

Nationalism and Imperialism in South and Southeast Asia

Essays Presented to
Damodar R. SarDesai

Edited by
Arnold P. Kaminsky and Roger D. Long

NATIONALISM AND IMPERIALISM IN
SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA



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ARNOLD P. KAMINSKY

ROGER D. LONG

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To
Damodar R. SarDesai



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Introduction

This volume is dedicated to and is a *festschrift* for Damodar Ramaji SarDesai (b. 1931) with whom all the contributors of this volume studied, or worked with in one capacity or another, in the Department of History at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Professor SarDesai's own *alma mater* as well. He is one of those professors who was much more than a teacher as his office door was always open and he was always willing to stop his own work to greet students and colleagues with a welcoming smile, often a quip, and to offer his support and guidance and to share his considerable erudition. His delightful sense of humour, always bubbling to the surface, made any discussion a welcome and pleasant one, but what made any talk with him so rewarding, stimulating, and enjoyable is his exceptionally keen intelligence and his wide knowledge and deep reading. He can carry on a conversation on almost any subject offering insights and knowledge, yet, with an inquisitive mind, he is, like a true intellectual, always listening and willing to learn from others, young or old. With his wide experience of life in India, the United States, and England and his travels the world over, he is a cosmopolitan person as well, with a wide experience and a mind to match.

Professor SarDesai was born in Portuguese-controlled Goa. To his friends and family, he is known as Bala, short for Balaji, after the famed deity at the Tirumala Venkateswara Temple; Venkateswara is an incarnation of the god Vishnu and one of Venkateswara's homonyms is Balaji. Located at the hill town of Tirumala near Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, it is one of the world's most visited pilgrimage sites. SarDesai's family is a prominent landowning and politically active family and historically has been involved in the government in Goa. A Konkani-

speaker, he is also highly proficient in Sanskrit, Portuguese, French, Hindi and Marathi, as well as English. He was raised on the island of Cumbharjua and received his early education from a tutor named Ganesh Shivaram Samant who travelled from Vemgurla to the island to offer classes. This early education had a marked impact on SarDesai's intellectual development and he remembers how, in addition to the regular lessons, there were talks about contemporary political issues outside Goa, about Gandhi and the nationalist movement then at its height, and, above all, about the necessity for tolerance and liberalism.

Apart from medical and teaching institutes there were no colleges in Goa. Bombay, however, was not only the great commercial and entertainment metropolis of the west coast of India but it was also a great intellectual centre and the location of a number of educational facilities including one of the oldest in India, Wilson College, which had been set up in 1832 as a school, twenty-five years prior to the establishment of the University of Bombay, with which it is now affiliated. He graduated from the college in 1952 and then enrolled in graduate studies at the University of Bombay. He received a Master of Arts in 1955 ranking first in Social Sciences for which he was awarded the Sir William Wedderburn Prize. During this period he actively participated at a radio station on the Goan border which urged independence from the Portuguese. For this he was banned from entering the colony. In 1982 SarDesai was recognized by the state of Maharashtra for his nationalist activities and awarded a *sanmanpatra* (testimonial). In 2007 he was honoured with the Global Goan Achievement Award. Among his numerous other awards are the 2007 Lifetime Achievement Award given by California State University, Long Beach, for his contribution to the study of India, Southeast Asia, and the British Empire. The *D.R. SarDesai Prize* was also established at the university as a national competition to reward middle school and high school teachers for the best unit or lesson plan bringing India into the world history curriculum in the United States. In 1979 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, London, a society of eminent historians founded in 1868 and given its royal charter by Queen Victoria.¹

SarDesai lectured at his *alma mater* and published his first book in 1960, the co-authored *India Through the Ages*,² before seeking further studies in the United States. UCLA offered SarDesai the best scholarship support of the several universities he contacted and this

was attractive as he would be coming for doctoral studies not only as a student but also as a new bridegroom. At the University of Bombay he had met his future wife, Bhanu, herself an accomplished academic who co-authored one of SarDesai's bibliographic studies, *Theses and Dissertations on Southeast Asia: An International Bibliography in Social Sciences, Education and the Fine Arts*³ (SarDesai is a bibliophile and book collector with an extensive book collection and he has a remarkable knowledge of bibliographical sources for Indian history, British Empire history, and Southeast Asian history). SarDesai and his wife met at Wilson College, became friends and members of a group that gathered at the venerable Royal Asiatic Society of Bombay (founded in 1804 under the rubric of the Literary Society of Bombay) to listen to lectures and to meet and talk. Overcoming some family resistance to a Konkani-speaker marrying a Gujarati-speaker, they married in Mumbai.

Between 1989 and 1999 SarDesai would proudly assume the presidency of the renamed (in 2002) Asiatic Society of Mumbai, when he guided a major fundraising campaign at a time of financial difficulties raising Rs. 60 million in order to save its building and its holdings, and to reorganize its materials and staff to make the library a modern, professionally-staffed research centre which is renowned for its remarkable and rare holdings.⁴ He has also served as Senior Trustee for the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in Mumbai, now known as the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya. His active involvement in the community had, in fact, begun at a young age when he had a critical role in the establishment of 'The Training School for Entrance into Politics' which had the support of India's constitution-maker and pre-eminent Dalit leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956).⁵

The SarDesais arrived in the United States in 1961. As it happened it would be the beginning of a lifelong relationship with Los Angeles and SarDesai maintains a home there and lives there but for visits back to Mumbai. They raised two daughters who are now both medical doctors in California, the eldest in Los Angeles and the younger in northern California, although they were both schooled, and educated at the undergraduate level, and at medical school, in India. A characteristic of the SarDesais' life when their children were being schooled in India was rushing back to Mumbai to see them as soon as UCLA's academic quarter was over and arriving back in Los

Angeles at the last possible moment, usually the day before his classes began.

At 30 years of age in 1961 SarDesai was not in any way an inexperienced graduate student as he was already a published scholar and had been teaching for several years. He received his doctorate from UCLA just four years later in 1965 for his dissertation, 'India's Relations with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: 1954-1961'. During his time as a graduate student in the Department of History he became recognized by the faculty for his extraordinary abilities and for his remarkable scholarship and facility with languages, and, with little ado, and to his great surprise, he was suddenly offered an assistant professorship in the department. At the time he was preparing to return to India for an academic career in Mumbai but he discussed the offer with his wife, who told him it was a wonderful opportunity he could not turn down. He concurred and he remained at UCLA for the remainder of his career and in retirement lives at his house in Los Angeles and maintains a connection with the university including regular visits to the renowned faculty centre for lunches with his former colleagues and students.

