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**Memories of a New World Order: A Study of Egypt's Participation at
the Bandung Conference of 1955**

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the Bandung Conference of 1955**

by

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Dedication

In memory of Mostafa El-Abbadi and Azza Karara, my first teachers of Egyptian history.

Mors nos non disiungit.

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Abstract

Memories of a New World Order: A Study of Egypt's Participation at the Bandung Conference of 1955

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The Afro-Asian Conference of 1955 was a political and cultural milestone for newly independent African, Asian, and Middle Eastern nations. Held in Bandung, Indonesia, delegates of the conference pledged to support one another to avoid excessive dependence on former colonizers, a policy that would later be known as “non-alignment” or “positive neutralism,” and would define the relationship of many “Third World” countries with Western states during the Cold War. While the conference has been a frequent subject of interest in postcolonial and area studies, it has been discussed significantly less in international relations literature. One reason for this disregard is the lack of interdisciplinary work on the subject, which has resulted in isolated theorizing. Using Egyptian experiences and histories surrounding the Bandung Conference, this report seeks to apply analyses from postcolonial studies to critique accounts of Afro-Asian solidarity in international relations literature.

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Introduction

"متى استعبدتم الناس وقد ولدتهم أمهاتهم أحراراً"

عمر بن الخطاب¹

The above saying is attributed to Umar ibn al-Khattab, second of the Rashidun caliphs and the first Arab Muslim to rule Egypt. He made this statement while berating military commander 'Amr ibn al-'As for allowing his son to unjustly strike an Egyptian Copt in an effort to display the superiority of the conquerors.² For Egyptians, this was common behavior that they endured under a long series of conquests, and one that would unfortunately continue well into the twentieth century. In the era following the rise of nations, nation-states, and imperialist expansion, the Egyptian people, along with other colonial subjects of the British Empire, demanded their freedom and independence from foreign oppressors. After extended power struggles between Egyptian nationalists, the British government, and the Egyptian monarchy over the course of a century and a half, freedom came in the form of a military coup in July of 1952. The emergence of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser as Egypt's champion against imperialism and political clientelism garnered international attention when he attended the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955. For many, this signified Egypt's commitment to maintain its autonomy through solidarity with former colonies, while for others it appeared as a foolish and futile attempt to challenge powerful states in an international system jeopardized by bipolarity.

¹ Umar ibn al-Khattab: "How could you have enslaved the people when their mothers bore them in freedom?"

² Ibn Abd al-Hakam. *Futuh Misr wa akhbarha*. Known in English as *The history of the conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922. 290.

Legacies of the Bandung Conference have been debated about within various academic fields, especially postcolonial and area studies. The observation driving this report, however, is the muted presence of the conference in international relations literature. Despite the creation of academic categories like ‘Global IR,’ the field does not really engage the histories and experiences of developing nations in theoretical and policy-oriented discussions.³ The main point of investigation, then, is what can be gained from an interdisciplinary approach involving the application of postcolonial theory to international relations studies surrounding this event. Since Egypt was one of the primary supporters and organizers of the conference, this report will focus on Egyptian experiences with colonialism, imperialism, and positive neutralism leading up to ‘the Bandung moment.’

The three chapters of the report build historical context for the conference, present three accepted narratives of it, and employ postcolonial theory in evaluating these narratives, respectively. I use Sanjay Seth’s definition of ‘postcolonial,’ which “signifies the entire historical period after the beginnings of colonialism.”⁴ Consequently, the first chapter takes into account various social, political, cultural, and economic aspects of Egyptian history starting from the Islamic conquest, arguably one of the most influential colonizations of Egypt, until the Cold War era. The objective of the chronological breadth of this chapter is to provide adequate background information for the next two. The second chapter then presents three major narratives of Egypt’s involvement at Bandung: official American and British foreign records, Egyptian nationalist views, and international relations discourses. In the third and final chapter, I will note disparities

³ See Amitav Acharya’s “Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective” and Pinar Bilgin’s “Thinking Past ‘Western IR’?”

⁴ Seth, Sanjay, ed. *Postcolonial Theory and International Relations: A critical introduction*. London: Routledge, 2013. 1.

among these narratives and apply postcolonial theories and interpretations, drawing on the information from the first chapter, to better understand these discrepancies and what they mean.

Chapter 1: Egypt and the Road to Bandung

Egypt's support of and participation in the Bandung Conference of 1955 may now seem like a logical consequence of anti-imperialist attitudes during the Cold War, but at the time this decision was neither so clear nor certain. In some accounts, American and British diplomatic obstinacy is often cited as the major impelling force in Egypt's embrace of positive neutralism.⁵ There were, however, a number of different factors that led Nasser in his search for Egypt's dignity to the doorstep of Bandung. His foreign policy was affected as much by the interplay of social, political, economic, and cultural forces that shaped Egypt before the 1952 military coup as it was by those he faced in his capacity as premier and president of the new republic.

Building historical context for Nasser's decision to attend the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung is a complicated yet essential task. How are we to understand the present significance of the 'Bandung spirit' without first understanding and theoretically reconstructing the atmosphere and attitudes of that time? And even then, is it possible to truly divorce oneself from preconceptions inherited through the privileged position of hindsight? While it may be argued that such complete access to the past is impossible for purely metaphysical reasons, tracing the sociological and ideological genealogies of our histories undoubtedly assists in "dislodging prejudices or aesthetic preferences masquerading as timeless truths."⁶ Unfortunately, the limitations of this report do not

⁵ See Miles Copeland's *The Game of Nations: The Amoral of Power Politics* and Peter Hahn's *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*.

⁶ Dudney, Arthur. "Testing the Limits of Comparatism: The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns in Persian and Urdu Literary Culture." Talk given at Asian Studies seminar at UT. 2018.

allow for as comprehensive a background study as I would like, however, providing the following overview of key historical events and different sets of Egyptian collective memory that influenced Nasser will clarify his actions leading up to and during Bandung.

A HISTORY OF FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

As is the case with many former colonial holdings, protectorates, and client states, the history of Egypt in Egyptian consciousness – and I use this word in its plural form – is inevitably tied with the histories of its foreign occupiers. Though the early invasions of the Nubians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans had a lasting influence on ‘Egyptianity,’ as P.J. Vatikiotis calls it, this report is more concerned with the effects of the Arab Islamic, non-Arab Islamic, and European conquests on modern Egyptian self-conceptions.⁷ Each of these three periods, together spanning roughly thirteen centuries, left deep, distinct impressions on Egyptian identities and worldviews that affected Nasserist foreign policy.

The beginning of Arab Islamic rule in Egypt is marked by the fall of Alexandria at the hands of ‘Amr ibn al-‘As under the Rashidun Caliphate in the seventh century. Over the course of several dynasties, Muslim rulers incorporated Arab and Islamic values into Egyptian societal infrastructure by establishing Arabic as the official language of administration, developing Cairo into a hub of cultural exchange, and founding libraries and universities. It was in this first period of Islamic rule, when “the inclusion of so much of the world in a single empire brought together elements of different origin into a new

⁷ Vatikiotis, P.J. *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*. 4th ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991. 9.

unity,” that Egyptian Muslims began to view themselves as connected to the *ummah* (the whole of the Muslim community) and as inheritors of the faith and mission of their Arab conquerors.⁸ This spirit survived subsequent invasions and occupations, providing a foundation for pan-Arab, nationalist, and Islamist movements in the twentieth century.

