

‘Nehru is just another coolie’: India and South Africa at the United Nations, 1946-1955

Goolam Vahed

Abstract

From 1860, when the first indentured Indians arrived in Natal, through Gandhi’s stay in South Africa between 1893 and 1914, and the appointment of an Agent-General in 1927, India took a deep interest in the affairs of Indians in South Africa. This formal link came to an end in 1946 when India withdrew its High Commissioner (Agent-General) from South Africa in response to segregationist legislation, and pursued the matter of the country’s treatment of its black citizens at the United Nations. By the time of the death of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1964, 24 resolutions had been passed condemning South Africa’s racial policies. At the same time, Nehru, India’s first prime minister, urged South African Indians to embrace the majority African population and integrate fully as South African citizens. India remained at the forefront of international pressure on South Africa to dismantle its apartheid policies and also provided valuable moral and material support to the anti-apartheid movement in response to heightening state repression. Formal ties with South Africa were only resumed after the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. This article examines how this issue played out at the United Nations in the period from 1946 to 1955, when relations between the South African and Indian governments rapidly ruptured. India’s strong anti-apartheid stance helps to explain why the African National Congress government in South Africa made the establishment of ties with India a priority once majority rule was achieved in 1994. The country’s contribution to South Africa’s development historically transcends trade relations and economics. The roles played by Indian political organisations in South Africa

and the Indian government contributed towards a rich tradition of intellectuallism, enhancing South Africa's status in contemporary global politics.

Keywords: Nehru, Jan Smuts, United Nations, Indian diaspora, Apartheid

Nehru is just another coolie There are some non-whites who, with White education, have made White moral principles their own. One example of this is Booker T. Washington There is another sort of non-White – you get them on the west coast of Africa but particularly in India, who accompany a great amount of book learning with a total lack of moral responsibility. An outstanding example of this undesirable type is the Prime Minister of India, Mr Nehru. He knows the West, is a good speaker and a sharp debater, but immediately he opens his mouth it is all too clear he is only a coolie.... We should not help to make the coolie even important by criticizing him (Oswald Pirow, South African Minister, *The Leader* 28 May 1953).

India and China, two potential economic superpowers, are competing for natural resources to fuel their growing economies, while multinational companies in both countries are scrambling for business opportunities outside of their borders. This competition is played out in many parts of the world but especially in Africa, a continent that has enjoyed reasonable and sustained growth over the past decade. Anand (2012) has described India and China as 'Postcolonial Informal Empires' in the emerging global order. Their rivalry is especially manifest in South Africa, which boasts one of the largest economies in Africa, and which has witnessed a large influx of Indian and Chinese migrants in the post-apartheid period. This article focuses on the historical links between India and South Africa because of the large diasporic Indian population in the country, and the mid-twentieth century rupture in these relations. One of the key issues examined is how India's role in South Africa transformed over the course of the twentieth century and why it was so well placed to forge a strong relationship with South Africa in the post-apartheid period.

Indian Settlement in South Africa, 1860s-1940s

Just over 152 000 indentured Indians arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1911 (Desai & Vahed 2010a). They were followed by passenger migrants from the 1870s (Vahed & Bhana 2015). The permanent settlement of Indians in Natal roused the hostility of White settlers and after Natal was granted self-government by the British in 1893, laws were passed to restrict Indian immigration, franchise and trading rights. The Indian political response was spearheaded by Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) which was formed in 1894 (Vahed 1997: 2-6). Claims by Indians for equality on the basis of being imperial citizens were rejected because, as Radhika Mohanram has argued persuasively, ‘whiteness’ and ‘Britishness’ became cognate during this period (Mohanram 2007: 73). Gandhi’s two decades long South African stay culminated in a strike by Indian workers which began at the coal mines in Northern Natal in mid-October 1913 and spread to the coastal sugar estates, railway workers and municipal workers in the major cities. The violence associated with the strike, coupled with pressure from the British government in India which feared agitation amongst Indians, led to a negotiated settlement which gave redress to some Indian grievances but left their status as second class citizens intact (Desai & Vahed 2015).

The First World War broke out shortly after Gandhi’s departure from South Africa. Indian political elites showed their loyalty to the British Empire by contributing to the war effort. They raised money for the Mayor’s War Fund and around 700 Indian volunteers served in East Africa as part of a bearer corps (Vahed 1999 / 2001). Instead of redress, the political, economic, and social screws were tightened after the war as anti-Indianism by Whites gained momentum. The South African League, formed in 1919 to rally against the ‘Asiatic Menace’, declared that Indians constituted a ‘serious moral, economic and political menace’ and should be repatriated ‘as speedily as possible’ because they caused unemployment and lower living standards among Whites. Those who remained should be segregated in reserves and banned from employment in ‘positions of responsibility.’ The League’s hostility forced the government to appoint the Asiatic Inquiry Commission of 1920, which found that the ‘Asiatic menace’ was a myth, but urged voluntary segregation and firmer immigration laws in order to appease Whites (Desai & Vahed 2010b: 6-7).

As racism began to rear its ugly head, Indians met in Cape Town in

January 1919 to form a national organisation. This failed to materialise but a second conference was held in Durban in August 1919 to discuss the Asiatic Commission. Following this, measures were taken by Indians in South Africa to strengthen links with their Indian counterparts. In 1919 Swami Bawani Dayal represented South African Indians at the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress (INC) at Amritsar. In 1922 he got the INC to agree that South Africa could send 10 delegates to its annual meetings (Vahed 1997: 8). Indians formed a national body, the South African Indian Council (SAIC), in May 1921 to coordinate protest. Due to increased discrimination, the SAIC proposed that the Union government hold a round table conference with the Imperial and Indian governments. The conference resulted in the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 which provided for a system of voluntary repatriation for those Indians who wished to return to India and the appointment of an Indian Agent to facilitate relations with the Union government (Sastri 1927: 196).