Shortly after arriving at UCLA he developed specially close relationships with two professors who would become his colleagues and his respected friends: the historian of the British Empire John S. Galbraith (1917-2003) who would enjoy a distinguished scholarly career as well as one in administration, serving as the second Chancellor of the University of California at San Diego between 1964 and 1968;⁶ and his near-contemporary, the person who would establish himself as one of the leading American historians of India, Stanley Wolpert (b. 1927).⁷ Over the decades numerous graduate students in history, including several of the contributors to this volume, would specialize in the fields of India, British Empire, and Southeast Asia as their areas of concentration in history and as such be members of the 'Galbraith, Wolpert, SarDesai' cadre; additionally, they often worked with political scientist Richard Sisson (b. 1936)⁸ for their outside field requirement. In typically generous fashion, SarDesai agreed without hesitation to contribute to the two *festschriften* for Galbraith and Wolpert penned by his and their students. In the case of the Wolpert *festschrift* he contributed an exceedingly generous 'Foreword' to the volume,⁹ and equally generously, he agreed to offer the lead chapter

in the Galbraith *festschrift*, 'British Expansion in Southeast Asia: The Imperialism of trade in the Nineteenth Century'.¹⁰

During his time at UCLA SarDesai served on large numbers of committees, both campus-wide and within the department, and helped steer the university through its dramatic expansion and in the growth of the department, serving as its vice-chair and chair and helping to make it one of the finest departments of history in the United States with a long list of outstanding and nationally- and internationally-renowned faculty.¹¹ At the height of the Vietnam War he was often interviewed by Los Angeles media outlets for his insights into the war. For fourteen years he served as chair of the South and Southeast Asian Studies Program and he was the first director of the University of California's Education Abroad Program in New Delhi serving between 1993 and 1995. He was also instrumental in raising a quarter million dollars in 1999 to endow the Sardar Patel Award given by the UCLA Centre for India and South Asia to the best doctoral dissertation on any aspect of modern India awarded at any university in the United States in history, social sciences, humanities, education, or fine arts. For the first two years he served as the chair of the evaluation committee establishing it as a coveted award.¹²

He was an assistant professor for only three years before receiving tenure and promotion to associate professor in 1969. Such was his international stature at this time that he was invited to reorganize historical studies at the University of Bombay as Chair of its History Department. He became a professor in 1977. At the end of his career and due largely to his active participation in the South Asian community in southern California, he was responsible for bringing the 'Navin and Pratima Doshi Professor of Pre-Modern Indian History' chair to the department when the donors strongly urged him to inaugurate the named chair. He did so between 1998 and 2001 before recruiting and passing on the chair to the renowned scholar, Sanjay Subrahmanyam.¹³

At UCLA SarDesai also organized and directed several national and international conferences including 'The Punjab Question', 'The Legacy of Nehru', 'India and the Nuclear Question', 'Ayurveda and Yoga: Medicine in Ancient India', 'Indian Americans and U.S. Politics', 'Development of Indology and Comparative Philology in Germany, 1750-1950', 'India's Constitution at Fifty', and 'Terrorism as a Threat to Democracy and Pluralism: The Case of India' with papers from

three of the conferences published. These conferences were all very successful because SarDesai is a gracious and accommodating host and with his deep understanding of all aspects of Indian history and the South Asian intellectual tradition he could offer deep insights and stimulate discussion. He rightly prides himself on his encyclopedic knowledge of Indian civilization but he carries his erudition lightly.

Only he knows how much time and energy he has dedicated to writing letters of recommendation for his students and supporting them in other ways over the decades, but all of them know it is very considerable and they have a heartfelt sense of gratitude for this as well which does not diminish with the passage of time. Tributes abound from his students to his selflessness both from the contributors of this volume and many others but two can serve as archetypical. Ingelise Lanman (see her contribution in chapter (8) always related how SarDesai arranged for her to spend a period of residence at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore¹⁴ and how touched and excited she was when he stopped off on his way home to India just to hear her give her research presentation at the centre. For the rest of her life she never stopped talking about how much she owed SarDesai and what an inspiration and help he had been. Another former student, the co-editor of this volume, Arnold Kaminsky, enjoyed a career in teaching and administration at California State University, Long Beach, a position for which SarDesai was largely responsible for him securing, and in his recollections he wrote, *inter alia*:

One has many gurus in life who collectively shape one's education, moral and ethical standards, and general demeanor in life. Rarely are these characteristics imbued in a single individual—but that is the case with Damodar SarDesai....[He] has blessed this community with his participation and insights on many levels, and we all applaud that. As his students we were not only fortunate to find so many of life's gurus wrapped into one selfless, caring individual, but we feel we were blessed to have a second father who helped shape our identities not just as scholars and teachers, but as thoughtful human beings.

Numerous others have written in a similar vein and it is for these reasons, and other personal and professional ones as well, that a number of his students have contributed to this volume in his honour. Many others could not contribute at this time but all hold Professor SarDesai in the highest regard and with the warmest affection.¹⁵ SarDesai's work has been an inspiration to generations of his students,

a major contribution to the world of learning, and to his chosen area of specialization, India, especially its foreign policy with regard to Southeast Asia, imperialism and the history of the modern European empires, and Southeast Asia.

In this Volume

Roger Long's chapter 1, 'Damodar SarDesai: Past and Present in the Writing of South and Southeast Asian History' provides an outline of SarDesai's work although it does not indicate the hundreds of book reviews SarDesai has written nor the thousands of hours he has volunteered for serving on university committees, work for his students, and the profession; service which because of his strongly developed sense of professionalism, he rarely talks about, regarding it as part of his professional duty and the requirement for being a good citizen and colleague, of which he is an exemplar.

Reflecting SarDesai's lifelong interest in the history of India and Southeast Asia this volume contains six chapters on Indian history and five chapters on various aspects of the history of Southeast Asia. Chapter 2 is by art historian Nalini Rao who examines 'Multi-Zonal Integration and Network Relations at Vijyanagara', the city of victory 'as large as Rome, and very beautiful to the sight', a city that defied invaders from the north for two centuries until it was subdued in 1565 by the Bahmani rulers. Rao offers an understanding of the dynamics between three major institutions that commanded urban space in a city that had no overall central planner but yet built remarkable buildings and created an ordered kingdom: the king, the temple, and the market. She does this using visual, historical, and literary sources that go back to the *Ramayana*.