The boundary between Arab and non-Arab Muslim rule in Egypt is blurred, since many governors and military generals appointed under Arab caliphates were often of non-Arab origin. If a particular historical moment must be chosen, however, it would likely be the overthrow of the Fatimids by Salah al-Din Youssef bin Ayyoub, Kurdish founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, in the twelfth century. He would become one of Egypt’s greatest heroes and nationalist icons, graciously remembered by European authors as a superior example to the “savagery” and “decadence” of the Turks and Arabs.⁹ Following the Ayyubids were the Mamluks, a Turco-Circassian slave class who gained power by rising through military ranks. Then the Ottomans conquered Egypt in 1517, however, it was not until the early nineteenth century when Muhammad Ali Pasha, an Ottoman officer from Macedonia, came to power that Mamluk influence truly ended.¹⁰ The significance of these early dynasties for this report does not lie in the structures they created, though important in their own right, but in their consistent alienation of Egyptian subjects:

The State and its rulers depended for their existence and the pursuit of their objectives upon warrior classes to the exclusion of the bulk of the

⁸ Hourani, Albert. *A History of the Arab Peoples*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2010. 56.

⁹ Grousset, René. *Histoire des Croisades*. Paris: Plon, 1936. 536.

¹⁰ Hourani. 228.

citizenry, who were strictly expected to provide the food and other necessities of these privileged ruling groups...The direction of Egypt's political fortunes thus passed from Arabs to Maghribis (North Africans), to Kurdish, Turkish and Circassian Mamluks, to Ottomans, French and British, without any real sense of organic social or national consciousness on the part of the mass of inhabitants until the late nineteenth century.¹¹

As Vatikiotis suggests, this alienation of the citizenry continued through the European occupations of Egypt, eventually sparking resistance and solidarity among various groups of Egyptian society. This is not to say that any organized Egyptian identities did not exist in the pre-modern era, but that the socio-cultural and political narratives produced in reaction to European imperialism were unique. They began to extend beyond the boundaries of religion and crystallize local histories to form modern Egyptian identities.¹²

The European occupations of Egypt occurred during the decline of the Ottoman Empire, causing weak *khedives* (Ottoman viceroys) to become financially dependent upon Europe, especially Britain. The French Expedition led by Napoleon in 1798 may have been short-lived, but it plunged Egypt into international politics and on “several occasions it brought Europe to the brink of war.”¹³ Britain, keen to monopolize the passage to India, recognized the strategic importance of Egypt and expelled French forces in 1801. Over the next eighty years, a combination of the Capitulations, extraterritorial rights granted to foreigners by the Ottoman sultan exempting them from taxation and arrest, and the *khedives*' increasing reliance on British and French financiers resulted in

¹¹ Vatikiotis. 24.

¹² Hourani. 58.

¹³ Zayid, Mamud Y. *Egypt's Struggle for Independence*. Beirut: Khayats, 1965. 3.

extreme exploitation of the Egyptian public.¹⁴ It was the Egyptian military, led by Colonel Ahmed 'Urabi, who rebelled against both the *khedivate* and European forces in 1882 in efforts to establish popular control of government and improve army conditions. The rebellion was quickly crushed by the British, but the nationalist sentiments roused by 'Urabi and his followers festered until it “reached its zenith some seventy years later with Gamal Abdel Nasser.”¹⁵

THE VEILED PROTECTORATE

While the experiences of Egyptians under the British occupation significantly shaped their struggle for self-determination, a more nuanced reading of the different forces at play is required to understand how this period affected Egyptian foreign policy of the 1950s. Following the 'Urabi Revolt, Britain sought to secure Egypt as an asset to her empire, but faced difficulties in asserting the legality of either an annexation or occupation, especially when other European powers, namely France, had similar designs on the region and the Ottomans maintained their feeble yet internationally recognized hold on the *khedivate*. The outbreak of World War I presented a major challenge to the British government, as Germany and Italy strengthened their positions in Turkey and Libya, respectively, and Egyptian nationalist movements began to move from the domain of the press to the streets.¹⁶ Since the Ottoman Empire allied with Germany in 1914, Britain responded by issuing a formal note proclaiming the rights of the Turkish Sultan

¹⁴ Zayid. 11.

¹⁵ Hurewitz, J.C. “The Historical Context.” In *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* edited by Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. 19.

¹⁶ Zayid. 31.

over Egypt forfeit and providing assurance to the new Egyptian sultan, Hussein Kamel, of Britain's defense of Egypt as a protectorate. Despite this document, the legal status of Britain's occupation of Egypt was still precarious, as it "hardly fit into any of the previously internationally recognized categories of protectorates."¹⁷ Many Egyptians accepted the declaration, however, in the expectation of greater self-government and the abolition of the Capitulations upon the conclusion of the war.¹⁸

When it became clear that Britain had no intention of fulfilling these terms, public opinion soured against the British and Sultan Fouad, whom they viewed as a puppet of European interests. Due to martial law imposed during the war, the public had no effective outlets to express their frustrations as press censorship and prohibition of meetings was in effect. After the war, Egyptian nationalists took up their cause once more, encouraged by the publication of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, in which the American president stressed the right to self-determination of weaker nations.¹⁹ This new wave of nationalism put Egyptian separatists directly in conflict with imperialist powers and created further distrust and suspicion between the sultan and his subjects. This would continue to be the case until 1952.

Egyptian nationalists quickly realized that they would be powerless in negotiations with Britain unless they sought arbitration from the international

¹⁷ Zayid. 72-73.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points." *Governments of the World: A Global Guide to Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities*, edited by C. Neal Tate, vol. 3, Macmillan Reference USA, 2006, pp. 325-329. Gale Virtual Reference Library, <http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/apps/doc/CX3447400266/GVRL?u=txshracd2598&sid=GVRL&xid=7e9e05b0>.

community. Thus, in 1918, Saad Zaghloul, a remarkable lawyer and politician of *fellahin* (peasant) origins, formed a *wafd* (delegation) that would present Egypt's case for independence at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.²⁰ As Zaghloul began to gain a larger following, he broke with al-Hizb al-Watani, Egypt's main statist political party since 1907, and formed the Wafd party "to achieve the independence of Egypt by peaceful means."²¹ While Sultan Fouad was in favor of Egyptian independence, he feared Zaghloul's popularity and on March 8, 1919, with British approval, had him and three other Wafd members deported to Malta. The sultan, however, underestimated Zaghloul's hold over the public, and on March 9 Cairo was overrun with student demonstrations and railway worker strikes, as well as a few attacks on British soldiers.²² To restore order, Zaghloul and his associates were released in April in time to attend the conference in Paris. The Paris Peace Conference proved a rude awakening for the Wafd, who were denied a hearing and informed that the European powers, Turkey, and America would officially recognize the British protectorate over Egypt.

The drop in morale was only temporary, and soon the Wafd became the most popular and influential political party in Egypt through their anti-colonial activism. This sharp rise in anti-Western sentiment unsettled Britain, and in May of 1919 Lord Milner was appointed to chair a mission of inquiry to understand "the late disorders in Egypt, and to report on the existing situation in the country and the form of the Constitution which, *under the Protectorate*, will be best calculated to promote its peace and

²⁰ Vatikiotis. 257.

²¹ Zayid. 82.