Repatriation failed to achieve the South African government's primary objective, which was to reduce the number of Indians resident in the country. This led to increased pressure from Whites in the early 1940s for anti-Indian legislation. It was during this period that the moderate leadership of Indian politics was challenged by younger professionals and workers, led by Dr Monty Naicker in Natal and Dr Yusuf Dadoo in the Transvaal, who felt that the politics of accommodation had failed. Under Naicker's leadership, younger members of the NIC, with the support of Indians' trades unions ousted the old NIC leadership in October 1945. This coincided with the government's passing of the Ghetto Act in 1946, which effectively introduced segregation in Natal. The NIC initiated a passive resistance movement against the legislation that lasted for two years from 1946 to 1948, but failed to overturn it (see Vahed & Waetjen 2015: 122-145).

There was strong support in India for the Indian struggle in South Africa. In March 1947, in the midst of the passive resistance campaign, the two doctors, Naicker and Dadoo, visited India to muster support for their campaign. They issued a joint statement on the eve of their departure on 11 March 1947 that the South African government 'has shown a bankruptcy in leadership in dealing with the acute post-war problems.... [and] is guilty of fostering race antagonism.' Naicker and Dadoo's hand was strengthened in that a week before their departure they held a 'historic joint meeting' with Dr A.B. Xuma, the African National Congress (ANC) president, pledging 'the fullest co-operation between the African and Indian peoples' (Bhana &

Pachai 1984: 183). Naicker and Dadoo met with Gandhi and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru during their visit and attended the All-Asia Conference from 23 March to 2 April 1947 where they met leading revolutionaries from all over the world. They returned to South Africa on 28 May 1947. Naicker told the 1947 conference of the NIC that political and community leaders in India had pledged their full support to South African Indians: 'India recognised that we in South Africa were not only fighting for our just rights but also to preserve the national honour and dignity of all Indians A mighty India is arising and will allow no country to trifle with her sons and daughters in other countries' (*The Leader* 7 June 1947). The Asian Conference was a seminal moment as Naicker claimed that he had learnt that 'our struggle is not merely a struggle for fundamental rights of the Indian minority in South Africa but a spearhead of the struggle of the oppressed people against the establishment of this Master plan [apartheid]' (Desai & Vahed 2010b: 223).

India Takes Up the Issue at the United Nations (UN)

Shortly after the passage of the Ghetto Act, Indian South Africans called on the Indian government to take measures 'to uphold the honour and dignity of Indians abroad' (Pachai 1971: 186). The Indian government responded by withdrawing its High Commissioner Ramrao Deshmukh for 'consultation' in May 1946 (*The Leader* 16 June 1946). This was momentous as it brought to an end a tangible link with India. The NIC also called on the Indian government to raise this issue at the newly-formed United Nations Organisation (UN). It is ironic that South Africa should be indicted at the UN as its Prime Minister, Jan Smuts, was a founding member of the League of Nations in 1918 and had attended the 1945 Conference of the UN in San Francisco where 'he was a revered figure in the Commonwealth and a venerable world statesman widely respected for his visionary commitment to international peace and justice' (Dubow 2008: 48). But as Dubow points out, Smuts'

lustre did not long survive the post-second world war era In 1946 he was rebuffed at the General Assembly, condemned in his own words as a hypocrite. In retrospect, his presence in San Francisco can

be seen as the start of a precipitous political decline, a process highlighted by his failure to comprehend fully the democratizing environment of postwar internationalism, or the narrowing context of nationalism at home. Just as the rest of the world renounced colonialism and racism, South Africa tightened its segregationist strictures under the new banner of apartheid (2008: 44).

A further irony is that Smuts 'was responsible for introducing the phrase "human rights" into the Preamble of the Charter' (Dubow 2008: 52).

Dr Narayan Khare, a member of the Viceroy's Council responsible for overseas Indians, was receptive to the NIC's appeal to indict South Africa at the UN, much to the annoyance of the Viceroy Lord Wavell. Khare and his fellow civil servants agreed that the matter should be raised at the General Assembly rather than the Security Council since this matter did not constitute a security threat. The civil service was aware that they could not win the day on the grounds of protecting minorities but would argue that India had a moral responsibility to protect Indians overseas until they were granted full citizenship (Mazower 2009: 174).

On 22 June 1946, the Congress-led interim Indian government, led by Nehru who was also acting foreign affairs minister, placed the discriminatory treatment of Indians in South Africa on the agenda of the General Assembly's very first session from October to December 1946. At the same time, India took tangible action to show its disapproval. In July 1946, India passed a law prohibiting the import or export of any goods except the personal effects of passengers, as well as newspapers, and magazines. During 1944-45 India's exports to South Africa were valued at 119 million rupees, and imports from South Africa at 30 million rupees (Reddy 1991:22). Nehru took office on 1 September 1946 and his government sent a high powered delegation to the UN. It was led by his sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit and included Krishna Menon, who had led the overseas movement for the independence of India, M.C. Chagla, renowned Indian jurist who was Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court from 1948 to 1958, and Sir Maharaj Singh, a former Agent-General to South Africa (Mazower 2009: 176). They were supported by a South African delegation comprising of ANC president A.B. Xuma and NIC members H.A. Naidoo, A.I. Meer, and Sorabjee Rustomjee. According to Manu, Nehru was 'keenly involved from the outset, asking detailed questions about laws and debating tactics, and ensuring that

everyone in the delegation, while free to provide dissenting opinions privately, moved in lock-step in public' (2012: 91).