Chapter 3 by Vasant Kaiwar, 'Famines of Structural Adjustment in Colonial India' examines the debate about famines in India but in particular he focuses on the work of Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (b. 1933) and Mike Davis and engages in their seminal work on the subject in 1981 and 2001. Kaiwar argues that there is, however, a missing piece in the literature and that is a global understanding of the operations of financial capital and its varying impact on the world capitalist economy. Financial capital had an impact on long-term industrial development; a systematic investigation is now needed on its corresponding impact on agricultural development.

Marc Gilbert examines the life of one of Britain's quintessential Victorian heroes twice immortalized in British imperial mythology as 'Chinese Gordon' and as 'Gordon of Khartoum' in Chapter 4, 'Charles Gordon and India'. Charles Gordon (1833-85) enjoyed an Indian career of a matter of weeks rather than months or years as the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, the Marquis of Ripon (1827-1909, Viceroy 1880-4), an appointment Ripon insisted over the objections of his friends and advisers who believed, correctly as it turned out, that Gordon was too mercurial and erratic to serve in a delicate position requiring tact, diplomacy, and self-effacement. Gordon's weeks in India in the summer of 1880 revealed an advanced liberal view on how Britain should govern its 'jewel in the Crown'. Gilbert's account also reveals the nexus between Ripon, Gordon, and another icon of the Victorian era, Florence Nightingale (1820-1910). Gordon offered a surprisingly advanced view of British rule in India arguing that it lacked knowledge of the hearts and minds of the Indian people and that their interests were not being served by the British Raj.

Tamil humanist reformer and writer, A. Madhaviah (1872-1925), published a large array of novels, essays, plays, and poems in Tamil and English before his untimely death at the age of fifty-three. Sita Anantha Raman in Chapter 5, 'The Modern Tamil Humanism of A. Madhaviah', examines the remarkable output of a man who worked as a tax inspector for the British imperial regime while creating a remarkable body of work widely celebrated in Tamil cultural history. He was a reformer who transposed recent, Western innovations of social equality and individual human rights upon Tamil and Sanskritic traditions of spiritual universalism. He was a product of orthodox Brahman background but exposed gender and incidents of caste discrimination and critiqued quixotic, irrational customs that constrained upper-caste women. He was a passionate advocate of women's education, widow remarriage, and the injustices of child marriage. He practiced the modern humanism he preached with his five daughters and was often ostracized by his community for doing so.

The Birla family is one of the great industrial families in India and the economic history of the country can be illuminated through looking at the conglomerates created by a number of families, the Birla family above all. In addition, the Birla family, and G.D. Birla (1894-1983), above the other members of the extended family, is

renowned for his intimate relationship with the Indian National Congress and Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) who often stayed at and was assassinated on the grounds of Birla House in New Delhi, now a museum dedicated to Gandhi and known as Gandhi Smriti. Tara Sethia in Chapter 6, 'Capitalism, Nationalism, and Industrialization in the Age of Imperialism: The Case of G.D. Birla and the Jute Industry in Colonial India' offers a revisionist interpretation of the influence of Birla and the jute industry whereby she discusses how Birla, as a member of the indigenous capitalist class, was not just a collaborator but he was also in conflict with imperial capitalists: he was a 'nationalist industrialist'.

Sucheta Mazumdar in 'The Race of Civilizations in the Age of Colonization: The Chindia Problematic', Chapter 7, looks at the revival of neo-nationalism she terms 'civilizational essentialism', that is, the rise of nationalist sentiment in countries triggered by increasing numbers of immigrants and a brewing 'clash of civilizations'; the two halves of the coin of globalization. India and China have been profoundly affected by globalization, and neo-nationalism has also been a significant force. The growth of the Indian economy and its trade with China has been remarkable so that India is now firmly part of the ambit of China and the two other East Asian economic giants, Japan and South Korea. As a result of this globalization, India and China have been thrust into closer contact and have they have had to overcome the limited contact between the two countries in the half century after Indian independence in 1947 and the October Revolution in 1949. In spite of the remarkable contact between Indian and Chinese intellectuals and artists in the early part of the twentieth century, stereotypes abound in an era of neo-nationalism and present the 'Chindia Problematic'. A new dialogue is required in the twenty-first century that moves away from racial stereotypes and East-West tropes as well as civilizational models of history.

For Chapter 8, Ingelise Lanman discusses the development of Malay nationalism in, 'Before the Cock Crows: Early Stirrings of National Awareness on the Malay Peninsula'. She does so by looking at the complex mix of Malay, Chinese, and Indians and the intricate system of governing in Malaya through indirect rule via the Malay sultans and direct British control. Her work offers a case study of the impact of global capitalism and of the *ad hoc* nature of British imperial administration and of the way indigenous peoples negotiated colonial

domination developing tactics of opposition. In doing so, they built a nascent nationalist organization.

In 'Kinh and Highlander in the Vietnamese Revolution', Mark McLeod in Chapter 9, addresses the relations between different Vietnamese states and the inhabitants of Vietnam's northern and central highlands and plains since the nineteenth century. The Vietnamese Revolution encompassed the two Indo-China wars (1946-75) and profoundly affected the minority highlanders just as much as it did the Viet (or Kinh). In addition, the Kinh embarked on a 'civilizing mission'. In the Second Indo-China War nearly one-third of the people in the central highlands died. Hmong in the northern highlands converted to Protestantism as they continued their resistance to the dominant Kinh. Highlanders played a significant part in defeating France and the United States but war has been devastating to their numbers, their environment and livelihood, and their culture.

The final two chapters of the volume are on the Philippines. Chapter 10 by Damon Woods discusses the writing of history, in 'Writing Early Philippine History: The Growing Gulf'. Like all post-colonial societies, the Philippines grapples with its intellectual history attempting to wrestle it away from its Western underpinnings and especially to write a history from the Filipino perspective using indigenous viewpoints, nativist ideas, and local sources generated by Filipinos rather than relying on documents and reports written by colonial rulers, the Catholic hierarchy, or Western scholars, as indispensable as those materials continue to be. The response is a 'growing gulf' between those Filipinos who continue to believe in dialogue between East and West and use them, although not without critiquing them at the same time, and those who reject Western materials and the work of Western scholars, especially if they are not published in the Filipino language.