²² Ibid. 86.

prosperity.”²³ The Milner Mission was the start of seventeen years of negotiations between Egypt and Britain, which would continue even after the granting of formal independence in 1922 and culminate with the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. The Treaty required Britain to withdraw all troops from Egypt with the exception of the Suez Canal Zone, and ceded authority to Egypt over its diplomatic and financial affairs, as well as full administrative control of the its army.²⁴

After 1936, public interest shifted from relations with Britain to domestic politics. King Farouk succeeded the throne upon the death of his father and almost immediately restarted the old power struggle between the monarchy and the Wafd, only now there were more political parties and nationalist movements vying for influence as well. Although a parliamentary government had been established in 1923, both the King and political party leaders subverted the constitution according to their needs. This political dissonance further alienated average Egyptians from the elites, as Vatikiotis explains:

It is this attitude of both the Crown and politicians which explains in part the perpetuation of local traditional patterns of political life in the inter-war period. But it is also a reflection of the unreal hold which liberal European political ideas had over Egyptian leaders – a condition which inevitably caused the degeneration of political parties, if not the moral (and therefore political) bankruptcy of their leaderships.²⁵

The outbreak of World War II worsened these political rifts and Egyptian domestic conditions in general. Additionally, Britain grew uneasy due to Axis sympathies within the Egyptian government and the growing internal instability. When the Egyptian prime

²³ Zayid. 90.

²⁴ Vatikiotis. 293.

²⁵ Ibid. 230.

minister Husayn Sirri resigned on February 2, 1942, the King and party leaders remained at an impasse to form a new government. British ambassador Miles Lampson then sent the King an ultimatum to request Wafdist Nahhas Pasha to form his cabinet or “accept the consequences.”²⁶ Incensed, King Farouk dismissed Lampson’s note, which resulted in British tanks and troops surrounding the palace on February 4. Known as the Abdeen Palace incident, this event made it clear to the Egyptian public that the British were still in charge, prompting the rise of several Marxist, Islamist, leftist, and fascist groups after the war, as well as secret nationalist factions within the Egyptian army.

LABOR AND CLASS ORGANIZATION

Despite its exclusion from many international relations narratives, the history of Egyptian labor and class movements is inextricably linked to Nasserism, as the 1952 military coup occurred at the height of class and trade union struggles. Before the twentieth century, Egyptian labor was generally extracted under the system of the *corvée* (feudal bondage), which British officials proudly claimed to have abolished under their occupation. This was not the case, however, as the *corvée* continued even after its legal abolition, and only fell out of use when Egyptian landed elites sought to gain more profit and pressured the state to renounce it.²⁷ This is not to say that labor protests and strikes

²⁶ Vatikiotis. 350.

²⁷ Brown, Nathan J. “Who Abolished Corvee Labour in Egypt and Why?” *Oxford University Press, The Past and Present Society* 144 (1994) 118.

did not occur before the 1900s, but they were disconnected and diffuse due to heavy-handed oppression from the colonial state.²⁸

With the rise of the Wafd and anti-imperial sentiment in the 1920s and 30s, Egyptians began to develop more cohesive national identities that resulted in formations of class consciousness and demands for labor rights and protections. The continuous exploitation of agricultural laborers led to massive influxes of peasants into cities in the early twentieth century, creating a larger industrial labor force and capitalist consumer base. Despite populist propaganda put forth by the Wafd of the ongoing “Egyptianization” under their leadership, foreign capital controlled major economic sectors like banks and railways.²⁹ Following World War II, members of the Wafd largely consisted of both landed aristocrats and urban middle-class bourgeoisie, known as the *effendiya*. While the *effendiya* tried to maintain influence with rural and urban masses by spearheading Wafdist labor movements, the true controlling interest of the party was in the hands of the landed elites who remained socially conservative and unwilling to break completely with British imperialism.³⁰ Additionally, the Egyptian intelligentsia, Wafdist or otherwise, of this period were mostly educated in Europe and attempted cultural reform by eschewing tradition, especially criticizing Islamic values, which did not resonate with the larger population. These paradoxical interests of the political parties and elites eventually led to the failure and collapse of the established order, signified by

²⁸ Hussein, Mahmoud. *Class Conflict in Egypt 1945-1970*. trans. Michel and Susanne Chirman, Alfred Ehrenfeld, and Kathy Brown. London: Monthly Review Press, 1973. 354.

²⁹ Beinín, Joel and Zachary Lockman. *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1998. 9.

³⁰ Ibid. 14.

the Cairo Fire of 1952, in which urban symbols of colonial oppression – luxury department stores, banks, car dealerships, etc. – were set ablaze by rioters.³¹ It was in these rapidly deteriorating economic conditions that Nasser and the Free Officers dealt the final blow to a dilapidated *ancien régime*.

ARAB NATIONALISM AND ISLAMISM

The term ‘pan-Arabism’ is generally used in reference to Nasser’s national and regional strategies, but it actually has roots in the policies of his political predecessors.³² After the founding of the Arab League in 1945, Egypt sought to gain monopoly over regional defense by excluding Britain from Middle Eastern security affairs and forming an Arab bloc, but was impeded by a pro-British alliance between Jordan and Iraq. As a result, King Farouk entered into an alliance with Syria and Saudi Arabia, known as the Triangle Alliance. Despite this regional split, the Egyptian government of the 1940s promoted pan-Arab propaganda on both a national and regional scale in response to the crisis in Palestine, hoping that increased solidarity among Arab states would curtail Israeli aggression and push Britain out of the Middle East.³³

In domestic Egyptian affairs, a more conservative form of Arab nationalism emerged alongside the regime’s regional propaganda. The political and economic instability following World War II propelled radical leftist and religious fanaticism into

³¹ Reynolds, Nancy Y. *A City Consumed: Urban Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

³² Doran, Michael. *Pan-Arabism before Nasser: Egyptian Power Politics and the Palestine Question*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 5.

³³ Ibid. 71.

the foreground, leading the “dispossessed urban masses” and “miserable rural population” to turn to groups like al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (the Muslim Brotherhood) and the fascist Misr al-Fatat (Young Egypt) for socio-economic salvation.³⁴ It is not surprising that Arab nationalism and Islamism, despite “the former being an ideology, a set of normative enunciations whose primary bearing is political and cultural, and the latter a religion which only recently carved for itself an ideological and political space distinct from nationalism,” should share the same socio-economic space, especially with the “waning of the old patrician classes...and the construction of states on the basis of differently constituted polities.”³⁵ These new movements, however, clashed intensely with the Wafd and the monarchy, since they demanded the complete eradication of foreign control in trade and politics. Although the Free Officers movement relied on the support of such groups initially, the military government that came to power in 1952 quickly distanced itself from what they considered extremist ideology. Thus, despite his populist claims of authenticity at the Bandung Conference, Nasser’s pan-Arab policies mirrored those of King Farouk more than the nationalism espoused by the Egyptian Marxists or the Ikhwan, whom he saw, like his predecessors, as a threat to his power.

THE FREE OFFICERS MOVEMENT

With the British relinquishing much of their control of the Egyptian military in 1936, the Royal Military Academy eased its admission criteria enough for sons of lower

³⁴ Vatikiotis. 327.