The Indian delegation argued that Indians were discriminated against on the basis of race in violation of the UN Charter and that the Cape Town Agreement of 1927 (and subsequent round table of 1932) was a treaty between the two nations which carried international legal obligations. South Africa rejected this position and considered the treatment of Indians as a purely domestic matter (Vandenbosch 1970: 197). For their part, South African Indians argued that they were justified in turning to India since they were regarded as transients who were to be repatriated from South Africa. Deputy Prime Minister of South Africa, J.H. Hofmeyr, said to this effect: 'We cannot blame the local Indians of, as we put it, running to Mother India unless we recognise them as South African citizens with rights of citizenship' (Von Eschen 1997: 86).

India's placing of South Africa's treatment of its Indian population, who numbered 282 000 according to the 1946 census, before the UN raised the critical question of that body's jurisdiction and powers. The South African delegation, led by Prime Minister General Smuts, argued that this was a purely domestic affair, citing Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, the 'domestic jurisdiction clause'. As South African citizens, Indians were subject to South African laws (Manu 2012: 98). Speaking before the General Assembly on 25 October 1946, Vijayalakshmi disputed Smuts' view that the Indian issue was a domestic matter:

It is by no means a narrow or local one, nor can we accept any contention that a gross and continuing outrage of this kind against the fundamental principles of the Charter can be claimed by anyone to be a matter of no concern to this Assembly.... Millions look to us to resist and end imperialism in all its forms, even as they rely on us to crush the last vestiges of Fascism and Nazism (Mukherji 1959: 149).

India, she said, felt 'a moral obligation to those Indians whose ancestors had been sent to a remote land on the clear understanding that they would enjoy equality of rights and opportunities'. India also cited Article 14 of the Charter which gave the General Assembly the power to act, no matter the origin of the problem (Mukherji 1959: 152). Vijayalakshmi insisted that India did not 'seek dominion over others ... but we do claim equal and honourable

treatment for our people wherever they may go and we cannot accept discrimination against them' (Manu 2012: 99).

The Indian delegation faced an uphill struggle as most of what would come to be known as the 'Third World' was still under the yoke of imperial rule. Only ten of the fifty-four members of the UN were from Asia and only four, including South Africa, were African. Britain and France vetoed calls for sanctions but called on the Indian and South African governments to negotiate a settlement through a round table conference (Bennett-Smyth 2003). In any event, the UN resolution amounted to little since the new body had no means to enforce it. Five countries consistently opposed or abstained from resolutions criticizing South Africa during this period - Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium and Australia. Except for Australia the others were African colonial powers (Dubow 2008: 46).

Vijayalakshmi was absolutely brilliant during the debates, prompting Menon to write to Nehru on 9 December 1946 that she was 'devastating.... Neither at San Francisco nor here have I seen a speaker so enthusiastically cheered as Mrs Pandit was' (Sahgal 2011: 114). It is said that when Vijayalakshmi met Smuts, she apologised to him for taking up the stance she took and he replied prophetically: 'My child, ... this is a hollow victory. I will be out of power in the next election, but you will have gained nothing' (Sahgal 2011: 115). However, as he conceded in his private correspondence, Smuts was shaken by the assault. According to Dubow,

Smuts expected Indian hostility to South Africa's racial policies at the General Assembly in 1946, but he was shocked by the power of the assault and, in particular, by the manner of Mrs Pandit's condemnation of him. Smuts referred to his failure at the UN as 'a bitter experience': 'Here is the author of the great preamble of the Charter', he complained, 'exposed as a hypocrite and a double-faced time server!' (2008: 66).

Nehru wrote to Smuts on 24 April 1947 that the Indian government was ready to enter into negotiations with the South African government as per the UN resolution. Smuts replied that South Africa could not do so because of the absence of the Indian High Commissioner. Nehru retorted that this was a feeble excuse. Smuts replied that India's withdrawal of its High Commissioner was a 'hostile act' and negotiations could not resume until the

High Commissioner returned. He was adamant that the Cape Town Agreement was not binding and that South Africa had the right to deal with Indians legislatively. Smuts argued that South Africa's policies towards Indians were no different from those of many other countries and he did not understand why these 'policies to achieve internal peace should be especially singled out for condemnation' (Vandenbosch 1970: 195). Negotiations between the South African and Indian High Commissioners in London also failed to achieve positive outcomes. India informed South Africa in August 1947 that in view of this lack of progress, there was no point in its High Commissioner returning to South Africa.

India reported to the General Assembly on 2 December 1947 that South Africa had ignored its offers of a round table conference. Smuts did not attend that meeting but sent his Minister of Justice, H.G. Lawrence who, in his previous capacity as Minister of the Interior, had extensive experience of Indian issues. There was less focus on the Indian issue this time round as the UN's focus was on Palestine while India was embroiled in conflict with Pakistan. Lawrence argued that although the Cape Town Agreement had failed in its primary objective of repatriating Indians, South Africa continued to 'uplift' Indians in the country and the inclusion of a clause allowing for parliamentary representation in the Ghetto Act, showed that it recognised Indians as a permanent part of the country's landscape (Vandenbosch 1970: 195). Smuts himself had said that parliamentary representation would give Indians 'a platform in South Africa. We do not want people in South Africa to go and make appeals in other countries. If they want to make any appeal let them do so in South Africa. We are now giving them political status [and] there is no need for them to go elsewhere' (Vandenbosch 1970: 201). The General Assembly passed a resolution in 1947 urging South Africa and India to continue their efforts to convene a round table conference and to invite Pakistan, which had just come into existence, to participate in the discussions (Vandenbosch 1970: 195).

