of Negro natives there (some of it by Indians),” Drake warned, “we have reason to fear for the future.”³⁰¹

In a second guest column after the opening round of General Assembly speeches, Drake’s tone had softened and he expressed tentative hopes based on what he had witnessed. The Haitian delegate Dr. Joseph Charles had risen to speak of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Liberia’s Attorney General C. Ahayomi Cassell, told “the world that ‘both the living and the dead are crying out loudly for peace, peace.’” And Pandit’s speech had reassured Drake even more because she had “warned the assembly not to ignore the voice of non-European peoples, for there are far more of them in the world than there are Europeans.” He conceded, “I had some hard words to say about India the last time I wrote a guest column in this spot,” but having seen Pandit speak and hearing of Indian participation in the African mineworkers’ strikes in South

³⁰¹ St. Clair Drake, “Brother India,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 August 1946, 7.

Africa, he applauded “this new-found solidarity of Indians with their black brothers.” Hopefully Pandit would “keep it up.”³⁰²

For most observers in the Black press, Pandit fulfilled their hopes for the UN and more. For many, Pandit’s fight against Smuts became a proxy through which the battle between racism and human rights, colonialism and liberation, the old world and the new were fought. The emotional discourse that dominated this press coverage over the course of the debates heightened when she was cast as the heroine of the story.³⁰³ South Africa had long been identified as the worst perpetrator of white supremacy within a domestic U.S. rhetoric of Jim Crowism.³⁰⁴ And in the context of the war, South African racism was figured as the continuation of the spirit of Nazism. Smuts in particular was considered an executor of aggressive British imperialism, made clear by his desire to annex the territory of Southwest Africa rather than transferring its mandate to the trusteeship system. In contrast, Pandit was a thrice-imprisoned follower of Gandhi, Nehru’s younger sister, and the only female head-of-delegation at the Assembly. Smuts, at once the author of the Preamble and the face of white supremacist ideology, was an easy target for anti-colonial and anti-racist vitriol, especially in contrast to the “diminutive and charming” Pandit who represented the voice of the colonized and thus became a “valiant” figure speaking back to power.³⁰⁵

³⁰² Drake, “Big Talk: Voices of Charles, Cassell, Pandit in UN Council Give Darker Peoples Hope,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 November 1946, 7.

³⁰³ Pandit was also the “heroine” in the coverage of the debates in *The Passive Resister* (see “Vivid Picture of Historic Debate,” *The Passive Resister*, 13 December 1946, 3).

³⁰⁴ “South African Leader in U.S. for UN Probe,” *Chicago Defender*, 10 August 1946, 13.

³⁰⁵ “One For ‘Our Side’,” *New York Amsterdam News*, 14 December 1946, 10. Lucile Selz, “India Wins Moral Victory In Union of South Africa Trial,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 8 December 1946, 1; S.A. Haynes, “The Battle For Freedom: Another Problem at the UNO” *Baltimore African-American*, 20 April 1946, 7; and “UN Gets Appeal on South African Ghettos,” *Chicago Defender*, 29 June 1946, 1. See also, “Photo Standalone 1—No Title,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 Nov 1946, 1. The caption under the image of Pandit reads: “Opposes Smuts—The fiery, alert, English-educated sister of India’s Pandit Jawahrlal [sic] Nehru, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi [sic] Pandit, the only woman to head a delegation to the United Nations General Assembly, is fighting Jan Christian [sic] Smuts’ plan for the Union of South Africa to annex Southwest Africa. She is championing non-self-governing countries before the UN.”

Observers in the Black press seemed to take special pleasure in heaping condemnation on Smuts in relation to both the South West Africa and South African Indian questions. His leadership and person were conflated with the British imperial project, prejudice and violence against people of color, and the hypocrisy of western civilization's rhetoric of democratization and rights in light of its ugly history of racism, violence, discrimination, and disenfranchisement. UN disapproval of the methods of racial superiority Smuts stood for repudiated homegrown U.S. racists by philosophical affiliation; he was often compared to U.S. white supremacist politicians such as Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo and Secretary of State James Byrnes.³⁰⁶ With Bilbo's position in the U.S. Senate under scrutiny through two separate investigations, he was considered currently "on trial" in the same way that Smuts was figured as "on trial" at the UN.³⁰⁷ Beyond this domestic figuring, Smuts was also cast as "one of the most dangerous men in the world." "Jews never fared worse under Hitler than blacks fare now in the Union of South

³⁰⁶ J.A. Rogers referred to Smuts as "the Bilbo of South Africa, and one of the ghouls of the Versailles Conference of 1919" ("Rogers Says: UN Assembly Offers Forum for Oppressed To Air Grievances," *Pittsburgh Courier* 7 December 1946, 6); and Horace R. Cayton called him "a smoother talking Mister Bilbo" in the delightfully titled article, "Smuts and Bilbo: Two Gentlemen Who Are Learning That Christmas Isn't For 'White Folks Only,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 January 1947, 7). Walter White wrote that Smuts was "notorious for more cold-blooded and inhuman treatment of African natives and Indian immigrants than even Mississippi" ("People, Politics And Places: Strike at the Heart," *Chicago Defender*, 23 November 1946, 15). See also the *Pittsburgh Courier* editorial, "An Evil Old Man," 16 November 1946, 6. In an interesting twist on this narrative, Stuart Gelder, a British man living in the U.S. South and writing about race for an Indian audience compares Bilbo to Nazi propagandists: "Like Goebbels and Streicher he plays on the basest fears and passions of the ignorant and oppressed—for it is not only the negroes who are oppressed. That is the tragedy of racial strife in the southern States of America" ("Treatment of Negroes in U.S.A.," *The Statesman*, 9 July 1946, 4).

³⁰⁷ Bilbo was under investigation for his white supremacist Senatorial campaign and accusations that he had accepted bribes from war contractors. See "Review of the Month," *Monthly Summary of Events and Trends in Race Relations* 4:6 (January 1947): 165-166; Roi Ottley, "U.S. May Be Put on Spot," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 December 1946, 14. The Black press was not alone in linking Smuts with Bilbo and the test case at the UN with future international scrutiny of U.S. racism. The *Chicago Tribune* was particularly outspoken on this issue. See "U.S. Delegation to U.N. is Split on Racial Issue," *Chicago Tribune*, 29 October 1946, 5; and especially, "Editorial: What the Slavers Didn't Expect," *Chicago Tribune*, 23 December 1946, 14. Also of interest is an isolated but intriguing comparison made between the situation in Natal and race relations on the West Coast of the U.S. where first Native Americans were moved off the land and then Chinese and Japanese migrants were brought in as laborers: "Even to this day, the [unnamed] visitor said, the Japanese in California had no right to purchase land. Indians in South Africa were far better off" ("U.S. Should Aid S.A. on Indians, Says Visitor," *Rand Daily Mail*, 14 November 1946, 7).

Africa,” according to a *Pittsburgh Courier* editorial.³⁰⁸ Calling Smuts the “long reigning Rasputin of South Africa,” the *Cleveland Call and Post* declared his statement that South Africa would maintain Southwest Africa as a mandate if the UN refused his request for annexation, “Gestapo-like.” The prejudice against Indians “alone,” the editorial board argued, “makes the Union of South Africa most unfit to annex any other area or even exert trusteeship over the land.”³⁰⁹ The *Chicago Defender*’s editorial board and opinion writers focused especially on the deeply hypocritical chasm between Smuts’s standing as an “elder statesman” in the West, and the fact that he was “one of the world’s most unregenerate imperialists and racists.”³¹⁰ Other writers utilized even more extreme descriptors with which to target Smuts – “Jackass,” “senile old vulture,” and “fossilized old slave-driver” – pointing to the heightened emotional stakes attached to the coverage of these cases.³¹¹

Pandit provided the perfect contrast to Smuts. Like Smuts she often was conflated with her nation and the causes for which she stood and the hyperbolic language used to describe Pandit closely rivaled Smuts’s demonization. Pandit was variously described as an “impassioned,” “fragile but militant,” “brilliant silvered-tongued orator.”³¹² One *Baltimore African-American* journalist referred to her in quasi-religious terms as “India’s ‘Joan of Arc’” fighting against Smuts, the “Supreme Racist.”³¹³ W.E.B. Du Bois also found inspiration in

³⁰⁸ “An Evil Old Man.”

³⁰⁹ “The Fate of the Colonial Lands,” *Cleveland Call and Post*, 7 December 1946, 4B.

³¹⁰ “JAN CHRISTIAN SMUTS,” *Chicago Defender*, 2 November 1946, 14.

³¹¹ “OPINION: Jackass Smuts at It Again,” *Baltimore African-American*, 16 November 1946, 4; “JAN CHRISTIAN SMUTS”; John Robert Badger, “World View: Smuts Exposes Himself,” *Chicago Defender*, 7 December 1946, 15. Other examples found in African American newspapers include: “supreme racist,” “cruel proponent of racial superiority,” “a beaten and discredited man,” “delusional old man,” “bland and wily,” “the cruel, grasping face of a ruthless, cold-blooded, hypocritical imperialist,” “evil old man,” and “the symbol of colonial arrogance, disdain and exploitation.”

³¹² Richard Dier, “S. Africa ‘Unfit’ to Grab New Area,” *Baltimore African-American*, 2 November 1946, 18; “One for ‘Our Side.’”

³¹³ “India, South Africa Set for Color Bar Test in UN: Jan Smuts, Supreme Racist, Madam Pandit, India’s ‘Joan of Arc,’ Chief Antagonists,” *Baltimore African-American*, 2 November 1946, 14.

Pandit's success against the South African leader, calling on "Every Negro organization in the United States...to send an official note of thanks" to her for the success of her "repeated and impassioned attacks upon that Great Hypocrite, Jan Smuts." Faulting the Liberian and Haitian delegations for not doing enough to stand up for human rights, Du Bois wrote, "Many American Negroes will ask how it happened that the Negroes of the world had to be defended by an Indian while the rest of the colored world was apparently silent."³¹⁴ In a February 1947 editorial, the *Chicago Defender* seconded Du Bois, conceding that Pandit deserved the "appreciation and gratitude of all members of the minority races. She was the only delegate to the United Nations to speak with feeling and deep conviction against the disabilities under which African natives are forced to live." Because the (male) Liberian, Haitian, and Ethiopian delegates were unable to speak freely, Pandit's "crusade [was] more significant...[she] pressed not only for freedom of India but freedom of all oppressed peoples. We have in her a true friend whose voice will be heard often."³¹⁵

Within this rhetoric of multi-racial solidarity over issues of such import, display of emotion was justified and expected. The fight to end the violence and humiliation endured through racist discrimination and aggressive imperialism was not an issue for dispassionate assessment and legalistic wrangling by cold diplomats as espoused by Smuts and Shawcross et

³¹⁴ Du Bois, "The Winds Of Time: Should Thank Mme. Pandit," *Chicago Defender*, 18 January 1947, 15.

³¹⁵ "MADAME PANDIT," *Chicago Defender*, 8 February 1947, 14. Praise for Pandit and disapproval for the African and Haitian delegates was not universal in the Black press. Several newspapers rarely mentioned Pandit in their coverage of the debates, even in those meetings where she was most controversial and outspoken (See Ernest Johnson, "India's Resolution Is Discussed," *New Journal and Guide*, 30 November 1946, 1, 2.) The *New Journal and Guide* wrote about "India's delegation" and "India's victory," but never quoted or commended Pandit specifically. The Virginia paper's coverage of the entire Assembly session focused more on the words and actions of the male delegates representing Haiti, Ethiopia, and Liberia. The *Cleveland Call and Post* misspelled Pandit's name in one of the very few articles in which she was mentioned (Sidney Williams, "On the Whole..." *Cleveland Call and Post*, 9 November 1946, 4B), and in another article on the Assembly vote in December, the Yugoslav delegate was quoted but Pandit was not (Lucile Selz, "South African Jim Crow Exposed," *Cleveland Call and Post*, 14 December 1946, 5B). Pandit's conspicuous *absence* from these papers is as significant as her conspicuous *presence* in others, indicative of the dominant masculinist anticolonial narrative that submerged women's presence in the contemporary moment and in historical accounts (Burton, *Brown Over Black*, 7).

al, but a deeply personal fight for the future dignity of millions of humans around the world. For the African American press, therefore, Pandit's tears were not manipulative; they were a powerful, acceptable reaction to the subject of debate. The drama of her appeal contrasted with the reaction of Smuts who was often described as sitting "silent" and "impassive" throughout the debates.³¹⁶ While to his supporters Smuts's impassivity indicated an experienced statesman's dignity and control, to others it was an expression of detached impotence in the face of his loss.³¹⁷ Pandit's "pleading tearfully" was characterized as a culmination of her successful proxy fight against Smuts, an expression of the significance of the issue to victims of racist oppression.³¹⁸ Passionate and militant, Pandit had invoked her tears when it mattered most.³¹⁹

In the contemporary moment, the debates surrounding the South African Indian resolution and its successful passage over U.S. opposition and against strong British protest signified a meaningful shift in the power structure of the postwar world order. Some legal scholars condemned the Assembly vote, claiming it undermined the principle of domestic jurisdiction and created an activist United Nations. The General Assembly had rejected a strictly legal interpretation of the Charter's language on domestic jurisdiction, which set a precedent of placing international concerns before determining the legal extent of a state's competence; an expansion of political obligations beyond that practiced by the League of Nations.³²⁰ The prominent legal scholar Hans Kelsen, in a critique of the UN Charter before the first General

³¹⁶ See "Colonial Freedom is Urged by India," *New York Times*, 26 October 1946, 3; "British Plan Atomic Accord," *Boston Globe*, 26 October 1946, 5; and Earl Conrad, "Color Issue Dominates U.N.," *Chicago Defender*, 2 November 1946, 6.

³¹⁷ L.W. Ritch, "Overstating His Case," Letter to the Editor, *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 December 1946, 8; "S. Africa 'Unfit' to Grab New Area," *Baltimore African-American*, 2 November 1946, 1.

³¹⁸ "Mme. Pandit's Tears, UN Vote Beat Smuts," *Chicago Defender*, 14 December 1946, 2.

³¹⁹ For analysis of Pandit and India's relationship with the African American community of activists in the post-war period, see Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism*, Chapter 6, "Building a Third World," 161-201.

³²⁰ See "Concluding Action of the General Assembly," *United Nations News* 2:1 (January 1947): 1; "What is an International Question," *United Nations News* 2:1 (January 1947): 3-4; and John M. Howell, "Delimiting 'Domestic Jurisdiction,'" *The Western Political Quarterly* 10:3 (1957): 512-526.

Assembly, had predicted correctly that the language on human rights and fundamental freedoms included in the UN's founding document could be used to justify intervention in domestic affairs.³²¹ As Carol Anderson's work demonstrates, the U.S. government for one worked to undermine future attempts to create mechanisms for enforcement in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in large part to avoid these kinds of international condemnations of racial discrimination and violence in the United States. However, even though the final resolution had no enforcement mechanism and ultimately failed to alter South Africa's racist legislation, the momentous decision nevertheless rewarded the hope invested in the UN by the "eyes of the world."³²² India had "blazed a path others would follow," placing race and empire prominently on the international stage.³²³ In response, many observers were inspired to push for UN intervention in other instances of racial discrimination and imperial aggression, highlighting the global significance of this historical moment for a variety of external players.³²⁴

The resolution's passage also impacted contemporary politics at home and the political lives of the main protagonists. The Indian delegation, representing a nation on the verge of independence, had won a prominent moral victory, an important boost to Nehru's international prestige as he struggled to maintain control in the face of raging communal violence and the increasing likelihood of partition.³²⁵ Jan Smuts, however, returned to South Africa to face reinvigorated political opposition from all sides. The South African Indian movement, inspired

³²¹ Kelsen, "Limitations on the Functions of the United Nations."

³²² Though a nearly identical resolution failed to pass at the 1947 Assembly, the South African Indian question became a yearly focus of debate at the UN and remained a separate resolution alongside general anti-apartheid resolutions through the mid-1950s. After Pakistan gained UN membership the resolution's titles were changed from the "Treatment of Indians in the Union of South Africa" to the more inclusive "Treatment of people of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa" (A/RES/265(III), passed 14 May 1949).

³²³ Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*, 188; Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 4. See also Anderson, "International Conscience, the Cold War, and Apartheid," 297-325.

³²⁴ See Max Yergan's response to the resolution's passage in Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize*, 88-89.

³²⁵ See D.N. Ghosh, "Indians in South Africa," *India and World Affairs* 2:4 (1947): 189-194; and C. Kondapi, "Indians Overseas: A Survey of Developments in 1946," *India Quarterly* 3:1 (1947): 56-57.

by the international support for their local cause, redoubled their efforts, recruiting new passive resisters to challenge all aspects of the Ghetto Act.³²⁶ Stronger multi-racial alliances also developed between South African Indian organizations and the African National Congress particularly around issues of labor conditions and racial segregation. Unable to overcome his “miscalculation” in the face of changing rules of diplomacy and international concern about racism, Smuts’s United Party ultimately lost to the white supremacist National Party in the 1948 elections, which ushered in the official system of apartheid.³²⁷ The statesman who had been an influential empire loyalist for decades, an avid supporter of a strong League of Nations, and the framer of the UN Charter Preamble would never again regain his previous level of international leadership.

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, like the (nearly) postcolonial state she represented, was ascending on the world stage. Celebrated in India, the United States, and South Africa, Pandit was soon to become an Indian diplomat to three of the Great Powers, the first female to preside over the UN General Assembly, and a leading Indian politician in her own right.³²⁸ The characterization of Pandit’s success at the UN as mostly attributable to feminine charm and oratorical skills by contemporary observers has infused the scholarship on India at the United Nations, largely erasing Pandit’s historical role as an important figure in the struggle for power at the birth of the United Nations. But as Cynthia Enloe argued in the now classic *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, making women visible alters the

³²⁶ See the use of Pandit as an example to encourage South African Indian women to participate in the movement in “Women to the Fore in the Fight for Liberty,” *The Passive Resister*, 10 July 1947, 2.

³²⁷ Dubow, 66.

³²⁸ Over the next decade and a half Pandit became one of the foremost female diplomats of her generation. She was the first female Ambassador to the Soviet Union (1947-48), the United States and Mexico (1949-52), and Great Britain (1954-61). In India, she was the first woman to hold a cabinet post, served as governor of Maharashtra (1962-64), and served in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, among other elected and appointed positions.

terms of debate and reveals “the amount and varieties of power at work” in international politics.³²⁹ Though she was not writing about high politics, Enloe’s statement nevertheless holds true within this chapter’s cultural reading of the UN. Within the contestation for power over the meaning and implementation of the UN Charter, Pandit’s embodiment of a colonized female actor expressing emotion through political arguments about racism and imperialism challenged the western cultural conception of dispassionate masculine diplomatic negotiation. Her savvy shepherding of these debates through the discourse of India’s aspirational postcolonial leadership on the global stage influenced the political outcome that fall and permanently altered the culture of the General Assembly itself.

³²⁹ Cynthia Enloe, *Making Feminist Sense of International Politics: Bananas, Beaches and Bases* (Pandora, 1989), 197.

**RESISTING THE GLOBAL STAGE: POSTCOLONIAL NATION-BUILDING,
THE INVASION OF HYDERABAD, AND THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, 1948**

It has been said that this was aggression, that we went deliberately, without any provocation, and that by sheer force were doing certain things which were wrong. Anybody who has to use force—and my country even more than any other abhors the use of force—anybody who has to use force must think a hundred times, and a thousand times, before force is invoked... The march of events, the compulsion of events, has at last exhausted its patience and has obliged it to take action.

India delegate to the UN Security Council, 16 September 1948

Over the course of two afternoons in May 1949, Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, Pakistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, made an impassioned presentation to the United Nations Security Council on India's September 1948 invasion of the large southern princely state of Hyderabad. The case had appeared on the Council's agenda just days before the invasion, but eight months later the Council had yet to hear a full report. The situation, Khan argued, merited UN intervention to secure international and regional peace, protect the Muslim minority in the state from further persecution, and settle the legal question underpinning the entire case: Hyderabad's status before India invaded.³³⁰ Khan claimed that with the British withdrawal from the subcontinent in August 1947, all of the princely states were granted independence with the option to remain that way or accede to either Pakistan or India. The hereditary Muslim leader of Hyderabad, the Nizam Osman Ali Khan (the Nizam), declared his state's independence in June 1947 based on that juridical fact. India, unwilling to allow such a large state in the center of the country to remain separate, had put economic and political pressure on the Nizam to force accession. When that failed, the Indian government fabricated a crisis to justify intervention, and

³³⁰ Khan, *Security Council Official Records, Third Year* [hereafter *SCOR*] 425th Meeting: 19 May 1949, No. 28 (pub/year): 15.

with superior military force launched a police action code-named “Operation Polo.” India’s far superior armed forces defeated Hyderabad’s opposition in mere days. Now under military occupation, the Muslim minority had been subject to atrocities, including arson, raiding, looting, mass murder, and rape. Many were now homeless and destitute. Muslims from Hyderabad’s ex-government were still under house arrest. Press censorship was almost total. The situation, Khan argued, threatened the already fragile peace between India and Pakistan, and undermined the international principle that the weak should be protected from the strong. He appealed to the Council to get the situation back to the status quo before invasion, and allow the people of Hyderabad to exercise self-determination. At the conclusion of Khan’s speech, the Security Council chair’s question, “Does anyone wish to speak?” was met with silence.³³¹ The meeting adjourned and the case of Hyderabad was never again addressed by the United Nations.

Khan’s speech in 1949 marked the official end of the efforts to hold the Indian government accountable through the UN for its actions during and after Operation Polo, though most international interest in the subject had faded months before. The standoff between the Nizam and India had garnered increasing international attention in the summer of 1948 with alarm over possible instability on the subcontinent. The issue loomed large for a short time in the press, but its swift conclusion and the lack of Security Council action ended most coverage within weeks. Outside the view of organized international scrutiny, the retaliatory deaths of thousands of Muslims in the months following the invasion went unexamined; the process of integrating Hyderabad into the Indian state over the next several years went unchallenged. On 1 November 1956, Hyderabad State itself ceased to exist when it was partitioned into three

³³¹ Chauvel (France), *SCOR*, No. 28, 31.

linguistic regions, which were merged into Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, and Bombay, as part of a larger project to reorganize Indian states along linguistic lines after independence.³³²

The silence that greeted the end of Khan's speech in 1949 has been maintained in the scholarship on Indian independence and the early years of the United Nations. This is partially explained by the existence of the more violent and longer-lasting history of the conflict over Kashmir and the on-going UN mission there. In the telling of those histories, Hyderabad is characterized as a stepping-stone on the way to the main event. Furthermore, the invasion of Hyderabad was only discussed at a handful of meetings with no action taken by the Security Council, making it a minor event in the larger histories written about the UN. The Hyderabad case also fits poorly into the Congress nationalist narrative that seeks to present the Nehru years as the golden age of international diplomacy at the UN. The inability to hold the subcontinent together at the moment of independence had a disturbing impact on the development of the postcolonial national imagination, unsettling the surety with which the new government had hoped to established itself internally and externally.

By rejecting the global stage of the UN despite Hyderabad's efforts to embrace that scrutiny, the history of the event was effectively silenced. These silences on the invasion of Hyderabad have produce a discordant absence in the historical archive and have had a lasting impact on the interpretation of the overlapping histories of the early years of the UN and the newly independent Indian state. Despite its short-lived appearance at the UN, the Hyderabad case offers important insights into both India's emergence as a postcolonial nation-state on the global stage and a small yet still significant moment in the early life of the UN Security Council. By challenging the legal right of Hyderabad to be heard at the Council on what India deemed a

³³² In June 2014, Andhra Pradesh was further divided to create the new state of Telegana, which has been the site of separatist agitation since before Hyderabad's annexation in 1948.

domestic issue, the Indian delegation drew on arguments in exact contradiction to those it continued to make in the case of South African race policies. Rather than working to expand the purview of the UN, in this case India sought to protect those limits more often invoked by the traditionally recognized colonial powers. Small states working in opposition to India such as Pakistan and Argentina were unable to gain traction on the issue through the Security Council mechanism despite warnings that failure to act would undermine the mission of the UN itself. As a result, India was able to enact aggressive internal imperialism without interference and the Council's inaction added to growing skepticism on the part of observers and member states of the organization's ability to ensure collective peace.

Unlike the South African case highlighted in the previous chapter where the Indian delegation led by Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit embraced the "highest rostrum" of the UN to project the postcolonial state's diplomatic aspirations, the Indian government explicitly resisted the global stage throughout the Hyderabad crisis, asserting the prerogative of their new independent status to attend to this "domestic" concern on its own terms. In this case, the Indian government and its UN representatives invoked the language of fear and existential threat to justify armed aggression against the Muslim-led princely state. This attitude by any UN member state undermined not only the prestige but also the very project of collective security within the still-emerging institution. But the fact that the belligerent state in this case was India – a member so often leading a passionate fight for justice through the UN – made these actions even more stunning to observers. Editorial boards of newspapers in Pakistan, the United States, and Britain, for example, were critical of India's actions and the failure of the Security Council to intervene. Evidence suggests that opinion makers in major English-language papers in the United States and Britain, concerned with the success of the UN to maintain order in the post-war world, fell in

line quickly with India's official narrative. This benefitted the new Indian state's desire to handle Hyderabad independently within the context of the on-going power struggle with Pakistan. It also helped excuse the UN Security Council for its inaction, protecting an image of its effectiveness (at least in the short term). The case reveals the limits of the UN's power and its inability (or unwillingness) to implement the ideals of the Charter in every instance based on operational concerns. Already embroiled in complicated and precarious peacekeeping missions in Palestine and Kashmir, and in the growing conflict between the Soviet Union and the West, the Security Council had little to gain by prolonging the Hyderabad case in the fall of 1948.

Historical silence on the Council's failure to prevent the invasion and forcible accession of the princely state provides a stark contrast to the Indian South African case of 1946 addressed in the previous chapter. The win against South Africa remains an important part of the narrative of the history of human rights at the UN and the history of India's early diplomacy there. As I have shown, the history of the postcolonial Indian state's emergence on the global stage was made in part through Pandit's leadership in the fight against South Africa on behalf of diasporic Indians there. Not so for the case of Hyderabad, which male members of the Indian delegation dealt with as minimally as possible, going so far as to not send a representative to several meetings. Rather than *externalized* nation-building through moral leadership on the global stage as had been the case with South Africa, with the invasion of Hyderabad, India expressly rejected international intervention in order to enact *internal* nation-building through authoritarian discourse and martial law. In spite of this and other counter examples, the dominant Indian nationalist narrative worked to characterize independence as gained through decades of non-violent action and through a highly principled commitment to morality and justice.³³³ The

³³³ Here I am thinking in particular of Kashmir and Junagadh.

triumph of 1946 sits at a unique moment in India's history between its known past (colonialism) and an uncertain future (independence) when the emerging postcolonial state could be at its most idealistic and inspire the most hope around the world. By 1948, the idealistic anti-colonial leaders were at the helm of a new state that had become embroiled in the often brutal realities of the present. As a working state in 1948, independent India no longer functioned within the hypothetical and it adjusted its domestic and foreign policy accordingly.

Fractured Independence

The violence, displacement, and suffering endured by millions of South Asians in the weeks and months following Pakistani and Indian independence cannot be overstated. The massive population exchange across the northwestern border and the concomitant outbreak of massacres, kidnappings, rape, and looting there, as well as violence in cities across the region, posed almost insurmountable challenges to the two newly created states. The haste with which the process of decolonization took place between February and August 1947 was breathtaking, and the announcement of the still-disputed Radcliffe Line just after independence contributed to a volatile situation that already had produced sporadic communal violence over the preceding year. In the months following 14 and 15 August, the subcontinent emerged into independence on unstable ground. But it was not only the violent upheavals and displacements caused by Partition that created political instability in the subcontinent in the months that followed. The suspicions, frustrations, and fears that existed between India and Pakistan were exacerbated by the conflicts over the princely states Junagadh, Kashmir, and Hyderabad. These three states were not contiguous and did not work in concert to negotiate with either Pakistan or India. Nevertheless, they were interrelated in that they were sites of conflict over land and power in a moment of

extreme instability. The timeline of events in these locations in the months following independence is a startling array of almost daily diplomatic and military maneuvers as the contesting sides attempted to gain control of rapidly deteriorating situations. While in high-level talks with Hyderabad, the Indian government was simultaneously responding to Junagadh's declaration of accession to Pakistan and the Indian military was increasing its presence in Kashmir in anticipation of conflict there. Decisions made in each case impacted and were informed by events in the others.

The incongruity of the official British approach to the problem of the princely states at independence produced a situation primed for conflict. All of the states combined covered over 500,000 square miles, and an estimated 90 million people—almost one-third of the total population in the subcontinent—lived under the rule of hereditary, feudal princes.³³⁴ These states controlled their internal administration and the inheritors of titles ruled in succession sometimes over generations, but the British had maintained a relationship of suzerainty that pointedly denied the rulers direct control over foreign affairs, communications, or defense. Since the mid-1800s, the princes had been subject to economic pressure, administrative manipulation, and land acquisition depending on ever shifting circumstances on the ground. Eric Beverly refers to these uneven relationships between the states and the Raj as “sovereign yet subordinated,” leaving the states in an “ambivalent legal position” even before decolonization.³³⁵ As Indian independence became an accepted inevitability in 1946 and 1947, the British balanced their promises to the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League with their relationship to these semi-sovereign states. Unilateral repudiation of the treaties with the states could lead to requests for

³³⁴ Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1; and Barbara N. Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 271-272.