³⁵ Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *Islams and Modernities*. London: Verso, 1993. 62-63.

middle class Egyptians to gain acceptance.³⁶ These new cadets still required a wealthy if not influential sponsor, however, which often restricted entry for many young Egyptian men. At the outbreak of World War II the academy increased its intake of recruits, but military infrastructure did not allow for rapid promotion, which fostered resentment between subaltern and high-ranking officers. This resentment was not the driving force behind clandestine political activism in the military. Wide-spread Axis sympathies within the junior officer corps, and to a lesser extent the senior officer corps, paired with rising nationalist and anti-imperialist sentiments led to collaboration between military officers and extra-parliamentary opposition like the Ikhwan and the Communists.³⁷ While the Ikhwan provided a civilian base of support for military activists, their ideology and proclivity for violence was off-putting, and in 1949 a band of young officers broke off from the Ikhwan and formed *Harakat al-Dubbat al-Hurra*, or the Free Officers movement. The figurehead of the organization was General Muhammad Neguib, who was supported by the founding officers: Hussein Hamouda, Khaled Mohi el-Din, Kamal el-Din Hussein, Salah Nasr, Abdel Hakim Amer, Anwar el-Sadat, and Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Following the rapid rise in popularity of the Free Officers, King Farouk, fearing their growing political influence, appointed his brother-in-law, Colonel Ismail Shirin, as

³⁶ Aclimandos, Tewfik. "Revisiting the History of the Egyptian Army." In *Re-Envisioning Egypt: 1919-1952* edited by Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson, and Barak A. Salmoni. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005. 77.

³⁷ Ibid. 80.

Minister of War in an effort to contain the bureaucratic reach of the Free Officers.³⁸ This sealed his fate, as the officers would not risk being imprisoned for their activities under a loyalist minister, and on July 23, 1952, about three thousand troops occupied army headquarters, airports, and telecommunications broadcasting stations while Anwar el-Sadat informed the Egyptian public of the military coup over Cairo radio.³⁹ Upon the abdication of Farouk, the officers formed a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and appointed General Neguib as president and Nasser as premier. In the following years, however, Nasser and Neguib clashed on the role of the military in government – the former favored a militarization of government agencies due to the previous history of civilian incompetence, while the latter emphasized the importance of a return to constitutional government. Tensions escalated, and after an assassination attempt on Nasser by a member of the Ikhwan in 1954, pro-Nasserist factions of the RCC linked Neguib to the attack and dismissed him from office. This was followed by a slew of arrests and executions, mostly of members of political opposition groups including the Wafd, the Ikhwan, and Communists. Political parties were not the only victims of the new military authoritarianism; the attack upon the judiciary reached its height when renowned Egyptian jurist and legal scholar, Abd al-Razzak al-Sanhuri, was physically beaten by a mob in a court stairwell for attempting to restore constitutional government in 1954. In this way, Nasser and the RCC consolidated domestic power while cementing the

³⁸ Cook, Steven A. *The Struggle for Egypt: From Nasser to Tahrir Square*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 38.

³⁹ Vatikiotis. 378.

regime's legality through anti-colonial and nationalist displays on regional and international levels.

RELATIONS WITH THE 'METROPOLE' AND 'PERIPHERY'

Following the 1952 coup, diplomatic relations between Egypt and imperialist powers, specifically Britain, were initially calmer due to the fact that European governments were unsure of the character and intentions of the Free Officers. Within two years, Nasser and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden signed the new Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, which required British troops to evacuate the Canal Zone.⁴⁰ This relatively peaceful relationship was short-lived, however, as Egypt sharply criticized Britain and the United States for negotiating the Baghdad Pact, a regional security arrangement involving Turkey, Iraq, and Pakistan, in 1955. Nasser felt that the pact was meant to undermine true Arab solidarity by keeping Arab states dependent upon the West for defense strategies and equipment. His proposals for a strictly Arab defense bloc were reminiscent of King Farouk's manipulations of the Arab League only a decade earlier. In addition to co-opting Egyptian regional defense plans, both Britain and the United States were reluctant to provide arms to Egypt for defense against Israel or funding for the Aswan High Dam. As relations continued to deteriorate with the West, Nasser turned his attentions to his allies at the Bandung Conference.

While Britain dictated much of Egyptian foreign relations under the monarchy, this was not entirely the case following the coup. Within the Arab League, Nasser

⁴⁰ Vatikiotis, 389.

generally maintained his predecessor's attitude by aligning with Syria and Saudi Arabia while remaining wary of the Iraqi-Jordanian alliance. Israel represented an ever-increasing threat to Egypt, especially after its humiliating defeat in the Arab-Israeli war and the signing of the 1949 armistice. Consequently, Nasser's main reason for promoting pan-Arab unity was rooted in the desire to build an Arab defense bloc for protection against the Israelis.

Although Nasser would be remembered as a formidable presence at Bandung, it took a considerable amount of convincing from Nehru to send an Egyptian delegation to the conference, and even then, Nasser spoke very little during conference meetings.⁴¹ The importance of Bandung for him was that it allowed him to strengthen ties with other Asian and African leaders, especially Chou En-Lai, who would later serve as a Soviet arms connection.

THE AFRO-ASIAN CONFERENCE OF 1955

A gathering of twenty-nine newly independent nations, the Bandung Conference caused quite a stir during the early years of the Cold War. Marginalized groups in different places began to feel hopeful about their own struggles: Malcolm X used the conference as an example to foster African American unity, the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) and Sudan were encouraged in their fight for independence, and the journalist Richard Wright published his report on the conference in hopes of alleviating the "burden

⁴¹ Kimche, David. *The Afro-Asian Movement: Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World*. Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1972. 63.

of race consciousness.”⁴² Although this first Afro-Asian conference began and ended with enthusiasm and optimism from the delegates involved, it was riddled with ideological disagreements and compromises throughout.⁴³

Before adopting the *Dasa Sila*, or Ten Principles, of the Final Communiqué, Egypt requested that the issue of Palestine be placed as a priority on the agenda, but the subject was courteously evaded by the Indian delegation, who were uncomfortable with openly criticizing Israel.⁴⁴ There were further tensions between China and India due to ideological differences, as well as confrontations between pro-Western and anti-Western countries.

Although Nasser himself did not make many speeches at Bandung, the speaker of the delegation made Egypt’s views clear, as can be seen by this excerpt from his opening address:

Egypt has always been identified with all efforts and initiatives designed to secure for dependent peoples the full enjoyment of the rights and benefits to which they are entitled under the Charter of the United Nations. On the other hand, this Charter contains definite commitments on the part of the world organization and positive responsibilities on the part of its members regarding non-self-governing territories.⁴⁵

⁴² X, Malcolm. "Message to the Grass Roots." Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference. Group on Advanced Leadership. King Solomon Baptist Church, Detroit. 10 November 1963; Wright, Richard. *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*. Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1956.

⁴³ See David Kimche’s *The Afro-Asian Movement: Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World* and George Kahin’s *The Afro-Asian Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*.

⁴⁴ Kahin, George McTurnan. *The Afro-Asian Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956.

⁴⁵ “Statement by the Egyptian Delegation at the opening session (Bandung, 18 April 1955)” Asia-Africa speak from Bandung. Djakarta: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, 1955. pp. 67-70.

He went on to criticize the colonial powers for obstructing the principles of the UN Charter:

The Charter lays certain obligations on the administering powers. Among these is the obligation to develop in those territories self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of its peoples and to assist them in the progressive development of their political institutions. However, the colonial powers have always obstructed any effective supervision of their administration of the non-self-governing territories.⁴⁶

This address captures one of the major tenets espoused at the first Afro-Asian Conference – not a rejection of international norms, but a recognition of inherent power imbalances within international institutions in favor of Western imperialist states that needed to be corrected.

⁴⁶ “Statement by the Egyptian Delegation at the opening session (Bandung, 18 April 1955)” Asia-Africa speak from Bandung. Djakarta: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia, 1955. pp. 67-70.