Shelton Woods writes about the eventful and honourable life and career of John Chrysostom Early (1873-1932) in the last chapter in the volume, Chapter 11, 'Colonial Crisis: How One American Fought for the dignity of the Philippine Highlanders'. In 1911 an American entrepreneur wanted to recruit and transport head-hunting and dog-eating Igorots of the Philippine highlands to Europe for exhibit in fairs around the continent in much the same way they had been shown for the first time in Madrid in 1887 and, to great popularity,

in the 1904 World's Fair held in St. Louis, Missouri, organized to commemorate the centenary of the Louisiana Purchase. Early had experienced mixed success in life before arriving in the Philippines in 1906 to serve as a teacher in response to the American aim at creating schools in the new-found colony in order to win the hearts and minds of the Filipinos. He volunteered for the highlands when few others did and became their protector. He did all he could to prevent the Igorots from being sent to Europe for the fairs for which he was removed from his post and returned to the United States. But there was a sequel. Igorots asked for Early to become the governor of their highland province and he returned in glory. He governed for seven years between 1923 and 1930 and was remembered fondly by Igorots at his memorial service in the Cathedral of St. Mary and St. John at the time of his death in 1932 at the age of fifty-nine.

NOTES

1. The society's website is at www.royalhistoricalsociety.org.
2. See Chapter 1 of this volume for a discussion of SarDesai's major writings.
3. Leiden: Inter Documentation Company, 1971.
4. SarDesai penned the entry, 'Asiatic Society of Mumbai', in Arnold P. Kaminsky and Roger D. Long, (eds.), *India Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Republic* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), vol. 1, pp. 61-5. SarDesai served as the Editorial Adviser for the encyclopedia. In typical SarDesai fashion he gave no credit to himself in the article for the work he did almost single-handedly in raising enormous amounts of money to preserve and modernize the society's holdings and operations.
5. Articles and books on the life and work of Ambedkar never cease to stop: for some recent volumes see S.K. Kapoor, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Caste Mobilisation* (Jaipur: Yking Books, 2012); Sheshrao Chavan, *Congress, Gandhi, and Ambedkar: Assessment and Observations of Untouchability* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2012); K.M. Vinay, *Critique of Caste and Nationalism: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Ideology* (Jaipur: Prateeksha Publications, 2010); and Janak Singh, *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar: Messiah of the Downtrodden* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2010).
6. See the *New York Times* obituary dated 14 June 2003 at www.nytimes.com. See also a *festschrift*, Roger D. Long, ed., *The Man on the Spot: Essays on British Empire History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995).

7. For an appreciation of Wolpert's life and writings see Roger D. Long, 'Charisma and Commitment: Stanley Wolpert and South Asian History' in Roger D. Long (ed.), *Charisma and Commitment in South Asian History* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003), pp. 6-35.
8. John Richard Sisson was born and raised on a farm in Gallia County, Ohio and graduated from Ohio State University with a B.A. in 1958 in international studies and an M.A. in political science in 1960. He then went to the University of California at Berkeley where he received his Ph.D. in 1967. He taught and held administrative positions at the United States Military Academy, West Point as a commissioned officer, and UCLA (ending as Senior Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs), before returning to Ohio State University to serve as provost between 1993 and 1998 and the interim president between December 1997 and June 1998. He finished out his career by teaching in the Department of Political Science at his *alma mater* and retiring in 2002, the year Ohio State University named him its 'Distinguished Alumnus of the Year'. For further information about his life and about his music background (he is an accomplished violinist), see www.gc.k12.oh.us. His publications include: *The Congress Party in Rajasthan: Political Integration and Institution-Building in an Indian State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); *Legislative Recruitment and Political Integration: Patterns of Political Linkage in an Indian State* (Berkeley: University of California Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, 1972), co-authored with Lawrence L. Shnyder; *Comparative Politics: Institutions, Behaviour, and Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield, 1978), co-authored with David T. Cattell; *Social and Economic Development in India: A Reassessment* (New Delhi: Sage, 1986), co-edited with Dilip K. Basu; *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), co-edited with Stanley Wolpert; *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), co-authored with Leo E. Rose; and *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Sage, 1990), co-edited with Ramashray Roy.
9. 'Foreword' in Roger D. Long (ed.), *Charisma and Commitment in South Asian History: Essays Presented to Stanley Wolpert* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004), pp. ix-xiv.
10. Long, *Man on the Spot*, pp. 7-20.
11. See the website for the Department of History at UCLA at: www.history.ucla.edu for information about the department's activities and its remarkable faculty and emeriti/ae.
12. On the award and for a list of awardees see www.international.ucla.edu/southasia/patel.

13. Among his many publications are: *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History* (London: Longman, 1993); *The Career and Legend of Vasco da Gama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Penumbra Visions: Making Politics in Early Modern South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); and *Is 'Indian Civilization' a Myth: Fictions and Histories* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013). His website is at www.history.ucla.edu.
14. The Institute was founded in 1968. It is 'dedicated to the study of social, political and economic trends in the region'. See its website for a description of its organization, activities and publications at www.iseas.edu.sg.
15. There are three former students, now deceased, who were among SarDesai's pride and joy. Ingelise Lanman's article is published posthumously in this volume. Dan Valentine, who was a paraplegic, worked in the British Empire field under SarDesai and was at the University of Oregon before his untimely death. Cedric Sampson, one of the early Native American Ph.D.s at UCLA, was a specialist in Thai history and nationalism in Southeast Asia. Sampson had a stellar career as an administrator—as Vice-Chancellor, Education Services, Los Angeles Community College District, President of the College of the Redwoods (1988-98), and Chancellor of the South Orange County Community College—before he passed from complications resulting from leukemia at the age of sixty.



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Damodar SarDesai:

Past and Present in South and Southeast Asian History

ROGER D. LONG

Damodar SarDesai, in over five decades of research and writing, has produced a steady stream of publications in two major fields. They are the history of India and the history of Southeast Asia. These fields have overlapped when SarDesai has written on Indian foreign relations with regard to Southeast Asia and when he has written about the Indian cultural and religious influence on Southeast Asia. His first publication of 1960, published even before he received his doctorate, was a co-authored comprehensive history of India, and he returned to that subject nearly half a century later with a book published in 2007 with a copyright date of 2008, *India: The Definitive History*,¹ a volume as part of Westview Press' 'The Definitive History' series. Like his *India: The Definitive History*, he also produced a major and comprehensive assessment of the history of an entire area with his *Southeast Asia: Past and Present*² which he supplemented with a book of readings, *Southeast Asian History: Essential Readings*.³ He also produced a volume with the subtitle of 'Past and Present'; that was the fourth edition of *Vietnam: Past and Present*.⁴ Accordingly, this appreciation of SarDesai's *œuvre* takes its title from a term chosen by SarDesai to reflect his intense interest in history as well as contemporary events and politics, 'Past and Present.'