UN involvement 'dramatically altered the political landscape in South Africa. White South Africans became increasingly self-conscious, drifting to the right, while world support for their cause energized black South Africans.' This was the beginning of the end for Smuts, a 'string of defeats ... culminating in the Nationalist [Party] victory in 1948' (Bennett-Smyth 2003). For Smuts personally, discussion of the issue at the UN damaged his international standing. As Dubow points out:

Few could have predicted that his participation in the recently formed United Nations would catch him out so dramatically. At once, Smuts found himself exposed to a changing environment in which the old rules of diplomacy were shifting, assumptions of impermeable state sovereignty were being questioned, and racism was becoming a matter of international concern. Several related events may be instanced to show the convergence of domestic and international politics in 1946, which inflicted such great damage on Smuts. Though not entirely unanticipated, they caused Smuts acute embarrassment and signalled the beginning of his political demise, a process of decline that was sealed two years later, when D.F. Malan's Nationalists ejected him and his government from office (2008: 64-65).

Apartheid

There was an important change in South Africa in 1948 when D.F. Malan's National Party (NP) emerged victorious in the general elections in May of that year. While segregation was long an entrenched policy in South Africa, the NP was to the right of the Smuts government and introduced a more rigid policy of racial separation known as apartheid which aimed to strictly separate South Africans according to race in every aspect of their lives. Monty Naicker was due to go the UN in July 1948 to present the South African Indian case but the government denied him a visa. The NIC telegraphed Nehru to 'draw your urgent attention to undemocratic and unwarranted action of union government in refusing passport.... This unprecedented attack on civil liberties of Indian people in South Africa is deliberate and calculated attempt to stifle and black out any adverse expression by voteless, voiceless Indian community' (Desai & Vahed 2010b: 228). In another act of defiance, that part of the 1946 Ghetto Act which offered Indians limited representation in parliament was repealed. It had not been implemented by Smuts because of opposition by Indians, but Malan removed even this option (Vandenbosch 1970: 195).

Eric Louw, Minister of Economic Development, represented South Africa at the UN in 1948. In October 1948, on behalf of South African Indians, M.D. Naidoo and Moulvi Cachalia visited India and Pakistan where they met with Nehru and Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Khan. In the nine

years from 1946, 1948 was the only year when the treatment of Indians in South Africa was not discussed by the General Assembly

In May 1949 the General Assembly passed another resolution calling on India, Pakistan and South Africa to enter into discussions at a round table conference. However, the Indian government's letter to the South African government on 4 July 1949 was ignored (Mukherji 1959: 154-155). The South African government did reluctantly meet with a joint Indian / Pakistani delegation led by Pandit Kunzru in February 1950, making it clear that it was not doing so because of UN pressure. Shortly after the meeting, however, the South African government promulgated the Group Areas Act in April 1950, ignoring a request by the foreign delegation to put this legislation on hold until negotiations had been completed. The Indian government issued a statement in June 1950 that in view of the attitude of the South African government, future meetings would be unproductive (Mukherji 1959: 158). K.R. Nehru, Indian delegate to the UN, reiterated in 1952 that the halting of discriminatory legislation was a precondition for a round table conference (*Indian Views* 9 January 1952).

The fifth General Assembly meeting adopted a resolution on 2 December 1950 that called for a round table conference to be held before the end of April 1951; failing which a three person commission should be appointed to 'assist' the two sides in negotiations. The resolution also called on the South African government not to enforce the provisions of the Group Areas Act while negotiations were in process (Vandenbosch 1970: 197). The South African government not only rejected the resolution on the grounds that the treatment of Indians was a purely domestic matter but brought the provisions of the Group Areas Act into effect on 31 March 1951. In the absence of any progress the UN General Assembly meeting of November 1951 adopted a stronger resolution that the 'policy of racial segregation (apartheid) is necessarily based on doctrines of racial discrimination' and that South Africa had contravened the previous resolution by enforcing the Group Areas Act (Vandenbosch 1970: 197).

Since the April 1951 deadline had lapsed, on 5 December 1952, the UN General Assembly resolved to proceed with the appointment of a three person committee, called the Good Office Commission, to facilitate discussions between South Africa, India and Pakistan. There were 44 votes in favour and 14 abstentions. It was the first time that no government had vetoed a resolution against South Africa. Indian delegate K.R. Nehru explained that

a UN resolution was necessary because South Africa 'was in no mood to discuss the removal of disabilities' (*Indian Views* 9 January 1952). When the South African parliament opened on 18 January 1952, the Governor-General E.G. Jansen described the UN's involvement in South Africa's domestic affairs and in its control of South West Africa (now Namibia) as 'a serious infringement of South Africa's rights' (*Indian Views* 23 January 1952).

With South Africa refusing to engage in talks under the mandate of the UN, there were suggestions that talks should take place outside of UN jurisdiction. However, Indian leaders in South Africa did not want the Indian government to withdraw the issue from the UN. P.R. Pather of the Natal Indian Organisation (NIO) said that in the 1940s attempts by Indians in South Africa to negotiate directly with their government had failed as they lacked 'any bargaining power' and were, consequently, 'not in a position to talk on substantial terms with the Union Government.... The SA Indian question must remain at the UN until it is finally settled.' J.N. Singh of the NIC said that 'to permit the removal of the item from the UN Agenda will be to eliminate for South Africa the censure of the entire civilised world – only the SA government stands to gain from such a step' (*The Graphic* 7 November 1952).

The Good Office Commission

The UN established the Good Office Commission in December 1952, which was tasked with facilitating discussions between India, South Africa and Pakistan, studying the racial situation in South Africa, and reporting to the UN within two years. The Commission wrote to the Indian, Pakistani and South African governments about convening a meeting. The South African government replied that it rejected the resolution of December 1952 and thus did not recognise the Commission. In fact, the South African delegation left the Debating Chamber when the resolution giving effect to the appointment of the Commission was passed (*Indian Views* 17 June 1953). The Good Office Commission was chaired by Herman M. Crux of Chile and included Henri Langier of France and Dante Bellegarde of Haiti. It met for the first time in Geneva on 8 May 1953 (*The Graphic* 9 May 1953) but made little progress because South Africa refused to engage in negotiations within the UN mandate. When the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly met in October 1953, Pakistan proposed that meetings should be held outside

the authority of the UN in order to break the deadlock (*The Graphic* 24 October 1953).