Chapter 2: Selected Accounts of Egypt and the Bandung Conference

Interpretations of an event are as important as its occurrence, especially when there are material consequences to its perception. Naturally, the Egyptian decision to join other African, Arab, and Asian nations at the Bandung Conference was perceived in different ways by various groups at the time, and has been remembered in different ways in the following decades. While there are multiple narratives of how and why Nasser chose to attend Bandung and what that choice meant in broader regional and international contexts, this chapter focuses only on three categories: official records of the United States and Britain from 1953 to 1955, the writings and speeches of Nasser and other members of the Free Officers leading up to Bandung, and the views of international relations scholars regarding the importance of the conference. In the next section, I will address the disparities between them and how postcolonial theory can explain these gaps.

OFFICIAL AMERICAN AND BRITISH RECORDS

During the Cold War, American and British government officials worked at securing many different foreign policy objectives. Regarding Egypt and the Bandung Conference, these objectives were not always aligned. While both governments favored strategies to contain communist sympathies and maintain military bases in the Middle East, the Americans were uneasy in supporting Britain's intransigent attitude toward Nasser for fear of losing influence in the region. Despite this concern, President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles ultimately valued the preservation of Anglo-American relations more than the appeasement of Nasser and Egyptian nationalists.⁴⁷ Both Foreign Service and Foreign Office documents from 1953 to 1955

⁴⁷ Hahn, Peter. *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. 209.

reveal the changing nature of American and British relations with Egypt and the perceived dangers of pan-Arabism and Afro-Asian solidarity.

The early years of the Egyptian military regime were characterized by tense relations with the West, especially Britain. Egypt's call for a complete British military evacuation as well as its escalating dispute with Israel put the British government at a political impasse with Neguib and Nasser. The Americans quickly grasped the grave implications of an Anglo-Egyptian rupture, as remarked upon by American ambassador to Cairo Jefferson Caffery in a cable to the State Department:

I should like to add by way of general observation that the hour is far later for the West in the ME than would seem to be realized. The sentiment of the people in this area is more especially anti-Western. The officials of the RCC are Egyptian Nationalists of middle class background brought up during a generation of continuous anti-British agitation ...Being honest men and realistic as regards their own internal capabilities, they have consistently rejected and will continue to reject proposals which do not take into sufficient account the complexes created by three-quarters of a century of British occupation.⁴⁸

He also implied that there needed to be a change in the behavior of their British counterparts in order for the US to better handle the Egyptian situation:

We have an opportunity to do business with a group of men who will not easily give commitments because they believe in keeping their word. If we are going to do business with them, we shall have to take this into account and we shall have to move quickly...Nothing breeds confidence like a display of confidence, however, and the vicious circle of Anglo-Egyptian recrimination and distrust must be broken. (Churchill's gratuitous pro-Zionist remarks, for example, unquestionably set back the prospects of any Arab-Israeli settlement.)⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States*. 1952–1954. Volume IX, Part 2. The Near and Middle East, 1952–1954. eds. Paul Claussen, Joan M. Lee, Carl N. Raether (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986) Document 1176.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Not long after Caffery submitted his report, Churchill sent Eisenhower a letter in which he indicated that his government “did not seek United States mediation or arbitration” and should the Americans provide encouragement or deliver arms to the Egyptians, General Neguib would be “emboldened to translate his threats into action” resulting in “bloodshed on a scale difficult to measure beforehand...for [which] we should feel no responsibility, having acted throughout in a sincere spirit for the defence not of British but of inter-allied interests of a high order.”⁵⁰ Thus, the American government found itself inevitably mired in Anglo-Egyptian tensions and being pulled in two directions.

Fortunately for the three parties involved, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Anthony Eden were able to successfully re-negotiate the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 in 1954. Upon the evacuation of British troops from the Canal Zone per the new Anglo-Egyptian Agreement, Britain sought an alternative foothold in the Middle East, which materialized in the form of the Baghdad Pact of 1955. Nasser’s condemnation of the pact, which included his Iraqi rival Nuri al-Said as a signatory, was inimical to both British and American interests. Eden was aggravated by Nasser’s continuous intransigence, which he attributed to “jealousy...and a frustrated desire to lead the Arab world.”⁵¹ He was particularly upset when Nasser referred to the pact as a crime:

He [Nasser] argued that the Turco-Iraqi pact, by its bad timing and unfortunate content, had seriously set back the development of effective collaboration with the West by the Arab states. We used every argument

⁵⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States*. 1952–1954. Volume IX, Part 2. The Near and Middle East, 1952–1954. eds. Paul Claussen, Joan M. Lee, Carl N. Raether (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986) Document 1183.

⁵¹ Private Papers of Sir Anthony Eden. February 1955. FO 800/776 (London: National Archives, Public Records Office).

we could to persuade him at least to restrain his criticism and if the agreement were reasonable in terms to cease his opposition. For instance at one moment I said that he should not treat this pact as a crime, to which he replied, laughing, “no but it is one.”⁵²

In the same month of this exchange, the Israelis launched an attack in Gaza killing thirty-eight Egyptian soldiers. Fearing further breakdown of stability in the Middle East, the US and Britain put Operation Alpha, a secret diplomatic plan to establish an Arab-Israeli peace settlement, into effect. Henry Byroade, then US ambassador to Cairo, suggested that the terms of Alpha be discussed with Nasser upon his return from Bandung, as he might be too emotionally charged to accept any peace agreements beforehand.⁵³ Nasser, however, appeared emboldened after his experience at Bandung and refused the terms of Alpha outright.⁵⁴

Nasser’s refusal of an Arab-Israeli peace agreement was not unexpected for the Americans officials, many of whom had been skeptical of the effects the Afro-Asian Conference would have on him. John Foster Dulles, in particular, was very critical of the conference:

The Secretary [Dulles] said that apart from the specific current issues at the conference there was a very real danger that it might establish firmly in Asia a tendency to follow an anti-Western and “anti-white” course, the consequences of which for the future could be incalculably dangerous. In

⁵² Private Papers of Sir Anthony Eden. February 1955. FO 800/776 (London: National Archives, Public Records Office).

⁵³ *Foreign Relations of the United States*. 1955-1957. Volume XIV. Arab-Israeli Dispute 1955. ed. Carl N. Raether (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989) Document 54.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Document 122.

this sense the whole concept of human brotherhood, of equality among men, the fundamental concepts of the United Nations, are in jeopardy.⁵⁵

The Secretary did recognize, however, the possible justifications for anti-Western sentiments:

It was true, of course, that in the past the record of the Western powers in Asia had not been without regrettable faults. There was nothing to be gained, however, by the Asian and African powers falling into the same faults, particularly the fault of racialism, in the opposite direction. He was disturbed by Nehru's recent speech which seemed to emphasize only the bad things about the West. If at the conference only the bad things in the record of the West are emphasized it would be easy to give impetus to an "Asia for the Asians" movement.⁵⁶

In the same meeting, the Lebanese Ambassador Charles Malik reminded the Secretary "that the idea of an Afro-Asian grouping had had its origin in the Arab-Israel problem," making a settlement for this dispute essential to curbing "anti-white racialism."⁵⁷

EGYPTIAN NATIONALIST NARRATIVES

Egyptian nationalist perspectives of the years leading up to Bandung are decidedly different from their Western counterparts. While American and British accounts of meetings with Nasser attribute his actions mainly to regional policy objectives, the reports and narratives of Egyptian officials of this period include a greater emphasis on the link between domestic and foreign policy in addition to regional and

⁵⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States*. 1955-1957. Volume XXI. East Asian Security; Cambodia; Laos. ed. Edward C. Keefer and David W. Mabon (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1990) Document 43.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

international concerns.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, official Egyptian government documents from 1953 to 1955 were not as readily accessible as American and British ones. As a result, this report draws on the writings, speeches, and private exchanges recorded by Nasser and other members of the RCC, as well as recollections of Nasser's biographer and ghostwriter, Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal. While some of these sources have been translated, many are only available in the original Arabic, which allows for a more nuanced understanding through analysis of word choice and the use of colloquialisms.