³³⁵ Eric Beverly, “Chapter 2: The Legal Framework of Sovereignty,” from unpublished manuscript, *Fragmenting Sovereignty*, 3.

compensation for ceded lands, and could open the British to accusations of disloyalty. The Labour-controlled British government was willing to pay that price, having decided by early 1946 that their pledges would have to be renounced.³³⁶ Section 7 of the Indian Independence Act granted them independence at the time British withdrew, about which public and private assurances on this point were made throughout the summer of 1947. The Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten told the Chamber of Princes in no uncertain terms the “States have complete freedom—technically and legally they are independent.” But this statement was immediately followed by a qualification wherein Mountbatten said he would “discuss the *degree* of independence which we ourselves feel is best in the interests of your own States.”³³⁷ This “somewhat schizophrenic air,” in Ian Copland’s characterization, led to directly conflicting messages being conveyed to the states.³³⁸

With the aim of establishing military and economic power at home, the newly established independent Indian government wanted to step directly into the role of paramount power left vacant by the British at the time of independence with the goal of full accession by all states. As such, they echoed the British-led schizophrenic position on the states.³³⁹ Though Pakistan’s Governor-General Muhammad Ali Jinnah accepted the option of independence for the states as set out in the Indian Independence Act, India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru disagreed, asserting that if not accession, some arrangement had to be made to bring the states into one or

³³⁶ Copland, *The Princes of India*, 218-223.

³³⁷ “Address: Lord Mountbatten, 25 July 1947,” S. L. Poplai, *Select Documents on Asian Affairs, India 1947-50*, Volume 1: Internal Affairs (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 172-173. My emphasis. See V. P. Menon’s account of this meeting in *The Integration of the Indian States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1956), 80-84. See also S. M. Burke, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 16; and W. E. Beckett, Foreign Office (hereafter FO), “Hyderabad and the United Nations,” 10 July 1948, TNA: PREM 8/818: 218.

³³⁸ Copland, *The Princes of India*, 223.

³³⁹ See for example, “Government Communiqué, 25 September 1947,” *Select Documents on Asian Affairs*, V.1, 276.

the other Dominion.³⁴⁰ After both Travancore and Hyderabad declared independence in early June 1947, the All-India National Congress Working Committee declared an official policy of refusal to recognize any states' declaration of independence, enshrining the principle of accession by any means into the independent Indian government's policy. The formidable elder statesman Vallabhbhai Patel was put in charge of the new Ministry of States. He, along with experienced civil servant V.P. Menon, set out to attain the complete accession of all princely states within India's territory based on the assertion that anything less than complete geographical cohesion would threaten the stability of the subcontinent.

In light of the strong stance by the new Congress-led Indian government, Hyderabad's aspiration for independence highlights just how much was up for grabs in the first year of Indian independence. Comprising over 80,000 square miles with 16 million inhabitants, over 80 percent of whom were Hindu, Hyderabad was by far the largest of the princely states. It alone had the infrastructure, economic resources, and administrative organization to possibly maintain independence long-term.³⁴¹ But its position in the middle of India, bisecting the fledgling state from north to south and east to west, made the possibility of its independence unthinkable.³⁴² An independent Hyderabad would create not just two competing nation-states on the subcontinent, but three, further eroding Indian control within its own borders and creating danger and rivalry beyond those borders. The new Indian government's ability to successfully incorporate Hyderabad – sometimes referred to in an emotional rhetorical flourish by the Indian leadership as either the “stomach” or the “heart” of the country – also held political and symbolic importance.

³⁴⁰ Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 85-90.

³⁴¹ According to Burke, “Hyderabad was by far the most viable state in India” (*Pakistan's Foreign Policy*, 17). K. L. Gauba called Hyderabad “the most important [State] from the viewpoint of size, population and revenue,” with resources ranging from food crops, cotton, and sugar, to textiles, paper, and metal works (*Hyderabad or India* (Delhi: Rajkamal Publications Limited, 1948), 52).

³⁴² See Taylor Sherman, “Moral Economies of Communal Violence: Partition and the Anti-Muslim Purge in Hyderabad State, 1948,” *Deccan Studies* (2010): 69.

Democratic rule for the people of the princely states had been incorporated into the Congress's goals for decades.

Though Pakistan also dealt with many states' accessions, the problem was mostly India's as the new state faced the prospect of independence without internal geographical coherence if the hundreds of princely states were not persuaded to accede. In the weeks leading up to independence, Patel and Menon, together with Mountbatten deployed "a potent mix of charm, bullying, and cajoling" to convince the princes to accede.³⁴³ By 15 August 1947, in what nationalists triumphantly call a "bloodless revolution," the vast majority of princely states had acceded to either India or Pakistan.³⁴⁴ Most had little choice in the matter, as "[t]hose with a predominantly Hindu population and a Hindu dynasty were compelled by force of circumstances to accede to India; similarly, Muslim States, by reason of geography, communal identity and relative weakness had no alternative but to accede to Pakistan."³⁴⁵ Some leaders also acceded because of "patriotism, the advice of their ministers, the pressure of popular political leaders in their states, and a sense of abandonment" by the British. But a number of states held out against quick accession.³⁴⁶ In addition to Travancore and Hyderabad, Kashmir also declared independence. The small state of Junagadh on the Kathiawar Peninsula acceded to Pakistan, and "at least a dozen other major states" failed to sign accession agreements before the British

³⁴³ Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 29.

³⁴⁴ See "Statement: Sardar Patel, 29 January 1948," *Select Documents on Asian Affairs*, Volume 1, 205. See also Gauba, *Hyderabad or India*, 107; and Binod U. Rao, *Hyderabad Reborn: First Six Months of Freedom, September 18, 1948-March 17, 1949* (Hyderabad: Director of Information, Hyderabad, For the Government of Hyderabad, 1949), 20.

³⁴⁵ Michael Brecher, *The Struggle for Kashmir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 21.

³⁴⁶ Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States*, 273-274.

withdrawal.³⁴⁷ Of these, Junagadh, Kashmir, and Hyderabad proved to be the most troubling to the Indian government's project of integration at all costs.

Hyderabad did not have the military capacity to face the far superior Indian Army, but this imbalance did not undermine the Nizam's decision to remain independent. Embracing the promise of independence enshrined in the Indian Independence Act, the Nizam appointed a trade commissioner in London, engaged in talks with the French about a diplomatic mission there, met with the Portuguese to discuss leasing port access in Goa, and placed an order with Czechoslovakia for arms and ammunition.³⁴⁸ He also laid claim to a special relationship with the British government and the Crown based on his long-standing loyalty, the existence of treaties between himself and London, and Hyderabad's status as the largest state in the subcontinent. In 9 July 1947 letter, the Nizam called on his "old ally, the British Government" to support his decision to refuse accession, insisting upon his right to maintain a working relationship with the Indian government while remaining internally independent.³⁴⁹ Two days later a delegation from Hyderabad, which included Sir Walter Monckton, long-time adviser to the Nizam, and the Nawab of Chhatari, then the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, met in Delhi to discuss the state's future with Mountbatten and Menon, who would lead India's negotiations with Hyderabad throughout. The Indian side was unwilling to consider independence, pressing only for accession.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Copland, *The Princes of India*, 260. For examples of accession agreements, see "Revised Instrument of Accession (Rajasthan), 12 May 1949," 181-184, and "Covenant (Madhya Bharat), 15 June 1948," 223-232, in *Select Documents on Asian Affairs*, Volume 1.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 250-251. See also, "Nizam Govt's Interest in Goa Port," *The Pakistan Times*, 22 July 1948, 1; Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 323.

³⁴⁹ Letter No.48/SP/8 dated 11th May 1948 and enclosures from United Kingdom High Commissioner in India, Top Secret. Attachment A: Copy of letter dated 9th July, 1947, from His Exalted Highness the Nizam to His Excellency the Crown Representative, TNA: DO 142/296: [1]. Hereafter Letter No.48/SP/8.

³⁵⁰ See Minutes of a Meeting Between His Excellency the Viceroy and a Delegation From Hyderabad, Held in the Viceroy's House, New Delhi, at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, 11th July, 1947, Secret, TNA: DO 142/297.

The Nizam's continued faith in the British and Mountbatten in particular – despite conflicting messages – was offset in part by Jinnah's support for Hyderabad.³⁵¹ In early August 1947, with the Nizam's approval and reportedly behind Monckton's back, a Hyderabad delegation met with Jinnah who encouraged them not to agree to accession with India and gave them assurances of Pakistan's support. Jinnah, it was reported, wanted Hyderabad not as a neutral party but as an active ally in case of a war between India and Pakistan.³⁵² Writing anonymously for the *Times of India* after Hyderabad's surrender, "An Ex-Official of Hyderabad" claimed that in 1947 "Jinnah had made it clear that if Hyderabad thought its cause was righteous it should die to a man." However, he had also advised the Nizam to be reasonable in his negotiations with India and to move toward a more democratic government.³⁵³ Whether or not Jinnah promised Pakistani military support was subject to many rumors.³⁵⁴

The Nizam's declared intent to remain independent was informed by more than a stubborn desire to protect his own feudal rule (as was the characterization often used by the Congress-dominated Indian government and extreme Hindu nationalists).³⁵⁵ Partition created unique problems for Hyderabad, which had ties to India and Pakistan, and the Nizam wanted to maintain good relations with both governments. His decision also was complicated by internal

³⁵¹ Ali, *Tragedy of Hyderabad*, 61-62. In Menon's account, Monckton reported to Mountbatten in late September 1948 "it was plain that Pakistan influences were at the root of the Nizam's" hardened attitude against accession (Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 325).

³⁵² Draft Note on Developments in Hyderabad from the Cabinet's Mission in March 1946 to the Conclusion of the Standstill Agreement in November 1947, Pol. 1610/48, Confidential, TNA: DO 142/297: 17.

³⁵³ See "Mr. Jinnah's Views on Hyderabad Issue," *Times of India*, 2 June 1948, 1; and a response: "Fruitless to Quibble," Editorial, *Times of India*, 3 June 1948, 6.

³⁵⁴ An Ex-Official of Hyderabad, *Hyderabad in Retrospective*, Reprinted from articles published in the "Times of India" (Bombay: Bennett, Coleman & Co., Ltd., 1949), 45-46. The Nizam received public pledges of support from many Muslim individuals and organizations in the lead up to the invasion. See "Tribal Leader assures Nizam of Full Support," *The Pakistan Times*, 28 August 1948, 6; "Azad Kashmir to Help Hyderabad in Case of Aggression," *The Pakistan Times*, 31 August 1948, 3; "Baluchistan Students Assure Hyderabad of Support," *The Pakistan Times*, 1 September 1948, 7; "Hyderabad is Not Alone, Says King Farouk," *The Pakistan Times*, 10 September 1948, 1; and "Multan Citizens Pledge Support to Hyderabad," *The Pakistan Times*, 17 September 1948, 4.

³⁵⁵ See Government of India, *White Paper on Hyderabad, 1948* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1948), 39. The passage reads: "the Nizam's pretensions to independence rest on no foundation other than his own ambition for unchecked absolutism in which he is supported by the Razakar terrorists and a handful of India's enemies."

Hyderabadi politics. Though over eighty per cent Hindu, the princely state was ruled by a powerful Muslim minority, which included the increasingly influential role of the Majlis-i Ittehad Muslimin (the Ittehad) led by the dynamic and controversial Kasim Razvi. By acceding to India, the Nizam would have angered the Muslim minority. On the other hand, accession to Pakistan could have alienated the large Hindu population. Academic research after Hyderabad's integration has concluded there were comparatively minor communal tensions inside the state despite the imbalance of power, lending credence to the Nizam's concerns.³⁵⁶ In addition, the problems posed by Hyderabad's geographical position wholly inside Indian borders would have been substantial.³⁵⁷

Talks in September failed to result in a treaty, but by 20 October 1947, the two sides had agreed on the language of a one-year stand-still agreement under the terms of which India would maintain "all agreements and administrative arrangements" regarding Hyderabad's external affairs, communications, and defense that had previously existed between the Nizam and the British Crown. Hyderabad could have agents-general (without full diplomatic powers) posted in foreign capitals. For the year of the agreement all disputes arising would be dealt with through arbitration.³⁵⁸ On 22 October the Nizam's negotiation team returned to Hyderabad to finalize the agreement with the Nizam.³⁵⁹ What occurred over the next several days became a pivotal moment in the India-Hyderabad conflict, heightened the fear surrounding the negotiations, and played a prominent role in India's claim that its "police action" in September 1948 was necessary to save the Nizam and the state from Muslim "fanatics."

³⁵⁶ Ian Copland, "'Communalism' in Princely India: The Case of Hyderabad, 1930-1940," *Modern Asian Studies* 22:4 (1988): 783-814; and Sherman, "Moral Economies of Communal Violence," 65-90.

³⁵⁷ Draft Note on Developments in Hyderabad from the Cabinet's Mission, 15. See also "Hyderabad's Future," *Times of India*, 12 June 1947, 5); and Cantwell-Smith, "Hyderabad: Muslim Tragedy," 35.

³⁵⁸ "Appendix II: Standstill Agreement," in *White Paper on Hyderabad*, 45.

³⁵⁹ "Indo-Hyderabad Talks," *Times of India*, 22 October 1947, 1.

The Nizam met the delegation and his Executive Council for three days to discuss the draft of the Standstill Agreement. The Council ultimately voted 6-3 in favor of the agreement, suggesting only trivial changes. The following day the Nizam began drafting a collateral letter to accompany his signature on the document. According to a British report, at approximately 3 a.m. on 27 October, the day Monckton and Chhatari were to return to Delhi with the documents, “a crowd, estimated at about 20,000 and composed of a mixture of ordinary Muslims and hired assassins, collected round the houses which the Nawab of Chhatari, Sir Sultan Ahmed and Sir Walter Monckton occupied and which were all adjacent. No Hyderabad police were seen at any time.”³⁶⁰ The three were evacuated by the military several hours later and informed to delay their departure to Delhi. Two days later Monckton and Ahmed went alone to meet with the Nizam, who shared with them the telegram he was sending to inform Delhi of the creation of a new delegation based on the “changed political situation here.” Ahmed’s last ominous words to the Nizam before he left the room were reportedly, ““This will be the end of you.””³⁶¹

Mir Laik Ali, an industrialist with no previous political position, took over as Prime Minister on 30 October. Formal meetings between India and the Hyderabad delegation, now headed by Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung, Minister of Foreign Affairs, began again under much different circumstances. Within days negotiations had already broken down when it became apparent the barely three month old independent Indian government would not offer concessions beyond that to which they had agreed previously.³⁶² Tensions were mounting outside the meetings as well. There were “reports of border incidents, arrests across the frontier, security measures on both sides and, above all, rumours of an armed clash and ill-conceived

³⁶⁰ Letter No.48/SP/8, [1]. See also Government of India, *White Paper on Hyderabad*, 25. Cantwell-Smith claims reports crowds numbering 50,000 demonstrated (“Hyderabad: Muslim Tragedy,” 36).

³⁶¹ Letter No.48/SP/8, [3].

³⁶² See Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 330-331.

preparations.”³⁶³ The threat of Indian military aggression loomed. Indian troops were engaged in heavy fighting in Kashmir. And India had proved its willingness to use military force to ensure a reluctant state’s accession when it took forcibly control of Junagadh’s administration on November 9. Days later, Patel, the most vocal advocate for full accession, insinuated that if Hyderabad did not fall into line it would meet the same fate as Junagadh.³⁶⁴

The Standstill Agreement between Hyderabad and India, signed on 29 November, closely resembled the October agreement.³⁶⁵ For one year India would maintain control over Hyderabad’s foreign affairs and communications but would withdraw its troops from Secunderabad within a few months time.³⁶⁶ The Nizam maintained his sovereign rights and was made responsible for internal peace and security. He also indicated his willingness to move the Hyderabad political system toward responsible government. The Ittehad’s leader Razvi, in a public address, called the agreement the “best possible terms” as it did not interfere with Hyderabad’s independence. But ever cautious, he urged the state to “muster sufficient strength to resist any attempt to relegate it to a position of inferiority to the Indian Union.”³⁶⁷ The *Times of India* editorial board was satisfied with the terms of the agreement, expressing relief that “saner counsels [had] prevailed over so-called ‘mulki’ hot-headedness in the Nizam’s capital and that...India, despite considerable provocation, [had] been at pains to be conciliatory in the interests of a peaceful solution.”³⁶⁸

³⁶³ Candidus, “Indian Political Notes,” *Times of India*, 27 November 1947, 6.

³⁶⁴ “Pakistan’s ‘Crudest Form of Intervention,’” *Times of India*, 14 November 1948, 7; “Mr. Patel’s Rajkot Speech Deplored,” *Times of India*, 16 November 1948, 3.

³⁶⁵ See “Hyderabad Talks Begin Tomorrow,” *Times of India*, 24 November 1947, 1; “Basis of New Reforms for Hyderabad,” *Times of India*, 25 November 1947, 1; and “Standstill Pact with Hyderabad,” *Times of India*, 27 November 1947, 1.

³⁶⁶ Secunderabad, the twin city of the capital Hyderabad, housed an large (British) Indian military base.

³⁶⁷ “Standstill Pact with India.”

³⁶⁸ “Good News; Moves in Right Direction,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 1 December 1947, 1. “Mulki” was a common term referring to inhabitants of the state of Hyderabad.

The Conflict Escalates

Despite the successful negotiation of the Standstill Agreement, the events of late October had marred relations between India and Hyderabad. The fact that a public demonstration backed by the Ittehad had successfully delayed the agreement led the Indian government to more strongly correlate the Nizam's refusal to accede with the political context of Partition and Hindu-Muslim conflict.³⁶⁹ Many on the subcontinent and around the world feared that the extreme violence in the weeks surrounding independence would again flare up, destabilizing the newly established Indian and Pakistani governments. In Indian discourse, the possibility of Hyderabad coming under the rule of "fanatical" pan-Islamists enhanced the domestic and foreign policy arguments against independence for that state. If the Nizam was indeed under the control of Razvi and the Ittehad, how could India ever feel safe? Historical accounts and contemporary scholars differ on the level of influence Razvi had over the Nizam, though by all accounts the relationship was close. The Indian government, however, consistently portrayed the October 1947 events as a *coup d'état* placing Razvi in de facto control.³⁷⁰ In the months leading up to the September invasion, public statements and governmental exchanges coming from the Indian leadership increasingly identified Razvi's Islamic radicalism and the actions of the Razakars as primary reasons why Hyderabad's independence was untenable. On the other hand, Hyderabad's negotiation committee and the Nizam himself continued to emphasize the princely state's unique legal position, and portray India as an aggressor determined to achieve a singular goal by any

³⁶⁹ See Taylor Sherman, "Migration, Citizenship, and Belonging in Hyderabad (Deccan), 1946-1956," *Modern Asian Studies* 45:1 (2011): 89.

³⁷⁰ Monckton's biographer wrote that the Nizam knew of and consented to the *coup d'état*, though Monckton was unsure whether it "was because he had been frightened by the Ittehad, or whether he approved of their aims; but in any case he refused to disown Razvi" (H. Montgomery Hyde, *Walter Monckton* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson Ltd., 1991), 141).

means. These two positions came to dominate the discourse on the conflict up to and through its brief appearance on the Security Council agenda.

Negotiations continued in the spring of 1948 in the midst of rising tensions with both sides accusing the other of breaking the Standstill Agreement.³⁷¹ Statements coming out of the two capitals undermined the chances for a peaceful resolution. The Ittehad's and the Razakar's rhetoric of Hyderabad as a Muslim state along with the recruitment of Muslim men to fight there colored New Delhi's perception of possible threats.³⁷² In March and April, reports circulated in India of Razvi publicly declaring in cold war terms that a Muslim force would push from Hyderabad all the way to Delhi with Indian Muslims as a "fifth column in any showdown" between the two states.³⁷³ Another round of talks broke down in April, and reports of border skirmishes and incidents of Razakar attacks increased. Indian readers were overwhelmed with fear-invoking headlines about bombings, attacks, looting, and arson. Other headlines raised the spectre of the gendered violence of Partition with reports of Hindu women and children kidnapped or raped at the hands of Muslim men.³⁷⁴

Speaking at a Congress Committee meeting at the end of April, Nehru assured his audience that India did not want a war with Hyderabad. On the other hand, India "would not tolerate any foreign Power in her midst."³⁷⁵ By June, the discussion of military intervention within the Indian leadership was increasing. Patel, supported by most of the Indian Cabinet,

³⁷¹ See letters from April to June 1948, in S. L. Poplai, ed., *Select Documents on Asian Affairs*, V.1, 304-327.

³⁷² Sherman, "Migration, Citizenship, and Belonging," 89-90.

³⁷³ Rajmohan Gandhi, *Patel: A Life* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1991), 477. See references in Candidus, "Indian Political Notes," 11 March 1948, *Times of India*, 6; and "A.-I.C.C. To Meet In Secret Session," 25 April 1948, *Times of India*, 9.

³⁷⁴ Sample headlines from the *Times of India*, May 1948: "Alleged Mobs in Hyderabad," 1 May 1948, 1; "Refugees Flee to Yeotmal," 2 May 1948, 1; "Razakars Burn Down Village in Nalgonda," 16 May 1948, 7; "Madras-Bombay Mail Attacked; Incident in Hyderabad Territory: Many Hurt; Reported Abduction of Women & Children," 23 May 1948, 1.

³⁷⁵ "A.-I.C.C. To Meet in Secret Session," *Times of India*, 25 April 1948, 9.

hardened his desire to use military action against the state sooner rather than later. But Nehru, Menon, and Mountbatten continued to urge restraint.³⁷⁶ However, the Indian government had to balance military commitments between Hyderabad and Kashmir, where clashes continued.³⁷⁷ Writing to Patel in early June, Nehru urged him to only consider military involvement “when the Hyderabad Government or their Razakars, etc. make it impossible for us to desist from it!”³⁷⁸ Nehru did support increased pressure “all around Hyderabad,” though, so if “further provocation of a major kind [occurred], we shall be justified in taking further action.”³⁷⁹

Internal public and political pressure was mounting on the government to take assertive action against Hyderabad.³⁸⁰ Beginning with the Nizam’s declaration to remain independent in early June 1947, the *Times of India* had been a mouthpiece for a Hindu nationalist-inflected line, arguing vociferously for Hyderabad’s accession and urging the Indian government to force that conclusion as soon as possible.³⁸¹ The *Times* also played a role in giving wide circulation to rumors of communal violence, internal unrest, and the influx of Muslim fighters into Hyderabad as early as August 1947.³⁸² In 25 May, the editorial board considered the Hyderabad problem “A Running Sore,” where “trouble of the most dangerous kind...is spreading like a disease in conditions which are all too unstable.” The time had come for action “adopted and executed with

³⁷⁶ Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 363; Hyde, *Walter Monckton*, 147; and “108: Sardar Patel to N. V. Gadgil Advising Firm Action in Hyderabad, Patel Papers, Navajivan Trust, 21 June 1948,” in *The Collected Words of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol. XIII, 142.

³⁷⁷ Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India*, 80-81; and “93: Nehru to Sardar Patel Regarding Reservation of Seats in Hyderabad Legislature for Muslims, Patel Papers, Navajivan Trust, 27 May 1948,” in *The Collected Words of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol. XIII, 128.

³⁷⁸ “102: Jawaharlal to Sardar Patel Suggesting Delay in Military Action in Hyderabad for Time Being, Sardar’s Letters Mostly Unknown, 6 June 1948,” in *The Collected Words of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Vol. XIII, 136.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁸⁰ Candidus, “Indian Political Notes,” *Times of India*, 6; “‘Compromise is Futile,’” *Times of India*, 21 May 1948, 5; Candidus, “Indian Political Notes,” *Times of India*, 27 May 1948, 6; and “Fruitless to Quibble,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 3 June 1948, 6.

³⁸¹ See “Swift Action,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 21 June 1947, 6.

³⁸² See “Secunderabad Trouble,” *Times of India*, 19 August 1947, 7; and “‘Hyderabad, People’s Common Heritage,’” *Times of India*, 15 November 1947, 7.

restraint but with firmness.”³⁸³ Editorials throughout the summer advocated military intervention over negotiation. A June editorial warned that with Razvi threatening to “amputate not merely the nose but the head and heart of Hyderabad to spite the face of the Indian Union,” an agreement had to be reached or there would be dire consequences.³⁸⁴ When talks broke down in mid-June, the board wrote, “Even should the worst happen—which nothing yet suggests—to the solidarity of the Indian Union, nothing can save Hyderabad, save contemporary commonsense, from complete liquidation.”³⁸⁵

Across the border in Pakistan, the editorial board of the Lahore English-language daily, *The Pakistan Times*, grew increasingly critical of India’s handling of the Hyderabad crisis, arguing a line opposite of that held by the *Times of India*. A mild editorial in late June called India’s policy in Hyderabad and Kashmir merely anti-democratic, evidence of “India’s attitude of wanting to grab and hold all that it could.”³⁸⁶ But critique escalated in early July in response to public statements made by Patel, accusing him of practicing fascism through his “black record of coercion, intimidation and oppression” toward the states.³⁸⁷ An 11 July editorial lashed out even more harshly with the opening: “The hydra-headed monster of Indian fascism has gripped Hyderabad in its vicious coil.” Admittedly not a fan of “the medieval despotism which the ruling house of Hyderabad symbolizes,” they nevertheless had sympathy for the Nizam’s situation in the face of the “Fascist tactics” used by “Pandit-Patel & Co.”³⁸⁸ And on 3 August, after Winston Churchill demanded British intervention in the crisis during a debate with British Prime Minister Attlee in Parliament, *The Pakistan Times* published an editorial urging the world to turn its

³⁸³ “A Running Sore,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 25 May 1948, 6.

³⁸⁴ “Imminent Crisis,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 11 June 1948, 6.

³⁸⁵ “Finality,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 18 June 1948, 6.

³⁸⁶ “India and the States,” Editorial, *The Pakistan Times*, 22 June 1948, 6.

³⁸⁷ “Faint-hearted Fulminations,” Editorial, *The Pakistan Times*, 2 July 1948, 6.

³⁸⁸ “Hyderabad,” Editorial, *The Pakistan Times*, 11 July 1948, 4.

“attention to the new menace of Hindu Fascism in India.” Invoking Cold War imagery, the editorial asked: “Does the voice of Hyderabad reach [Attlee] from behind the iron curtain, which India has built around that State?” Hitler, Mussolini, and others had “met their doom, leaving, amongst others, a zealous convert in Pandit Nehru.”³⁸⁹ Calling the Indian administration “rabidly communal,” a 29 August editorial wrote that the life of the Muslim minority in India was suffering under the “engine of repression” that included arrests for “either spying for the Nizam or fostering pro-Pakistan propaganda,” and persecution along the lines of that endured by the Jews under Nazi Germany. “Much as Pandit Nehru may shout from the housetops that India is a secular, democratic State where every citizen...enjoys equal opportunities, the persecution of the Muslim minority furnishes damaging evidence to the contrary.”³⁹⁰

As events unfolded toward what most assumed would be armed conflict, the issue became more visible in the United States and Britain, two powerful states with vested interests in stability on the South Asian continent where concerns about the Kashmir conflict had been increasing as well. In hindsight we know that Hyderabad failed in its bid to remain independent, and perhaps its inclusion in the Indian state seems inevitable given that government’s will to establish a unified state and its far superior military might. But until the Nizam’s surrender in September 1948, this was not a foregone conclusion. No doubt Kashmir rightly dominates the historical memory of both Partition and the battle over the princely states, but it is important to understand that in this period Hyderabad often resided alongside Kashmir as one of the two dominant threats to the subcontinent’s stability.³⁹¹ At times Hyderabad was even considered the more trenchant problem. In a *Manchester Guardian* editorial on how India had fared in 1948,

³⁸⁹ “Fascism Redivivus,” *The Pakistan Times*, 3 August 1948, 6. See also, “Churchill Accuses Nehru of Hitlerian Methods,” *The Pakistan Times*, 1 August 1948, 5, 8.

³⁹⁰ “The Insanity Fair,” Editorial, *The Pakistan Times*, 4.

³⁹¹ See, for example, “Kashmir and Hyderabad,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 24 August 1948, 5.

Hyderabad is identified as one of three major issues India had faced along with Kashmir and Gandhi's death.³⁹² In the weeks leading up to India's invasion, the *New York Times* and *The Times* (London) both believed the Kashmir situation was closer than Hyderabad to a workable cease-fire that could lead to a final settlement of the dispute.³⁹³ And just four days before the Indian invasion began, the New York paper wrote: "Of the two disputes" it was Kashmir "that seems to offer the better hope of a peaceful solution."³⁹⁴

The sense of urgency to resolve the conflict between India and Hyderabad was fed by fears that a direct military clash would set off region-wide violence on a scale larger than that witnessed at Partition.³⁹⁵ As early as November 1947 outside observers expressed fears that the conflict "might spread the flames of communal warfare to South India."³⁹⁶ Another breakdown of talks in June had led India to escalate the economic blockade around the state. Border clashes also increased tensions, which was reflected in press coverage outside the subcontinent. In the opinion of *The Manchester Guardian*, "Hyderabad [had] displaced Kashmir as the centre of gravest danger in India." Though the editorial board agreed that India had a strong case and the Nizam should have accepted past offers made by Delhi, India was in fact the source of the current problem. It was no secret that the larger state could easily subdue the smaller, but if it were to do so it would set off "a sickening butchery" of Hindus there, which would spread to attacks on Muslims elsewhere on the subcontinent.³⁹⁷ Philip Noel-Baker, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, conveyed his concerns to Attlee at the end of July that there was a real risk of "violent communal reactions" in the whole of India, if India used force as had been

³⁹² "India," Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 January 1949, 4.