Nehru came under attack in the Indian Parliament in March 1953 for India's membership of the Commonwealth while Britain was not supporting action against South Africa. Nehru was adamant that India's Commonwealth membership allowed it to have a say in international affairs. The lack of progress on South Africa, he said, was due to the 'half-hearted support extended on the part of important and great countries who quibbled over these matters.' Nehru conceded that India could do nothing about the South African issue beyond raising it at the UN, and that he personally did not 'see any solution of problem in the near future – certainly I cannot bring it about.... The Government of South Africa is impervious to any reasoned approach' (*Indian Views* 1 April 1953). Nehru repeated in the Indian parliament in October 1953 that the South African dispute was 'frozen, petrified.' He described the situation as a 'major test for the world' since, unlike other countries which practiced racism with an element of apology, 'in South Africa there is no apology. It is blatant. It is shouted out, and no excuse is put forward for it' (*The Graphic* 3 October 1953).

The Commission reported to the UN in September 1954 that it was unable to get negotiations started during 1952 and 1953 due to the intransigent attitude of South Africa. In February 1954 it tried to get the parties to meet outside the UN's authority but that strategy also failed. An invitation was sent to South Africa's chief representative to the UN, W.C. du Plessis, on 25 August 1954 to attend a meeting with the Commission but he replied that the South African government did not recognise the Commission (*The Leader* 24 September 1954).

G.P. Jooste, South Africa's deputy representative at the UN, argued that the annual discussion of South Africa's internal policies was 'prejudicing' the country's 'good governance and stability.' This 'hostile approach' was 'fanning the emotions' of Black South Africans and 'sowing suspicion' and 'promoting distrust' among South Africa's racial groups. It was also giving people in other parts of the world the impression that the UN could be used 'as a tool of agitation' (*The Leader* 1 October 1954). When the matter was debated by the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly in October 1954, du Plessis reiterated that the UN did not have the right to meddle in South Africa's affairs and that, in any case, Indian South Africans had 'never evinced the slightest desire to leave' the country as their

circumstances were not as bad as the detractors were making them out to be. He claimed that India's stance encouraged agitation amongst those within South Africa who wanted to disrupt law and order with Indian and communist support (*The Leader* 22 October 1954).

The Asian and African countries proposed that the United States (US) mediate the dispute. However, the US ambassador to the UN, Henry Cabot Lodge, voiced Washington's 'increasing concern' over intervention in the domestic affairs of a member state and proposed direct negotiations. A proposal by Cuba, Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador that South Africa, India and Pakistan resume direct negotiations was accepted unanimously by the Political Committee. The NIC issued a statement welcoming the decision. It stated that the 'world has moved on since the days of Kruger [Transvaal president in the nineteenth century], and today colour bars and colonial exploitation are rapidly disappearing in all parts of the world.' The statement was clear that the resolution of the Indian question had to be 'in relation to the broader question of racial discrimination in the Union' and that a lasting solution depended on 'the efforts of the people of the Union themselves' (*The Leader* 5 November 1954). India's representative to the UN, P. Trikamdas, warned that South Africa was headed for a 'fearful race conflict and race war. The African giant has awakened and will not for long tolerate the status of semi-slavery for the greater glory of the Master Race' (*The Leader* 5 November 1954). South Africa ignored calls for round table discussions.

At its ninth session in 1954 the UN decided to discontinue the Commission and to call on India, Pakistan, and South African to undertake direct negotiations, with a mediator appointed to facilitate discussions. The resolution was adopted with 45 for, 1 against, and 13 abstentions. Ambassador Luis de Faro (Brazil) was appointed as mediator. However, South Africa informed the UN in April 1955 that it was terminating all negotiations in view of two speeches that Nehru had made in early 1955 attacking South Africa: 'As far as the Union Government is concerned, the question of persons of Indian origin in the Union of South Africa must be regarded as closed' (UN 1968: 780).

South Africa's action was a direct result of proceedings at the Afro-Asian conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, from 18-24 April 1955 and attended by 29 nations (*The Leader* 22 April 1955). Nehru was one of the architects of the conference, which aimed to end the 'politics of pigmentation' in which 'arrogant white statesmen set themselves up as

overlords over 'lesser peoples' who were considered to be unable to stand on their own two feet in the difficult conditions of Western Civilisation' (Adebajo 2008: 109). Nehru took Moses Kotane of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and Moulvi Cachalia of the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), who were leaders of the 1952 Defiance Campaign, to the conference as observers (Reddy 1987). India successfully moved a resolution censuring South Africa's racial policies. The resolution read:

The conference extended its warm sympathy and support for the courageous stand taken by the victims of racial discrimination, especially by the peoples of African and Indian and Pakistani origin in South Africa; applauded all those who sustained their cause, reaffirmed the determination of Asian-African peoples to eradicate any trace of racialism that might exist in their own countries; and pledged to use its full moral influence against the danger of falling victim to the same evil in the struggle to eradicate it (Adebajo 2008: 109).

According to Bunting, the biographer of Moses Kotane, Nehru impressed Kotane as 'an international statesman of great charm and understanding, alert and well-informed. He expressed intense hate for national oppression and injustice, and was greatly disturbed by the vicious racial policies pursued in parts of Africa, especially South Africa.' Kotane and Cachalia secured a large sum of money to aid the South African liberation movement (Bunting 1975: 275-276).