Before Nasser ousted General Neguib and consolidated his power in 1954, one of his major concerns was maintaining the integrity of his regime. Only by firmly establishing his legitimacy could he gain bargaining status in the international community. In this area, his wit, charm, and incendiary rhetoric served him well. In 1953 he published *Falsafat al-Thawra* (The Philosophy of the Revolution) in which he outlined the nature of Egypt's struggle and the hardships that were yet to come:

Every nation on earth undergoes two revolutions: one political, in which it recovers its right to self-government from an imposed despot or an army of aggression occupying its territory without its consent. The second revolution is social, in which the classes of society struggle against each other until justice for all citizens has been gained and conditions have become stable.⁵⁹

He also explained why the military was the best institution to bring about the change Egypt so badly needed:

⁵⁸ Abou-El-Fadl, Reem. "Neutralism Made Positive: Egyptian Anticolonialism on the Road to Bandung." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42:2 (2015) 220.

⁵⁹ Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *Falsafat al-Thawra* [The Philosophy of the Revolution]. Cairo: Mondiale Press, 1953. 24-26.

The situation demanded that a homogenous force should emerge, away, to a certain extent, from the struggles of individuals and classes. This force should issue from the heart of the people. Its members should have faith in each other and should have in their hands such elements of material force as to ensure swift and decisive action. Such conditions did not prevail except in the army. It was not the army, as I mentioned, that determined its role in the events. The opposite is nearer the truth. It was the events and their evolution that determined for the army its role in the mighty struggle for the liberation of the country.(Nasser, 24-26)⁶⁰

For Nasser, the first priority of foreign policy was the stabilization of domestic policy, which could only be accomplished through positive neutralism – “non-cooperation with those who do not recognize Egypt’s sovereignty.”⁶¹ While the term ‘positive neutralism’ was officially endorsed by Nasser as Egypt’s foreign policy at the Bandung Conference, he and his regime had begun using it to describe Egypt’s political stance as early as 1952, after Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Cairo.⁶²

Records of Nasser’s addresses during and after Bandung focus on the shared interests of the peoples of Asia and Africa in eradicating colonialism and feudalism, and guaranteeing self-determination and human rights for the oppressed.(Nasser, Bandung speeches, address to cabinet May 1955)⁶³ It is interesting, however, to examine records of Nasser’s thoughts on the subject of anti-imperial solidarity prior to Bandung because he

⁶⁰ Nasser, Gamal Abdel. *Falsafat al-Thawra* [The Philosophy of the Revolution]. Cairo: Mondiale Press, 1953. 24-26.

⁶¹ Abou-El-Fadl. 224

⁶² Haykal, Muhammad Hasanayn. *Nasser: The Cairo Documents*. London: New English Library Ltd., 1972.

⁶³ “The address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser in the cabinet on his return from the Bandung conference.” Translated from the original Arabic. 2 May 1955. <http://nasser.bibalex.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=344&lang=en> ; “The address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the closing session of the Bandung conference.” Translated from the original Arabic. 24 April, 1955. <http://www.nasser.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=341&lang=en> ; “The address by President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the opening of the Asian African Conference in Bandung.” Translated from the original Arabic. 19 April 1955. <http://www.nasser.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=339&lang=en>

does not mention colonial and imperial forces as much, and focuses much more on regional alliances and rivalries. For example, in a transcript of a secret meeting of Arab prime ministers on January 22, 1955, Nasser is preoccupied with Arab relations with Iraq and is especially irritated that Nuri al-Said has failed to show for the meeting.⁶⁴ The rest of the meeting centers around the practicality of pooling military resources to counter any possibility of an Israeli offensive. While Nasser was concerned with the actions and reactions of Western powers, that was not necessarily a constant priority for him.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS LITERATURE

The general lack of international relations literature pertaining to the Bandung Conference, and specifically Egypt and Bandung, is telling in itself. There are, however, a few works on the subject that fall into realist, neorealist, and constructivist schools of thought. While each school differs in its treatment of the political interactions of developing countries, one of the major accusations of postcolonial and area studies scholars against them is that they tend to favor the effects of material structures in policy formation rather than cultural and ideological drivers.

Realist and neorealist thought has shaped a significant portion of international relations literature published during and after the Cold War. Consequently, much of the analyses of Nasser's Egypt and anti-imperialist movements during this time are fitted into these frameworks. Authors like Miles Copeland, Jr. stress the importance of great power politics and personalities of leaders in explaining political outcomes, while others, such

⁶⁴ "The secret records of the meeting of Arab Prime Ministers 22-29 January 1955." Translated from the original Arabic. 22-29 January 1955. <http://www.nasser.org/Speeches/browser.aspx?SID=310&lang=en>

as Stephen Walt, focus on the structure of the international system as the driving force behind states' actions.⁶⁵ Scholars subscribing to the realist school, work under three major assumptions: 1) states are unitary actors that hold the most influence in the international system, 2) the international system, having no central authority, is anarchic in nature, and 3) states are rational actors that value security concerns above all other issues.⁶⁶

Much of this literature takes into consideration the balancing of power and threats in forming alliances, states' perception of intentions and offensive capabilities, and geopolitics. Peter Hahn and Hoda Gamal Abdel Nasser highlight the failure of the alignment of American and British interests with regard to Egypt as one of the main causes of Nasser's staunch neutralist policy and closeness with the Soviets.⁶⁷ For both Tawfig Hasou and Shibley Telhami, the anti-imperial and pan-Arab nationalist movements in Egypt during this time served as a populist gloss over regional power struggles.⁶⁸ The general consensus among these scholars is that the need to establish a secure base of power was the most important motivating factor for Nasser's foreign and domestic policies.

⁶⁵ Copeland, Miles. *The Game of Nations: The Amoral of Power Politics*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969; Walt, Stephen. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.

⁶⁶ Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

⁶⁷ Hahn, Peter. *The United States, Great Britain, and Egypt, 1945-1956: Strategy and Diplomacy in the Early Cold War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991; Gamal Abdel Nasser, Hoda. *Britain and the Egyptian Nationalist Movement 1936-1952*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 1994.

⁶⁸ Hasou, Tawfig Y. *The Struggle for the Arab World: Egypt's Nasser and the Arab League*. London: KPI Limited, 1985; Telhami, Shibley. *Power and Leadership in International Bargaining: The Path to the Camp David Accords*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Separate from the realists and neorealists in this literature are the constructivists. While constructivist scholars may differ in their views, they share a few core beliefs that do not align with the realist schools of thought. Rather than placing emphasis on security, constructivists argue that interactions within the international community are regulated by historically and socially constructed norms, and not by human nature or materialism. Alexander Wendt, one of the founders of the constructivist school, eschewed the heavy reliance on the explanatory power of military force found in realism and instead based a state's ability to construct and adhere to universal norms on its location within the international system.⁶⁹ This assumption underpinned the work of many constructivist scholars who worked on developing countries, like Bahgat Korany, Martha Finnemore, and Ali Dessouki, and led them to view "postcolonial innovations as merely corroborating the mandate of intergovernmental organizations such as the UN."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Wendt, Alexander. *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

⁷⁰ Grovogui, Siba. "Remembering Bandung: When the Streams Crested, Tidal Waves Formed, and an Estuary Appeared." In *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial Orders and Decolonial Visions* edited by Quỳnh N. Phạm and Robbie Shilliam. London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. 131.