His first book published in 1960 was a co-written high school textbook, *India Through the Ages* surveying the history of India while he was teaching at the University of Bombay and was a junior scholar.⁵ It was written with Dr. K.C. Vyas, the senior editor, who was the Principal of the New Era School in Bombay,⁶ a school founded in 1930 and considered one of the leading schools in the city, and S.R. Nayak, a fellow junior scholar. The book was reissued in 1962 with revised updated editions appearing in 1965 and 1967. The textbook took a traditional approach to writing history at the time with the textbook divided into early Indian history, the medieval period, and the modern era with the intrusion of the European powers. The eras were further divided into short segments designed to impart a straightforward chronological narrative and illustrated with fine drawings. At just over 300 pages the book is strong on factual information and a very useful reference source for that reason, although the numerous sections entitled 'Questions for Revision' raise a number of issues calling for an analytical approach and asking for a historical argument that would be appreciated in today's postmodernist world. Writing such a textbook and thinking through the issues of historical debate is excellent training for the historian and provide a foundation of knowledge that lasts a lifetime.

SarDesai wrote a short history of the influence of trade in imperial expansion in his *Trade and Empire in Malaya and Singapore, 1869-1874*.⁷ At 17 pages it appeared as No. 16 of the 'Papers in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series' from the Southeast Asia Program, Ohio University, then, along with Cornell University, one of the few centres in the country specializing in Southeast Asia. It was written at a time when historians were addressing theories to understand the motives for the European expansion of empire, the 'new imperialism', especially the 'scramble for Africa', at the end of the nineteenth century. J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study*,⁸ and Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*,⁹ focusing on the role of investment, were the basis of modern theories of imperial expansion and these were discussed in the voluminous *The Historiography of the British Empire Commonwealth*¹⁰ published four years earlier. Some fifty years later it is still considered one of the landmarks in the field, although a standard bibliographic work has become the last volume of the *Oxford History of the British Empire*.¹¹ The dominant names in imperial studies for a generation, however, were Robinson and Gallagher.¹²

Their ideas of the 'informal empire' and the importance of strategic reasons, that is, the defense of India, for the scramble for Africa were the ones to which almost all commentators on imperialism referred. Robinson and Gallagher dominated the discourse on imperialism until Edward Said's *Orientalism*¹³ caught the post-modern consumer capitalist *zeitgeist* in 1978.

SarDesai began his essay by speaking of the 'scramble' for territories, addressing Hobson and Lenin, and commenting on how the United States had also become imbued with the ethos of 'the white man's burden' in the Philippines. He quickly went on to say that there was 'no 'scramble' for territory in Southeast Asia as there had been in Africa, although in both of these parts of the world the process of European colonial expansion was completed during the same period'.¹⁴ Investment was important, and so was the importance of the Malay peninsula for naval purposes in the defense of India and the extension of British interests in China and Australia, but SarDesai emphasized that it was trade and the invisible exports connected with trade, such as shipping, insurance, and banking, that were the catalysts for the British expanding their control over territories in Malaya.

This observation about the nature of the forces behind imperial expansion, so obvious to SarDesai, was an important one and it was not until Cain and Hopkins and their two-volume work *British Imperialism*,¹⁵ which made the concept 'gentlemanly capitalism' common currency in imperial studies, that the significance of invisible exports, and the trade it was based on, and the interests and pressure group tactics of the 'gentlemen capitalists' in the banking houses, insurance companies, and shipping firms, as well as local communication systems such as telegraph lines, railroads, and road transportation, was fully realized. Those in the civil services in Westminster, especially in the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office, and the Admiralty, or in the periphery, also sometimes owed their highly remunerative careers to the fact that they were connected to the administration or protection of British colonies. In the academic field of imperial studies Cain and Hopkins generated a great deal of excitement, comment, and interest.

SarDesai's main point in his work was to indicate the importance of the Malay trade to the British economy, especially the export of tin and rubber, and how Singapore's traders, both before and after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, forced the Colonial Office to

change its policy of non-interference in the affairs of the Malay states. For 50 years after 1824 the British were reluctant to intervene in local affairs by extending their political authority. In 1874, however, the British interceded in three Malayan states: Perak, Selangor, and Sungei Ujong. The British were concerned about foreign gains in trade and possible political influence in Southeast Asia, such as the Germans after 1871, but for SarDesai, 'the traders played a vital role in this particular case of extension of imperial authority, not in dictating policy to the government, but in exploiting the sensitivities of British governments in the nineteenth century toward threats to national interests in the field of trade and commerce'.¹⁶

SarDesai concluded that the Robinson and Gallagher thesis was 'partially pertinent' to British expansion in Malaya in that the British government preferred 'informal' control where possible but 'formal' colonial government when necessary although there was essentially no difference in the British aim to ensure favourable conditions for British trade. In Malaya, however, SarDesai persuasively argued it was the local traders and not investors in Britain who orchestrated the British takeover. As for their argument of the importance of the defense of India for expansion in Africa, SarDesai believes that this theory could be extended to the Straits of Malacca. It was, however, the traders who changed British policy in 1874 not the Admiralty.

This concise but path-breaking study was expanded by SarDesai six years later in his *British Trade and Expansion in Southeast Asia, 1830-1914*.¹⁷ Researched in Great Britain, India, Malaysia, and Singapore he provided chapter and verse for his arguments. In nearly 300 pages of text, he began by looking at 'Trade and the New Imperialism' offering an overview of European imperial expansion in Southeast Asia before examining how the role of investment had to be viewed in a number of different ways. The flag, he stated, did not necessarily follow investment but preceded it illustrating how a government can annex territory on the 'surmise of potential mineral or other natural riches of an area to be exploited through application of capital at an appropriate time far in the future'¹⁸ or as Lord Roseberry (1847-1929, Prime Minister 1894-5) so pithily stated in a speech in 1893, the British were 'pegging out claims for posterity'.¹⁹ SarDesai made the point that the colonies of Australia and South Africa had started as liabilities but later proved to be invaluable assets, thus demonstrating the validity of the theory.