³⁹³ "Kashmir and Hyderabad," Editorial, *The Times* (London), 24 August 1948, 5.

³⁹⁴ "Tension in India," Editorial, *New York Times*, 9 September 1948, 26.

³⁹⁵ Sherman, "Migration, Citizenship, and Belonging in Hyderabad (Deccan)," 89.

³⁹⁶ "Stalemate Between India and Pakistan," *The Manchester Guardian*, 22 November 1947, 6. See also "India and the Princes," Editorial, *New York Times*, 11 October 1947, 16.

³⁹⁷ "Hyderabad," *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 July 1948, 4.

“unmistakably threatened.”³⁹⁸ The same concern was expressed in a 29 July British Cabinet Meeting.³⁹⁹ According to V. P. Menon, a section of advisers to the Indian government also used the “bogy of large-scale communal disorders” to argue for continued patience. A skeptic, Menon thought these fears “exaggerated if not illusory.”⁴⁰⁰ Patel, too, “thought these fears to be false” and personally guaranteed the safety of all Muslims in India.⁴⁰¹ But throughout August, journalists and editorial boards warned the “conflict could easily put in peril relations between Hindus and Muslims throughout the land.”⁴⁰² Robert Trumbull predicted in the harshest of terms that “India would again be drenched in blood” if the government forces invaded Hyderabad.⁴⁰³

Related to these worries was the concern that an attack on Hyderabad could draw other Muslim states into the conflict. In late August, rumors circulated in India, Pakistan, and the United States that Syria planned to sponsor Hyderabad’s case at the United Nations, a possibility that would both raise the profile of the case and complicate the already tangled legal questions involved.⁴⁰⁴ According to a report from Beirut, Syria never intended to publicly sponsor the case. The Lebanese Prime Minister informed the UK source “that the Arab Governments had been careful not to intervene on a religious dispute i.e. Moslem versus Hindu and it was for that reason that initiative had been left to Lebanon which as a State with a Christian minority was in a

³⁹⁸ Philip Noel Baker (Commonwealth Relations Office) to Prime Minister Attlee, Serial No. 51/48, 24 July 1948, PREM 8/818: 289.

³⁹⁹ Cabinet, Situation in Hyderabad and Kashmir, Minutes of a Meeting held at 10, Downing Street, on Tuesday, 27th July, 1948, Gen. 223/6th Meeting, 29 July 1948, PREM 8/818: 226-227.

⁴⁰⁰ Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 371-372.

⁴⁰¹ Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, 479.

⁴⁰² “Hyderabad in the Balance,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 7 August 1948, 5. The same fear was conveyed in “Twin Dominions,” Editorial, *The Times*, 14 August 1948, 5; and “Comment,” *The Observer*, 1 August 1948, 4.

⁴⁰³ Robert Trumbull, “India, Age One, Facing Big Internal Problems,” *New York Times*, 8 August 1948, E4.

⁴⁰⁴ See “Hyderabad Moves United Nations; Syria Believed To Be Sponsoring Case,” *Times of India*, 20 August 1948, 1; “Syria to sponsor Nizam case in UNO,” *The Pakistan Times*, 21 August 1948, 1; George Barrett, “Hyderabad Brings India Clash to U.N.,” *New York Times*, 25 August 1948, 8; “Syria’s advocacy of Nizam’s cause disquieting,” *The Pakistan Times*, 26 August 1948, 2; and “Indian Attack on Hyderabad is Predicted,” *Chicago Tribune*, 30 August 1948, 10. This possibility was still rumored even after India’s invasion, see A.M. Rosenthal, “Hyderabad Again Makes Plea to U.N.,” *New York Times*, 14 September 1948, 4.

better position to act than a purely Moslem State.” Though Lebanon “had offered their good offices in the dispute,” events had unfolded so rapidly that at this point “[h]e proposed to wait until he arrived in Paris for United Nations Assembly meeting when he would review the possibilities of action.”⁴⁰⁵ Given the fact that Hyderabad had chosen to take their case to the Security Council where Lebanon did not have a vote, the possibility of intervention was limited. The prospect of Pakistani involvement remained an open question.

Despite increasing international awareness and concern over the issue, Indian leaders continued to position the issue as a solely domestic concern. As the conflict escalated in late summer 1948, their public rhetoric increasingly drew on nationalist feeling by embracing the metaphor of Hyderabad as the heart of India – an essential part of a thriving Indian nation from which the new state’s very existence could be challenged by Muslim foes.⁴⁰⁶ Hyderabad’s geographical position had been part of India’s argument for accession since the beginning of negotiations, but that location became more closely identified with India’s ability to physically survive at all in the months preceding Operation Polo.⁴⁰⁷ In April at the Congress meeting in Bombay, Nehru emphasized this argument. Not only would Hyderabad pose a constant threat to India, but it could also provide a location for Pakistani support. India could not tolerate this, “right in her middle.”⁴⁰⁸ Addressing a crowd of over 25,000 in early June, Nehru reiterated, “The geographical position of Hyderabad is such that it cannot remain out of India.” Without

⁴⁰⁵ From Beirut to Foreign Office, No. 684, Secret, 18 September 1948, TNA: CO 537/3395: 6.

⁴⁰⁶ Menon emphasizes this point several times in his personal narrative of the integration of Hyderabad, see pages 316, 321, 334, and 353.

⁴⁰⁷ Outside observers recognized the common usage of this metaphor. After the Nizam’s surrender, in a letter to the editor one resident of Lahore wrote: “Indian spokesmen call Hyderabad a sore in the heart of India.” But, he asked, “How can a smaller State be called a menace to the peace and prosperity of the bigger State?” (Sheik Abdul Rashid, “Hyderabad and India,” Letter to the Editor, *The Pakistan Times*, 19 September 1948, 4).

⁴⁰⁸ “A.-I.C.C. to Meet In Secret Session,” *Times of India*, 25 April 1948, 9.

specific mention of Pakistan, he assured his audience India had no intention of coercing accession unless Hyderabad were to become a base for an enemy state.⁴⁰⁹

With the publication of the Government of India's *White Paper on Hyderabad* on 11 August 1948, the geographical location of "the middle" had been transformed for a domestic audience into the more emotive "heart" of India – a matter of life and death for the nation. "India," the *White Paper* begins, "is not a mere geographical expression but an economic and political entity," with the states an integral part of that whole. By "negotiating constitutional relationship[s]" with the states, the government was not playing "power politics" or following "any expansionist policy," it was working to create "organic unification" to guarantee "all-compelling defence and internal security." Drawing on a quote from the historian Sir Reginald Coupland's 1943 report, *The Future of India*, the *White Paper* expressed how "vital" unity was to India's existence: "An India deprived of the States would [lose] all coherence... India could live if its Moslem limbs in the North-West and North-East were amputated, but could it live without its heart?" The *Paper* went on to present evidence that the Nizam intended "to develop an independent theocratic fascist State in the heart of India which...[was] intended to form a base for subverting the loyalty of the Muslims in India to the Indian Dominion." The United States could not tolerate the same in Colorado nor could the British in Worcester, could they?⁴¹⁰ Upon presenting this document to the Constituent Assembly, Patel warned: "compromise would mean suicide."⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁹ "Need to Increase Production; Pandit Nehru's Call to Country; 'Hyderabad Must Accede to India,'" *Times of India*, 3 June 1948, 1.

⁴¹⁰ Government of India, *White Paper on Hyderabad, 1948* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1948), 3; *Ibid.*, 40; *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴¹¹ "India Government's White Paper on Hyderabad," *Times of India*, 11 August 1948, 5. See also, "'Standing Threat to India': Mr. Patel's View of an Independent Hyderabad," *The Manchester Guardian*, 11 August 1948, 8; "Full Fact," Editorial, *Times of India*, 11 August 1948, 6; "Hyderabad Accused by India," *Irish Times*, 11 August

Hyderabad's location in the "heart" of India played a prominent role in Nehru's speech to the Constituent Assembly on 7 September, his last, best effort to convince his domestic audience of the need for Indian action. He first pointed out the anachronistic nature of Hyderabad's continued feudal rule in a time of democratization in the subcontinent. "It was inconceivable to us that...in the heart of India which is pulsating with a new freedom, there should be a territory deprived of this freedom and indefinitely under autocratic rule."⁴¹² The larger issue was the maintenance of peace and stability, which was not possible with a "mounting wave of violence and anarchy."⁴¹³ Hyderabad had to be a part of India, he argued, because anything else would create "an ever present fear of conflict."⁴¹⁴ India had been patient, perhaps too patient. "No country situated as India is would have tolerated these warlike preparations by a State in the very heart of India."⁴¹⁵ After detailing some of the more horrifying incidents being reported out of Hyderabad, Nehru urged the government not to:

permit such atrocities to continue to be perpetrated with impunity within the geographical heart of India, for this affects not only the security, honour, life and property of the law abiding inhabitants of Hyderabad, but also the international peace and order of India. We cannot have a campaign of murder, arson, rape and loot [sic] going on in Hyderabad without rousing communal passion in India and jeopardising the peace of the Dominion."⁴¹⁶

1948, 1; and "'Compromise will mean suicide'; Patel's Statement on Hyderabad," *The Pakistan Times*, 11 August 1948, 8.

⁴¹² "India's Ultimatum to Hyderabad; Immediate Disbandment Of Razakars Demanded," *The Times of India*, 8 September 1948, 4; and Acting U.K. High Commissioner in India to Commonwealth Office, No. 3101, 7 September 1948, TNA: DO 142/90, [2].

⁴¹³ "India's Ultimatum to Hyderabad."

⁴¹⁴ Acting U.K. High Commissioner in India to Commonwealth Office, No. 3101, 7 September 1948, TNA: DO 142/90, [2].

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, [3].

⁴¹⁶ "Incursions Into India; Campaign of Violence," *The Times of India*, 8 September 1948, 4; and Acting U.K. High Commissioner in India to Commonwealth Office, No. 3101, 7 September 1948, TNA: DO 142/90, [4].

The only way to ensure Hyderabad's internal security and therefore India's security was for Hyderabad to disband the Razakars immediately and allow Indian troops to return to Secunderabad.⁴¹⁷ Thus was India's final public ultimatum delivered.

Hyderabad at the Security Council: Invasion and Evasion

With the possibility of invasion looming, the leadership in Hyderabad finally sought official international intervention in late August 1948. The first communication to the United Nations was a letter sent to the President of the Security Council on 21 August, bringing the Council's attention to the "grave dispute" that had developed, which was "likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security." Drawing on Article 35(2) in the UN Charter, the letter asserted that Hyderabad was being threatened through an economic blockade and the violation of its boundaries to give up its independence. It warned that India's actions undermined not only the state's existence, but also "the peace of India and of the entire Asiatic continent, and the principles of the United Nations." The President circulated the letter to members of the Council, but no action was taken due in part to the fact that the Council was in the midst of a transition from Lake Success, New York, to the Palais de Chaillot, Paris, where the major UN bodies would be meeting that fall. The day after Nehru's ultimatum was delivered in September, the Security Council received a second letter from Hyderabad asking "to become a party to the Status of the International Court of Justice in order to facilitate the peaceful solution" of the dispute.⁴¹⁸ Again, the Council took no action.

⁴¹⁷ "'Disband Razakars Immediately'; India's Final Note To Nizam," *The Times of India*, 8 September 1948, 1; "India's Ultimatum to Hyderabad"; and "Nehru's ultimatum to Nizam," *The Pakistan Times*, 8 September 1948, 1 and 10.

⁴¹⁸ United Nations, "Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, 1 July 1948-30 June 1949," *General Assembly, Official Records: Fourth Session*. Supplement No. 1 (A/930) (Lake Success, New York, 1949), 25.

In the meantime, speculation about an imminent invasion circulated widely in the U.S. and British press.⁴¹⁹ On the 9th, the editorial board of the *New York Times* asserted that though the conflict threatened the peace of the subcontinent, the Nizam was being insensible in his refusal to agree to accession. “The idea that such a State could remain independent, with its own armed forces, foreign service, tariffs, and so on, seems as about as sensible as if Minnesota or another of our states should seek such status here.”⁴²⁰ The *Chicago Tribune* echoed the Indian government’s argument that intervention was necessary “to liberate” the Hindus in Hyderabad from the Razakars, “fanatics” who were “terrorizing the Hindus” and were only “responsive to orders from a wild-talking fanatic [Razvi].”⁴²¹

Between 7 August and 21 September 1948, *The Times* (London) produced more editorial comments on the Hyderabad-India dispute than other major newspapers in the United States and Britain. *The Times*’ opinion on the matter was also more strident than its counterparts, providing clear support for the vocal British Conservative Party opposition to Indian aggression. On 7 August, the board warns, “Time is desperately short.” India could “press home its advantage at the cost of bitterness and bloodshed,” but instead should “save the day and open up again the prospects of a fruitful partnership with Hyderabad.”⁴²² In a reflection on the first year of Indian and Pakistani independence a week later, *The Times* again referred to the “grievous and perilous” situation “where the special claims and circumstances of the NIZAM clearly call for tolerance and

⁴¹⁹ “Nehru Insists ‘for Last Time’ Troops Go Into Hyderabad,” *Washington Post*, 8 September 1948, 6; Robert Trumbull, “India Ready to Invade Hyderabad,” *New York Times*, 8 September 1948, 1, 13; “India to Send Troops to Hyderabad,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 September 1948, 8; “Tension in India,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 9 September 1948, 26; “War Peril Seen With India Policy on Hyderabad,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 September 1948, 14; “India to March on Hyderabad, Nehru Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, 11 September 1948, 8; “Nehru Says His Troops Will March Into Hyderabad,” *Boston Globe*, 11 September 1948, 3; Robert Trumbull, “Hindu-Moslem Conflict May Bring War in India,” *New York Times*, 12 September 1948, E4; and “Abroad: War in India?” *New York Times*, 12 September 1948, E2.

⁴²⁰ “Tension in India,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 9 September 1948, 26.

⁴²¹ Percy Wood, “India’s Troops Poised to Move on Hyderabad,” *Chicago Tribune*, 13 September 1948, A2.

⁴²² “Hyderabad in the Balance,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 7 August 1948, 5.

statesmanship, if justice is to be done and a quickly spreading conflict to be escaped.”⁴²³ Ten days later the situation had yet to be resolved, and the board warned that the increasing tensions there were undermining the possibilities of a settlement in Kashmir. “The interest taken by Pakistan in the Hyderabad dispute has in turn only served to strengthen the suspicion of the Government of India that the NIZAM is trying to create a rallying-point for Muslim disaffection in the heart of the Union.” Hyderabad needed to be settled or a stalemate could happen in Kashmir.⁴²⁴

Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s death on 11 September 1948, offered yet another opportunity for *The Times* to warn its readers about the consequences of conflict breaking out between India and Hyderabad. With Mohandas Gandhi and now Jinnah’s passing, Nehru was left with “the fate of their work in his hands.” He had to know that if Indian forces invaded it “might plunge the whole continent to disaster.” For the first time, the editorial board stated explicitly their position that a resort to force by Indian “will not be excused...the right of the NIZAM OF HYDERABAD to choose freely unfettered by force or pressure, cannot be denied.” They also emphasized a critique that Indians took very seriously and that precipitated comments and debates in India, namely the relationship between Gandhi’s philosophy and the current Indian government: “It is still within the power of MR. NEHRU to choose the way of peace,” the editorial concluded. “There can be no doubt of the course which [Nehru’s] guide, the dead MAHATMA, would have chosen.”⁴²⁵

In the early morning of 13 September, India launched its invasion of Hyderabad. That afternoon, Zahir Ahmed, Secretary-General of Hyderabad, sent a telegram to the President of the Security Council asking for the dispute to be put on the agenda at the earliest possible date.

⁴²³ “Twin Dominions,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 14 August 1948, 5.

⁴²⁴ “Kashmir and Hyderabad,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 24 August 1948, 5.

⁴²⁵ “Mr. Jinnah,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 13 September 1948, 5. The *Boston Globe* editorial board agreed that Gandhi and Jinnah were “restraining influences” on India and Pakistan, and that their losses had negatively impacted both sides (Uncle Dudley, “Unscrambling India,” Editorial, *Boston Globe*, 16 September 1948, 18).

“International peace, fundamental principles of the Charter, and the duty to prevent widespread bloodshed demand immediate consideration of the matter,” he wrote.⁴²⁶ A day later it was decided that the earliest the Council could meet on the subject was on the 16th.⁴²⁷

Critical editorial comment flowed, criticizing India for acting like a colonial power and refusing international mediation at the UN. Summary of editorial coverage in major Anglophone newspapers demonstrates what was at stake for the Indian postcolonial state’s aspirations for global moral leadership if the Hyderabad issue remained on the global stage. *The Times* (London) considered India’s invasion a “deplorable use of force” that put the “peace of the Indian continent...in danger.” It argued India should have agreed to the Nizam’s offer of third party intervention in the form of arbitration, a plebiscite, or the UN Security Council. Instead India hid “[b]ehind the smoke-screen of propaganda,” obscuring the Nizam’s legal standing because the government was “convinced that it is unsafe to allow a Muslim-ruled state to exist in the heart of the Deccan.” India’s determination to treat this a domestic matter reveals that government’s hypocrisy in the face of its relationship to the UN: “Its use of force against a weaker neighbour which resists its claims comes badly from a Government that owes its existence to the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.”⁴²⁸ *The Pakistan Times*, openly hostile to Operation Polo, held nothing back in the condemnation of military intervention. Referencing Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, two prominent figures in the late 18th century British imperial project in the subcontinent, the editorial claims these two did no more than India has now done in Hyderabad. In fact, “Hitler’s invasion of Poland was in no way less justified.” India claimed they were acting as liberators on a mission of peace to bring

⁴²⁶ From Paris to Foreign Office, Confidential, No. 1258, 13 September 1948, TNA: CO 537/3395: Colonial Policy. India-Hyderabad Dispute, 1.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴²⁸ “The Invasion of Hyderabad,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 14 September 1948, 5.

“happiness and freedom” to the people, but “a Government as oppressive and Gestapo-ridden as Hitler’s must possess a tremendous amount of impudence to don the robes of a liberator.” The invasion of Hyderabad could be called nothing less than “a cold-blooded crime.”⁴²⁹

India’s multi-pronged invasion proved overwhelming to Hyderabad’s inferior defenses, and the “police action” became even more visible in the international press. The *New York Times* had a much more critical opinion of the situation than it had held previously. The editorial board acknowledged India had a good case regarding Hyderabad’s location and feudal system, but they were not “convinced by India’s list of grievances and ‘atrocities.’” “The invasion of a neighboring state ‘to restore order,’” the editorial argues, “has an ancient odor that is all too familiar.” The editorial also called into question the international community’s ability to keep the peace. The legal questions of the case “will not be answered by Indian tanks and aircraft. Nor will they be answered by India’s mere insistence that they do not exist.” The “situation clearly calls for international action,” which the Security Council could set in motion.⁴³⁰ The *Washington Post* editorial board wrote three opinions between 15-19 September, commenting on the invasion and its implications for India and the United Nations. The opinions in many ways leaned to the Indian position calling the “acts of terrorism...by the so-called Razakars, a quasi organization of Moslem fanatics” “pretty well substantiated.”⁴³¹ They also agreed with India’s legal argument that Hyderabad was not in fact independent. However, those issues did not persuade the board that India’s “appeal to force so precipitately.”⁴³²

The *Manchester Guardian* called India to task for not being more patient, but was highly critical of the behavior of Muslims inside Hyderabad. The board believed that “the fundamental

⁴²⁹ “War-Guilt,” Editorial, *The Pakistan Times*, 14 September 1948, 4.

⁴³⁰ “India and Hyderabad,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 15 September 1948, 30.

⁴³¹ “Hyderabad,” Editorial, *Washington Post*, 15 September 1948, 8.

⁴³² “Right and Might,” Editorial, *Washington Post*, 16 September 1948, 10.

trouble clearly lies in the social and racial structure of Hyderabad, in the indefensible claim of the small Moslem minority to preserve their privileges, and above all in the readiness of the extremists among the Moslems to enforce their point of view by ruthless intimidation,” threatening both Hindus and modern Muslims, and preventing the Nizam from coming to a settlement. He should have started toward responsible government and placed Hindus in administration after the standstill agreement was signed, but he did not, in large part because the “Razakars—a sort of Moslem storm troopers” were against those changes. The best solution was for both sides to agree to Security Council oversight of a plebiscite and the terms of accession.⁴³³ No matter the level of criticism, observers agreed this case deserved a hearing at the UN.

The Security Council did finally meet on the subject of Hyderabad on the afternoon of 16 September 1948. India’s invasion of the state was already four days old, but the Council resisted an emotional response in favor of legal debate. Council representatives were hesitant to take up the agenda item given the difficult legal questions. Before discussing the invasion itself, the Council first had to determine if Hyderabad had the legal right to bring a case to the Council based on UN procedural rules. Would placing the question on the agenda “imply a certain view of the juridical status of the parties,” as the Chinese delegate asserted?⁴³⁴ Only the Argentinean delegate, José Arce was adamant that the Council take immediate action, referring to the lives that were at stake. The “Security Council is aware that, in a part of the world, one country appears to have invaded another, that fighting is taking place there and people are being killed and wounded. That is a situation which the Security Council must remedy,” he argued.⁴³⁵ Still, it took one hour of debate before the committee voted to approve the agenda item.

⁴³³ “Hyderabad,” Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 September 1948, 4.

⁴³⁴ Tsiang (China), 357th Meeting: 16 September 1948, *SCOR*, No. 109, 5.

⁴³⁵ Arce (Argentina), *SCOR*, No. 109, 5; see also, 7-8.

At this point Ramaswami Mudaliar (India) and Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung (Hyderabad) came to the Security Council table prepared to argue both the legal and moral aspects of their respective cases. With his opening words Jung immediately laid out the rhetorical strategy that would be utilized to support Hyderabad's position throughout the agenda item's life at the Security Council. He built his argument around the ugly fact that Hyderabad was a small independent state being invaded by a stronger state, which was using allegations of "anarchy and disorder" to justify their actions. This "brutal invasion," he said, had "shocked the conscience of the world," and because its military defenses were weak, Hyderabad would have to defend itself "here, before this high organ of the United Nations and before the public opinion of the world. For the world has been stirred to deepest apprehension by this premeditated act of war emanating from a State which has based the claim to its own independence on high spiritual ideals of non-violence." The Council, he urged, needed to listen to the "anguished cry of the people of Hyderabad" and take "swift, authoritative, and determined" action "to stop this threat to international peace and justice."⁴³⁶

Jung went on to ask the Council to intervene in the current situation and study the circumstances leading up to the invasion including the economic blockade, the language in the Standstill Agreement on maintaining order, and the *White Paper's* reference to fascist and communist agitation inside the State. All of India's actions, Jung argued, had been predicated on their desire to force Hyderabad to give up its independence. He then expanded on the legal arguments supporting Hyderabad's legitimacy as an independent state with the right to bring such a case to the UN. Citing Mountbatten's assertion from July 1947 that the States had "complete freedom technically and legally," Jung emphasized Hyderabad's desire to maintain

⁴³⁶ Jung (Hyderabad), *SCOR*, No. 109, 11-12.

independence while also being committed to “the most integrated co-operation with India.” The reference to arbitration in the Standstill Agreement alone made it acceptable for the Security Council to hear the case. “Hyderabad has now chosen to submit to arbitration—in its widest sense—by this high organ of the community of nations,” he concluded.⁴³⁷

Mudaliar presented India’s case in a briefer statement designed to undermine the Hyderabad delegation’s credibility. He aimed to convince the Council of Hyderabad’s dependent status in which case the relations between India and Hyderabad would fall under domestic jurisdiction and outside the purview of international intervention:

I wish to make it clear that in my Government’s view Hyderabad is not competent to bring any question before the Security Council; that it is not a State; that it is not independent; that never in all its history did it have the status of independence; that neither in the remote past nor before August 1947, nor under any declaration made by the United Kingdom, nor under any act passed by the British Parliament, has it acquired the status of independence which would entitle it to come in its own right to present a case before the Security Council.⁴³⁸

Beyond this, Mudaliar sought to correct the “wrong impression” that India’s invasion “was aggression, that we went deliberately, without any provocation, and that by sheer force were doing certain things which were wrong. Anybody who has to use force—and my country even more than any abhors the use of force—anybody who has to use force must think a hundred times, and a thousand times, before force is invoked...The march of events, the compulsion of events, has at last exhausted its patience and has obliged it to take that action.”⁴³⁹ Before the invasion India had received “harrowing tales of death, of arson, of loot, of rape, by what were called the private armies in Hyderabad...encouraged or countenanced by the Government of

⁴³⁷ Jung (Hyderabad), *SCOR*, No. 109, 15 and 18.

⁴³⁸ Mudaliar (India), *SCOR*, No. 109, 18-19.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

Hyderabad.”⁴⁴⁰ It was from this perspective that the situation had to be put before world opinion. The meeting then adjourned until the following Monday to allow delegates time to analyze the situation and receive instructions from their governments.⁴⁴¹

The following day the Nizam surrendered to Indian forces. The Hyderabad regular forces had offered little resistance to the superior Indian military, dissolving quickly under the multi-pronged assault. Reports on the fighting coming out of Hyderabad described the Razakars as putting up the strongest opposition, but they too were unable to stop India’s march toward Hyderabad City and Secunderabad.⁴⁴² The *Washington Post* referred to India’s successful invasion as a “Soiled Victory,” but conceded that the only thing the UN could do at this point was “censure” India for the invasion “and then insist on a plebiscite to legitimize the situation.”⁴⁴³ The *New York Times* seemed resolved to the fait accompli India had achieved, characterizing the invasion as a relatively minor conflict that was carried out against minimal resistance allowing India to implement whatever policies they chose. Relieved that Pakistan took no position, they commented, “When the Indian Union resorted to force it took a gamble that could conceivably have set a flame that might have taken years to quench.” Major outbreaks of violence in Hyderabad and the subcontinent were averted, and the Security Council was now let off the hook regarding this tricky situation.⁴⁴⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* argued that it was now time for India to act generously toward Hyderabad in order to avert “a great disaster.” Though India disputed Hyderabad’s ability to bring the issue to the Security Council, “why should not

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁴¹ Cadogan (UK), *SCOR*, No. 109, 21.

⁴⁴² For a detailed account of the operation from the Indian perspective, see Armed Forces of the Indian Union, *Operation Polo: The Police Action Against Hyderabad, 1948* (Delhi: Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, Manager of Publications, Government of India, 1972).

⁴⁴³ “Soiled Victory,” Editorial, *Washington Post*, 19 September 1948, M14.

⁴⁴⁴ “Cease-Fire in India,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 18 September 1948, 16.

India now itself invite the United Nations to organise and supervise the plebiscite,” which all agree will likely go in India’s favor?⁴⁴⁵

The London *Times*’ criticism of India did not fade with Hyderabad’s surrender. In unequivocal terms the board declared: “The Indian Union can have no claim to sovereignty over Hyderabad.” By imposing its will on a weaker nation, India had violated moral principles. “It is tragic that the rulers of a nation which only a few months ago recognized Mr. Gandhi as its lasting inspiration in public policy should have chosen, for reasons of state, to go against all that he preached and practised. Only one course of action can restore the good name of India” – agree to follow an international decision on the issue.⁴⁴⁶ This is the same line of argumentation as that delivered by Winston Churchill in Parliament in late July, one that resents India’s independence itself.⁴⁴⁷ India from this perspective had not taken over from the British in the case of the princely states, as that government claimed, but was in fact going against its own stated principles and enacting its own form of imperial aggression. The ability to criticize in this vein can be characterized as almost gleeful, a sort of post-imperial schadenfreud. This attitude was met in India by a defensive government and public who were offended by any British criticism of India’s actions toward consolidation and stability, and were quick to defend their continued adherence to Gandhian ideals within a new context.

The final highly critical editorial from *The Times* came on 21 September. The board accused the Indian public, which supported the invasion unlike many observers abroad, of being

⁴⁴⁵ “Hyderabad Surrenders,” Editorial, *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 September 1948, 4.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Churchill successfully engaged Attlee in a debate in the House of Commons in late July 1948 (TNA: PREM 8/870: 1948 Parliament (Procedure) (Churchill on the Hyderabad Question)). Challenging the Labour government’s stance on the Hyderabad issue, Churchill argued that the British had a long-standing relationship with the Nizam that should not have ended with the British withdrawal. Since the Indian Independence Act and official British statements had granted the states the right to independence, they should be willing to help those states defend that right against Indian aggression. On Attlee’s prepared response, see TNA: CAB 127/115: India: Constitutional Position. Briefs for a Debate on Hyderabad.