Chapter 3: Reevaluating Bandung via Postcolonial Egypt

The three accounts presented in the previous chapter were not selected at random. The main focus of this report is the examination of Bandung in the corpus of international relations literature, but in order to evaluate and interrogate the treatment of the conference by international relations scholars via postcolonial theory, the genealogy of these accounts must also be examined. Typically, international relations theories rely on the political perceptions of the era that they theorize about. For this reason, accounts from official American and British documents as well as Egyptian sources from 1952 to 1955 were included. The question now remains, how do the images and imaginings of Bandung in these three accounts align or diverge? There are several responses to this comparison, however, the two most important points of critique for this report are the dependence on West-centric ideological conceptions and essentialist teleologies.

Before delving into the complexities of the above-mentioned problems I will present the theoretical framework by which these issues will be analyzed. Homage must be paid to Edward Said's pioneering work on orientalism, in which he exposed hidden power differentials within Western knowledge systems. While his critiques generated heated debates in academia, his claim that neutral, nonpolitical scholarship was illusory became a central tenet of postcolonial theory. He insisted that "no one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position."⁷¹

⁷¹ Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. Originally published in 1978. 10.

Thus, the aim of postcolonial research is to approach a subject through self-reflexive epistemologies that contest the uncontested and universal.

Building on Said, scholars like Salman Sayyid and Sanjay Seth expanded postcolonial theory, problematizing the 'Western' and 'non-Western' binaries:

Postcolonial theory is not an attempt to elaborate a theory of the world as it would look from the vantage point of the Third World or developing world or the Global South. It is certainly true that the intellectual genealogy of postcolonial theory includes anti-colonial nationalism and anti-imperialism in its various forms...while postcolonial theory draws upon and is politically allied with anti-imperialism, it is not simply the continuation and contemporary version of this. This is in part because postcolonialism is critical of all 'essentialisms,' that is, of all approaches which take national and ethnic identities for granted, by assuming them to be 'fixed,' 'natural,' or 'primordial.'⁷²

In this way, postcolonial scholars push past Said's strictly textual critique, and instead work on decentralizing all 'others' – whether that is the 'West,' the 'orient,' or the 'Third World' – and understanding how historical narratives of an 'other' reflect the history of those writing the narratives.⁷³ Also important to this deconstruction of narratives is disentangling ideological fusions by recognizing the politics of erasure.⁷⁴ Timothy Mitchell best explains this in his observation regarding modern identities:

The identity claimed by the modern is contaminated. It issues from too many sources and depends upon, even as it refuses to recognize, forebears and forces that escape its control. To overlook these differences requires a

⁷² Seth. 1-2.

⁷³ Sayyid, Bobby S. *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism*. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1997. 33.

⁷⁴ Bilgin, Pinar. "Thinking Past 'Western IR'?" *Third World Quarterly* 29:1 (2008) 7.

constant representing of the homogenous unity of modernity's space and time.⁷⁵

Although difficult, tedious, and sometimes near impossible, disrupting this homogeneity is key to postcolonial analysis.

EUROCENTRISM AND WESTERN BIAS

Among the three accounts presented, all of them draw upon eurocentric conceptions of the international community. This is most clearly visible in the American and British government records. From Anthony Eden's description of Nasser as a leader with "a frustrated desire to lead the Arab world" to John Foster Dulles' denunciation of the supposed racialism promoted by the Bandung Conference, these records reveal the hypocritical nature of Euro-American views of the sovereignty and solidarity of developing countries. While Western leaders criticized the political implications of pan-Arabism and Afro-Asian unity, they did not acknowledge the similarities these ideologies displayed to their own 'Western strategic objectives.'⁷⁶ Operation Alpha in itself is a perfect representation of Euro-American efforts to preserve their own interests at the expense of Egyptian ones. Additionally, the alignment of Western political ideologies and practices with international norms created universal standards that often seemed illogical or ill-fitting to developing countries. Bandung represented a challenge to these standards, posing a threat to imperialist epistemology.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, Timothy. "The stage of modernity." In *Questions of Modernity* edited by Timothy Mitchell. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. 13.

⁷⁶ Hahn. 184-194.

The latent eurocentrism of the Egyptian national narratives is a little more difficult to discern, but it is present nonetheless. Using the techniques of Seth and Sayyid described earlier, one can identify how “the Orient itself becomes a creation of orientalism.”⁷⁷ That is, how Nasser and the RCC’s ideology leading up to Bandung were both imperialist and anti-imperialist at the same time. On one hand, the Free Officers movement openly opposed colonial and imperialist oppression, and on the other they perpetuated and reproduced many colonial power structures. This reproduction manifested itself in two different ways: the internalization of ‘liberal’ norms and the marginalization of political opposition groups. The former is not surprising, as much of the Egyptian intelligentsia during this period were educated in Europe and equated modernization with Western ideals of progress. The latter is the unfortunate consequence of prevailing attitudes concerning power consolidation rooted in colonial precedent.

After examining the eurocentric qualities of the American, British, and Egyptian accounts, it is easier to trace the Western bias inherent in a significant portion of international relations literature. Constructivists in particular “focus substantially on the proposition, diffusion, and internalization of norms in a more or less linear process led by materially powerful states or globally prominent transnational civil society groups.”⁷⁸ This has led to Euro-American ideologies and practices reinforcing the majority of internationally recognized political norms. Similar to complaints of Bandung voiced by Dulles in 1955, constructivist theories ascribe the production of norms, especially those

⁷⁷ Sayyid. 33.

⁷⁸ Acharya, Amitav. “Who Are the Norm Makers? The Asian-African Conference in Bandung and the Evolution of Norms.” *Global Governance* 20:1 (2014) 406.

relating to human rights, to the domain of the West and view events like the Afro-Asian Conference as intellectual subsidiaries. Additionally, the realist assumption that states are rational actors that value security concerns above all others is also rooted in Western ideologies. The Dasa Sila outlined in the final communiqué of the Bandung Conference is a direct challenge to this theory.

TELEOLOGY AND AGENCY

In postcolonial studies, examining the treatment of teleology and agency in a narrative is essential to understanding the various essentialisms it employs. For this report, ‘teleology’ refers to the focus on ideological purposes or ends as driving forces of history, and ‘agency’ describes the ability of an actor to exert her power and claim ownership of it. All three accounts of Bandung presented earlier do indeed suffer from teleological assumptions that rob multiple actors of agency in their own narratives, but in different ways.

The Egyptian accounts as well as the American and British government records exhibit similar teloses: both frame the Afro-Asian Conference in reference to their respective goals of regional control, except that Nasser viewed Bandung as a symbol of the anti-colonial spirit while Britain and the US considered its popularization of positive neutralism a danger to the “Western cause.”⁷⁹ In either case, the agency of various social and political actors is removed in these narratives. In the Euro-American account, most developing countries are viewed as extensions of Western interests, while the Egyptian

⁷⁹ Acharya. 408.

account ignores the fissures and divisions present in Egyptian culture and society, striving to portray a homogenous national identity. Despite these problems, it is difficult to critique the teleology of politics because the whole point of political ideologies is to provide a target, a seemingly attainable goal, to justify the actions of power. It is still useful, however, to perform this exercise as it contextualizes the development of international relations theories.