In deciding to withdraw from negotiations, the South African government described Nehru's speech as 'indeliberate'. Monty Naicker of the NIC said that South African Indians 'deeply regretted' the action of the South African government in withdrawing from the round table talks, while P.R. Pather of the NIO described the action as 'ill-advised' (*The Leader* 29 April 1955). When the General Assembly met later that year, de Faro informed it that his attempts to restart negotiations had failed. The General Assembly adopted a brief resolution in November 1955 which noted that the parties had failed to hold discussions and urged them to restart negotiations. South Africa was absent when the resolution was adopted by 43 to 0 (UN 1968: 780). In early 1956, there was consternation in Natal when local newspapers claimed that Nehru had said that India was contemplating war with South Africa. A.M. Moolla of the NIO wrote to Nehru to confirm that he had been correctly

quoted. India's Ministry of External Affairs replied that the statement was incorrect. What Nehru had said was that India had problems with three countries, South Africa, Pakistan (over Kashmir), and Portugal (over Goa) and that 'while some people might think in terms of these problems leading to war, this was entirely out of the question' (*The Leader* 11 February 1955).

While this issue was being played out internationally, many Indians in South Africa joined the majority African population in a Defiance Campaign against apartheid laws during the second half of 1952 (Vahed 2013). Speaking in the Indian Parliament in November 1952, Nehru said that no progress had been made in effecting the UN resolution because the South African government 'has not co-operated.' He added that the issue had been 'overshadowed by the much larger issue of race conflict which has led to the passive resistance movement [Defiance Campaign] against apartheid' (*The Graphic* 14 November 1952). At the 58th session of the All India Congress in January 1953, Nehru warned that a race war was

developing in Africa. The policy of the South African government has been opposed by us in so far as people of Indian origin are concerned. That policy has progressively emphasised racial discrimination and indeed, overlordship of one race over another. The passive resistance movement in South Africa has now become widespread and Africans are taking a leading part in it.... Repression will never solve the problem of Africa and the grave danger is that something in the nature of race war will develop and bring disaster in its train (*Indian Views* 18 February 1953).

From Nehru's statements and actions it is clear that he did not want to confine India's involvement to South African Indians only but to extend it to the majority African population. This reflects Nehru's internationalism. He was adamant that the treatment of Indians in South Africa was not 'merely an Indian issue' but 'a world cause' that affected all peoples 'struggling for the equality of opportunity for all races and against the Nationalist doctrine of racialism' (Mazower 2009: 178).

Nehru and Africa

Nehru stood out from most of his contemporaries in a very important respect.

He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, read for the Bar in London, and was widely travelled and consequently cosmopolitan in his outlook. According to Brown (2006: 73):

Nehru was one of the best-travelled Indians of his age.... Not only did Nehru spend the years of his education in Britain (with forays abroad). He spent nearly two years in Europe in the mid-1920s, and again some months in the mid-1930s.... They provided the occasion for extensive travel and the forging of international contacts. On the earlier visit he went to Brussels for a congress against imperialism and encountered members of the European Left as well as a number of Latin American, Middle Eastern, African and Asian delegates, including some from China. The latter encounter prompted him to think about future cooperation between Indian and Chinese nationalists. He and his family also visited Russia, and he was forced to think seriously about the attempt at large-scale socio-economic engineering he witnessed there. Later that decade – in 1938 – he took another break in Europe, feeling out of place in Indian politics. He went to Spain where he made contact with the International Brigade, as well as taking care, back in England, to see as wide a range of politicians as possible – particularly those with influence on Indian policy.

Nehru wanted India's international standing to be 'radically transformed as part of a global problem of capitalism sustaining imperialism' (Brown 2006: 74).

Unlike Gandhi, Nehru made strident calls for South African Indians to reject racial and ethnic exclusivity and embrace the African majority in the struggle against White minority rule. Speaking in London in June 1953, Nehru said that Indians in South Africa were not Indian nationals, and that

the question of Indians, though important to us, has been deliberately allowed by us to become a secondary issue to the larger issue of racial discrimination. The opposition movement there is far more African than Indian. The leadership is African – we want it to be so. We have told Indians in Africa very definitely and very precisely that we do not encourage or support them in anything they might want

which goes against the interest of Africans. We shall support them, of course, in their legitimate demands (*The Graphic* 20 June 1953).

According to a report in *The Graphic* (20 June 1953), with the street placards reading 'Nehru shocks Indians', local political leaders expressed 'unease' at Nehru's statement which was seen as 'the most important pronouncement by any prime minister of India ... in the history of Indians in South Africa.' 'Moderate' Indian leaders interviewed by the *Graphic* reporter were concerned that the problems of South African Indians were being 'submerged in the vaster race problems of all Africa and in the debating exchanges of the United Nations, where the practical issues facing South African Indians have been dissolved into the larger questions of world policy and diplomacy.' Their 'destiny' now depended not on their 'own will' but the outcome of the passive resistance struggle led by Africans. NIO moderates further complained that amongst Indians, the Indian government was only consulting with Congress leaders rather than seeking to gauge the views of the 'large section of Indian opinion which does not embrace the policies of Congress' (*The Graphic* 20 June 1953).