“oblivious of all but narrowly nationalistic, and even communal, considerations.” Interestingly, the board seemed to let Nehru off the hook, calling his attitude toward Hyderabad “generous,” and instead put the blame for the “ruthless use of force” on more obviously aggressive Patel and Menon – who “now find their most formidable opponent at their mercy.” Even a plebiscite that goes in India’s favor at this point, the editorial argued, would not be above suspicion.⁴⁴⁸ It is important to note that by 1 November, *The Times* board had backed off on their strongest critiques of India’s actions, conceding that the Indian government had put their power to effective use: the administration in the state was back up and running smoothly, order had been restored, and the military was conducting itself well.⁴⁴⁹

The Pakistan Times editorial stance after the Nizam’s surrender turned away from India’s crimes and toward suspicion of the Nizam himself. An article published on 17 September asked the question, “Nizam in League with Indian Govt?” How else to explain the “easy walk-over by the Indian forces” unless the Nizam had actively supported the invasion? Major-General El Edroos, head of the Hyderabad military, never even brought the army into the fight, and there was the fact of the Nizam seeking negotiations with Delhi outside the normal negotiating team in August.⁴⁵⁰ Neither confirming nor denying the assertions of this conspiracy theory, *The Pakistan Times* nevertheless sowed more doubts by pointing out that El Edroos was accepted as a member of the new Cabinet established after the invasion. “Whether Hyderabad’s surrender was brought about by force or trickery,” the editorial continues, “India cannot absolve herself of the guilt of unprovoked aggression.” This behavior was in direct contrast to Pakistan’s policy of non-intervention in the States. The Security Council, they argued, should continue to investigate the

⁴⁴⁸ “Future of Hyderabad,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 21 September 1948, 5.

⁴⁴⁹ “Hyderabad under Indian Rule,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 1 November 1948, 5.

⁴⁵⁰ “Genesis of Hyderabad ‘invasion’; Nizam in League with Indian Govt?” *The Pakistan Times*, 18 September 1948, 1, 8.

matter “even though the complainant has been bludgeoned or bribed into silence.”⁴⁵¹ Suspicions over the Nizam’s complicity in his own defeat continued to circulate through the paper’s pages.⁴⁵²

The *Times of India* editorial on the surrender was titled simply, “Happy Ending.”⁴⁵³

When the Security Council met again to discuss the case on 20 September, the Indian army had occupied the princely state for three days, and the Council had received, through the Indian delegation, a telegram from the Nizam “ordering the withdrawal of the Hyderabad case from the Council.”⁴⁵⁴ As Jung had warned at the previous meeting, the timing of India’s invasion and the swiftness of its advance had presented the Council with a *fait accompli*. The question now was whether the delegations would be willing to take action given India’s current position.⁴⁵⁵ Zahir Ahmed, speaking on behalf of the Hyderabad delegation, stated that though the press had reported the surrender, the delegation had not yet received any direct instructions from the Nizam. As a result he urged the Council not to dismiss the case, and hoped “a solution may be found which will take into account the vital interests of both parties, the principles of international justice and morality, and the authority of the United Nations.”⁴⁵⁶ Mudaliar, again representing India, assured the Council that the Nizam had not produced the telegram under pressure by the Indians. Troops had entered Secunderabad, order was being maintained, and the

⁴⁵¹ “Let There Be Truth,” Editorial, *The Pakistan Times*, 19 September 1948, 4.

⁴⁵² “Nizams [*sic*] Surrender Not a Defeat of Muslim Forces,” *The Pakistan Times*, 19 September 1948, 9; Mutafakkir, “Hyderabad Drama,” Letter to the Editor, *The Pakistan Times*, 23 September 1948, 4; “How Nizam Fell in Line with Indian Union,” *The Pakistan Times*, 29 September 1948, 4; Sheikh Abdul Rashid, “The Path of Peace,” *The Pakistan Times*, Letter to the Editor, 29 September 1948, 6; and B. L. Advani, “Kashmir and Hyderabad” *The Pakistan Times*, Letter to the Editor, 1 October 1948, 6. Though he does not accuse either the Nizam or El Edroos of collusion with the Indian Army, Mir Laik Ali does refer on several occasions to the fact that there had been a surprising lack of planning and preparation on the part of the army command (see Ali, *Tragedy of Hyderabad*, 271-295).

⁴⁵³ “Happy Ending,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 18 September 1948, 6.

⁴⁵⁴ United Nations, “Annual Report of the Secretary-General,” 25.

⁴⁵⁵ Jung (Hyderabad), *SCOR*, No. 109, 16.

⁴⁵⁶ Ahmed (Hyderabad), 359th Meeting: 20 September 1948, *SCOR*, No. 111, 2.

civil administration was operating as before with the full cooperation of the Nizam and his forces. “Our position has been that our troops had to enter Hyderabad in order to prevent atrocities which were being committed on Hyderabad soil; to prevent border incidents; to prevent repercussions in the provinces adjoining Hyderabad and indeed in the rest of the Dominion of India,” Mudaliar stated. “That our forces have entered without much trouble is an indication not of the lack of preparedness of the other side, but of the overwhelming good-will to which the people of Hyderabad extended to our forces.”⁴⁵⁷ He concluded by reiterating that India did not think Hyderabad was competent to bring the issue to the UN. Both Cadogen and the U.S. delegate Philip Jessup pointed out that since the situation had not changed the legal question at hand there was little the Security Council could do. They suggested an adjournment for a few days, with the warning that the UN membership would be watching and expecting India to uphold its stated intent to allow the people of Hyderabad to decide the position of its state.⁴⁵⁸

As Cadogen moved to officially propose adjournment, José Arce of Argentina interjected with an angry condemnation of India’s actions in Hyderabad. He challenged the stated reasons for invasion, the claim to domestic jurisdiction, and India’s contradictory stances in the cases of Hyderabad, Junagadh, and Kashmir. “I shall make no attempt to conceal my surprise at these events and, if I may say so, at the attitude of the Council,” he began. India, he pointed out, had resisted the Council at every turn. The government had offered no information to the Council that was not readily available to the public, and had not produced any documentation to justify their position on Hyderabad’s legal standing. Drawing a cutting parallel to another colonial invasion, Arce compared India’s claim that once they were in control of Hyderabad the people would have their chance to express their will to a song sung by Mussolini’s troops at Addis

⁴⁵⁷ Mudaliar, *SCOR*, No. 111, 4.

⁴⁵⁸ Cadogen, *SCOR*, No. 111, 5 and 7; and Jessup (U.S.), *SCOR*, No. 111, 4-5.

Ababa. “I believe it was called *Faccetta nera* (little dark faces),” he said, “and naturally, in this song the troops promised the people of Abyssinia that they would obtain all they wanted as soon as Italy had gained control.”⁴⁵⁹ Given the situation, Arce was sure that India’s claim of the Nizam’s cooperation was “perfectly true, for it is rather hard to refuse cooperation when it is demanded with a loaded pistol and a foot on your neck.” Arce also made a direct criticism based on India’s past representations at the UN. India’s attitude on domestic jurisdiction in this case, he argued cynically, seemed “difficult to reconcile” given the fact that, “if I remember correctly, [the delegation] has once or twice raised the question of the Indian minority in South Africa.” India had clearly invaded because the Nizam would not agree to accession, and though Arce respected the Government of India, he had seen India “upholding one theory regarding Junagadh with one part of the library and the opposite theory on Kashmir with the other part of the library.” He concluded:

I wish to express my doubts and also a feeling of sorrow because...the United Nations are following the same path as the League of Nations; and I fear that what I have said so often will be shown to be true; that the Big Five, as they are called, do not require any privilege and do not require the veto, because in reality they possess a natural veto—the veto of force, of superiority, and the right given by [arms].⁴⁶⁰

After Arce concluded his comments, he received some support from the representatives of other small states. The Colombian delegate expressed his concern that if Hyderabad were to disappear as a state, the UN principles of “the condemnation of any forcible acquisition of territory, and the self-determination of peoples” would be compromised.⁴⁶¹ The Syrian delegate, Azm, expressed his desire for the item to stay on the agenda and proposed the creation of an ad hoc committee to

⁴⁵⁹ Arce, *SCOR*, No. 111, 8. See coverage: “Hearing of Hyderabad Case is Postponed,” *Irish Times*, 21 September 1948, 1; “Hyderabad’s UN Appeal,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 21 September 1948, 5; and “Hyderabad’s Case Postponed in U.N.,” *New York Times*, 21 September 1948, 3.

⁴⁶⁰ Arce, *SCOR*, No. 111, 8-9.

⁴⁶¹ Umaña Bernal (Colombia), *SCOR*, No. 111, 8.

study the issue. However, the Latin American and Middle Eastern voices could gain no traction in the meeting in the face of permanent members' protection of India.

By the time the Security Council met again on the agenda item at the end of September, the Nizam had reconfirmed his earlier telegram revoking the authority of the Hyderabad delegation's authority.⁴⁶² Those delegates nevertheless continued to challenge the validity of that claim. The discussion at the meeting opened with the question of the Hyderabad delegation's credentials and whether they should be asked to speak given those doubts. This was the first time "the validity of the credentials of a delegation" was debated at the Council, and "addresses on both sides were strong and emotional" throughout the four-hour debate.⁴⁶³ Was the cable from the Nizam authentic? If so, the Council needed to abide by his decision to withdraw the case. If not, the juridical question stood, and the delegation should still be allowed to present their case.⁴⁶⁴ At this point Arce again urged the Council to take action not only on the basis of obligations in the Charter to maintain peace and to the member nations to avoid the threat of force. "I can see no reason for burying our heads in the sand," he admonished. India had admitted clearly what it did and unless the Nizam was to "appear in person before us, unaccompanied by anyone" Arce would not "give credence to any letter or cable bearing his signature." Information from the sheep had only come through the wolf, and it was the duty of the UN and the Council to "protect the little fish from being devoured by the big fish." India had offered no proof to challenge the fact that as of 15 August 1947, Hyderabad was an independent state. Therefore, the Council should request a cease-fire and ask India to withdraw its troops. "I shall never vote for the withdrawal of this item from our agenda," Arce proclaimed, "and I

⁴⁶² "Secretary-General, United Nations, 22 September 1948," *Select Documents on Asian Affairs*, V. 1, 354-355.

⁴⁶³ "Hyderabad Minister Makes Appeal in U.N.," *New York Times*, 29 September 1948, 10.

⁴⁶⁴ See statements by Cadogen (UK), El-Khouri (Syria), and Urdaneta Arbelaez (Colombia), 360th Meeting: 28 September 1948, *SCOR*, No. 112, 1-7.

believe that the only definite steps” possible are through investigation and asking India to abide by the UN Charter. “I shall accept the decision of the majority of the Council,” he conceded, “but I can never agree that a State, even if governed by a dictator who represents only a minority, should be suppressed by force...No State may be destroyed in that way.”⁴⁶⁵

Cadogan again refused to allow Arce’s criticisms to drive the debate. The Chair acknowledged it was not the authenticity of the telegram per se that was at question, but the fact that the Nizam may not have been a free agent when he wrote it. In the absence of other suggestions, he proposed to invite both parties to the table again to discuss only the validity of the letter before the discussion went any further. At this, Arce expressed his exasperation with the proceedings, arguing that the Council had already allowed itself “to become a court with parties debating on both sides of the table,” lowering its prestige. Why prolong the situation by inviting anyone to speak on the matter, he wondered? The only question that should be on the table was whether or not the agenda item should be removed.⁴⁶⁶ Urdaneta Arbalaez of Colombia concurred. “The problem before us now is not exactly a legal one. It is rather a question of a *de facto* situation,” he commented. With no way to know if the second letter from the Nizam was signed under pressure, nothing would be gained by allowing the parties to speak at this point.⁴⁶⁷ Cadogan suggested that the Hyderabad delegate could come to the table to address his challenge to the validity of the Nizam’s letter, and the Indian delegate could respond. With no objections, Mudaliar and Jung joined the table.

The Hyderabad delegation to this point had not had the opportunity to present their full case to the Security Council, and Cadogan specifically asked Jung not to address what rights or

⁴⁶⁵ Arce, *SCOR*, No. 112, 1 and 7-9.

⁴⁶⁶ Arce, *SCOR*, No. 112, 11.

⁴⁶⁷ Urdaneta Arbalaez (Colombia), *SCOR*, No. 112, 11.

wrongs the government of India may have committed, but to confine his comments “to factual statements” that could help the Council judge whether or not the Nizam was a free agent when he signed the last letter.⁴⁶⁸ Jung pointed out that in order to support his claims he had to provide the broader context of the conditions in Hyderabad and requested fifteen minutes to make a fuller statement. “[I]t is quite likely that after this question has been decided I may no longer have a chance to speak to the Security Council,” Jung explained in language indicating an emotional tone, “and I should certainly like to unload my mind before I withdraw from the Council table.” He and his delegation had not acted on the communications from the Nizam because the issues at stake in the Hyderabad case involved “a wider principle...which directly affects the United Nations as a whole.” India had not invaded to maintain order. “There is no one in this room who deep in his heart does not know that” claim was “but a pretext,” that descriptions of the Razakars’ excesses were “a gross and deliberate exaggeration,” and that India had premeditated the war on Hyderabad “as part of the national policy in pursuance of the idea of creating a uniform and united India.” India’s conduct was that of “a conqueror.” The state had taken over the administration of the military, the police, and the civil government.⁴⁶⁹ India was in the process of annexing Hyderabad, and the Security Council should send observers while the mechanisms for a free vote were set up, and intervene to help establish a settlement between the two states. This fight for Hyderabad’s independence and dignity was also being waged to defend the UN Charter, Jung argued. Getting to the heart of the issue he asked, “If the United Nations allows this invasion and the extinction of a State, on the pretext of maintaining order, what legal aid and moral authority will it possess to prevent such action in the future?”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Cadogan, *SCOR*, No. 112, 14-15.

⁴⁶⁹ Jung, *SCOR*, No. 112, 15 and 16-17.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 19. See also: “U.N. and Hyderabad,” *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 September 1948, 8.

Mudaliar responded to Jung's comments defensively, offering point-by-point refutations of "the series of attacks... suggestions, innuendos and reflections" against the Indian government.⁴⁷¹ He pointed out that in fact this was the first time in the last eight months that the Nizam had been a free agent, as the Nizam had made clear in a 23 September broadcast when he stated that India had restored to him the freedom to rule.⁴⁷² Ever since the October coup d'état, Mudaliar argued, "Gangsterism won the day, the Nizam was rendered helpless." Now released from the Razakars, he was free to rule his dynasty, make decisions on behalf of his people, and help calm the disturbance that had taken over in the last eight months. Dismissive of Arce's critiques, Mudaliar said, "I think the Security Council, which is essentially intended to promote peace, will be doing the only right and justifiable thing by refraining from indulging in technical discussions and casuistry about independent States and invasion, and Italy and Abyssinia, and the big fish and the little fish." If asked, he could show the Council thousands of telegrams from Muslims and religious associations all over India "offering thanks... because the canker" that had been dividing Hindus and Muslims had finally been removed. "The Hyderabad difficulty," he concluded, "which was embittering relations and poisoning the atmosphere, has happily ended."⁴⁷³ When he finished his comments no further discussion was held on the issue, and Cadogan adjourned the meeting.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ Mudaliar, *SCOR*, No. 112, 20.

⁴⁷² "Broadcast: Nizam, 23 September 1948," *Select Documents on Asian Affairs*, V. 1, 343-344. B. Shiva Rao, another Indian delegate to the U.N., had written a letter to the editor making this point as well ("Hyderabad," Letter to the Editor, *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 September 1948, 4). See also, "Hyderabad Yields To India 109 Hours After Invasion," *Baltimore Sun*, 18 September 1948, 8.

⁴⁷³ Mudaliar, *SCOR*, No. 112, 23 and 28.

⁴⁷⁴ In his report to the Foreign Office the day after this meeting, Cadogan said he was still debating what position to take on the issue. Assuming the Nizam's letter was real he would likely vote against recognition of the Hyderabad delegation (From United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation) to Foreign Office, No. 51, Immediate, Secret, 29 September 1948, TNA: CO 537/3395: 12). The Foreign Office supported this decision (From Foreign Office to United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation), No. 105, Immediate, Secret, 30 September 1948, TNA: CO 537/3395: 13).

The Security Council did not address the Hyderabad issue again for two months, after Pakistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs requested permission to participate in future discussions on Hyderabad and reported on a deterioration of the situation there, asking for "urgent action by the Council."⁴⁷⁵ Given his vocal criticism of India and the Council's handling of the case in September, the fact that José Arce presided over the Security Council in November could have altered the fate of the agenda item. But according to British reports, Arce "was apparently shaken by Mudaliar's arguments" at the 28 September meeting, and when the issue came up his approach was studiously neutral.⁴⁷⁶ Pandit, in a maneuver demonstrating India's deliberate distancing from the agenda item, had informed Arce in writing that there was no Indian delegate available to address the issue "because [the Indian government] had understood that this question would not be considered at any time or for whatever new motive."⁴⁷⁷ At the meeting Hyderabad was bumped down the list in order to discuss the more pressing India-Pakistan question. By the time that discussion ended the Council had already been in session for three hours, and Arce asked the members how they proposed to proceed. After a brief discussion and without objections the chair agreed to postpone before discussing Hyderabad.

The case showed up again as the fourth item on the Council's 15 December agenda. After briefly describing the documents he had received pertaining to the issue, the Chair (now Van Langenhove of Belgium), invited Pakistan's representative, Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, to speak on the issue.⁴⁷⁸ He informed the chair that in order to cover all of the relevant material his comments could take up two full Security Council meetings. Van Langenhove suggested that

⁴⁷⁵ Letter sent 6 October 1948. United Nations, "Annual Report of the Secretary-General," 26.

⁴⁷⁶ From United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation) to Foreign Office, No. 51, Immediate, Secret, 29 September 1948, TNA: CO 537/3395: 12.

⁴⁷⁷ Arce, 382nd Meeting: 25 November 1948, *SCOR*, No. 127, 28. Pandit's letter is document S/1084, 24 November 1948.

⁴⁷⁸ Documents S/1109, S/1027, S/1115 (India's report), S/1124 (Indian statement), S/1118, S/1011, and S/1031.

since the session in Paris was coming to an end they should postpone until they returned to Lake Success. Though the Syrian delegate suggested putting it on the agenda for the following two days, the Chair pointed out that many people, including Khan, were leaving Paris. The agenda item was yet again postponed without a full discussion.

The next and last time the Hyderabad item made it onto the Security Council agenda was 19 May 1949 by which time India's annexation of Hyderabad was to all intents and purposes irreversible. By the time Khan finally presented the full case to the Council, India's nationalist narrative had already come to dominate the history of the invasion aside from works produced by Pakistani scholars and those in the Hyderabad diaspora.⁴⁷⁹ India had published a propaganda piece in the spring of 1949 to demonstrate how positive their interventions and procedures had been since the invasion. The story it tells is one of a new government that had brought a chaotic, outdated, corrupt, and sometimes violent State into order through projects ranging from irrigation projects and road building to dealing with the Razakars and establishing the basis upon which to build responsible government. The narrative was one of an enlightened Indian state bringing modernity, rationality, and secularism to a place that had been kept in feudal circumstances for centuries.⁴⁸⁰

In V. P. Menon's account of the invasion, occupation, and integration of Hyderabad he claims, "There was not a single communal incident in the whole length and breadth of India

⁴⁷⁹ Pakistan and Hyderabad diasporic writer's English-language work on the invasion, occupation, and integration of Hyderabad include: Ali, *Tragedy of Hyderabad*; Talat A. Wizarat, "Pakistan and the United Nations" *Pakistan Horizon* 40:1 (1987): 95-105; Omar Khalidi, ed. *Hyderabad: After the Fall* (Wichita, KS: Hyderabad Historical Society, 1988); Qutubuddin Aziz, *The Murder of a State: A graphic account of India's brutal invasion of the Muslim-ruled State of Hyderabad in September 1948, the heated debates in the British Parliament and the UN Security Council and the post-invasion holocaust in which over 200,000 Muslims died* (Karachi: The Islamic Media Corporation, 1993); and Aziz Razvi, *Betrayal: A Political Study of British Relations with the Nizams of Hyderabad* (Karachi: South Asia Publications, 1998).

⁴⁸⁰ See Rao, *Hyderabad Reborn*.

throughout the time of the operation.”⁴⁸¹ Another historical account asserts: “Mercifully, Polo produced no reprisal killings.”⁴⁸² But the process of integrating Hyderabad into the Indian state was not as calm and stable as the government and contemporary scholars have claimed. As Sherman has shown, the new administration had to determine how to deal with the juridical system and the large number of detainees held in the wake of the invasion; balance the administrative roles necessary for a transition to democracy; and calm the agitation of the Razakars and the Communist uprisings in Telangana.⁴⁸³ To do so, they had to be innovative and flexible in order to deal with an extremely dynamic and sometimes volatile situation.⁴⁸⁴ The all-India communal violence that had been feared never erupted after the invasion, but quite quickly there was internal violence including the destruction of mosques and buildings, rape, and murder. Pakistanis and others attempted to bring this violence to the light of day through newspaper coverage, the Security Council, and diplomatic entreaties. The Pakistani paper the *Dawn* printed letters from Hyderabad describing “large scale atrocities” by the Indian army against the Muslim population. An October 20 editorial described in Cold War terms an “Iron Curtain” being dropped over Hyderabad preventing the world from learning about a “bloodbath of Muslims” estimated at over 100,000.⁴⁸⁵ A letter to the editor of the *Washington Post* in early December attempted to bring the atrocities against Muslims to the attention of the outside world. In this letter, Kamaluddin Ahmad called the situation a “genocide...the cruelties and mass murders done by the Indian army and the Hindus are shown to be worse than those practiced by the Nazis

⁴⁸¹ Menon, *The Integration of the Indian States*, 378, and 382-385.

⁴⁸² Gandhi, *Patel: A Life*, 483.

⁴⁸³ In her 2007 article in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Sherman claims the Indian occupying force held around 17,500 detainees at the end of the invasion. However, in her 2011 article in *Modern Asian Studies*, she estimates that approximately 21,000 men suspected as being “Razakars” or otherwise not “belonging” to the Indian state were held in detention camps along with their wives and children until they could be deported.

⁴⁸⁴ Sherman, “The Integration of the Princely State of Hyderabad,” 489-516.

⁴⁸⁵ Acting U.K High Commissioner in Pakistan to Commonwealth Relations Office, Important, no. 1289, TNA: PREM 8/817: 16-17.

under Hitler's regime."⁴⁸⁶ The British government considered Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's efforts to bring the atrocities to its attention "a great deal of exaggeration."⁴⁸⁷ Nehru continued to assure both the Pakistanis and the British that the reports were false, though no Pakistani press or observers were allowed into Hyderabad.⁴⁸⁸

The historical record confirms unequivocally that reports of violence against Muslims were not exaggerated, and leaders in the Indian government participated in actively suppressing that information. In response to charges of atrocities, the Indian government sent Pandit Sundarlal and Qazi Muhammad Abdulghaffar on a tour of Hyderabad in November and December 1948 to gather information. The report they produced confirmed "large-scale killings, rape, and destruction and seizure of Muslim property" particularly in the western Marathwada Districts.⁴⁸⁹ The horrors conveyed in the Sunderlal Report are breathtaking, and include first-person accounts of massacres, torture, rape, and arson. In just one example among many, in the western Hyderabadi villages around Shahpur Taluka an estimated 5,500 people were killed or committed suicide over a two-day period, and most Muslim homes and mosques in the area were destroyed.⁴⁹⁰ Though parts of the Report may have been smuggled to Karachi in 1949, the Indian government's suppression was successful; it was never made public until Omar Khalidi published portions of the report in 1988 through a U.S. publisher.⁴⁹¹ In addition to these atrocities, the Indian government had set up concentration camps to hold tens of thousands of

⁴⁸⁶ Kamaluddin Ahmad (Madison, WI), "Blood in Hyderabad," Letter to the Editor, *Washington Post*, 14 December 1948, 12.

⁴⁸⁷ Philip Noel Baker (Commonwealth Relations Office) to Prime Minister Attlee, Serial No. 88/48, 5 November 1948, PREM 8/817: 12-13. See exchange: Liaquat Ali Khan (writing from Paris) to Clement Attlee, 30 October 1948, TNA: PREM 8/817: 27-30; and Attlee to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 1 November 1948, TNA: PREM 8/817, 1 page. See also, John Kenton, "Pakistan Reports Hyderabad Abuse," *New York Times*, 31 October 1948, 7.

⁴⁸⁸ Attlee to Secretary of State, 3-4.

⁴⁸⁹ Khalidi, ed., *Hyderabad: After the Fall*, 97; Sherman, "Moral Economies of Communal Violence," 70.

⁴⁹⁰ Pandit Sundarlal and Qazi Muhammad Abdulghaffar, "Appendix to the Report," in Khalidi, ed., *Hyderabad: After the Fall*, 113.

⁴⁹¹ Khalidi, ed., *Hyderabad: After the Fall*, 97.

detainees, including thousands of surrendering troops. An estimated 17,000 civilians, and as many as 21,000 men designated Arab, Afghan, or Pakistani who along with their wives and children were held in camps surrounded by barbed wire as they awaited possible deportation.⁴⁹² Aziz refers to these events as “an unprecedented holocaust” unleashed in “a forest fire of massacres, plunder and horrifying savagery.”⁴⁹³ In contrast, the official Indian government summary of Operation Polo concludes: “The irresistible advance, joined with the exemplary behaviour of the Indian forces towards the civil population irrespective of religion or creed, nipped the guerilla menace [referring to the Razakars] in the bud and prevented prolonged resistance in the countryside.”⁴⁹⁴

In his article in the *American Journal of International Law* in 1950, Clyde Eagleton wrote with distain and frustration about the Security Council’s failure to act on the issue of India’s invasion and the forcible incorporation of Hyderabad. With the “Question of Hyderabad” at the time of the article still on the Council’s agenda despite the fact that the Council had done nothing, he deemed it “thus far the worst failure of the United Nations” both politically and legally.⁴⁹⁵ In his opinion, the Indian position was completely without legal merit, and the only way they avoided international intervention was through political maneuverings, an assessment that is difficult to dispute though India’s argument also struck a chord with a number of delegations. First, India was savvy about the timing of the invasion. Operation Polo began after the Hyderabad letter reached the Security Council but before 15 September, the date Zahir

⁴⁹² Sherman, “Migration, Citizenship, and Belonging in Hyderabad (Deccan),” 91-94. See also, “Hyderabad Arab Disarmed by India,” *New York Times*, 29 September 1948, 13.

⁴⁹³ Aziz, “Chapter 19: Horrendous Aftermath of India’s Invasion,” in *The Murder of A State*, 199.

⁴⁹⁴ Armed Forces of the Indian Union, *Operation Polo: The Police Action Against Hyderabad*, 121.

⁴⁹⁵ Clyde Eagleton, “The Case of Hyderabad Before the Security Council,” *The American Journal of International Law* 44:2 (1950): 277.

Ahmed proposed in his 21 August telegram to Cadogen.⁴⁹⁶ Apparently India hoped that by acting quickly they could have the situation under their direct control before the situation became more visible on the international stage. In addition, by launching the invasion immediately after Jinnah's death, the Indian government benefitted from the fact that no Pakistani leader was in a position to order military retaliation at that moment.⁴⁹⁷ Second, India used diplomatically acceptable delaying tactics to prevent the issue from being fully aired at the Council in the months following the invasion. Though Mudaliar was present to speak at the two September meetings, the Indian delegation did not send a representative to the November 24, December 2, and December 10 meetings. If not for the tenacity of the Pakistani delegation the case would not have been discussed at all after 28 September 1948.

In addition, India had support at the UN from powerful interests working behind the scenes. According to Sultana Afraz, the Americans and the British did not want to get involved in either the Hyderabad case (or in Junagadh) because in the context of post-war problems and the larger Kashmir issue they chose "political expediency rather than consideration of fair play and justice."⁴⁹⁸ Exchanges between the UK delegation in Paris and the Foreign Office in London reveal that India had political support behind the scenes working to prevent Hyderabad from getting a full hearing at the UN. The British and the Canadians developed a plan to remove the issue from the agenda. Cadogen reported that he would inform the U.S. delegate taking over

⁴⁹⁶ From Paris to Foreign Office, Confidential, No. 1258, 13 September 1948, CO 537/3395: 1.

⁴⁹⁷ Cantwell-Smith, "Hyderabad: Muslim Tragedy," 45. Jinnah died in Karachi on 11 September after an extended illness. His funeral was held the following day, bringing tens of thousands into the streets to mourn the loss of their Quaid-i-Azam. The streets were filled the day after as well, 13 September, as Pakistanis protested India's invasion of Hyderabad, shouting slogans such as "'Nizam Zindabad!' (Long Live the Nizam), and 'Indian Union Barad!' (Do Away with the Indian Union)" ("Pakistani Crowds Urge War on India," *New York Times*, 14 September 1948, 3). See also, "Wave of Indignation Sweeps Pakistan," *The Pakistan Times*, 14 September 1948, 1; and "Lahore Citizens Indignant Over Attack on Hyderabad," *The Pakistan Times*, 16 September 1948, 11.