In the study SarDesai overtly stated that he concentrated more on trade than investment but his work is a nuanced, theoretically-based account of the events and forces that led to British imperial expansion in Southeast Asia, both of the formal and the informal variety. He fully took into account what his professor of British Empire history at UCLA, John S. Galbraith,²⁰ always emphasized in his lectures: that there were a number of 'factors' that both impelled the British to imperial action or restricted or even restrained their behaviour. These 'factors' could emanate from the centre as well as the periphery, they could be global forces or peripheral ones, and they could be the result of broad government principles or they could be the human factor, the result of Galbraith's 'man on the spot.'²¹ SarDesai looked at the different factors in explaining the driving force of trade, or the expectation of trade, in British expansion by first of all looking at the important role played by the free port of Singapore and the British hope throughout the nineteenth century of opening up China to British goods and investment. He then looked at Britain's informal empire in Siam, before developing three chapters on Malaya, a final one on the 'New Imperialism', and a fascinating account of how Siamese territory in Malaya was seized by the Malaysians with the support of the British. His conclusion is a succinct account of how the case study of Southeast Asia fits in, or does not conform with, general theories of imperial expansion. With his intimate knowledge of the history of the British Empire, Southeast Asia, as well as his native India, he offers a rich and thoughtful guide. He sums up:

Hobson and Lenin certainly overemphasized the role of finance capital and investment in imperial expansion of the late 19th century. Their theories fail to explain British behavior at all times in Burma and Malaya where investment largely followed, not preceded, the establishment of British authority. On the other hand, the non-economic explanations of Fieldhouse, Schumpeter, Langer, and Taylor, whatever their applicability to the African scene, do not uncover the causes of British expansion in Southeast Asia. Promotion and protection of trade, though not necessarily in that order, does provide the rationale for the graduated establishment of British control in the region. Political action contributed in all cases of intervention in Southeast Asia to promote the colonial power to the status of predominant trading partner of the colony concerned. Other factors like the turbulent frontier, personality of the man-on-the-spot, fear of foreign investment, certainly played their part in individual cases of expansion. In most situations, however, the British gov-

ernment's action was clinched by the economic advantage that would accrue to the British national interest of trade.²²

SarDesai is a bibliophile with a fine personal collection of books and material on a wide variety of historical subjects and he is always up to date with the latest research in his field which means for him the interrelated areas of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and British Empire. Accordingly, it was a labour of love that he worked with his wife Bhanu to compile his volume *International Bibliography of Theses and Dissertations on Southeast Asia*.²³ In the pre-computer search days these kinds of guides were invaluable to scholars and exceedingly tedious to generate for their authors. They required careful typing and checking of spelling. All of this work was done on a manual typewriter with any diacritical marks written by hand. Scholars eagerly awaited the publication of these time-saving guides. Comprehensive lists of theses and dissertations were particularly appreciated as these materials were, and still are, notoriously difficult to learn about, and even more difficult to obtain copies.

The SarDesais listed 2,814 M.A. theses and doctoral dissertations which they divided into eight chapters or categories: 'Anthropology, Sociology, Religion and Folklore', 'Economics', 'Education', 'Fine Arts', 'Geography', 'History and Archeology', 'Linguistics and Literature', and 'Political Science and International Affairs' with each chapter further divided by country although for some sections there were 'General' topics as well. M.A. theses from the University of California at Los Angeles and Berkeley, Cornell, American University, Columbia, and the University of Chicago were easier to recover but information on other universities was not available, a gap they hoped to fill in a possible later edition. They were satisfied they had titles of most of the doctoral research in the United States, the Soviet Union, the British Isles, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, and Japan. They were disappointed with the coverage of research conducted in France, Germany, Thailand, India, and Canada and they were aware of research conducted in the People's Republic of China on Southeast Asia but their efforts to obtain any information from Peking were in vain. SarDesai's own UCLA dissertation, 'India's Relations with Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, 1954-1961', of 1965 was listed as number 1852 on page 97.

The SarDesais rightly believed that a reference guide of this kind would prevent a duplication of research efforts and would help foster greater intellectual cooperation among scholars in different parts of the world. They offered this work as a 'modest effort' in that direction. In giving their thanks to a number of people, including Oliver Pollak²⁴ who also contributed a chapter in the volume, and, in typical SarDesai fashion, he thanked IDC for publication of the book and especially for the promise that IDC would make every effort to film any of the items listed in the bibliography for individuals and libraries at moderate cost.²⁵ The volume is a very valuable historical record in itself and still a very useful reference book worth consulting for anyone conducting research on Southeast Asia. That the field has expanded dramatically over the past three decades is in no small measure due to the SarDesais' path-breaking volume.

*What is Nationalism? The Case of India*²⁶ was co-written in 1975 with Charles H. Heimsath,²⁷ of American University, and it was a subject SarDesai gave special prominence to 30 years later.²⁸ The subject of nationalism was an especially burning one for SarDesai's generation and books on the nationalist movement and its leaders dominated scholarship for a generation after 1947. For, as SarDesai stated, 'Nationalism was undoubtedly the single most potent, dynamic, emotive element that altered the political configuration of Asia and Africa in the twentieth century. That nationalism was, in most cases, a response to imperialism and the political and economic exploitation of the governed'.²⁹ He goes on to say that it would be difficult to provide a definition that would be acceptable to all but cited 10 conditions or beliefs present in most cases of nationalism. He went on to state, as others have done, that one of the paradoxes of the nationalist movement was that it was led by an elite educated in Western institutions who imbibed Western learning. He said that the nationalist leadership that succeeded best, however, was not one that adopted Western techniques completely but one that blended with indigenous beliefs and sentiments as Gandhi did in India.

*Changing Patterns of Security and Stability in Asia*³⁰ was co-edited with Sudershan 'Sudie' Chawla (1924-2011), a professor of political science at California State University, Long Beach from 1962 after receiving his doctorate from Ohio State University, until his retirement in 2002, and who also served as Chair of his department between 1968 and 1971. He was SarDesai's long-time friend and like

him was fascinated by India's foreign policy, especially with regard to Southeast Asia.³¹ He too, had received his undergraduate education in India, but his was at the University of Delhi, like the University of Bombay, one of the finest institutions of higher education in the world, and he, too, was also gracious, welcoming, and helpful to students and young scholars. The volume contained nine chapters covering security issues as they were seen in the late 1970s from Japan to the Indian Ocean including a nod to the 1979 revolution under Ayatollah Khomeini (1900-1989) in Iran. Written at the height of the Cold War—China had recently invaded Vietnam and Mao Zedong (1893-1976) had passed from the scene but the country had not yet embraced global capitalism and was still an enigma to many in the West and perceived to be a dire threat to capitalism, the Soviet Union was at the height of its military power and on the brink of invading Afghanistan, and the United States was an ever belligerent force in world politics despite the 1975 debacle in Vietnam—the volume is valuable for an understanding of security issues at a time when, as SarDesai described it, 'the strategic-political balance seemed suddenly to have improved in favour of the Communist world'.³² SarDesai, in his chapter, 'Vietnam's Quest for Security',³³ believed the Soviet Union had increased its influence in the region and that China's only gain had been, 'the maintenance of tension over its southern border'³⁴ and thus its ability to exert its authority in the region. The volume, therefore, is a valuable guide to understanding Cold War politics before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the rise of China as an economic superpower and increasingly a growing military and political force in the region.