The teleologies surrounding the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in international relations literature differ depending on the school of thought consulted. Realists and neorealists emphasize the bipolarity of the international system during the Cold War, in which the Soviets and Americans vied for influence in different geographic regions. Thus, their accounts of anti-colonial movements are limited to the ways in which powerful states influenced the trajectories of developing countries, removing any agency these countries had in influencing their own destinies. While the constructivist school does not necessarily exhibit a fixed teleology, it does exclude the possibility of weaker states producing and effecting the dispersal of international norms by citing the UN Charter as the major influence in the principles established at Bandung. Not only does this assumption rob the developing countries of their agency in their interactions within the political community, but it is also erroneous. While the UN Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights was used as a reference by some of the conference members, quite a few attending countries were not UN member states and were

consequently unfamiliar with these documents.⁸⁰ As a result, the Final Communiqué issued at the end of the conference was an enumeration of principles deemed universal by the developing countries present, as well as a recognition of the importance of the UN as an umbrella organization.

CONCLUSION

The treatment of the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in international relations literature suffers from a lack of inclusion of the perspective of developing countries as well as a nuanced interrogation of the power differentials bequeathed by colonialism. These analytical gaps can be attributed to the skewed perspectives of both the ‘victor’ and the ‘vanquished’ of the imperialist legacy, as explained by Ibn Khaldun:

The vanquished always want to imitate the victor in his distinctive characteristics, his dress, his occupation, and all his other conditions and customs. The reason for this is that the soul always sees perfection in the person who is superior to it and to whom it is subservient. It considers him perfect, either because it is impressed by the respect it has for him, or because it erroneously assumes that its own subservience to him is not due to the nature of defeat but to the perfection of the victor.⁸¹

As he suggests, the suffering of peoples under colonialism and imperialism cannot be solely quantified in material terms, like military defeats or economic exploitation. The widespread impact of this phenomenon continues to affect social, political, and cultural aspects of developing countries, and these aspects must be included and examined in international relations studies. In an age when xenophobic populism has overtaken

⁸⁰ Acharya. 409-410.

⁸¹ Ibn Khaldun. Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah: an Introduction to History*. Trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. and abridged Dawood, N.J. London: Routledge, 1978. 116.

political and cultural discourses in many nations, the academy is not completely immune to absorbing these attitudes.⁸² Therefore, it is all the more necessary for scholars of international relations to work alongside those of postcolonial and area studies to better understand the origins of our identities and modernities.

⁸² See Gilley, Bruce. "The case for colonialism." *Third World Quarterly* (2017)

Historiographical Essay

As previously mentioned, it is difficult to find the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference discussed as a main subject in international relations literature. Most of the writing pertaining to Bandung falls under history, anthropology, area and subaltern studies, and the social sciences. In the past decade, however, there has been a growing collaboration between the fields of postcolonial studies and international relations, in which legal scholars, anthropologists, historians, political scientists, and economists contribute to a multifaceted understanding of historical events. Most of these works deal with the conference on an international scale; only a few scholars have produced nation-specific analyses, and even less on the Egyptian experience.

Before examining contemporary sources on this subject, I must acknowledge the contributions of scholars and writers who covered the conference during the Cold War era; their analyses influenced subsequent interpretations of Bandung in no small way. George Kahin, who was assistant professor of government and associate director of the Southeast Asia program at Cornell at the time of the conference, published his report *The Asian-African Conference* in 1956. In it, he gives a detailed account of each delegation's core interests and the negotiations and compromises reached "to establish, or at least to delineate much more clearly than before, several important common denominators of their international orientation." (Kahin, 1) *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference* by Richard Wright, an African American journalist, was also published in 1956. Wright's account of the conference focused more on his perception of the issues of race and religion, especially as he saw a connection with the discrimination experienced by African Americans and the perpetuation of racial exclusion on an international scale. (Wright, 140) There were also a few public servants who published material

regarding Bandung, such as David Kimche (Israel), Vernon Bartlett (Britain), and Miles Copeland (America). Their works generally reflected the attitudes of their respective governments toward the conference and its participants.

In contemporary works outside of international relations literature, historians, anthropologists, economists, and Middle Eastern studies scholars have written about Bandung. Elie Podeh, a historian who has worked extensively on Egypt, examined the influence of the Afro-Asian Conference on the evolution of Nasser's foreign policy in his article "The Drift Towards Neutrality: Egyptian Foreign Policy during the Early Nasserist Era, 1952-55." (Podeh) He later collaborated with fellow historian Onn Winckler in editing a volume on the development and impact of Nasserism, featuring scholars like Leonard Binder, Nathan Brown, and Rami Ginat. (Podeh-Winckler) From the postcolonial and subaltern studies perspective, Partha Chatterjee published an article evaluating the anti-imperial legacies of Bandung and the persistence of empire today. (Chatterjee) Christopher J. Lee, assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, edited *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and its Political Afterlives*. The volume is comprised of works by sociologists and historians to "add greater empirical depth to meanings of the postcolonial, a stronger area studies perspective to cold war scholarship." (Lee, 4) Indonesian historian Hilmar Farid has also written about the legacies of the 'Bandung spirit' and the need for a revival of this spirit, as international bodies are failing to protect weaker states. (Farid) Finally, renowned economist Samir Amin discusses the attack upon and defeat of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) by globalized neoliberalism and the problematic characterization of the conference as a failure by Western medias. (Amin)

The Bandung Conference has gradually has been reintroduced into international relations discourses as a subject of serious study, and scholars of this field have begun to

collaborate with those of postcolonial and subaltern studies. Andrea Teti, a political science lecturer at the University of Aberdeen, has used Egypt's attendance at Bandung to promote the application of constructivist theory in order to build "bridges between traditionally isolationist fields like IR and MES." (Teti, 77) His work is more focused on operationalizing 'identity' as an IR variable and "rescuing [it] from postmodernists." (Teti, 26) Fellow political scientist Reem Abou-El-Fadl, however, feels a little differently and writes in favor of employing marginalized narratives in understanding the transformation of Nasser's foreign policy after Bandung. (Abou-El-Fadl) Jason Parker, a professor of history at Texas A&M University, published an analysis of the diplomatic strategies of the Eisenhower administration regarding the Bandung Conference in which he blames Cold War bipolarity for reducing "the room to maneuver for those who had sought to turn the fleeting postwar moment into concrete societal progress." (Parker, 889) Other key international relations texts concerning Bandung deal with the conference on an international scale and how it disrupted mainstream international relations theoretical assumptions. Scholars of such works include Amitav Acharya, Itty Abraham, Mustapha Kamal Pasha, Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, and Andrew Phillips. While Acharya, Abraham, and Pasha are generally more concerned with interrogating contemporary interpretations of the past, Lumumba-Kasongo and Phillips focus on the implications of the conference for an increasingly globalized international order.

Recently, two edited volumes have been published that deal strictly with the Afro-Asian Conference of 1955: *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial Orders and Decolonial Visions* edited by Quỳnh N. Phạm and Robbie Shilliam and *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Pasts and Pending Futures* edited by Luis Eslava, Michel

Fakhri, and Vasuki Nesiah. *Meanings of Bandung* seeks to better understand the impact of the conference on international socio-political dynamics, as this is “woefully understudied in IR, and in the Euro-American academia at large.”(Phạm-Shilliam, 17) *Bandung, Global History, and International Law* focuses on how the ‘Bandung spirit’ re-wrote and subverted international legal conventions. Although the two books fall into different academic fields of study, they both present Bandung as a historical nexus between decolonial imaginings and postcolonial realities.

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