⁴⁹⁸ Sultana Afraz, "The Junagadh Affair and the Hyderabad Case: The Role of Power," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 309 (1989): 104.

from him as chair that “we should not have any special reason for urging early resumption” on the matter. He also reported that the Canadian delegate was “authorised to propose, at an early stage, that Hyderabad representative be no longer heard.”⁴⁹⁹ Understanding that the Canadian delegate was proposing to remove the item altogether, the Foreign Office recommended they talk with the Indians first, as complete removal would likely only be approved if India agreed to allow UN observers in and voluntarily reported on the steps taken to ensure the people’s voice is heard.⁵⁰⁰ On October 3 the Foreign Office informed Cadogen of the fuller plan to get the item off the agenda. The Canadians and the Indians were to talk and then, at the next meeting, the Indians should volunteer to let in observers and the Council about the steps taken. Then, the Canadians would propose removing the Hyderabad appeal from the agenda.⁵⁰¹ On the 6th of October Cadogen reported that the Canadians would not bring the issue up themselves, but “if it had come up he would have proposed removal of item from agenda [sic].” The Canadian delegate agreed reluctantly to speak to the Indians, and Cadogen understood that the Chinese supported the item’s removal as well. As to whether the Indians planned to invite observers into Hyderabad, it “now seems likely that the Indians have had second thoughts.”⁵⁰² By 14 October, Cadogen reported that despite the Indian delegation’s impatience with the Council’s failure to remove the item from the agenda, it was unlikely the item would be addressed again any time

⁴⁹⁹ From United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation) to Foreign Office, No. 51, Immediate, Secret, 29 September 1948, CO 537/3395: 12.

⁵⁰⁰ From Foreign Office to United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation), No. 105, Immediate, Secret, 30 September 1948, CO 537/3395: 13. (2 pages)

⁵⁰¹ From Foreign Office to United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation), No. 139, Immediate, Secret, 3 October 1948, CO 537/3395: 14.

⁵⁰² From United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation) to Foreign Office, Important, Secret, No. 95, 6 October 1948, CO 537/3395: 15.

soon.⁵⁰³ With a lack of political backing from key Security Council delegations, supporters of UN intervention were bound to be disappointed.

Unlike the South African case championed by Pandit just two years earlier, the Indian government explicitly resisted the global stage in 1948, asserting the prerogative of their new independent status to attend to this “domestic” concern. For the Indian state, their goal had been achieved: to bring the princely state that sat at the “heart” of India into the political, geographical, and discursive boundaries of the nation. This ensured centralized state control over the whole of southern India and consolidated state power at home. The events of the “police action” then became folded discursively into the larger narrative of the spectre of Partition wherein the secular, “civilized” Indian state was obligated to protect the majority Hindu population of Hyderabad from violent, “fanatical” Muslim bands, and at the same time eliminate a possible site of enemy (read: Pakistani) organizing. This attitude by any UN member state threatened not only the prestige but also the future effectiveness of that still-emerging institution. The fact that the belligerent state in this case was India – a member so often leading the fight for justice through the UN – made their actions even more stunning to observers. For the press, that point in particular was their contention with the Indian government’s actions and the failure of the Security Council to intervene.

⁵⁰³ From United Nations General Assembly Paris (United Kingdom Delegation) to Foreign Office, Important, Secret, No. 152, 14 October 1948, CO 537/3395: 18.

**PERFORMING MASCULINITY: VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT, INDIAN
PEACEKEEPING, AND THE GENDERED EMBODIMENT OF NONALIGNMENT, 1953**

In electing India's 'goddess of victory' the first woman president of its General Assembly, the United Nations has marked up another first for Mme Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit.

Christian Science Monitor, 16 September 1953

[I]n this baffling, 'ideological' battle of half-truths, untruths and distortions, the one person who has remained completely unaffected is the Indian soldier. He is the silent hero of this international drama that is being staged on the blood-drenched battlefields of Korea.

Times of India, 9 November 1953

When the United Nations General Assembly convened in New York in the fall of 1953, long-time UN reporter Alistair Cooke described the atmosphere as an "Icy Ballet of Despair" in which the "meek" delegates each "go up to the podium...recite their anxious survey of the world's woes, and retire."⁵⁰⁴ A number of pressing matters weighed on the representatives at this eighth meeting of the Assembly, especially the threat to the organization's ability to function at all in the face of Cold War rivalries. The Korean War had dominated the previous three annual gatherings, and vicious debates over UN involvement in the conflict had placed East-West power politics into stark relief at both the Assembly and the Security Council. For three years troops had fought under the blue UN flag with little to show but a divided, wounded region. The idealistic goal of an international military force tasked with establishing peace between nations had cracked under the realities of a war fought over fiercely defended borders and deeply held

⁵⁰⁴ Alistair Cooke, "Icy Ballet of Despair at U.N.: Sequence of Hollow Victories for the West," *The Guardian*, 1 October 1953, 1.

ideological beliefs. The Security Council was often deadlocked, and the General Assembly had become the location of bitter exchanges. As a result, many had become skeptical of the UN's effectiveness as an instrument for peace. The Soviet bloc remained unwaveringly critical of the UN handling of the Korean conflict. These delegates made forceful denunciations of the United States' efforts "to cloak the destructive, aggressive war against the peaceful population of Korea under the flag of the United Nations."⁵⁰⁵ Others, such as the Dominican Republic's delegate, continued to criticize the power of the veto to block progress in the Security Council.⁵⁰⁶

Yet there also was hope in the air. The tone of most of the delegations' opening speeches to the Assembly might best be described as cautious optimism tinged with nostalgia.⁵⁰⁷ After years of conflict, the long-sought Korean armistice had been signed in July; what had seemed an intractable problem now held the possibility of final resolution. The spokesperson from Egypt said it was not a victory for one side or the other, but rather "a victory for the Purposes and Principles of the Charter."⁵⁰⁸ Many delegates from the Americas, the Middle East, and Asia, while acknowledging its shortcomings, expressed continued faith in the world organization. Western-oriented delegates especially found hope in the fact that many non-Communists UN delegates had worked together "to resist armed aggression by collective force" in Korea, with either direct or oblique critique of communist actions to undermine these efforts.⁵⁰⁹ And certainly the idealism invested in the birth of the UN still maintained rhetorical power. Out-going president Lester Pearson (Canada) acknowledged in his opening address "the inadequacy of our

⁵⁰⁵ Kiselyov (Byelorussian SSR), *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session, Plenary Minutes, Verbatim Records of Meetings, 15 September—9 December 1953* (hereafter Eighth Session) New York: United Nations, 1954), 161.

⁵⁰⁶ Franco y Franco (Dominican Republic), Eighth Session, 131.

⁵⁰⁷ See Zeineddine (Syria), Eighth Session, 149; and Urrutia (Colombia), Eighth Session, 171.

⁵⁰⁸ Badawi (Egypt), Eighth Session, 166.

⁵⁰⁹ Casey (Australia), Eighth Session, 39. See also Thors (Iceland), 142; and Shabander (Iraq), 193.

own efforts in translating aspirations into reality” over the preceding seven years, but he believed the world community was still dedicated to “international efforts towards world co-operation.”⁵¹⁰

There was also optimism in the growing power of the nonaligned Afro-Asian bloc at the General Assembly, a natural outgrowth of UN postcolonialism. Due to the Security Council’s inability to overcome the power of the veto after the Korean War broke out in 1950, the General Assembly largely had taken over the maintenance of international peace and the settlement of disputes. Within this newly configured structure, the Afro-Asian bloc (sometimes referred to as the Arab-Asian bloc, and later the Non-Aligned bloc) had emerged as a dynamic force, balancing the two sides of the ideological divide and carving out a new, more influential position in international diplomacy for postcolonial states with India as a recognized leader. In his opening speech, the Indonesian delegate for one considered his country’s nonaligned position a “privilege,” allowing them to continue “to play actively a humble but independent part in seeking the middle road for mutual conciliation and understanding.”⁵¹¹ Others emphasized the changing role of the Asian, African, and Middle Eastern states in the power structure of the Assembly as a step forward for the organization.⁵¹²

Amongst those states most committed to nonalignment, India in particular had reason for optimism in the fall of 1953. Both at the General Assembly and in Korea, Indian representatives were enacting the nonaligned position, resulting in much optimism for the postcolonial state’s potential leadership on the global stage from New York and Delhi. In New York, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, once again serving as India’s head of delegation, was elected to serve as the first female president of the Assembly. This was a remarkable achievement made even more so in

⁵¹⁰ “Address by Mr. Lester B. Pearson,” Eighth Session, 2.

⁵¹¹ Sunario (Indonesia), Eighth Session, 47.

⁵¹² Zeinneh (Syria), Eighth Session, 150.

hindsight given that only two other women have served in this position to date.⁵¹³ Though the vote was delayed two hours by a Cold War scuffle over the People's Republic of China's right to replace the Republic of China at the UN, the outcome of the presidential vote itself was not a surprise. The United States, Pakistan, and other member states had expressed their support for Pandit's election, essentially guaranteeing the honor would go to India. In her short acceptance speech, Pandit referred to the "choice as a tribute to [India] and a recognition of its profound desire to serve the" UN and the cause of world peace. It was recognition, too, she said, of the role women played in "this great Organization."⁵¹⁴ Certainly it was recognition of India's leadership in Afro-Asian bloc, which the United States grudgingly acknowledged, though US policy makers despised the nonaligned position, "believe[ing] that India, in its foreign policy, was acting just like a frightened woman."⁵¹⁵ In the press conference after the meeting that night, Pandit was faced with a barrage of questions focused mostly on her clothing rather than how she planned to preside. Reacting to this belittling gendered gaze, she was reported to have asked the press "not to regard me as Exhibit A from India, but as someone who is trying to devote herself to her job and the promotion of peace."⁵¹⁶ Pandit had made it from the periphery of the UN at the Charter conference in 1945 to the center of Assembly leadership, yet she remained for some journalists and other observers less a skilled diplomat than a symbol of Indian womanhood – and an example of the femininity attached to India's foreign policy position on the global stage.

Simultaneously and half a world away, Indian diplomacy was being enacted by a very different set of actors. As Pandit assumed the presidency in New York, the Indian military was

⁵¹³ As of 2015, only three women have presided over the UN General Assembly: Pandit (1953), Angie Brooks of Liberia (1969), and Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain (2006).

⁵¹⁴ "Address by Mrs. Pandit, President of the eighth session of the General Assembly," Eighth Session, 14.

⁵¹⁵ Andrew J. Rotter, "Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947-1964," *The Journal of American History* 81:2 (1994): 536.

⁵¹⁶ Henry Harris, "U.N. Elects Mme. Pandit," *Boston Globe*, 16 September 1953, 1.

embarking on its first postcolonial overseas mission in an early experiment in UN peacekeeping. The nonaligned position was now being tested with men's boots on the ground. As the Korean conflict had dragged on, India's refusal to side with either the Western or the Communist position had provided the Indian state with a unique opportunity to perform its stated foreign policy goals. Representatives at the UN – predominantly male – worked to mobilize a moderating position between continuing pressure from the United States for a military solution, and Soviet demands for foreign troop withdrawal and Communist Chinese membership at the UN. An Indian-led plan to deal with the repatriation of prisoners of war (POWs) devised by the controversial V. K. Krishna Menon had been influential in finally bringing both sides to agreement. Beginning just four days before Pandit's election, the 6,000 soldiers of the newly formed Custodian Force (India) (CFI) began the process of taking over responsibility for close to 23,000 unrepatiated POWs at the 38th parallel (the demilitarized zone or DMZ) in Korea. The mission's motto: "For the Honour of India." The soldiers and their leaders were hailed as heroes in the Indian press and are enshrined in Indian historiography as the forbearers of India's commitment to UN peacekeeping.⁵¹⁷ In an assessment after the CFI returned home, the *Times of India* wrote that the "mission... proved that India's foreign policy is aimed at world peace and that the Indian army is a messenger of peace."⁵¹⁸

This chapter begins with an analysis of the reaction to Pandit's arrival at the center of General Assembly leadership. Now an experienced delegate and recognized leader at the UN, journalists and fellow delegates continued to marvel at the presence of this Indian woman within a highly masculinized space and place. For some, Pandit's legitimacy was undermined by

⁵¹⁷ As of 2015, India has contributed nearly 180,000 troops to UN peacekeeping missions, far more than any other state ("India and United Nations Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding," Permanent Mission of India to UN, New York, <https://www.pminewyork.org/pages.php?id=1985>. Accessed 25 September 2015).

⁵¹⁸ "Aim of India's Foreign Policy: 'World Peace,'" *Times of India*, 28 July 1954, 9.

suspicion that her gender, her affective bond with her brother or both prevented her from effective governance. The chapter then pivots to assess the arena of the competitive masculine postcolonial diplomacy of Nehruvian nonalignment that was inhabited by male diplomats at the UN and the soldiers of the CFI in Korea simultaneously with Pandit's performance elsewhere in UN geopolitics. This is not only a story about India and its relationship with a developing UN, but also a history of peacekeeping through militarized action outside the borders of the state. Within the complexity of Cold War politics wherein femininity was attached to not just women but states and the behavior of men as well, the CFI offered a clear opportunity to test India's resolve to manage geopolitical outcomes in Asia, one that was measured in gendered terms.

Scholars identify India's role in the Korean armistice as a key moment in India's "golden age" of diplomacy, an example of the possibilities of nonalignment and proof of India's commitment to peaceful negotiation.⁵¹⁹ According to A. Appadorai, this was one of the times in the 1950s when "India's voice was listened to with respect and she made an effective impact on the course of international developments."⁵²⁰ In most scholarship on India and the Korean War outside Indian historiography, the CFI is lightly attended to. Histories concerned with the role India played as mediator in the Korean conflict generally end with 1952 when Krishna Menon used his many tactics of persuasion and negotiation to put together an (initially) successful POW resolution. When the CFI is addressed, the experiment in dealing with the non-repatriate POWs is generally regarded as a failure. India's neutral position and military management of the prisoners was not enough to disrupt the ideological positions held by the opposing sides, each of

⁵¹⁹ See Swadesh Rana, "India, the United Nations, and World Peace," in *India's Foreign Relations During the Nehru Era*, edited by M.S. Rajan (Delhi: National Printing Works, 1976), 267; C. S. R. Murthy, *India's Diplomacy in the United Nations: Problems and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Lancer's Books, 1993), 44; and Satish Nambiar, "India's Role in United Nations Peacekeeping," in *India's Role in the United Nations*, edited by Nawaz B. Mody and B.N. Mehrish (Bombay: Allied Publishers Ltd., 1995), 10.

⁵²⁰ A. Appadorai, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy, 1947-1972* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 50. The other examples Appadorai mentions are Indo-China (1954) and the Suez Canal crisis (1956).

which effectively undermined the process of determining individual prisoner's personal desires regarding repatriation. Violence and unrest amongst the prisoners themselves further destabilized the CFI's work.

Newspapers in the United States and Britain reported on the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) (chaired by India) and the CFI mostly in response to dramatic events – a hostage taking, a shooting, or especially tense debate at the NNRC. Not so in India. In three prominent regional newspapers – *The Hindu* (Madras), *The Statesman* (Calcutta), and the *Times of India* (New Delhi) – events in Korea and the Indian troops' performance garnered dozens of editorial comments and almost daily coverage for a full six months, much of it front page news. The story played out like a melodrama, complete with heroes and villains, obstacles for the protagonists to overcome, and a triumphant return once the mission was complete. The troops were considered heroes and the chair of the NNRC, Lieutenant General K.S. Thimayya, and the commander of the CFI, Major General S.P.P. Thorat, both received awards for their service to the nation upon their return.⁵²¹ At over six feet tall and nearly 200 pounds, Thimayya was an imposing figure whose charisma, humour, strength, and straightforward nature made him immensely popular with his soldiers and superiors alike.⁵²² With his long ties to the nationalist movement, Anglicized education and erudition, and stature as a defender of the Indian nation at home, Thimayya had all the credentials necessary to perform the realpolitik of masculinized Indian postcolonial diplomacy at a moment of global crisis. At stake for the mission were India's Gandhian legacy and the capacity of postcolonial Indian leaders to prove their fortitude when their credibility as "real men" was suspect. As this history shows, the Indian state worked to

⁵²¹ These were two of only twelve Indian soldiers in a book on post-independence military leaders selected for their "good leadership and strength of character" (Major General V. K. Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army: Biographies of Twelve Soldiers* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005).

⁵²² Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 87.

manage the spectre of an effeminate India as Nehru sought to create and sustain a permanent role for India as the vanguard of the Afro-Asian bloc at the UN and beyond.

Pandit as ‘Exhibit A’

The heavy press coverage and congratulatory messages in the UN delegates’ opening speeches after Pandit’s election as President of the General Assembly rivaled both the volume and tone of the rhetoric which had followed her performances in San Francisco in 1945 and at Lake Success in 1946. But beyond many references to those two defining moments, observers offered few concrete examples of Pandit’s accomplishments in Indian political leadership or as a former ambassador to Moscow and Washington. Instead, her presence was described through often metaphorical language infused with an orientalized gaze that diminished her substance by attributing so much power to her form. In the words of Phyllis Battelle: “Her eyes, her voice, the way she walks – regally even though her physical smallness is exaggerated by the engulfing silk Sari garb she wears – all have authority.”⁵²³ She had “built steam under the final drive abroad” for Indian and Pakistani independence in 1947.⁵²⁴ She combined the best of “East and West.”⁵²⁵ She was glamorous and noble.⁵²⁶ The *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Los Angeles Times* labeled her India’s “goddess of victory.”⁵²⁷

⁵²³ Battelle, “Mme. Pandit Elected UN President,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 16 September 1953, 1.

⁵²⁴ “Mme Pandit Records Another ‘First,’” *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 September 1953, 2.

⁵²⁵ “Mme. President,” Editorial, *Boston Globe*, 16 September 1953, 18; and “U.N. President,” Editorial, *Washington Post*, 17 September 1953, 10;

⁵²⁶ “Mme. President”; “Profile—Mrs. Pandit,” *The Observer*, 20 September 1953, 3.

⁵²⁷ “Mme Pandit Records Another ‘First’”; “India’s Victory Goddess Marks Up Another First,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 September 1953, 10.

Many observers did celebrate the fact that a woman, and an Asian woman at that, had reached such a high diplomatic post at the UN.⁵²⁸ Fellow Indian UN delegate Rajeshwar Dayal later recalled that Pandit's election was "a tribute to Indian womanhood."⁵²⁹ El Salvador's UN delegate was one of several who pointed out that the election represented "affirmation" of the UN Charter's support for equal rights between men and women.⁵³⁰ Many also expressed respect for Pandit's experience and ability. By 1953 she was highly experienced and highly visible on the global stage, having led the UN delegation many times over, and served as India's ambassador to the Soviet Union (1947-49) and the United States and Mexico (1949-51). Her record impressed the *Christian Science Monitor*, which approved the Assembly's decision to elect such "a distinguished successor to the distinguished individuals" who had preceded her.⁵³¹ However, no reporter (not even those writing for the *Times of India*) and only a handful of delegates focused on Pandit's achievements at the UN or as an ambassador without reference to her feminine demeanor and embodiment of an acceptable, respectable Indian womanhood. As had happened at the birth of the UN, Pandit's physical appearance and "native" dress continued to garner undue attention. Observers remained fixated on this "exotically different new President of the U.N. General Assembly."⁵³²

At the press conference after Pandit's acceptance speech, her objectification based on gender and difference was immediately laid bare. Rather than substantive questions about her record or her plans as president, reporters were most curious about her clothing. Battelle

⁵²⁸ See Erwin D. Canham, "The Time for Leadership," *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 September 1953, 20; "Current Topics: Mrs. Pandit Honoured," *Times of India*, 17 September 1953, 6; Claire Cox, "Mrs. Pandit's Election Is Tribute to India," *Times of India*, 17 September 1953, 5; and "Mme. Pandit, Heading UN, Raps Racism," *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 September 1953, 4. Also, Sunario (Indonesia), Eighth Session, 47.

⁵²⁹ Rajeshwar Dayal, *A Life of Our Times* (New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, 1998), 194, 195.

⁵³⁰ Urquia (El Salvador), 444th Plenary, 24 September 1953, 142.

⁵³¹ "Plaudits for Mme Pandit," Editorial, *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 September 1953, 20.

⁵³² Battelle, "Madame Pandit's Saris Could Set a New Style In Fashions," *New Journal and Guide*, 10 October 1953, C11.

described Pandit's assessment of "her newspaper audience" as almost sad when Pandit asked that they not regard her as "Exhibit A from India," but as a person devoted to her job "and the promotion of peace."⁵³³ The press, however, clearly considered Pandit's dress and appearance important, with references to her gray sari and how it accentuated her "silvery" hair by both male and female reporters in papers as diverse as the *Atlanta Daily World*, the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*, the UK papers *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, the Australian *Sydney Morning Herald*, and the *Times of India*.⁵³⁴

Remembering the press conference in her memoirs, Pandit described the questions about her sari as "almost unintelligent" and difficult for her to answer politely because she believed, "[n]o man would have been asked these meaningless questions by the world press." She was frustrated that "after all the years I had been in public life, such inane queries" such as the color of her clothing "should be put to me simply because I was a woman."⁵³⁵ Pandit's irritation with this preoccupation did not prevent her from capitalizing on the attention, however. In "Writer Finds Mme. Pandit Real Woman Away from UN," Battelle describes an interview with Pandit "in the pink-walled study of her three-room hotel suite on Park Avenue" later in September. She writes of Pandit discussing her daughters, grandchildren, and brother, and demonstrating to the reporter how she wraps her sari around herself "[w]ith quick, deft gestures of her little fingers." Admitting to wearing Western clothing during her school days, Pandit said she now wore saris

⁵³³ Battelle, "Mme. Pandit Elected UN President"; Henry Harris, "U.N. Elects Mme. Pandit, Bars Seat to Red China," *Boston Globe*, 16 September 1953, 1. ; "Plaudits for Mme Pandit," Editorial, *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 September 1953, 20; and Henry Harris, "First Woman President of U.N. Knows How to Call Angry Men to Order: Are Her Tears Real?," *Boston Globe*, 20 September 1953, A3.

⁵³⁴ Battelle, "Mme. Pandit Elected UN President"; Henry Harris, "U.N. Elects Mme. Pandit"; Kathleen Teltsch, "Mme. Pandit Mutes Status as a Woman: New U.N. President Hopes Her Sex and Origin Will Not Be Stressed," *New York Times*, 16 September 1953, 3; "Mrs Pandit U.N. President: Mr Vyshinski Defeated on China," *Guardian*, 16 September 1953, 1; "Profile—Mrs. Pandit," *The Observer*, 20 September 1953, 31; "World Citizen First; Woman Second," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1953, 8; and Claire Cox, "Mrs. Pandit's Election Is Tribute To India," *Times of India*, 17 September 1953, 5.

⁵³⁵ Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 276.

because they “are so much more beautiful, and so comfortable, one doesn’t need to wear girdles and things.”⁵³⁶ Existing at the intersection of diplomat and celebrity, Pandit proved flexible in her approach to the orientalized gaze pointed her way.

In addition to sexualized comments on her “slender figure molded into the statuesque sari of her people,” reporters strove to describe how Pandit’s “feminine charm” related to her leadership abilities.⁵³⁷ Because one person so rarely embodied these two categories at the United Nations, her legitimacy as both woman and diplomat were destabilized and in need of constant reiteration. In the words of an Australian reporter: “World figure that she is, Mrs. Pandit is also a woman, deeply feminine at that.”⁵³⁸ *The Observer*, which represented well Pandit’s record of political experience and opinion from her leadership in the INC and public health interests in India, to her Ambassadorships aboard, still expressed admiration for her abilities as both charming woman and diplomat in combination, stating that she was “usually dressed in pastel-colored saris, which set off her distinguished looks to great advantage, yet she has contested the toughest American and Russian diplomats, emerging always unruffled and usually victorious.”⁵³⁹

The connection between Pandit’s gender and her diplomatic ability also colored the congratulatory comments made by the majority of Assembly delegates (all male, and predominantly from Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia) in their general debate speeches.⁵⁴⁰ Pakistan’s Zafrullah Khan said that in electing Pandit “the Assembly has secured a president who in her person combines not only the charm and the grace that go with her sex, but

⁵³⁶ Battelle, “Writer Finds Mme. Pandit Real Woman Away from UN,” *Atlanta Daily World*, 22 September 1953, 3.

⁵³⁷ “Mme. President,” Editorial, *Boston Globe*, 16 September 1953, 18; “Profile—Mrs. Pandit.” See also, Cox, “Mrs. Pandit’s Election Is Tribute To India.”

⁵³⁸ “Grandmother Wields Gavel Over 60 Nations,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1953, 4.

⁵³⁹ “Profile—Mrs. Pandit.”

⁵⁴⁰ de Pimentel Brandao (Brazil), Eighth Session, 169.

also great dignity and high intellect.”⁵⁴¹ Others claimed her presidency would be successful because of the special ability of women to help settle human problems and maintain peace.⁵⁴² Egypt’s delegate offered up a prayer to emphasize that point: “Madam, may the Almighty guide your merciful woman’s hand so that it may, like a magic wand, transform the insecure and divided world in which we live into a better world where peace, law and justice shall reign.”⁵⁴³ Her leadership was accepted, even celebrated, by most UN delegates in these public utterances, but that acceptance was predicated on the reiteration of a woman’s “special” leadership abilities.

Though much smaller in number, there also were negative responses to Pandit’s election in some newspapers, opinions that were directly linked to disapproval of India’s nonaligned position and Pandit’s close relationship with her brother. The *Baltimore Sun* reported that one British newspaper had gone so far as to call on the UK to leave the UN in protest. Accusing both Nehru and Pandit of showing sympathy to Britain’s and America’s enemies, the paper warned that as president Pandit could “‘make her sympathies felt to Britain’s and America’s cost.’” The UN never benefited the British anyway and now it was at risk of real harm.⁵⁴⁴ The Long Island, New York daily *Newsday* conceded that Pandit was “a charming and intelligent woman, an interesting addition to the United Nations General Assembly,” but argued that her reward was undeserved. Pandit was not just a diplomat; she was “the personal representative of her brother” who had taken a position of appeasement in the Korean conflict and “cozied up to Red China and Russia” during the war. “Allowing her to preside now,” *Newsday* concluded, “is an insult to the nations which fought” in Korea.⁵⁴⁵ The *New York Times* editorial board had a more moderate opinion on the subject, arguing there was reason to believe Pandit was not siding too much with

⁵⁴¹ Zafrullah Khan (Pakistan), Eighth Session, 43.

⁵⁴² U Myint Thein (Burma), Eighth Session, 172; Trejos Flores (Costa Rica), Eighth Session, 174.

⁵⁴³ Badawi (Egypt), Eighth Session, 169.

⁵⁴⁴ “Britain is Urged to Quit The U.N.,” *Baltimore Sun*, 17 September 1953, 1.

⁵⁴⁵ “Undeserved Reward,” Opinion, *Newsday*, 17 September 1953, 59.

the communists. In 1952 after her cultural tour of China (discussed further below) she commented, “that Chinese Communism methods ‘did not fit in with her concept of democracy.’” And, she had educated two of her daughters in the United States. The open support of the British, the Americans, and the Soviets at the UN and her “charm, position and accomplishments” made her “the logical candidate [and] impose[d] on her a special kind of responsibility to wield the powers of her office with fairness and evenhanded justice.”⁵⁴⁶

Henry Harris’s complex and at times conflicted assessment of Pandit in a long article for the *Boston Globe* brings together many of these threads. Gender and emotion remain central to Harris’s assessment of Pandit’s abilities, but his acknowledgment of her real record at the United Nations and within the Cold War context lead to a slightly more nuanced portrayal. The article opens with the fairly astonishing statement that that “The first woman president of the U.N. General Assembly...was at least partially justified in asking correspondents not to treat her as ‘Exhibit A from India.’” Harris then devotes a large portion of the 1500 word article to attend to this question of Pandit as an “exhibit,” and how her gender, family, and demeanor impacted perceptions of her:

[S]he herself, is somebody, no one here will deny. But it is also impossible for her to escape being to some extent an exhibit, as the first woman, and a very attractive one, to be president... as the sister of Prime Minister Nehru, an exceedingly controversial world figure; and as the representative of India, which seeks every opportunity to mediate the cold war...But it is hard for anyone of the feminine gender to dissociate herself from her sex, when she has raised three daughters...when she is always looking for gifts for her four grandchildren, and when she has often served as official hostess for her brother...Nor can Mme. Pandit deny something that is an open secret in the Indian delegation—that she is a good cook.

Harris also offered a lengthy meditation on Pandit’s clothing on the second page of the article under the jumpline: “Mme. Pandit Wears ‘What Is Available,’ and on Her It Looks Very Well.”

⁵⁴⁶ “Mme. President,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 16 September 1953, 32.

The colors she chooses to wear “excellently set off her figure, her young features and white hair,” he wrote. And even the coat she wore over her sari at a General Committee meeting made her look “humble,” but did “not detract from her appearance.” These lengthy sections on appearance and clothing, set off from the rest of the article, read like a man’s observation of a woman rather than a journalist’s considered assessment of a diplomat.

Harris is also critically concerned with Pandit’s “emotional” character. His article begins on page one of the paper just below the fold with the subtitle, “Are Her Tears Real?” He is referring, of course, to Pandit’s “moving” speech during the 1946 debates over racism in South Africa, which Harris agrees swayed the General Assembly on the Indian issue. Given her ability to affect opinion then and the previous year in San Francisco, Harris concedes she became “a force in her own right” at the UN, but he questions the legitimacy of that power. How sincere were “the restrained tears with which she occasionally punctuates her speeches?” he wondered. “How far do they represent her emotions and how far the native shrewdness she is known to possess?” Her emotion is not benign. He reports Pandit is known to have the “Nehru temper” and is capable of terrifying “many associated with the Indian delegation.” This, he argues, could undermine her ability to act as “a quasi-judicial force, [which is] something very difficult for an emotional person.” This language recovers the central pulse of the debate between Pandit and Smuts in 1946 when Smuts and others challenged Pandit’s supposed over-emotionality, claiming legitimate decisions should be based on unemotional, measured consideration.