There was strong reaction to this report. A letter writer signing off as 'AVOCA' questioned whether Indian political moderates (represented by the NIO) enjoyed the support of the majority of Indians and asked the NIO to produce its membership list. Nehru, the letter argued, consulted with NIC leaders because he 'will consult only persons worthy of consultation.' The NIC leaders had 'shown their merits not merely by words, but also by deeds. The Prime Minister of India knows what it takes in human efforts and suffering to undergo a prison sentence and he knows the mettle possessed by those who serve prison sentences for the sake of freedom' (*The Graphic* 27 June 1953). J.N. Singh of the NIC said that Nehru's views reflected that of his organisation and that there was 'a degree of consultation and cooperation and understanding' between the Indian and African congresses. Indians would not be 'mere followers' but would play an equal and active part in the alliance (*The Graphic* 20 June 1953). A.I Bhoola, who studied law with Nelson Mandela at the University of the Witwatersrand, and who was a member of the NIC, denied that there was 'widespread' unease among Indians locally. Those who spoke of 'the Indian problem in South Africa' were 'living in the past. There is no such problem.' At issue were the concepts of 'White supremacy' and 'Apartheid', rather than the 'rights of a

handful of Indians.’ He described moderate politicians as being like the ‘proverbial ostrich’ who refuses to ‘see things as they are.... They are too narrow, self-centred and parochial.... The issues are far more fundamental than one of living next door to a European.’ The Defiance Campaign had created ‘a tremendous fund of goodwill’ among Indians and Africans ‘which needs to be zealously guarded and strengthened, and we can do so ONLY along the lines indicated by Mr Nehru’ (*The Graphic* 27 June 1953).

The first Overseas Indians Conference, held in London on 13 June 1953, and attended by delegates from Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, British Guiana, Malaya, Trinidad, and several other countries, echoed Nehru. In his presidential address, K.D. Kumar of Malaya said that with the exception of South Africa, Indians were an ‘integral part of multi-racial societies’ and ‘must regard themselves nationals of the country in which they lived.’ E.H. Ismail of the NIO represented South Africa while the SAIC sent E.J. Pillai as an observer. English speakers with long-established links with South Africa included Henry Polak, who had worked closely with Gandhi, and Father Harold Satchell (*The Graphic* 18 July 1953). In October 1953, Nehru delivered his ‘African Speech’ in the Indian Parliament in which he maintained: ‘We shall help you [Indian]. Naturally we are interested in protecting you, your dignity or interests, but not if you go against the people of Africa, because you are their guests and if they do not want you, you will have to go bag and baggage and we will not come to your aid....’ (*The Graphic* 28 November 1953)

This message was reinforced locally. At the SAIC conference in August 1954 I.C. Meer moved a resolution that was adopted calling on the Indian government to refuse to accept any expatriates from South Africa. He said that while some Indian and White politicians in South Africa regarded the Cape Town Agreement as the Magna Carta of Indians in South Africa, South African Indians had no say in its formulation. But even that Agreement had been breached by the National Party government which had not fulfilled its ‘upliftment’ clause. India should therefore make it clear that it would not be party to the repatriation scheme or accept any Indians deported by the government for political reasons. This would send an unequivocal message that Indians were South African citizens (*The Leader* 20 August 1954). At the July 1955 conference of the Natal Indian Teachers Society (NITS), its president Dr A.D. Lazarus said that Indians in South Africa should stop thinking of themselves as ‘alien and unassimilable’ and should become ‘true

South Africans in thought and deed.’ ‘Alien and unassimilable’ were the words used by D.F. Malan when he introduced the Areas Reservation and Immigration Bill in 1925, and should be rejected outright by South African Indians. He called on teachers to reinforce this lesson to school children and to emphasise that they were part of the majority population in South Africa (*The Leader* 8 July 1955).

Despite these pronouncements, some Africans were suspicious of Indian intentions. Journalist Jordan Ngubane, who wrote a weekly column in *Indian Opinion* entitled ‘African Viewpoint’, said that the Indian and African alliance over the Defiance Campaign had ‘complicated tensions of a highly explosive nature.’ He wrote that African national pride was being ‘insulted’ by Indians in South Africa and in India who were

giving a twist to the resistance movement which would give it a character that would redound only to their own exclusive credit and reveal African contributions in poor light.... The treatment meted out to African leaders and African contributions by important sections of the Indian press at times does little to cement Afro-Indian relations. Both in this country and in India the resistance movement is often reported as though it was an Indian movement. The impression is being sedulously created that the African leaders of the struggle are juniors to their Indian counterparts (*The Graphic* 6 February 1953).

On the other hand, Moses Kotane of the SACP took a different view. While South African ministers demonised Nehru for wanting to conquer Africa to provide a home for India’s surplus population, Kotane felt that Nehru ‘genuinely believed in the freedom of all oppressed people in the world as a matter of right and justice.’ He said: ‘Mr Nehru spoke [at the Bandung conference] with intense emotion in condemning the barbarity and tyranny of the South African Government It is clear to me that India, far from restricting its interest to the fate of South Africa’s Indian population, is deeply concerned about the position of all victims of the Government in South Africa’ (Bunting 1975: 275-276).

The Wrath of Malan

South African Prime Minister D.F. Malan was in no mood for compromise.

In September 1952 he described claims that Africans in South Africa were oppressed as a 'damnable lie' and argued that they were better off than Black people in the USA as well as untouchables in India. He added that India would only be satisfied once 'the rich and beautiful province of Natal is given to Indians and the whites allowed to be pushed out.' The Delhi-based *Hindustani Times*, which was edited by Gandhi's son Devdas, pointed out that untouchables and Blacks in the USA at least enjoyed theoretical equality. As long as Blacks in South Africa did not enjoy such rights, 'it is of little avail for him [Malan] to indulge in such unwarranted taunting comparisons.... The more he [Malan] indulges in violent language and mock heroics the more he alienates the world' (*The Graphic* 26 September 1952).

In November 1952, D.E. Mitchell, M.P. and former Administrator of Natal, complained that Indians were 'perpetually shouting for help overseas.' The NIO issued a statement that Indians were loyal to South Africa, 'but any people paying equal taxes and bearing all the responsibilities of citizenship and yet denied the elementary rights of citizenship are fully justified in seeking the assistance of outside countries to gain that right. The Republic of India has the right by virtue of the existence of the Cape Town Agreement to oversee the Indian people in South Africa.' The issue was taken to the UN because the South African government rejected all attempts to 'arrive at a settlement through a policy of peaceful negotiations' (*The Graphic* 7 November 1952).