The centenary of Jawaharlal Nehru's birth in 1989 was celebrated in India and around the world but in no finer academic manner than in the labour of love, the two-part conference organized by SarDesai with the assistance and collaboration of Anand Mohan of Queens College, the City University of New York. Called 'Nehru Remembered: An International Centennial Conference', part one of the conference was held at Queens College and then the participants flew to Los Angeles to continue their presentations and round out their discussions at UCLA. For the conference SarDesai compiled and edited the 47-page *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Reference Guide* which he distributed to the participants courtesy of the UCLA International Studies and Overseas Program. It consisted of 'Landmarks in the Life

of Jawarharlal³⁵ which is a very useful chronology of Nehru's life, and then SarDesai chose to replicate four articles in 'Momentos' he considered of importance for understanding the man and his life. The first is 'The Rashtrapati'³⁶ by 'Chanakya', the piece appearing in the *Modern Review* in 1937 that was severely critical of Nehru. It concluded, 'We have a right to expect good work from him in the future. Let us not spoil that and spoil him by too much adulation and praise. His conceit, if any, is already formidable. It must be checked. We want no Caesars.'³⁷ At the time it was published, the only other person who may have known the identity of the author was Nehru's daughter Indira: it was Nehru himself!

The second and third pieces SarDesai chose were two of the most memorable speeches Nehru ever gave and epitomize Nehru's brilliant and sensitive use of words which were evocative of verse as much as prose. The first was the renowned 'A Tryst with Destiny'³⁸ peroration he gave at midnight on 14 August 1947 when India became independent. It began in words that have been memorialized countless times but are always worth reprinting,

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance.³⁹

The second of his speeches was a talk that encapsulated the feelings of millions of people as few others have done. It was the broadcast he gave to the nation on the day of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, 30 January 1948, 'The Light has Gone Out.'⁴⁰

Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the Father of the Nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrific blow, not to me only, but to millions and millions in this country. And it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any other advice that I or anyone else can give you.

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more

years, and a thousand years later, that light will be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented something more than the immediate present, it represented the living, the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.⁴¹

The final article in this section was Nehru's 'Last Will and Testament' of 21 June 1954⁴² in which he stated his views on religion, 'I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed to me after my death. I do not believe in any such ceremonies and to submit to them, even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others.' All three pieces give a fine sense of the style and interests of the man and of his sense of history and the ideals by which he lived. In a land of deep religious sentiment it is even more remarkable to note 50 years after his death that that he did not use religious slogans or symbols to manipulate the voters at election season or at any other time. With presidents and prime ministers, and self-appointed crusaders around the world, evoking God and religious affiliation as justification for war, violence, murder, and ethnic cleansing, not to mention crass party advantage, Nehru's conduct and actions can increasingly be seen as a remarkable exception to the practice of modern politics. It seems difficult to believe that a man of such ideals and principles was really a politician and that he practiced such ideals while holding down elective office for seventeen years in the world's largest democracy.

SarDesai followed these articles by a section he always savours, a bibliography. He divided it into 'Works by Nehru' in books, collections, pamphlets, articles, and speeches;⁴³ 'Books on Nehru: A Select Bibliography';⁴⁴ and then a special interest of SarDesai's, 'Indian Foreign Policy: A Select Bibliography'.⁴⁵ The *Guide*, containing the most famous speeches Nehru ever made and a bibliography of the books considered basic for Nehruvian studies is a very helpful guide to the libraries metaphorically filled to the rafters with studies of books and articles on this charismatic figure.⁴⁶

The conference was superlatively organized with a cast made up of some of the most renowned scholars in Nehruvian studies, all of whom publicly expressed their appreciation to SarDesai and Anand Mohan.⁴⁷ The conference was headlined by two of the most notable chroniclers of the life of Nehru. The first was Sarvepalli Gopal (1923-2002), the widely respected professor of history at Jawaharlal Nehru University,

New Delhi. His three-volume history of Nehru⁴⁸ is considered one of the most respected and authoritative biographies available and widely used by scholars around the world. SarDesai and Mohan asked him to lead off both the conference and the book of essays published to memorialize both the conference and the centenary celebrations: *The Legacy of Nehru: A Centennial Assessment*.⁴⁹ Gopal generously but appropriately spoke for all the attendees when he began his article in the book with thanks to SarDesai and Mohan by saying,

I would like, first of all, on behalf of the participants overseas, to say how delighted we are to be here, first at Queens College of the City University of New York and then at the University of California in Los Angeles. It is appropriate and far-sighted for outstanding academic institutions in the United States to associate themselves with the celebrations of the centenary of Jawaharlal Nehru for his legacy is not just to India but to the whole world.⁵⁰

That Nehru's legacy is a model for the world is a sentiment that SarDesai holds deeply.

This statement of Gopal's was seconded by the most renowned chronicler of Nehru in the West, Michael Brecher, the R.B. Angus Professor of Political Science at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, whose *Nehru: A Political Biography*,⁵¹ researched in one-on-one interviews with Nehru and even a three-day trip around India with him and published while Nehru was still alive to read it was, in its day, the most widely used single volume on Nehru's life. His article was entitled 'Nehru's Place in History'.⁵² He reviewed his assessment of Nehru of four decades earlier where he compared and contrasted Nehru's place in history to such figures as Churchill, Roosevelt, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao and leaders of nationalist movements in Asia and Africa and made a frank statement of Nehru's strengths and weaknesses. For Brecher, Nehru's contribution, along with Roosevelt's, was the greatest and most enduring of all. Any weaknesses Nehru had, Brecher believed, were the 'weaknesses of a giant.' Such was Nehru the giant that he could admit to a visiting journalist that Brecher's criticisms were justified.⁵³

Brecher's criticism could serve as the motto for the conference. Any shortcomings of judgment and action in Nehru's political career spanning some 50 years were overshadowed by his commitment to a democratic tradition, to freedom for the colonized and the downtrodden, to secularism, with protection for every religious

group, to his belief in the freedom of speech and the press, and to his cause for justice and equality in international affairs. In the new millennium his idealism, his lack of religious hypocrisy and his refusal to pander to religious extremists, and the principles he fought for seem even more admirable, enduring, and praiseworthy than they did on his birth centennial. His wide interests and influence were reflected in the presentations at the conference and in *The Legacy of Nehru*.