Harris wondered too about the limits of Nehru’s confidence in Pandit’s diplomatic abilities given the fact that he had called on Krishna Menon to negotiate the UN resolution “which broke the deadlock over prisoner repatriation” even though Pandit was then head of India’s delegation. Was there friction between these two diplomats as a result? Despite his

skepticism and misgivings about her personality, Harris concludes that Pandit does have the experience, skill, and inclination to fulfill her duties as President well. He points out that because India wants to continue to be a “world mediator,” it behooves her to “to act with great impartiality in the chair.” Also, as a newly independent nation, India enforced strict protocol in order to gain respect, something she would not want to undermine. Furthermore, she was an aristocrat, an educated daughter of a respected India lawyer, and she was not married off early – yet another reference to the acceptability of the Indian womanhood Pandit embodied. She served three sentences in prison doing “hard labor,” and is regarded in India “as an extrovert, eloquent and shrewd,” as opposed to her brother, “an introspective intellectual.” In the final assessment Harris believes Pandit can “dissociate herself from the Indian delegation” and lead fairly, a task perhaps made easier since ill-feeling was reported to exist between her and Krishna Menon, India’s new head of delegation. Though much of Harris’ article could lead a reader to think otherwise, he assured his readers he did not believe Pandit was merely “window dressing.” What she would do with her power, however, remained to be seen.⁵⁴⁷

Several observers, including Harris, expressed optimism that Pandit could use her “skill and tact” to ease tensions between rival Cold War delegations.⁵⁴⁸ Pandit’s biographer Vera Brittain writes that Pandit “was regarded as peculiarly well qualified to bring a healing touch to existing pathological antagonisms” in this moment.⁵⁴⁹ But hope that Pandit’s position as president would help move the two sides toward a permanent peace proved generally unfounded. In a televised news interview days after the election, Pandit deflected questions about India’s relationship to the United States and her own plans for the Korean question at the UN saying, “as

⁵⁴⁷ Harris, “First Woman President of U.N. Knows How to Call Angry Men to Order,” *Boston Globe*, 20 September 1953, 1 and A-3.

⁵⁴⁸ See for example “U.N. President,” Editorial, *Washington Post*.

⁵⁴⁹ Vera Brittain, *Envoy Extraordinary: A Study of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Her Contribution to Modern India* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1965), 113.

head of the United Nations I am more or less a citizen of the world; someone who has to stay aloof and...help in...an impartial way the proceedings of the General Assembly. Therefore, it would not be possible for me to comment on any specific issue.”⁵⁵⁰ For the majority of the three-month session, she followed through with this position and she did not lay claim to a powerful position on the Korean subject. Press reports covering Pandit’s tenure as president were more likely to be about speeches delivered or a luncheon held in her honor than for anything controversial happening at the General Assembly itself. Pandit no longer commanded attention at the UN as an outsider seeking access or justice at the world organization, and her increased responsibility required of her a different self-representation than in previous years. As a well-known, more experienced diplomat her role had shifted within the increasingly complex and complexly gendered politics of the Cold War world.

India, Korea, and Nonalignment

Scholars and observers identify the fall of 1950 as the birth of the nonaligned position at the UN – a full three years before Pandit’s election at the General Assembly.⁵⁵¹ When the North Korean army launched a surprise military surge south of the 38th parallel in June 1950, the UN Security Council had responded swiftly.⁵⁵² Given the conflict’s Cold War origins, the threat of a Soviet veto would have stymied the Council’s actions under normal circumstances. But the Soviets at that time were boycotting the Security Council to protest Communist China’s

⁵⁵⁰ Longines-Wittenauer Interview with Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, 18 September 1953, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoXfXzIE_oA. Accessed 22 September 2015.

⁵⁵¹ See Francis Parakatil, *India and United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations* (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co (Pvt) Ltd, 1975), 17; L. M. Goodrich, “The United Nations and Korea,” *Journal of International Affairs* 6 (1952): 127-128; Arend Lijphart, “The Analysis of Bloc Voting in the General Assembly: A Critique and a Proposal,” *The American Political Science Review* 57:4 (1963): 902.

⁵⁵² Sydney Bailey, *The Korean Armistice* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 7. The UNCOK was established by A/RES/195(III) on 12 December 1948. See also, K.P.S. Menon, *India and the Cold War* (Chowpatty, Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1966), 32-33.

exclusion from UN membership. Without the Soviet veto, the Council quickly passed a resolution that called for a cease-fire and instructed the UN Command to oversee a military withdrawal.⁵⁵³ In what some consider the first direct action by the emerging nonaligned bloc, the Indian and Egyptian delegations (then non-permanent members of the Council) abstained from that first rushed vote because they had not yet received instructions from their respective governments.⁵⁵⁴ Two days later the North invaded Seoul, and the United States and its allies were able to push through another resolution recommending “the Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and restore international peace and security in the area.”⁵⁵⁵ For the first time, soldiers from member states were to be organized into a military force under the auspices of the UN in an effort to end hostilities on the Korean peninsula, creating the United Nations Command (UN Command). Once the Soviets returned to the Council with their veto power, resolutions on Korea were no longer able to pass in the limited-membership and big power-dominated Security Council. Therefore, the United States and its allies shifted action on the Korean conflict to the more democratic General Assembly.⁵⁵⁶ The decision to take the issue to the Assembly created the circumstances through which new diplomatic configurations could take shape at the UN, establishing an alternative within Cold War UN politics that drew on the power of UN postcolonial affiliations – the Afro-Asian bloc.

⁵⁵³ S/Res/82 (1950) [S/1501], 25 June 1950.

⁵⁵⁴ G. H. Jansen, *Nonalignment and the Afro-Asian States* (Washington: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), 102.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.* See also S/Res/84 (1950) [S/1588], 7 July 1950, which unified command of the forces under US leadership and allowed all who participated in the operations to utilize the UN flag.

⁵⁵⁶ See Stueck, “The United Nations, the Security Council, and the Korean War,” in Vaughan Lowe, Adam Roberts, Jennifer Welsh, and Dominik Zaum, eds., *The United Nations Security Council and War: The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 267 and 273.

Much was at stake ideologically and pragmatically for the Indian state in the Korean conflict. India's foreign policy claimed a commitment to utilizing the ideals of the UN to prevent a broader war. Pragmatically, the domestic need for economic recovery and development necessitated help from both the Americans and the Soviets, which prohibited siding with either of the great powers.⁵⁵⁷ Neither financially nor militarily strong, India sought to occupy a middle ground from which to maintain ties with all in the hope of angering none. In Nehru's words: "If we did align ourselves we would only fall between two stools."⁵⁵⁸ In addition, India needed to maintain a working regional relationship with its powerful neighbor, China. Ideologically, nonalignment produced an Indian moral exceptionalism with its close association to non-violence. In the words of one Indian nationalist scholar, nonalignment could be "considered specifically adapted to India; it is a policy which is inherent in the circumstances of India; in the past thinking of India, in the conditioning of the Indian minds during the struggle for freedom, and in the circumstances of the world to-day."⁵⁵⁹ To advocate nonalignment at the UN, then, the postcolonial state not only protected its internal economic and political circumstances, but also bolstered its credibility as an inheritor of the ancient tradition of "Ahimsa" (non-injury) as embodied by the Gandhian non-violent independence movement.

Despite this moral positioning, India's official nonaligned foreign policy did not translate into universal approbation or adoration. In Andrew J. Rotter's research on gender and foreign relations between South Asia and the United States in this period, he found that U.S. policy makers thought the Indian state "was acting just like a frightened woman," as opposed to the

⁵⁵⁷ Dhiraj R. Chamling, *India and the United Nations* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1978), 31; Paul M. Edwards, *United Nations Participants in the Korean War: The Contributions of 45 Member Countries* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2013), 162.

⁵⁵⁸ "We Will Not Compromise," Speech during debate on Foreign Affairs in Parliament, New Delhi, March 28, 1951, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*, Volume Two (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1963), 284.

⁵⁵⁹ Parakatil, *India and United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations*, 14. See also, 16, 27, and 31.

manlier Pakistan, which had embraced the American position in exchange for military aid. Further, Indian men were considered “passive, servile, and cowardly,” and “inclined to homosexuality.” Nehru himself was described by the CIA as emotional, hypersensitive, “volatile and quick tempered,” all of which helped explain the stance of “neutrality” in the Cold War.⁵⁶⁰ These constituencies in the U.S. government viewed India’s decision not to contribute troops to UN forces in Korea as proof of this “passive and week-kneed” policy.⁵⁶¹

Despite this attitude, India was joined in its non-aligned position by countries from the Afro-Asian bloc and the Commonwealth, which also believed the UN should be a place for moderation in order to prevent a third world war. The Korean crisis became an opportunity to test India’s nonaligned position under high pressure. Immediately following North Korea’s invasion India worked at the UN and through direct diplomatic channels to mobilize a negotiated solution to the war and prevent its spread.⁵⁶² In July 1950, Nehru made a personal appeal to the United States and the Soviet Union to start negotiations, proposing to bring the USSR back to the Security Council and give Communist China a seat, which the United States rejected it out of hand.⁵⁶³ Indian representatives also worked to build a coalition at the UN “to encourage U.S. caution in Korea,” including working with other non-permanent Security Council members to create a committee to study the Korea question.⁵⁶⁴

Nevertheless, India’s position on military intervention continued to be characterized as weak. The United States and some of its allies wanted India to send troops to support the UN Command to back up India’s supposed opposition to North Korea’s initial aggression. But India

⁵⁶⁰ Rotter, “Gender Relations, Foreign Relations,” 536; and *Ibid.*, 524-525.

⁵⁶¹ Paul M. McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent 1945-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 46.

⁵⁶² M. M. Rahman, *The Politics of Non-Alignment* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1969), 97-98.

⁵⁶³ Alka Gupta, *India and UN Peace-keeping Activities* (Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1977), 49-52.

⁵⁶⁴ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 78, 63.

chose to send only ambulance field units.⁵⁶⁵ The official explanation for that decision was that the Indian army, “small and poorly equipped” was already “overwhelmed by dangers” inside and along its many borders.⁵⁶⁶ Clearly this decision was also made to allow India “to maintain a mediating role in the conflict.”⁵⁶⁷ By refusing to provide frontline soldiers, India could maintain an elevated moral position on Korea. In a message to UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie, Nehru argued that in fact “India’s ‘moral help’ “outweighed” the petty military help of some other countries.”⁵⁶⁸ Ideologically, nonalignment provided the postcolonial state a solid platform from which to argue for an approach to solving international disputes without the use of force, an embrace of the ideals of the UN Charter.

It was also true that India had, in Nehru’s words, “a rather special responsibility in regard to China.”⁵⁶⁹ Neither the British nor the Americans had diplomatic relations with the communist Chinese government, leaving them to rely on Indian sources to convey important messages back and forth. The Indian ambassador to China, K. M. Panikkar, became the conduit through which Chinese positions were conveyed to London and Washington and back again via the same route.⁵⁷⁰ His reports, however, were not considered reliable by the United States. In early October 1950, Panikkar warned that China would engage in the Korean conflict if the General Assembly approved UN Command action north of the 38th parallel. The resolution passed

⁵⁶⁵ India sent a mobile army surgical hospital, the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance Platoon. The 346 personnel served under Commonwealth command, not US command, a stipulation of their participation (Edwards, 137). On the field ambulance’s active duty in Korea (November 1950-February 1954), see Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, *For the Honour of India: A History of Indian Peacekeeping* (New Delhi: Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research/Army HQ, 2009), 64-72.

⁵⁶⁶ Edwards, *United Nations Participants in the Korean War*, 160. See also 136.

⁵⁶⁷ *India and the United Nations*, Report of a Study Group set up by The Indian Council of World Affairs (New York: Manhattan Publishing Company, 1957), 147-148.

⁵⁶⁸ Nambiar, *For the Honour of India*, 64. See also, Gupta, *India and UN Peace-keeping Activities*, 47.

⁵⁶⁹ “Ferment in Asia,” Speech delivered at the 11th session of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Lucknow, October 3, 1950, *Jawaharlal Nehru’s Speeches*, 250. See also, “327. The Prime Minister’s Statement that the Problems of Korea Can Be Solved Only with China’s Co-Operation, 6 December 1950,” *Select Documents on India’s Foreign Policy and Relations, 1947-1972*, Vol. II, edited by A. Appadorai (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 416-419.

⁵⁷⁰ Bailey, *The Korean Armistice*, 102.

nonetheless.⁵⁷¹ When the Chinese had not taken any action by the middle of the month despite the fact that the UN troops occupied Pyongyang, Panikkar became the target of criticism in India and the United States.⁵⁷² Dayal recalls that the American and British delegations dubbed him “Sardar Panicky”⁵⁷³ – a nickname that reflects the western perception of Indians’ lack of masculine fortitude. It was not until China launched a major counter-offensive in Korea in late November 1950 that Panikkar’s credibility was restored.⁵⁷⁴

Throughout the winter of 1950-51, Chinese troops in the hundreds of thousands helped turn the tide of the war, and the North took control of Seoul yet again.⁵⁷⁵ Efforts to find a negotiated settlement fell short. With India taking a leading role, Arab-Asian members at the United Nations convinced the General Assembly in December to approve the creation of a three-person committee made up of Nasrollah Entezam (Iran), Lester Pearson (Canada), and Benegal Rau (India) to investigate the principles on which a cease-fire could be based. The Chinese refused to cooperate, though, and the committee’s work halted one month later.⁵⁷⁶ Then, the U.S. delegation put forward a resolution that would condemn China as an aggressor state for their involvement in Korea. As the resolution moved through the Assembly system, Nehru warned from Delhi that the aggressor resolution “cannot lead to peace. It can only lead to an intensification of the conflict and might, perhaps, close the door to further negotiations.”⁵⁷⁷ But the nonaligned position was not powerful enough to intervene at this point. Passage of the U.S.

⁵⁷¹ A/Res/376(V), “The Problem of the Independence of Korea,” passed 47 to 5 with 7 abstentions.

⁵⁷² K. M. Panikkar, *In Two Chinas: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1955), 111-112. See also, Rahman, *The Politics of Non-Alignment*, 107.

⁵⁷³ Dayal, *A Life of Our Times*, 173.

⁵⁷⁴ Panikkar, *In Two Chinas*, 114.

⁵⁷⁵ By 1 November 1950, the Chinese had put 200,000 Chinese troops onto the battlefields of Korea. Just over a year later the communist forces numbered 1.2 million (Gupta, *India and UN Peace-keeping Activities*, 37; 41).

⁵⁷⁶ A/Res/384(V), passed on 14 December 1950, 52-5-1. See *India and the United Nations*, 150; and Tae-Ho Yoo, *The Korean War and the United Nations* (Louvain: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1964), 62-66.

⁵⁷⁷ “A Great Challenge,” Broadcast from All India Radio, Delhi, January 24, 1951, *Nehru’s Speeches, Vol. II*, 280-281. See also, Chamling, *India and the United Nations*, 137-139.

resolution in the General Assembly on 1 February 1951 was the first time in history that body condemned a nation for aggression.⁵⁷⁸ As a result, Communist China's position became more entrenched and the war continued to expand. For the moment, India's diplomatic role in the effort to find a peaceful solution waned.

When the Chinese and Koreans finally met with the UN Command for armistice talks in July 1951, the bulk of the war's heavy military fighting had passed. In less than four weeks the two sides had agreed upon a five-point agenda that included the establishment of a de-militarized zone; ceasefire arrangements; and recommendations to the governments of the countries concerned. But it was agenda item number four – on the arrangements for prisoners of war – that would become the major barrier to a final agreement, extending the armistice negotiations over years rather than months. The POW issue struck at the heart of the Cold War divide that underpinned the Korean conflict.⁵⁷⁹ The United States and its allies believed that no POW should be forced to repatriate. The Communists, in contrast, were adamant that all POWs be repatriated. Both sides drew on the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 to support their stance. To allow the POWs to choose whether or not to repatriate upon release was not in accordance directly with the Convention, but it was pointed out in legal arguments by the U.S. side that the language simply read: “returned and repatriated,” not *forcibly* repatriated. This argument held that the prisoners' human rights would be violated if forced repatriation resulted in inhumane treatment upon return.⁵⁸⁰ The Communists took the language of the Convention at face value. The Soviets opposed voluntary repatriation in principle.⁵⁸¹ Furthermore, China and North Korea stood to lose tens of thousands of soldiers if a high percentage of POWs chose not to repatriate, as seemed

⁵⁷⁸ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 157.

⁵⁷⁹ Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War*, 163.

⁵⁸⁰ Bailey, *The Korean Armistice*, 88-89. See also Gupta, *India and UN Peace-keeping Activities*, 61-64.

⁵⁸¹ Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War*, 163.

likely. With the military situation at a virtual stalemate and neither side ready to make significant offensive maneuvers, there was no compelling reason to bend on this question. The armistice talks ground to a halt at the end of the April 1952, with agenda item number four the only major issue remaining.

Throughout these ongoing negotiations, India remained the main diplomatic channel through which the Chinese communicated to the West and vice versa. To this end, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, acting as a cultural ambassador for India, led an official “Cultural Goodwill Mission” to China in the spring of 1952 that was based on a discourse of postcolonial Asian solidarity.⁵⁸² Chinese radio coverage of the delegation’s tour described the visit as strengthening ancient bonds between the two countries to help promote peace in Asia and around the world.⁵⁸³ Historians have established that Zhou en-lai approached Pandit about the Korean POW problem during her visit. Knowing his words would wind their way to Washington via Delhi, he told her China would accept 100,000 repatriates in order to move the armistice talks forward, an increase of 30,000 over the number currently offered by the UN Command. Pandit relayed the conversation to Nehru, but before word reached Washington, the United States had already released a lower number, and their tactics made capitulation on either side remote.⁵⁸⁴ Throughout May and into June 1952, Indian diplomats were involved in an attempt to speak to both sides to

⁵⁸² See Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 265-274.

⁵⁸³ Words to this effect were quoted in the following Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) China: Communist Reports (Washington, D.C.: Foreign Broadcast Information Service): “Indian Cultural Delegation Welcomed,” 30 April 1952, AAA 5; “Speech by Chang Han-fu,” 30 April 1952, AA6; “Reply by Mme. Pandit,” 30 April 1952, AAA 6 – AAA 7; “Indian Cultural Group Feted in Peking,” 7 May 1952, AAA 14; “Need for Closer Ties with India Seen,” 8 May 1952, AAA 7; “Mayor Peng Welcomes Indian Delegates,” 12 May 1952, AAA 23 and AAA 25; “Chou En-lai’s Speech,” 13 May 1952, FBIS, AAA 9; “Sino-Indian Association Inaugurated,” 19 May 1952, AAA 20 – AAA 21; and “Cultural Delegation,” 4 June 1952, AAA 12 – AAA 14.

⁵⁸⁴ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 272; Bailey, *The Korean Armistice*, 103-104; and Panikkar, *In Two Chinas*, 171-174. Though Pandit writes about meeting Mao during her “Goodwill Mission to China” in her memoir, she does not mention this private diplomatic exchange.

mediate a solution to the impasse. However, the Americans continued to believe Ambassador Panikkar's reports from China were embellished.⁵⁸⁵

When the UN General Assembly gathered in New York on 14 October 1952, the American and Soviet sides were wrangling for their respective positions to emerge victorious on the Korean issue. The United States—convinced that a military solution was both possible and necessary—wanted resolutions renewing UN support and requesting more members' involvement. The Soviets kept pushing for political reunification with the oversight of neutrals. Others looked to India in the nonaligned bloc as well as the British Commonwealth states for leadership on mediating a resolution that would balance the interests of the United States and the Soviet Union while maintaining both sides' support. It was at this Assembly that India's controversial diplomat V. K. Krishna Menon took the lead in creating an alternative plan for POW repatriation. Krishna Menon had most recently served as India's High Commissioner in London, where he had "produced a chaotic, scandal-ridden mission." Nehru had offered him sick leave followed by a cabinet post or ambassadorship in Moscow. When he refused, Nehru offered for him to be part of the UN delegation. Unwilling to serve under Pandit, Krishna Menon was then given the Korean situation as a special project.⁵⁸⁶ A sense of rivalry between Krishna Menon and Pandit was perceived by observers and was increased by the distinct difference in their personalities and diplomatic styles. In her memoirs, Pandit wrote of his tendency to exclude her and other Indian delegates from his work.⁵⁸⁷ Fellow UN diplomat Dayal recalls that Krishna Menon brought "a certain stridency" to India's voice at the UN, and he was significantly more abrasive and less cooperative than Pandit. "For all his cleverness and subtlety," Dayal wrote,

⁵⁸⁵ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 278-284.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 294.

⁵⁸⁷ Pandit, *The Scope of Happiness*, 287.

“Menon lacked finesse, nor did he show good judgment.” Yet Krishna Menon “did a great deal of footwork among delegations and the burning of midnight oil to find a solution” in the fall of 1952, “play[ing] his cards very close to his chest, leaving the leader and the delegation totally in the dark about his activities.”⁵⁸⁸ His tactics, though unpopular, did have some success on the Korean issue.

Krishna Menon presented a proposal in the second week of November that would create a neutral four-member repatriation commission along with an “umpire” to break deadlocks. Prisoners of war would be transferred to the demilitarized zone, turned over to the commission, and screened before being sent to their respective nations. The Americans tried to persuade the British and Canadians not to back the Indian proposal, but Krishna Menon continued to push. By the end of November, the Americans had agreed upon an amended resolution. The Soviets, though, rebuked the Indian resolution. At this point, the Communists were not willing to capitulate on the POW issue. Despite continued Soviet opposition, Nehru decided not to withdraw the proposal, which passed overwhelmingly with Western alliance support and that of the Afro-Asian bloc.⁵⁸⁹ The Chinese and North Koreans joined the Soviet bloc in rejecting the proposed solution, making its passage at the UN moot.

India’s POW proposal found new life when the Soviets and Chinese moved to end the war after Stalin’s death in March 1953. The Communists agreed to exchange sick and wounded POWs before a ceasefire agreement, and they let UN General Assembly President Lester Pearson (Canada) know that they were prepared to come to a final agreement.⁵⁹⁰ A final agreement was settled in the first week of June 1953; the Armistice was signed at Panmunjom on 27 July 1953

⁵⁸⁸ Dayal, *A Life of Our Times*, 196, 202, 192.

⁵⁸⁹ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 295-305; and Bailey, *The Korean Armistice*, 119-123.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 314.

without the participants exchanging a word.⁵⁹¹ After three years of fighting, casualties in the millions, and the loss of over ten percent of the Korean population, the armed conflict came to an end right where it started: at the 38th parallel. Tens of thousands of prisoners remained in custody, their futures still uncertain.

‘For the Honour of India’: Peacekeeping and Masculinity

Assumption of responsibility for the chairmanship of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) and the mission of the Custodian Force (India) (CFI) provided the Indian state with an opportunity to prove the possibilities of nonalignment through peacekeeping and demonstrate a more masculinized role on the global stage. Instead of selecting a diplomat to chair the NNRC (the four other delegations were led by diplomats), India appointed a highly decorated general who had wide name recognition throughout South Asia for his military command during Partition and the first Indo-Pakistan War (1947-48). Though the CFI remained lightly armed and was ordered to utilize non-violent persuasion before force, these men nevertheless were trained soldiers representing an emerging nation-state at a time of heightened international tension. A successful military operation outside the subcontinent, even with its peacekeeping overtones, could help legitimize the postcolonial Indian state. Even more, the particularities of this engagement helped tie the Nehruvian policy of nonalignment closer to the non-violent Gandhian ideal. The CFI demonstrated a new way in which to enact nonalignment and was a position that served the Indian nation-state’s pragmatic and ideological needs. The CFI embodied a middle ground between militarized Cold War masculinity and the characterization of the effeminate Indian neutrality.

⁵⁹¹ Bailey, *The Korean Armistice*, 138.

India had not been the first choice to oversee the POWs. During armistice talks North Korea had rejected Switzerland as an option, but said they would accept a neutral Asian state. Then, the Soviets approached India in May 1953 after Indonesia refused.⁵⁹² The United States did not like the choice of India, but they also did not want to insult India further by rejecting its willingness to play the role of custodian, especially since the United States staunchly opposed India's participation in a possible Korean political conference.⁵⁹³ Two days before the armistice was signed the Indian government issued an order to create the CFI. Lieutenant General S.P.P. Thorat (1906-1992), Chief of the General Staff at the time, conducted an initial assessment of the situation. The Advance Party traveled to Korea from 11-18 August to establish what form the CFI should take and what logistical support each side needed.⁵⁹⁴ The CFI eventually was made up of approximately 6,000 Indian soldiers who were selected on the basis of availability, not experience. Most of the officers were young – 25-30 years old – and few had ever been out of India.⁵⁹⁵

Before the CFI even left the subcontinent, their mission was imbued with special significance within a domestic rhetoric of Gandhian-inflected nationalism. Indian governmental leaders focused on the troops' responsibility to uphold India's honor in the eyes of the world. In his speech to the troops, Nehru said, "The honour and good name of India is in their keeping. Let each soldier, remember this and demonstrate to the world that the soldiers of India stand for

⁵⁹² See "Search for Settlement," Statement in Lok Sabha, May 15, 1953, in Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy, Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961), 425.

⁵⁹³ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 314.

⁵⁹⁴ Lt. Gen. S.P.P. Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, 1986), 127.

⁵⁹⁵ S. N. Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India) in Korea, 1953-54* (Delhi: Historical Section, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 1976), 18-20; General K.S. Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1981), 37-38. Thimayya wrote this retrospective of his time in Korea immediately after he returned to India, but the Indian government asked him to postpone publication. His wife published the manuscript after his death. See Humphrey Evans, *Thimayya of India: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960), 8.

peace and the service of the people.”⁵⁹⁶ Rajagopalachari, then India’s President, linked the mission to Gandhi who he imagined “would have blessed them ‘greatly and earnestly’ because they were going to discharge a task which Gandhiji himself would have liked most today.”⁵⁹⁷ And while in Madras to board the transport ships, the Governor of Madras told the departing troops that they had been “entrusted with a great and noble task and the world is fortunate because humanity has evolved a stage when soldiers embark on a mission of peace.”⁵⁹⁸ The mainstream Indian media, with almost daily coverage over the ensuing four months, ensured the Indian public remained apprised of these young men’s performance.

General K.S. “Timmy” Thimayya (1906-1965), chair of the NNRC, was an inspired choice to be the face of India’s first post-independence overseas military engagement. Elite and well educated, he had become a popular figure in the Indian military through his service during the first India-Pakistan war (1947-48). The second son in a family of wealthy coffee planters, he had been groomed for military service from an early age. As a teen, he attended the Prince of Wales Royal Indian Military College (RIMC) at Dehradun, and was one of only six Indian boys admitted to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Six months after Thimayya’s arrival, Lieutenant General S.P.P. Thorat (1906-1992), head of the CFI, began his training at Sandhurst, and the two forged a lifelong friendship.⁵⁹⁹ After Sandhurst, Thimayya served in Bangalore and Baghdad. During his third assignment to Allahabad (1928-1932) he developed ties to prominent Indian nationalist figures such as Sarojini Naidu and Mohammed Ali Jinnah.⁶⁰⁰ He also visited Jawaharlal Nehru in Naini prison (1930), and he got to know Nehru’s sisters, Vijaya Lakshmi

⁵⁹⁶ “‘Discharge Duties Impartially,’” *Times of India*, 18 August 1953, 3.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid. See also, “Fulfil Mission of Peace,” *The Hindu*, 18 August 1953, 5, 6; and “‘India Will Be Able To Discharge Her Duties In Korea,’” *The Statesman*, 19 August 1953, 1.

⁵⁹⁸ “‘Mission of Peace’ Has Noble Task Ahead,” *Times of India*, 19 August 1953, 3.

⁵⁹⁹ Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 90, 122.

⁶⁰⁰ Thorat also got to know Jinnah and Lal Lajpat Rai when they sailed on the same boat from England to India in September 1926 (Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 124).

Pandit and Krishna (Betty) Hutheesingh, well. At one point he considered resigning his commission to join the nationalist movement, but was encouraged to stay in the military by the elder Motilal Nehru with the prescient assurance that after independence the state would need experienced Indian military leaders.⁶⁰¹

After serving honorably in World War II, Thimayya sat on the Indian Armed Forces Nationalisation Committee organized to accelerate the Indianisation of the military. He then was promoted to Major General in command of the Boundary Force in September 1947, which put him on the front lines of the violence and massive displacement around the Partition of India and the creation of Pakistan and India.⁶⁰² For his leadership in this period the Pakistani Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911-1984) wrote in Thimayya's honor: "*Na Hindu, na Musalman / Sirf Insaniyat Thi / Thimayya ka Iman*" (Neither Hindu nor Muslim / Humanity was / Thimayya's only belief).⁶⁰³ In the spring of 1948, Thimayya took over command of the Sri Division of the Jammu and Kashmir force (JAK). During the first year of the armed conflict over the border region, he became famous in India for leading the Stuart light tank assault on the Zojila pass, which helped win back the Ladakh region for India.⁶⁰⁴ After this, "Thimayya's name had become a household word in India. He was considered a hero and the saviour of Kashmir."⁶⁰⁵ Who better to represent Indian strength in Korea?