The other 15 chapters in the volume included essays by such scholars as Robert I. Crane (1921-97)⁵⁴ who served in the OSS in India shortly before independence and became a Professor of History at Syracuse University and the author of a number of works on the Indian National Congress and on Nehru's India; Asghar Ali Engineer (1939-2013),⁵⁵ the Director of the Institute of Islamic Studies in Mumbai, who has agitated against communal prejudice often in the face of violence from the hands of Hindu communalists; Bhikhu Parekh (b. 1935),⁵⁶ born in Gujarat but a long-time professor of political science at Hull University, who became a leader of the Indian community in Britain and chaired the Runnymede Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain (1998-2000)⁵⁷ and, for his contribution, was made a life peer by the Labour government in 2000: Lord Bhikhu Parekh; B.R. Nanda (1917-2010),⁵⁸ the renowned Director of the Nehru Museum and Library in New Delhi; and the Bengali Tapan Raychaudhari (b. 1926),⁵⁹ the first Indian to become Professor of Indian History at Oxford University, and SarDesai.

SarDesai's chapter concerned his great interest in Nehruvian foreign policy, most notably Indian relations with Southeast Asia. His chapter was entitled, 'India and Southeast Asia During the Nehru Era'⁶⁰ and he began by stating that due to the enormity of the subject he was going to selectively focus on two areas that were closest to Nehru, the issues of freedom and peace. As SarDesai stated, world events which impacted these two matters, 'had always been a matter of passion' for Nehru⁶¹ and with freedom movements still in full fledge in order to wrest independence from the Dutch in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and the French in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, the fight for liberty was still going in India's neighbourhood. Further, with the French waging a vicious war to prevent independence and then the nuclear superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union,

menacing the world with a proxy war, all in Southeast Asia, the issue of peace was fundamental to the well-being of millions of people, not to mention the ideological battle to rid the world of imperial violence and hegemony that was the basis for world peace.⁶²

SarDesai makes the point that Indian interest in or knowledge of Southeast Asian affairs was not very great before independence and only figured prominently between 1947 and 1949, 1954 and 1955, and 1959 and 1961.⁶³ The first period of interest initially emerged in 1945 due to Nehru's fury over British intervention and the use of Indian troops in the Dutch East Indies and Vietnam to suppress independence movements, but it quickly dissipated. Two years later, however, Nehru's policy toward the two countries began to diverge. When the Dutch attacked the newly formed republic of Indonesia on 20 July 1947 Nehru immediately co-sponsored a cease-fire resolution in the United Nations Security Council. In December 1948, when the Dutch renewed their attacks, he called for a conference in New Delhi and denied shipping and air facilities to the Dutch. The conference was attended by representatives from 18 Asian and African countries. They heard Nehru speak bitterly: 'We meet today because the freedom of a sister country of ours has been imperiled and the dying colonialism of the past has raised its head again and challenged all the forces that are struggling to build up a new structure of the world.'⁶⁴ When a ceasefire occurred on the basis of the Indian recommendations, and independence for Indonesia was achieved on 27 December 1949, SarDesai states, 'Not for the last time could India take pride in helping the birth of a nation.'⁶⁵

Vietnam, however, was a special case. SarDesai believes that Nehru's attitude toward communists, or nationalists who were communist, deserves analysis for its seeming contradictions. Nehru resented any communist opposition to the nationalist parties in Indonesia, Burma, and Malaya almost as much he did communist parties in India who opposed the Indian National Congress, even though they shared many socialist ideals. He arrested large numbers of them. In 1950 India contributed one-sixth of the Commonwealth financial assistance given to Burma to defeat a communist insurgency. In Vietnam, however, he recognized that the communists were 'genuine nationalists'⁶⁶ and represented the aspirations for freedom of the Vietnamese people. Just as importantly, Franco-Indian relations impacted India's policy toward the Indo-China problem. France still controlled five pockets

of Indian territory and agreed in 1947 to negotiate with India for their return to Indian sovereignty but the negotiations dragged out and it was not until 21 October 1954 that the French government finally reached an agreement with India to depart the subcontinent. During these years the French used their Indian territories for refueling and other facilities to fight the communists in Vietnam, and India did not want to risk French ire by criticizing it harshly. It was, therefore, in the Indian national interest to be restrained regarding the Indo-China question.

Nehru's attitude toward Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) and the Vietminh had become more complex with the creation of Mao Tse Tung's People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949. With the alliance between China and Vietnam it was possible that Chinese influence would expand south and the following year, in 1950, China occupied Tibet. China not only pledged its support to communist parties in India and Southeast Asia but described India as a semi-colony of Western nations, and Nehru an 'imperialist running dog' and 'the Chiang Kai Shek of India'.⁶⁷ India could put itself at a considerable disadvantage diplomatically and, with the Chinese army massed at its border, it could also be at risk to an invasion (as indeed happened 12 years later). It could gain nothing, therefore, by taking a bellicose position on Vietnam both with the French and with the Chinese.

It was not until February 1954 that India's stance of non-interference changed as Nehru, in the face of a change in the Russian acceptance of the concept of peaceful coexistence, called for an immediate ceasefire in Indo-China. At the Geneva Conference he attempted to ensure Indian representation as he argued that Indo-China was an Asian issue. India was given a peripheral role but a significant one and various interested parties, such as Chou En-Lai (1898-1976), traveled to New Delhi for talks with Nehru. This led to a communiqué containing the principle of peaceful coexistence with Nehru hoping this would also apply to Indo-China where it was his fervent desire to avoid further foreign intervention in Indo-China, both Chinese and American. As a result of the Geneva Conference India was appointed Chairman of the International Control Commission which would, among other things, supervise imports of foreign goods into Indo-China. At the Bandung Conference in 1955 Nehru secured further promises of non-interference. Indians rejoiced in the idea that Nehru had created a non-military defense system for Southeast Asia.⁶⁸