Though he was to become the public face of the NNRC, Thimayya later wrote he "knew extraordinarily little about the Korean War, and even less about the prisoners" when he was appointed to the position. His initial impression was that the job would be "a firm, orderly and

⁶⁰¹ Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 96; and Brig. Chandra B. Khanduri, *Thimayya: An Amazing Life* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2006), 37. He had received the same advice from Lala Lajpat Rai in 1926 (Singh, 96).

⁶⁰² Ibid., 104.

⁶⁰³ Khanduri, *Thimayya*, 113. Thank you to Mara Thacker and Pooja Chandrashekar for their input on this translation.

⁶⁰⁴ Nambiar, *For the Honour of India*, 29.

⁶⁰⁵ Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 107.

relatively simple carrying out of the Terms of Reference” for the NNRC that had been produced out of the armistice talks. But he quickly realized the Terms had been written so as to allow both sides to have their own interpretation. Rather than bringing their positions together, the document and the months spent negotiating it had only hardened each side’s perspective. Neither side was going to make compromises because to do so was to give up on their opposing ideological positions. His job, in his own words, immediately became “an almost frantic effort” just to keep the mission together.⁶⁰⁶ When Thimayya arrived in the DMZ, he had three goals regarding the prisoners: to maintain discipline in the camps and punish offenders accordingly; to help the prisoners trust and feel at ease with the CFI; and to allow each prisoner, “*alone and protected,*” to make his own choice about repatriation. While the goal to allow each prisoner on his own to have a chance to speak his mind sounded reasonable, in reality it proved almost impossible and brought into stark relief the militarized nature of the CFI’s mission.

The CFI’s biggest challenges came in the southern camps that held nearly 26,000 non-repatriated North Korean and Chinese POWs.⁶⁰⁷ These men had endured years of detention and arrived in the DMZ antagonized by their recent experiences and their unknown futures. The internal Chinese and North Korean POW organizations resisted the separation of individuals from the group, and prisoners were scared and insecure about their situation. In addition, the insistence by the opposing sides to meet with each non-repatriate to explain “the real truth about

⁶⁰⁶ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 15, Appendix I, 60.

⁶⁰⁷ “Interim Report of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission,” *The Korean Question: Reports of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, Covering the Period 9 September 1953 to 21 February 1954, General Assembly, Official Records: Eighth Session, Supplement No. 18 (A/2641)* (hereafter Interim Report) (New York: 1954), 3-4. Only 359 POWs were handed over by the Northern Command, and the northern camp was generally well disciplined and self-contained, requiring little intervention beyond routine guard duties. The Interim Report devoted only six lines to the handover of these POWs; it took 20 times that to summarize the handover of the UN Command prisoners.

his position and his rights,” and the efforts by the retaining side to not allow those explanations to take place, complicated the situation.⁶⁰⁸

From the first day of contact with POWs, the CFI faced a delicate balance between enacting the ideals of peacekeeping and the need to maintain militarized control of a vast prison system. On the first day of prisoner handovers on 10 September, Thimayya and the CFI had to respond to emergency issues regarding prisoner behavior and disagreements amongst the NNRC delegations that foreshadowed the overwhelming challenges they would face in the coming months. Fifteen observers representing the NNRC and both Commands were present at the exchange, along with the CFI’s troops. The first several groups of prisoners were processed smoothly, but just after noon the in-coming prisoners noticed the Communist observers and became enraged, screaming, throwing rocks, and “rush[ing] the barbed wire fence” to try to attack.⁶⁰⁹ One Korean POW threw himself into an Indian soldier’s arms and cried that the other prisoners were preventing him from asking for repatriation. Another tried the same thing and was barely saved from being beaten to death by other prisoners. By the end of the first day, nearly 1,000 POWs were in CFI custody. Nine had thrown themselves on Indian troops asking to be repatriated, two of whom were saved from brutal assaults. These men were ultimately repatriated, but it was evident they had been abused and threatened in the camps, including having unwanted anti-communist slogans tattooed on their bodies.⁶¹⁰

In the Indian nationalist reading of these events, the unarmed Indian soldiers were characterized as paternalistic and civilized in the face of Chinese prisoners’ outbursts. The *Times of India* article describing the chaos of the initial hand-over of prisoners was titled: “Path Of

⁶⁰⁸ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 139-142.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 73; Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 31.

⁶¹⁰ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 74-75, 76, 79-80. See also, “Taking Over of POWs By Indian Custodian Force,” *The Statesman*, 18 October 1953, 7.

Non-Violence Being Followed By Indians in Korea.” The Indian guards were described as using “stern but fatherly,” “gentle persuasion” to guide the Chinese through the in-take process.⁶¹¹

Given the language barrier, the Indians depended upon gestures to get their instructions across:

A guard would approach a Chinese who was shouting abuse at a Communist fellow countryman and throw his arm around him. Then after asking him by gestures to remain silent, the quiet Indian would show him by example that his hysteria was having no effect and creating no impression. Then the Chinese, trained by a life of ‘observing face’ and respect for example, would quietly follow the guiding guard through the routine of arriving at the Indian camp.⁶¹²

An article a few days later emphasized that the “Indian troops made a conspicuous [sic] effort to avoid even a hint of force in handling the Chinese prisoners-of-war which they accepted today. They pointed, gestured, smiled and touched only those prisoners who wandered into the wrong line or the wrong compound.”⁶¹³

But as tensions increased between the CFI and the POWs in the coming weeks, the Indians faced a difficult and very public decision regarding the level of force they would employ to control POW behavior. To what extent would the mission remain peaceful in the face of violent and unruly prisoners? The mission had humanitarian overtones, but the Indians were also prison guards. The enclosures built to house the UN Command POWs each included seven to ten compounds, which in turn held 500 prisoners each. Two four-meter high barbed wire fences set twelve feet apart surrounded each compound, and another floodlit double fence line with sentry towers at regular intervals surrounded each enclosure. The arrangement looked formidable, but it was quickly discovered that “the fence could be scaled in about 8-10 seconds, and the wooden posts could be loosened and pulled out of the ground in about 30 seconds. A body of determined men could push down the fence in a matter of minutes.” Adding to the risk, the compounds were

⁶¹¹ See “Indian Custodian Force: ‘Gentle Persuasion’ Method Used,” *The Hindu*, 14 September 1953, 1.

⁶¹² “Path of Non-Violence Being Followed by Indians in Korea,” *Times of India*, 13 September 1953, 9.

⁶¹³ “Indian’s Handling of POWs Praised by US Officers,” *Times of India*, 15 September 1953, 7.

built close together, allowing prisoners to see and hear what was happening in the other compounds, increasing the possibility that unrest in one compound would spread.⁶¹⁴ Thorat had been warned by the UN Command that the prisoners were agitated about being moved closer to the communists in the DMZ, but he “did not think that the prisoners would prove to be so unruly as they did.”⁶¹⁵ Internally, the prisoners had arrived well organized with the objective “to resist repatriation and prevent such prisoners as desired repatriation from exercising that right...any prisoner who desired repatriation had to do so clandestinely, and in fear of his life.”⁶¹⁶ They quickly armed themselves with “crude weapons, such as tin daggers made of oil barrels and spears cut from...tent poles which had iron spikes at one end, and they produced fire bombs out of tins filled with oilsoaked [sic] rags.”⁶¹⁷ In contrast, the majority of CFI troops “were unarmed except for sticks,” though they did have machine guns for use in the watchtowers.⁶¹⁸

Within this already oppositional environment a number of extremely tense situations evolved between the CFI and the prisoners before the one-on-one explanations regarding repatriation even started. The first – Thorat’s successful negotiation of a hostage situation – helped produce a mythology surrounding the Indian performance of non-violence in Korea.⁶¹⁹ All morning on 25 September, Chinese POWs in compound D-31 had protested the removal of a fellow prisoner who had asked for repatriation; the POWs threw stones at the guards and threatened a mass escape. When Thorat, along with men from the Jat Regiment and Major H. S. Grewal, a Chinese-language interpreter, arrived to assess the situation, the angry prisoners refused to talk and after several minutes grabbed Grewal. “Grewal was a big built and strong

⁶¹⁴ Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 22-24.

⁶¹⁵ Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 134.

⁶¹⁶ “Interim Report,” 5. Thimayya made this point explicitly in a letter to the UN Command on 7 October 1953 (See Annexure VI, 5, pg. 49).

⁶¹⁷ Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 38.

⁶¹⁸ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 71.

⁶¹⁹ See Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 139-140; and Nambiar, *For the Honour of India*, 91-94.

man,” Thorat remembers, “but was utterly helpless in the hands of about twenty prisoners who had dragged him into a nearby tent.” Sepoy Thakur Singh, closest to Grewal, went after him and was also taken hostage. Thorat rushed into the compound, along with twelve Indian soldiers, who “picked up stones or whatever they could collect to protect” him.⁶²⁰ The prisoners, who outnumbered the Indians fifty-to-one inside the enclosure, met them with spiked tent poles. Thorat stepped between the two sides, ordering the Indians to halt, while members of the Jat Battalion surrounded the enclosure with weapons drawn.

In the many versions told of this incident, Thorat is universally hailed for his ability to stay calm and take control of the situation with his masculine leadership qualities; casually leaning on the fence, smoking a cigarette while assessing the situation. One hour into the stand-off, he reportedly asked an English-speaking Chinese prisoner, “What kind of Chinese are you? Where is your hospitality? You have offered my men neither tea nor cigarettes?” In what is characterized as a miraculous transformation, his challenge to Chinese pride eased the tension, tea and cigarettes were brought, and the prisoners eventually released the two Indians, agreeing to write a petition to the NNRC expressing their concerns.⁶²¹ Thorat’s demonstration of personal courage in the face of danger earned him two honors at the end of his service in Korea: one a military honor, the Ashoka Chakra Class II (now the Kitri Chakra), and the second a civilian award, the Padma Shri.⁶²²

⁶²⁰ Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 139, 140.

⁶²¹ “Indians’ Courage in Korea Averts Crisis,” *Times of India*, 27 September 1953, 1, 9; “Incident in P.O.W. Camp in Korea,” *The Hindu*, 27 September 1953, 5; “500 Red POWs Trap Thorat,” *The Statesman*, 27 September 1953, 7; Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 39-42; Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 141-143; and Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 199-200.

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 142; “Asoka Chakra for Thorat,” *The Statesman*, 26 January 1954, 1; Singh, *Leadership in the Indian Army*, 139. The Ashoka Chakra is the highest peacetime military decoration in India, awarded for bravery off the battlefield. The Padma Shri is the fourth highest civilian honor in India.

Thorat's heroic intervention notwithstanding, non-violent negotiation did not resolve all conflicts. Clashes between the troops and POWs at the southern camp hospital on 1 and 2 October resulted in the shooting deaths of three prisoners and greatly increased the tension between prisoners and guards. The hospital, located close to the prisoner compounds, had become the prisoner organizations' main contact with the outside world.⁶²³ When Czech and Polish representatives entered the hospital on 1 October to investigate the situation, the CFI had to defend the communist men from prisoner attacks. Prisoners in a neighboring compound, witnessing the clashes, threatened escape and began scaling the barbed wire fences. When they breached the second fence line, refusing to stop despite numerous warnings, the troops opened fire, killing one and wounding five.⁶²⁴ The following day a riot again broke out when an Indian doctor prevented a Chinese POW from committing suicide and tried to bring the injured man to the hospital. In an attempt to prevent the prisoner from being taken away, prisoners "broke through the inner gate and scaled the outer barbed wire fence and rushed the compound commander."⁶²⁵ The CFI again opened fire, this time leaving two dead and another five wounded.⁶²⁶ Two more prisoners were shot and killed in separate incidents in the following month.⁶²⁷

The image of the benign soldier dominates the history of the CFI with little to no mention of these fatal incidents. Yet the shootings point to a corruption of "peacekeeping" when enacted by trained, armed soldiers; an inherent power differential made apparent in the bodily clash

⁶²³ "Report by the Custodial Force, India, on the activities of the 64th US Field Hospital (as base for covert operations," Annexures to the Interim Report of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, Annexure XVII, C, *The Korean Question: Reports of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission*, 106.

⁶²⁴ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 200.

⁶²⁵ "2 Killed, 5 Wounded in Fresh Uprising," *Times of India*, 3 October 1953, 1, 7. See also, "Two Rioting POWs Killed," *The Statesman*, 3 October 1953, 1; and "POWs Get Unruly," *The Hindu*, 3 October 1953, 7.

⁶²⁶ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 133-136, and 200-201; and Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 43-44. See also Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 143-144.

⁶²⁷ G.K. Reddy, "One Korean Prisoner Shot In Self-Defence By Sentry," *Times of India*, 11 November 1953, 1.

between guards and prisoners. Thorat laid this hierarchy bare after the first shooting, stating that the use of deadly force “would impress on the prisoners ‘that we are the custodian force and they the prisoners and not the other way around.’”⁶²⁸ Thimayya’s own words reveal an attitude toward the POWs on the ground that helped legitimize the Indian state’s “mature” intervention on behalf of the child-like prisoners.⁶²⁹ He did express empathy with the prisoners, who he knew were acutely aware of the vulnerability of their situation and had been used as pawns in an ideological battle, acknowledging that their “human rights [were] largely forgotten.” But he also regarded them from a paternalistic perspective, with the Indian soldiers figured as more civilized than the men they guarded. The North Korean and Chinese POWs, he wrote, were not the “brave and noble warriors who, through experience and by an intellectual process, had learned that communism was Evil and that capitalism was Good,” as they had been portrayed in Western media. The majority, he believed, “were simple-minded, ignorant and completely unsophisticated peasants who followed anyone who took the trouble to impose his will upon theirs.” The North Koreans, he wrote, acted “like bewildered and angry children” who were “confused, afraid and violent...easily led and swayed.” Though the Chinese were “better disciplined, less noisy, and a bit more rational,” they still were “like lost and abandoned children [who] seemed infinitely pathetic.”⁶³⁰

In the wake of the shootings and an increase of anti-Indian rhetoric originating from the South Korean government condemning the use of force, Thimayya felt compelled to hold his

⁶²⁸ “Indian Troops Compelled to Use Force,” *The Hindu*, 2 October 1953, 7.

⁶²⁹ See Whitworth, *Men, Militarism, and UN Peacekeeping*, 15; and Anne Orford, *Reading Humanitarian Intervention: Human Rights and the Use of Force in International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 47.

⁶³⁰ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 90, 100, 96, 105, 106, 109.

first press conference to address the increasingly complex situation.⁶³¹ Surrounded by dozens of journalists from around the world, he sat at a table in front of two large posters that revealed a dual intent behind India's visibility on the global stage: the first an image of Benares with the words "SEE INDIA," the second featured Kashmir and urged "VISIT INDIA."⁶³² The relationship between the Korea mission and India's desire to perform its legitimacy on the world stage could not have been more obvious. In response to a question about possible responses to a mass escape attempt, Thimayya said the CFI would not resort to "mass slaughter." Misinterpretation of his statement was turned into widespread front-page coverage in the United States, Britain, and India, all of which claimed the CFI would not attempt to stop a mass escape at all.⁶³³ Thimayya was compelled to hold a second press conference the next day to clarify his position regarding what level of force the CFI was willing to utilize, though that position remained largely untested.⁶³⁴

The Indian government, meanwhile, called on the United States and the United Nations to condemn the threats toward the CFI coming from the South Korean government, claiming

⁶³¹ See "S. Korean Assembly Member's Demand," *The Hindu*, 3 October 1953, 7; "Two Rioting POWs Killed," *The Statesman*, 3 October 1953, 1; "S. Korean Member's Threat," *The Hindu*, 4 October 1953, 6; "Explanations to P.O.W.s May Never Begin: Sequel To Threat Of Anti-Indian Violence," *Times of India*, 5 October 1953, 1; "We Know No Fear': Indians' Views On S. Korean Threat," *Times of India*, 5 October 1953, 7; "Expulsion of Indian Force: South Korea May Use 'Volunteers,'" *Times of India*, 6 October 1953, 7; "S. Korean Threat of 'Reprisals': Indians Unconcerned," *The Guardian*, 5 October 1953, 5. The UN was notified of these on-going threats, see "S. Korean Threat Engages Attention of U.N. Delegates," *Times of India*, 6 October 1953, 7; and Paul W. Ward, "U.N. is Notified of India Protest," *Baltimore Sun*, 8 October 1953, 1, 10.

⁶³² Image, *The Hindu*, 13 October 1953, 10. Beginning in September *The Hindu* ran pictures of the NNRC and CFI on the back page of the newspaper approximately once per week. The Kashmir poster can also be seen in an image of a press conference in early 1954 in Nambiar's, *For the Honour of India*, 92.

⁶³³ "Indians Not to Resist Mass Break-Out of P.O.W.s in Korea," *The Statesman*, 7 October 1953, 1; "Thimayya on Role of Indian Troops: 'Will Not Prevent Mass Break-Out of P.O.W.s,'" *The Hindu*, 7 October 1953, 5; "Call For Fair Play," *The Guardian*, 7 October 1953, 1; "Indians Will Not Stop Mass Escape by POWs," *Times of India*, 7 October 1953, 1; "Indians Won't Bar Mass POW Flight," *New York Times*, 7 October 1953, 1; "India Shuns Using Force On Captives," *Baltimore Sun*, 7 October 1953, 1,7; and "Indians May Quit Korea," *The Irish Times*, 7 October 1953, 1.

⁶³⁴ "Agency Reports Misleading: N.N.R.C. Chief's View," *Times of India*, 9 October 1953, 1; Robert Trumbull, "India Reassures on Captives," *New York Times*, 8 October 1953, 3; and Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 164.

they risked undermining the Indian mission in the DMZ.⁶³⁵ The *Times of India* expressed indignation over the United States' failure to protest, concluding with a masculine nod toward Indian power: "India is in no mood to be pushed around—by anybody."⁶³⁶ The *Statesman* believed Rhee's threats were merely "bluff and bluster," but admitted, "there is no knowing how far lunatics, political or other, may in some circumstances go." Asking for the United States to warn Rhee off seemed reasonable.⁶³⁷ The *Hindu* asserted that "what was already a delicate and thankless task" had turned into a dangerous one. By reaching out to Washington, Delhi was hoping to prevent "a complete breakdown" of the NNRC, which would undermine the already fragile truce.⁶³⁸ At a press conference in Delhi, Nehru praised the CFI for its control of a difficult situation despite the shootings earlier in the month. South Korea's attitude from the beginning had created difficulties for the NNRC mission, he said, and continued threats from the Rhee government should end.⁶³⁹

The biggest test to the CFI's policy on the use of military force occurred just a short time later. With only 90 days for prisoner explanations allowed by the Terms of Reference, the process was already behind when the first group of 500 Chinese POWs refused to come out of their compound for explanations on 15 October 15. Troops surrounded the compound and messages were exchanged with the prisoners. Finally, as troops armed with bayonets moved in, the prisoners agreed to comply. The first 250 men were escorted out, split into groups of 25, and

⁶³⁵ "Indian Resentment at Lack of United Nations Support," *The Guardian*, 7 October 1953, 1; "India Concerned Over Threats by South Korea: Diplomatic Moves in Three Capitals," *The Statesman*, 9 October 1953, 1; "India Will Not Give up Peace Mission," *The Hindu*, 10 October 1953, 7, 9; "Big Powers Urged to Condemn S. Korea's Stand," *Times of India*, 10 October 1953, 1; "India Wants Firmer US Attitude," *The Statesman*, 11 October 1953, 1; and Robert Trumbull, "India Unsatisfied with US Attitude," *New York Times*, 11 October 1953, 3.

⁶³⁶ "A Clear Warning," Editorial, *Times of India*, 8 October 1953, 6.

⁶³⁷ "The Korean Tangle," Editorial, *The Statesman*, 9 October 1953, 6.

⁶³⁸ "Korea," Editorial, *The Hindu*, 9 October 1953, 6.

⁶³⁹ "Indians' Stay in Korea Not To Be Indefinite," *The Statesman*, 11 October 1953, 1, 7; "U.N. Should Dissociate Itself From Rhee's Tactics', Says Nehru," *Times of India*, 11 October 1953, 1, 9; and "Custodian Force: Cannot Carry On Indefinitely," *The Hindu*, 11 October 1953, 5.

then taken to the explanation huts. The *Times of India* referred to the emergence of the Chinese prisoners “without using even a harsh word” as “a magnificent victory” for the CFI without mention of the threat of violence explicit in the wielding of bayonets.⁶⁴⁰ Once inside the explanation booths, the POWs refused to listen to the explanations. They spat, threw their shoes, and created disturbances such that the explainers could not be heard. Prisoners who tried to attack the communist explainers had to be forcibly restrained. Others would pretend to be calm, but hit the explainer if he came too close.⁶⁴¹ At the end of the first day, 490 prisoners had been processed. Ten asked to be repatriated and were handed over to the Northern Command in an elaborate ceremony.⁶⁴²

The second day was even more tense. Two compounds of Korean prisoners were to be processed, but they were much more resistant than their Chinese comrades had been the day before. Two hundred soldiers surrounded the enclosure, prepared to go in through the main gate and force the prisoners out. When they advanced, all but the leader of the prisoners disappeared into their tents. Bunkers were dug, messages were flagged between compounds, and POWs in the other compounds moved to scale the barbed wire fences, “with their suicide squads—wearing gloves and stripped down to knickers only—in front.”⁶⁴³ Mass escape was threatened if the Indians used force. Thimayya later described the situation as “terrifying.” “The prisoners seemed quite insane,” he remembered; they demonstrated wildly, “shouting and screaming like

⁶⁴⁰ “Indians Win ‘Battle of Will’ In Korea,” 16 October 1953, 1. *The Statesman* also called the day a victory for the Indians (“Explanations to Chinese P.O.Ws Begins,” *The Statesman*, 16 October 1953, 1). See also, William J. Jordan, “Only 10 of P.O.W.s in First 500 Submit to Red ‘Persuaders,’” *New York Times*, 16 October 1953, 1; “Non-Repatriate P.O.Ws in Korea: ‘Explanations’ Begin After Initial Hitch,” *The Hindu*, 16 October 1953, 7.

⁶⁴¹ See Greg MacGregor, “Chinese Show Feelings,” *New York Times*, 16 October 1953, 3.

⁶⁴² Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 167-169; Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 49-51; and “Part III. Commencement of explanations, Chapter I: Explanations in the Southern Camp,” in Interim Report, 9.

⁶⁴³ “No Explanations As POWs Are Adamant,” *Times of India*, 17 October 1953, 1. See also, “Another Hitch in Explanations,” *The Statesman*, 17 October 1953, 1.

maniacs.”⁶⁴⁴ Eventually 600 Indian troops armed with sticks and rifles surrounded the compound, and special guards with tear-gas were called in.⁶⁴⁵ Efforts to have Chinese POWs who had been through the process the day before assure the Korean prisoners failed. After negotiations had gone on for five hours, Thimayya insisted the POWs come out without any further negotiation, and the NNRC gave Thorat permission to use deadly force if the Indians were attacked or in the case of a mass breakout attempt.⁶⁴⁶

The stalemate placed Thorat in a nearly impossible dilemma. What would the cost in human lives be if the troops opened fire on the enclosures? Robert Allen, a reporter for the *New York Times*, described how Thorat took his time contemplating the issue with the same refined masculine calm he had demonstrated during the September hostage situation:

[Thorat] stood on a mound overlooking the P. O. W. compounds, studiously practicing golf swings with his chrome and leather-trimmed shooting stick. Prisoners were screaming, singing and chanting. They blew bugles and banged on their metal mess gear. Five hundred of General Thorat’s troops—lean, hard professional fighting men carrying rifles—were drawn up just outside one of the prison compounds.

Once or twice he was heard to mutter, ‘Does anyone realize what a terrible strain I am under?’⁶⁴⁷

In the end, convinced that the use of force would result in hundreds of casualties, he “decided to eat my pride and told Thimayya to call off the operation for the day.”⁶⁴⁸ He requested “a clearly-worded directive authorizing the use of force” in this situation.⁶⁴⁹ The NNRC in response held an emergency meeting to discuss the matter. The Czechs and the Poles “were livid with rage,”

⁶⁴⁴ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 171.

⁶⁴⁵ “No Explanations As POWs Are Adamant”; and “Another Hitch in Explanations.”

⁶⁴⁶ “Part III. Commencement of explanations, Chapter I: Explanations in the Southern Camp,” in “Interim Report,” 9.

⁶⁴⁷ Robert Allen, “‘Operation Convincer’ Backfires on Communists,” *New York Times*, 25 October 1953, E3.

⁶⁴⁸ Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 148.

⁶⁴⁹ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 172.

arguing that the Indians were “weak for not using force”⁶⁵⁰ and that Thorat “should act in terms of the Commission’s unanimous directives given to him earlier.” The Swiss and Swedish delegates, however, thought the new situation warranted a reassessment, “as they were not prepared to agree to any decision which involved heavy casualties.”⁶⁵¹ Thimayya, determined to avoid “mass slaughter,” insisted that a unanimous decision by the Commission was warranted. Without that unanimity the NNRC deadlocked, and the CFI withdrew from the standoff prompting celebrations by the prisoners, but demoralizing the troops who viewed retreat as a failure.⁶⁵² In a press conference days later, Thimayya admitted, “We had to swallow our pride to withdraw our troops on Friday...But I think it was better to swallow our pride than kill two or three hundred.”⁶⁵³

The dilemma of whether to use force to compel the prisoners of war to attend explanations undermined the CFI’s authority and was never resolved satisfactorily. Disagreement over the issue and the prisoners’ continued resistance to the explanations process left the NNRC “torn and paralysed” for weeks with Indian mediation unable to bridge the gap.⁶⁵⁴ While the Indian position did not deny that the Terms of Reference allowed for the use of force, Thimayya continued to insist that with the likelihood of high casualties the Commission had to be unanimous on the issue. Another 500 Chinese went through explanations on the 17th of October, in what *The Statesman* referred to as a “moral victory by the Indian troops, but further efforts proved fruitless.”⁶⁵⁵ The explanations remained suspended.⁶⁵⁶ The only method left was

⁶⁵⁰ Robert Allen, “‘Operation Convincer’ Backfires on Communists,” *New York Times*, 25 October 1953, E3.

⁶⁵¹ “Part III. Commencement of explanations, Chapter I,” in Interim Report, 10.

⁶⁵² Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 173-174; S. N. Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force (India)*, 53-54.

⁶⁵³ “Impartial Status of Indians in Korea,” *Times of India*, 20 October 1953, 1.

⁶⁵⁴ G.K. Reddy, “Gen. Thimayya Refutes Communist Charge,” *Times of India*, 20 November 1953, 1.

⁶⁵⁵ “More Rowdyism at Explanations,” *The Statesman*, 18 October 1953, 1.

⁶⁵⁶ “Explanations Remain Suspended,” *The Statesman*, 21 October 1953, 1.

that of persuasion, which Thimayya utilized to little avail in the coming weeks.⁶⁵⁷ No other compound was convinced to cooperate until the last day of October, and the North Korean prisoners who attended the explanations acted out violently, throwing chairs at the explainers. The CFI had to use twice as many troops than previously to control the situation.⁶⁵⁸ Explanations took place for two only days in November and then not again until December.

True to the dominant discourse idealizing the CFI, in the midst of the deadlock over the use of force, G.K. Reddy declared the Indian soldier “the silent hero of this international drama that is being staged on the blood-drenched battlefields of Korea.”⁶⁵⁹ The decision not to use deadly force was supported by many contemporary observers despite the now highly likely failure of the NNRC’s mission. *The Times* (London) supported the position, as did the *Daily Telegraph*, and *The Guardian*.⁶⁶⁰ The unapologetically anti-communist *New York Times* editorial board expressed its hope that the deadlock at the NNRC would continue to protect the lives of POWs in the camps.⁶⁶¹ “Impartial observers” in the DMZ reportedly hailed the Indians’ “reasoning and restraint” in such a difficult situation.⁶⁶² The Indian government’s assessment of this decision two decades later concluded that while “the use of force involving heavy casualties would not only have defeated the object of sending the CFI to Korea, but would also have done harm to India’s reputation.” However, they concurred with Thorat’s opinion that by giving the

⁶⁵⁷ “‘Explanations’ to Prisoners,” *The Hindu*, 24 October 1953, 6; “N.N.R.C. Seeks US Officials Aid,” *Times of India*, 26 October 1953, 1; “NNRC Unable to Function,” *The Statesman*, 27 October 1953, 1; “Gen. Thimayya Visits POWs,” *Times of India*, 28 October 1953, 11.

⁶⁵⁸ “North Koreans Hurl Chairs at Communist ‘Explaining’ Teams,” *The Statesman*, 1 November 1953, 1.

⁶⁵⁹ G.K. Reddy, “N.N.R.C. Heading For Deadlock,” *Times of India*, 9 November 1953, 7.

⁶⁶⁰ “Panmunjom,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 22 October 1953, 9; “U.K. Papers’ Bouquet to Indian Forces,” *Times of India*, 23 October 1953, 7; “The Explanations,” Editorial, *The Guardian*, 7 November 1953, 4.

⁶⁶¹ “Operation Boomerang,” Editorial, *New York Times*, 22 October 1953, 28.

⁶⁶² Robert Alden, “Indians’ Handling of Captives Hailed,” *New York Times*, 9 November 1953, 3.

prisoners “the choice of attending or not attending explanations...the entire project of explanations was wrecked.”⁶⁶³

In the end, only ten days of explanations took place within the 90-day time period allotted for explanations. Fewer than fifteen percent of Korea and Chinese POWs were processed through the system; only about four percent of those chose repatriation.⁶⁶⁴ The remaining prisoners remained in limbo. With the NNRC and the CFI’s work designated to end on 22 January, a heated debate emerged over the fate of those prisoners who had not gone through explanations. Switzerland and Sweden argued that the timeline laid out in the Terms of Reference was solid and therefore the CFI had to release the prisoners from custody four weeks after the period of explanations ended. Czechoslovakia and Poland believed that since the explanations had not been completed, the Commission’s work should continue. Thimayya favored an extension of the explanation period and the creation of a new agreement given the changed circumstances. But without the two sides’ willingness to negotiate, the only solution seemed to be to follow the letter of the Terms.⁶⁶⁵

The dispute created “an explosive situation.”⁶⁶⁶ The South Korean government was said to be planning a mass break out of troops from the camps if they were not released on schedule, and rumors swirled of “armed bands” preparing to infiltrate the camps.⁶⁶⁷ The UN Command insisted that all prisoners in the southern camps had to be released at midnight on 22 January.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶³ Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 148; and Prasad, *History of the Custodian Force*,” 55.

⁶⁶⁴ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 190. See also chart on page 59 in Prasad.

⁶⁶⁵ “Final Report of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission,” Supplement No. 18 (A/2641), in *The Korean Question: Reports of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, Covering the Period 9 September 1953 to 21 February 1954, General Assembly, Official Records: Eighth Session* (hereafter Final Report) (New York: 1954), 116.

⁶⁶⁶ G.K. Reddy, “Korean Dilemma: I – India’s Lonely Furrow,” *Times of India*, 25 December 1953, 6.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; “We Will Rescue You, Rhee Assures North Koreans,” *The Statesman*, 30 December 1953, 4.

⁶⁶⁸ William J. Jordan, “U.N. Insists P.O.W.’s Be Set Free Jan. 23 by Neutral Group,” *New York Times*, 4 January 1954, 1, 3; G.K. Reddy, “UN Command Wants POWs Free On Jan. 23,” *Times of India*, 10 January 1954, 1, 9;

With hope of a negotiated solution lost, India made the unilateral decision that the CFI would comply with this deadline. Though Thimayya announced it would be illegal for those commands to release the prisoners as civilians at that time, it was apparent the UN Command would release them anyway.⁶⁶⁹ The Communists opposed the decision, saying it played into the hands of the UN Command and went against the Armistice agreement, but possessed little power to affect the outcome.⁶⁷⁰ So over a period of nineteen hours on 20-21 January, on a “cold, windy, and rainy day,” the CFI transferred close to 22,000 North Korean and Chinese prisoners back into UN Command custody.⁶⁷¹ “Thus ended the drama of our Korean assignment,” Thorat wrote in his memoirs, “in which nations had played with the future of men as if they were dumb cattle and sheep.”⁶⁷²

The End of the Mission

Despite the mission’s ultimate failure to fully assess the desires of the prisoners of war, praise for the custodial force at the end of their mission came from a variety of sources, and, in Thorat’s estimation, “went far beyond the customary diplomatic courtesies.”⁶⁷³ The Commander of the Commonwealth Division in Korea presented Thorat with a silver plaque engraved with the words: “190th Indian Infantry by 1st Commonwealth as a token of their admiration for steering so

“U.N. Rejects Bid to Delay Release of Unrepatriated POWs,” *The Statesman*, 11 January 1954, 5; “U.N. Stands Firm on P.O.W. Issue, Jan. 23 To Be Date Of Release,” *The Statesman*, 12 January 1954, 1.

⁶⁶⁹ “India Likely to Hand Over Prisoners on January 23: Unwilling to Prolong Responsibility,” *The Guardian*, 11 January 1954, 5; “India to Send War Prisoners Back,” *The Guardian*, 15 January 1954, 1; “India to Hand Back POWs To Commands,” *Times of India*, 15 January 1954, 1; “India to Hand POWs Back on Jan. 22,” *The Statesman*, 15 January 1954, 1.

⁶⁷⁰ Final Report, 118-119; G.K. Reddy, “Decision to Return POWs to Respective Commands,” *Times of India*, 15 January 1954, 7.

⁶⁷¹ Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 154; Lindsay Parrott, “Indians Complete Return of P.O.W.’s,” *New York Times*, 21 January 1954, 1, 3.

⁶⁷² Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 155.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 160.

fine a course between the rock of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charbydis, Korea 1953-54.”⁶⁷⁴ British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Selwyn Lloyd praised the CFI for “discharg[ing] its duties with calmness, consideration and dignity...the Indian soldiers had brought credit on themselves and their country.”⁶⁷⁵ Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden paid tribute to the Indian force, garnering cheers when he stated, “They have justly won world-wide respect.”⁶⁷⁶ And President Eisenhower sent his praise through Nehru, saying the force did well in a “‘delicate and demanding peace-time mission,’” upholding the “‘high reputation of the Indian Army.”⁶⁷⁷ *The Times* (London) concluded that the world owed Thimayya and the CFI for the work they did with “courage and outstanding good sense.”⁶⁷⁸ Even the skeptical *New York Times* editorial board offered muted praise, conceding the Indian soldiers were “‘apparently...well-disciplined and impartial,” performing their duties well.”⁶⁷⁹

The rhetoric used by Indians as they welcomed their troops home was especially idealistic and drew again on the ideals of Nehruvian nonalignment and Gandhian nationalism that had been invoked in August when they first left for Korea. With no reference to the militarized violence inherent in the mission, the *Times of India* was effusive in its praise for a job well done. “By divorcing so completely the Indian Army from the concept of aggression and relating it so successfully to the concept of peace,” they argued, “the Custodian Force has established a tradition which is but a faithful counterpart of the policy of dynamic

⁶⁷⁴ “Indian Custodian Force in Korea Congratulated,” *The Statesman*, 9 February 1954, 4.

⁶⁷⁵ “India the World’s ‘Interpreter,’” *The Guardian*, 27 January 1954, 12.

⁶⁷⁶ “Far East Talks,” *The Guardian*, 23 February 1954, 2; “Last Indian Troops Leave For Home,” *The Statesman*, 24 February 1954, 1.

⁶⁷⁷ “‘Ike’s’ Praise For Indian Troops,” *Times of India*, 20 February 1954, 7; “US Appreciation of Work by Indian Troops in Korea,” *The Statesman*, 20 February 1954, 1.

⁶⁷⁸ “A Memorable Achievement,” Editorial, *The Times* (London), 18 February 1954, 9; and “Gen. Thimayya’s Work Praised,” *Times of India*, 19 February 1954, 9.

⁶⁷⁹ “The Last Prisoners,” Editorial, 18 February 1954, 30.

‘neutrality.’”⁶⁸⁰ *The Statesman* congratulated the CFI for completing its “duty magnificently.”⁶⁸¹ At a reception for the returning troops in Singapore, India’s representative there, Gopala Menon, told the soldiers, “‘You have acted as a spearhead of the Gandhian ideals of love, peace, non-violence and truth and you have won a major battle which may well mean the turning point in the world struggle for peace and tranquility...We could not have had better soldiers, or better torch bearers, or better ambassadors of India’s eternal and immortal mission of peace and goodwill.’”⁶⁸²

Once back in Madras, the Governor again addressed the troops, telling “them that besides earning universal approbation, they had set up a ‘unique example’, which was bound to go down in world military history.” The Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army announced, “‘You have enhanced the prestige and reputation of our armed forces and you have added further glory to our nation’s arms.’” And the Chief Minister of Madras proclaimed it was “‘the tradition and character developed in India through thousands of years that’” allowed the CFI to achieve such glory.⁶⁸³ He continued, “the honour they had brought to India was even bigger than the honour that would have been attained in successful battle.” *The Statesman* reported on the troops in Madras: “These men are back from the Indian Army’s first mission of peace abroad—a delicate assignment in execution of which they have won the admiration of the world and a place of pride in military history.” From Nehru’s message: “‘They performed their tasks with courage and quiet efficiency and upheld the honour of India.’”⁶⁸⁴ Thorat remembers the train he took from Madras to Delhi making “many unscheduled halts to enable the crowds [who heard about their progress

⁶⁸⁰ “Welcome Home,” Editorial, *Times of India*, 23 February 1954, 6.

⁶⁸¹ “A Job Well Done,” Editorial, *The Statesman*, 22 February 1954, 6.

⁶⁸² “Big Welcome For Custodian Force,” *Times of India*, 17 February 1954, 8.

⁶⁸³ “Heroes’ Welcome To Troops Back From Korea,” *Times of India*, 22 February 1954, 1, 1, 7.

⁶⁸⁴ “Warm Welcome For Troops Back From Korea,” *The Statesman*, 22 February 1954, 1.

through newspaper reports] to express their admiration and affection for the men.”⁶⁸⁵ In Delhi, CFI and NNRC members were welcomed at the train station by Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi, senior Army officers, and the Deputy Defence Minister.⁶⁸⁶

G.K. Reddy, having reported from the DMZ since September, wrote a series of articles about the situation at the end of December that criticized the mission while venerating the Indian soldiers involved. The POW problem, he argued, was “part and parcel of a gigantic psychological war being waged” between the Communists and the West over not only the control of territories, but also the “loyalties and allegiances” of the people. The Indians arrived in Korea prepared to steer a neutral course and help solve this “human problem,” but they could not have predicted the level of divisions between the two sides. It was only through “moral strength” that the Indians could keep going under these circumstances. “In every respect, the ‘Honour of India’ ... has been the guiding principle of their thoughts and actions here, which have brought credit to the country and enhanced its prestige.” In the midst of “this baffling conflict of ideologies, the one person in Korea who has remained completely unaffected is the Indian Jawan.”⁶⁸⁷ Though Reddy believed the decision not to use force was the right one to make, India had made that too clear to the prisoners too early, making it even harder to control the situation. “It was certainly not our job to kill the prisoners,” he reasoned, “but it was certainly our job to have enforced strict discipline right from the beginning.”⁶⁸⁸ In the final analysis, he felt the CFI’s failure to carry out their duties lay not in their actions, but in those of the UN Command, which

⁶⁸⁵ Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 163.

⁶⁸⁶ “Custodian Troops in Delhi,” *The Statesman*, 27 February 1954, 4; “Korean P.O.W.s in Delhi,” image, *Times of India*, 28 February 1954, 11; Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 163. Also with them were 88 former prisoners of war who refused repatriation and asked to be taken to a neutral country. Thimayya wrote that of all the neutral countries, only Mexico agreed to give visas to 15 who originally asked to go there; the rest stayed in India. At the time he wrote (1954), they were being held in the Cantonment in Delhi, being taught about India, and he thought it was possible marriages could be arranged in the future (Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 206-208).

⁶⁸⁷ Reddy, “The Korean Dilemma: II – Tactics in a War of Ideas,” *Times of India*, 26 December 1953, 6.

⁶⁸⁸ Reddy, “Korean Dilemma: III – Strange Political Atmosphere,” *Times of India*, 6.

“had a bigger purpose in view than merely winning over these disgruntled and ignorant [Chinese] peasant soldiers who were sick of war and yearning for peace and a quick return to civilian life. It was intended as a psychological threat to Red China that in the present day wars of not only guns but also ideas, it may not be able to count upon the complete loyalty and allegiance of its own troops.”⁶⁸⁹ Within this anti-communist logic, “there is no place... for [India’s] conception of neutrality or an independent middle-of-the-road approach.”⁶⁹⁰

Thimayya and Thorat, in their later assessments of the Korean mission, agreed with Reddy’s opinion regarding the ideological conflict undermining the Indian objective of neutral mediation. Thimayya initially approached the mission with the attitude that “a neutral area and a rational atmosphere” could help the two sides escape “from the violent emotions that dominated” the situation. But he came to believe “[n]either side gave sufficient attention to the human aspect of the POWs problem.” The Americans called them “gooks” and treated them like they were despised. On the other hand, the Northern Command, he believed, would have been happy to see the true non-repatriates shot. The neutral party under these circumstances was “doomed to failure” because the situation was about ideology and not the prisoners themselves.⁶⁹¹ For Thimayya, Korea was a failed experiment in neutrality. Thorat wrote that in his opinion “the two opposing commands were really indifferent to the completion of explanations. Often it appeared to me that they had forgotten the humane aspect of the problem and had set their heart merely on gaining a propaganda victory—or at least avoiding a propaganda defeat.” The explanations failed because “both commands were interested in the P.O.Ws not as human beings, but as pawns in the game of Cold War...the prisoners faded into the background. The only thing that mattered

⁶⁸⁹ Reddy, “Korea Dilemma: IV – Purpose Behind Non-Repatriation,” *Times of India*, 29 December 1953, 6.

⁶⁹⁰ Reddy, “The Korean Dilemma: II.”

⁶⁹¹ Thimayya, *Experiment in Neutrality*, 25, 90, 142. See also 147.

was the political prestige of countries involved...[both] would rather save face by sabotaging explanations.”⁶⁹²

Conclusion

Until the time India accepted the responsibility for prisoners of war in 1953, the Indian government’s involvement in the Korean conflict remained largely within the diplomatic sphere. The Indian government condemned North Korea’s invasion of the South in 1948, but subsequently worked to soften the hawkish United States-dominated efforts to force a militarized solution to the conflict. The attempt to forge a middle ground through nonalignment opened the Indian government to harsh criticism from the United States in particular, where strong anti-communist attitudes rejected the possibility of neutrality. The nonaligned position was characterized as indecisive and weak, even cowardly and effeminate. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit remained a visible United Nations presence, serving as India’s ambassador to the United States (1949-52) and ultimately assuming the Presidency of the General Assembly. But her skill “at remaining always a good diplomat besides being very feminine,” in the words of one U.S. journalist, was not pressed into service to settle the Korea issue.⁶⁹³ Instead, male diplomats such as K.P.S. Menon, V.K. Krishna Menon, and Nehru played the more prominent roles in representing the nonaligned position on the global stage vis-à-vis Korea. In the fall of 1953, two different performances of India’s postcolonial national character were being played out: through Pandit at the UN General Assembly and through young, male soldiers in the de-militarized zone. Pandit, no longer on the periphery at the UN, remained a feminine symbol of Indian diplomacy, unable to gain traction within the complexly gendered Cold War politics. Through the NNRC

⁶⁹² Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, 149, 156.

⁶⁹³ Harris, “U.N. Elects Mme. Pandit,” 1.

and the CFI, Indian soldiers, figured as the inheritors of Gandhian non-violence, were led by Thimayya and Thorat, prominent military figures who became highly visible masculine actors on the ground. Pandit remained an important cultural ambassador, but where nonalignment was emphasized, Indian men represented independent India's will and capacity on the global stage.

THE LEGACIES OF UN POSTCOLONIALISM

The cases involving India at the United Nations highlighted in this research project point to the many contradictions inherent in an ideologically utopian organization faced with the challenges of governance in a decidedly non-utopian world. 2015 marked the seventieth anniversary of the UN, which prompted countless retrospectives and discerning assessments of the organization's past effectiveness, present relevancy, and future prospects. The most cynical critics claim the UN project buckled under its own weight almost immediately after its creation when the Security Council fell victim to the power of the veto, leaving the organization without crucial enforcement tactics. More optimistic voices point to the successes achieved in global health and the coordination of aid for refugees and famine victims coordinated through UN agencies. But pragmatists on all sides acknowledge the fact that the organization continues to exist at all is in itself an achievement given the short life of its predecessor and the enormous challenges the UN has faced. What was created at a moment of great practical and ideological need in the waning months of the world's second global war in a generation has been sustained into the twenty-first century by a continued commitment to the basic principle of international cooperation, despite its many imperfections.

It is in the fractious and contradictory space between the aspirational and the operational that we see the emergence of UN postcolonialism – a gendered culture of diplomatic debate and exchange that evolved in reaction to issues confronting the new international organization. In the period between the end of World War II and the end of the Korean War, the culture of the United Nations was altered by the presence of the postcolonial Indian state, a precursor to the even bigger changes brought to the organization at the height of decolonization when 16 African

countries plus Cyprus joined in 1960. India's diplomacy in turn was altered as the state responded to changes wrought on the ground by independence and by Cold War politics. As a symbol of postcolonial possibilities for millions of colonized and oppressed around the world, India's leadership on issues such as South African racist policies and the Indonesian independence movement at the General Assembly combined with changes in international ethics as a result of the atrocities of World War II to make a space for new debates on different terms. Though the veto at the Security Council protected the dominance of the Great Powers, the democratic nature of the General Assembly and the presence of postcolonial member states there opened up the possibility of new solidarities leading to unexpected outcomes. The framers of the UN Charter based the organization's structure on an assurance that past diplomatic practice would inform future debate. However, when the case against South Africa emerged at the first General Assembly through the leadership of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, this postcolonial issue touched a nerve for many delegates who were swayed by the moral and ethical argument. The vote to condemn South Africa overrode a legalistic dependence upon the judiciary to make the Assembly a powerful political force from its inception. This heated debate forced the UN to immediately confront, in highly gendered and emotional terms, the legacies of colonialism and racial ideology that had been previously side-stepped by colonial powers.

After 1953, the particular form of gendered diplomacy that Pandit brought to the United Nations on behalf of India was absent when V. K. Krishna Menon took over as India's leading UN representative.⁶⁹⁴ Between 1954 and 1960, Krishna Menon brought a distinctly different personality to the UN than Pandit had so far cultivated. Where Pandit was often described as charming, Krishna Menon was considered abrasive to the point of rudeness. While she might be

⁶⁹⁴ Pandit continued her diplomatic career as India's high commissioner in London and ambassador to Dublin (1954-1961) before returning to national politics in 1962.

most remembered for the tears she shed during debates over South African race policy, he is infamous for delivering one of the longest UN speeches in history: a nearly eight-hour defense of India's position in Kashmir before the Security Council in 1957. And though Pandit's work on behalf of India has begun to gain recognition in this work and others, Krishna Menon remains the more visible diplomat in the historiography of India's so-called "golden age" of diplomacy at the UN.

My work makes Pandit visible not just as a diplomat but as an elite Indian woman, which reveals the variety of power at play at the birth of the United Nations in a way traditional approaches to this history (preoccupied by men such as Krishna Menon) have not. That a woman represented India cannot be dismissed – who she was, how she represented herself, and how observers and delegates consumed her performance altered the culture of debate and exchange in international diplomacy at the UN. Anger and suspicion directed at her for her supposed emotionality during the South African debates and throughout her UN career as well as analysis of how her body was read as she moved through the space of the UN bring into relief the highly gendered nature of diplomatic space. I believe that India's ability to garner allies inside and outside the organization in 1945 and 1946 was enhanced by Pandit's savvy self-representation of a Nehruvian Indian womanhood that embodied a unique combination of British-inflected erudition and respectable Gandhian-influenced female activism. It also didn't hurt that so many male observers found her physically beautiful and, judging from the suggestive language used by some, sexually desirable as well. Pandit's comparative youth, personal history of activism and extended prison sentences, respectability as a widow, British-tinged spoken English, and powerful oratory all added to her charisma. The other Indian delegates who might have led these early delegations in her stead – all men – could not have replicated Pandit's complex appeal in

that particular moment. And when the aspirational Indian leadership had little other power to wield in the international arena in 1945 and 1946, the work Pandit did on behalf of the Indian nation was invaluable to the nationalist project. However, as international politics and India's practical concerns after independence changed, the needs of representation for India's interests changed as well.

Early examples of the impact of UN postcolonialism made through India's representation should not be taken simply as more fodder for the Indian exceptionalist narrative that seeks to cast Pandit, Nehru, and Gandhi as idealistic peacemakers at work on the world stage. For one, India was not alone in helping produce the character of UN postcolonialism that made colonialism, racism, and other forms of oppression issues for legitimate debate. The context and legacy of colonialism was dealt with in other parts of the UN structure and by other delegations and special interest groups. There were furious fights over the question of self-determination in the Trusteeship Council and many pushed for mechanisms of enforcement to be included in the creation of the Declaration of Human Rights (first adopted in 1948), to name just two examples amongst many. Also, there has never been a time when the "India" that was represented at the UN was so pure as to be above reproach no matter that Pandit et al were in presenting the Indian National Congress as the only legitimate Indian nationalist representation on the UN stage. The Congress nationalism that dominated the UN spotlight from 1945 forward functioned within a rhetorical position that was only sometimes successful in silencing opposition and hiding the *realpolitik* of post-independence governance. Congress might have been the largest and most powerful of the many anticolonial and nationalist organizations on the ground, but it did face real opposition from constituencies too often dismissed by Congress's brand of nationalism.

Recognizing the impact of Partition on India's foreign policy agenda widens the cracks in the celebratory Indian nationalist narrative that tends to dominate the history of India at the UN. The achievement of Indian independence came at an extremely high cost as a result of the fragmented map left behind by the British, a situation that ultimately brought a series of postcolonial issues to the UN that still have no resolution. Nehru and the Congress leadership had worked diligently to avoid power sharing with the Muslim League. When negotiations between the two broke down, India and Pakistan's borders were created by the so-called Radcliffe Line, a series of boundaries drawn quickly and with indifference by a British bureaucrat who had little knowledge of the subcontinent. Millions migrated in the immediate aftermath; hundreds of thousands were killed; uncounted numbers endured mass rape; and the pain and suffering continues in regions still disputed by the two states. At home, the Indian leadership was embroiled with Pakistan and the uncooperative princely states of Junagadh, Kashmir, and Hyderabad in a series of militarized conflicts imbued with masculinized rhetoric over the literal and figurative shape of the postcolonial state. That translated into several forms of UN involvement, including the creation of the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan that continues to oversee a tenuous ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

Though left out of most literature due to effective silencing by the Indian state, the Hyderabad case reveals the broad contradictions inherent in the Indian postcolonial experience at the UN once operational concerns overtook aspirational desires. Simultaneously, how Partition functioned at the UN itself altered the postcolonial relationship to the international organization. India's approach to Hyderabad's case at the Security Council was directly linked to the lessons learned by the conflict over Kashmir at home and abroad. And the failure of UN intervention after India's invasion of Hyderabad reveals competing interests at stake in the international

organization. While several smaller states pushed the Council to recognize the danger of allowing a larger state to use the military to force a smaller state's accession, some Commonwealth States and the United States were willing to defend the Indian position in the interest of future stability. Partition and the Hyderabad case reveal that India's postcolonial reality was not a rejection of the circumstances of rule established by the British imperial state, nor did the delegations representing independent India seek to upend the system that protected the basic tenets of nation-state sovereignty. The Indian state responded flexibly on the international stage according to its changing needs.

By 1953, India had assumed a complicated insider-outsider status at the United Nations that had been produced by the particularities of the postcolonial state's nation-and state-building projects as they intersected with various UN organs. Pandit's election as president of the General Assembly that fall was an acknowledgement of her successful diplomatic career and a nod to the more prominent position India had taken within the Afro-Asian/nonaligned bloc. The Cold War Korean conflict had shifted some authority from the stalemated Security Council to the more democratic General Assembly, allowing new voting configurations to impact the outcomes of debates. India's role negotiating a nonaligned position in these debates, considered an effeminate and passive position by the U.S. government, nevertheless provided Delhi with an opportunity to influence international politics. At the same time, Pandit's election also signaled the United States's success at keeping Indian involvement in Korea at arm's length outside the UN. Many observers saw her election as a sort of consolation prize for India's exclusion from the Korean political conferences. So, while Pandit seemed to be assuming a role garnering her and India greater insider power, the bureaucratic position did not offer many opportunities to influence

debates. Her call to have a special session of the Assembly in the spring of 1954 to deal with the Korean issue was dismissed.

As my research shows, Pandit's power also was constricted by continued preoccupation with her as a cultural object. Within the competitive masculinity of Cold War gender politics, Pandit's power in 1953 was limited by her feminine representation of Indian diplomacy that had served the nation so well in 1945 and 1946. In response to changing international politics, India strove to demonstrate a more masculinized diplomatic persona through the bodies of male soldiers as peacekeepers in Korea at the same time Pandit presided over the GA in New York. During this first peacekeeping mission in Korea, the Custodian Force (India) (CFI), oversaw the tens of thousand of prisoners of war who had languished in prison camps for years after active fighting ended while the U.S.-dominated UN Command and the communist command in North Korea battled over competing ideologies. Even according to the two Indian Generals who oversaw the mission, the CFI failed to fulfill its main purposes in the face of such rigid ideological opposition. Perhaps this is why the CFI garners so little space in the UN historiography. By contrast, the mission, which was the first time India had sent troops abroad since independence, remains prominent in histories produced by the Indian government. This operation helped legitimize India's status as a fully-fledged state with sophisticated military capabilities. At the same time, the discourse surrounding the mission served the nationalist project. The Indian soldiers' actions became tied to the tradition of Gandhian non-violence with little reference to the militarized nature of the mission and the deaths and casualties that resulted from clashes with prisoners. The use of peacekeeping troops provided the Indian state with an opportunity to enact Nehruvian nonalignment through the bodies of male soldiers, a distinctively hybrid reaction to changing international politics.

In September 2015, seventy years after Pandit headed India's delegation to the first United Nations General Assembly, another Indian woman, Sushma Swaraj, delivered opening remarks to the same body. Swaraj, currently India's Minister of External Affairs, appeared at the UN as a representative of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Hindu nationalist administration.⁶⁹⁵ Many of the main points Swaraj made in her appraisal of the UN touched on issues that arose in the cases from the late 1940s and early 1950s addressed in this research project. The UN, in her assessment, has achieved its original promise by aiding the process of decolonization and eventually dismantling apartheid, two prominent aspects of India's foreign policy at the birth of the UN. She also discussed at some length the importance of UN peacekeeping and highlighted India's status as the largest contributor of peacekeepers to date. But Swaraj criticized the UN's failure to fulfill its purpose in other instances, including how the veto and the exclusion of Asian and African countries as permanent members of the Security Council undermine the potential of that body. "How can we have a Security Council in 2015 which still reflects the geo-political architecture of 1945?" she wonders. Terrorism was also of great concern in Swaraj's speech. In a testament to the long shadow of Partition over the subcontinent, she specifically identified Pakistan as a country that utilized "terrorism [as] a legitimate instrument of statecraft" in an attempt to destabilize India and make a claim on Jammu and Kashmir.

Of particular interest in the context of the UN stage as a space through which nationalist narratives can be built were two references made to Mohandas Gandhi. Though Modi and his

⁶⁹⁵ Swaraj is only the second woman to hold the office of Minister of External Affairs. The first was Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter (no relation to Mohandas Gandhi), who was groomed from a young age to carry on the Nehruvian legacy. Gandhi was also India's only female Prime Minister to date, serving from 1966-1977 and 1980 until her assassination in 1984. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, was Prime Minister from 1984-1989. Rajiv was also assassinated in 1991. His widow, the Italian-born Indian politician Sonia Gandhi, has been president of the Indian National Congress since 1998 and continues to serve in the Indian Parliament.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) continue to condemn the Indian National Congress and seek to minimize Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy as the father of the Indian state, the new Indian administration has embraced Gandhi within the ideology of Hindutva as a progenitor of the Hindu nation. Swaraj reiterated this deliberate connection when she referred to the UN's founding and Gandhi in the same breath: "When the United Nations was established, a rather diminutive looking man was writing out the final act in a struggle that would become a symbol of hope for the colonized and the oppressed everywhere."⁶⁹⁶ Later in her speech she wondered if Gandhi would approve of how the planet's resources were being used. The return to Gandhi before an international audience is a contemporary example of Indian self-representation that remains dependent upon a celebratory national narrative and reacts to changing political pressures. The symbol of Gandhi in this context serves the BJP's nationalist agenda by eliding the violence and oppression undergirding the Hindutva project at home. Pakistan is a state sponsor of terrorism, India is the nation created by Gandhi. The simplistic consumption of Gandhi's legacy outside the subcontinent continues to be relied upon in an attempt to situate India in a morally elevated place within the family of nations despite a much less palatable reality on the ground.

These references to Gandhi in Swaraj's speech echo one of the themes Pandit and her colleagues drew upon to help frame India's position at the birth of the United Nations during a very different historical moment. As this dissertation has shown, even for those who could legitimately claim to have served beside Gandhi in the years prior to independence, the ability to rely upon a non-violent legacy to uphold India's global moral leadership was diminished quite

⁶⁹⁶ "Statement by the Hon'ble External Affairs Minister, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, October 01, 2015," Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations. PDF accessed from: <http://gadebate.un.org/70/india>.

quickly once Congress's anticolonial nationalism evolved into operational governance. The "India" represented in San Francisco by Pandit – an aspirational independence movement fighting against colonialism and racial oppression from outside the power structure – was very different from the "India" Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar spoke on behalf of during the Hyderabad discussions at the Security Council just three years later, which was also operating in a different political framework from the Indian state represented by Indian peacekeepers in 1953. These case studies offer a lens into how the gendered performance of the Indian nation-state on the UN stage transformed in response to quickly changing local and international politics. And in turn they trace the ways the culture of the United Nations evolved when faced with the contestations and contradictions presented by the postcolonial state.

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