In a debate on foreign affairs, Malan stated in parliament in May 1953, 'I say deliberately that Nehru is the enemy of the white man. He wants the white man out of Africa' (*The Leader* 7 May 1953). Minister of the Interior T.E. Dinges called on Nehru to keep his 'nose out of Africa.' The TIC passed a resolution 'deeply regretting the undignified and highly unwarranted attack' (*The Leader* 14 May 1954). As noted in the epigram, Oswald Pirow described Nehru as 'just another coolie.... We should not help to make the coolie even important by criticizing him' (*The Leader* 28 May 1953).

Nehru responded in the Indian parliament that the allegations were 'totally false and misleading' and that through their statements Malan and his colleagues had gone 'utterly beyond all reasonable bounds of decency and propriety in international affairs' (*The Leader* 21 May 1953). The Indian press also denounced Malan. The *Hindustan Times*, for example, wrote that Malan's outburst

sprang from a deep-rooted malady. It is not only a matter of self-preservation that makes him rant so often and so loudly about the White man's position in South Africa. He seems to be in terror over the future of his race, which has so far exploited the non-Whites and treated them as slaves. By shouting against Nehru, the South African Prime Minister cannot turn the tide of history. His oppression is sure to recoil on him. Neither Malan nor those who support his ideology will be able to prevent the awakened Asians and Africans from winning their basic rights (*The Leader* 28 May 1953).

Malan again attacked Nehru in a speech in the South Africa parliament in December 1953, where he said: 'India's plans in Africa are very clear; nor does India hide its plans. India formulated its policy in this way: that it stands for 'anti-colonialism'. In other words, here in Africa, its standpoint is that the European, the man from Europe, must get out of Africa.' He blamed Nehru for initiating the 1952 Defiance Campaign and thereby interfering in South Africa's internal affairs. Malan wanted the 'eyes of the world and especially the eyes of the nations interested in Africa ... opened to what is happening here as a result of the actions of India.' There was a need to

protect the indigenous population of Africa against penetration by the peoples of Asia.... India, with its population of 400 000 000 is seeking a place where it can unload its superfluous population, and the most obvious place to unload them is in Africa.... The European countries that have possessions in Africa ... and the UN should also realise its obligation to protect the indigenous population of Africa against Asiatic penetration. Africa should be safeguarded for the European ... because he has borne civilisation on his shoulders and is still necessary here, but the rest of Africa should be there for the benefit of the Native (*The Graphic* 12 December 1953).

South Africa Punishes its Indian Population

While cultural, sporting and economic links between South Africa's Indians and India were receding, there were sporadic attempts to organise sporting tours. *The Graphic* (31 October 1952) reported that a South African Indian football team would tour India during 1953 and the same newspaper reported

on 13 March 1953 that football matches in the new season were more exciting than usual as players were seeking to impress the selectors. However, the players were shocked when the South African government refused them passports. They were due to leave on 3 May 1953 (*The Graphic* 2 May 1953) but failed to depart. On the same day, the South African Indian Football Association (SAIFA) issued a statement that despite its

assurances that the tour was a purely goodwill and sporting one, with no political associations whatsoever, and despite urgent appeals from Indian and European sporting organisations, the Minister has refused to alter his decisions.... We are at a complete loss to understand the reasons for it – more so in the light of official approval for European sporting tours to and from South Africa in recent years (*The Graphic* 9 May 1953).

P. Gupta, president of the All-India Football Federation issued a statement that he had learnt of the ‘unfortunate cancellation’ with a ‘feeling of utter disappointment tinged with regret.’ He felt that the South African government was influenced by ‘considerations which should find no place in sport’. He called on the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and the International Football Federation to take such steps as would ‘prevent a recurrence of the unfortunate discriminatory action against footballers obviously on racial grounds alone.’ Football centres in India had completed preparations and there was ‘a keen sense of disappointment throughout the country’ (*Indian Views* 27 May 1953).

Denying passports was part of the state’s plan to reduce South African Indians’ contact with India. On 10 February 1953, Minister of the Interior T.E. Donges announced that in terms of the Immigrants Regulation Amendment Act of 1953 there would be a ban on wives from India, thus withdrawing a concession granted to Indians in terms of the Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1913 (*The Graphic* 6 June 1953). Donges explained during debates in Parliament that this concession had been granted by Smuts because of the male: female disparity. Since gender parity had been reached among Indians in South Africa and given that the entry of wives and children exceeded the total number of Indians who left South Africa each year, this measure was necessary to reduce the Indian population in South Africa (*The Leader* 28 January 1955). The NIC issued a statement that the ban ‘makes

serious inroad into the liberty of the individual. Why should an Indian be prohibited from marrying a person born in India?' (*The Graphic* 6 June 1953)

Although the Indian High Commissioner had been withdrawn, his office remained functional in Cape Town and it issued a memorandum disputing Donges' assertions. The memorandum pointed out that the right to marry partners in India was not one given to Gandhi but that the Immigrants Regulation Act of 1913, while forbidding further Indian immigration, permitted Indians, like all other nationals, to marry outside South Africa. This right was now being denied to Indians while members of other race groups were not affected. The memorandum further argued that Donges was wrong to state that gender parity had been reached. According to the 1951 census, the Indian population of 365 524 was made up of 188 956 males and 176 568 females, meaning that there was a shortfall of females. The difference between the entry and exit of Indians was minimal. The number of Indian wives and children admitted between 1937 and 1952 was 17 324, while the number of Indians repatriated was 16 952. Furthermore, the figure of 17 324 included many wives and children who had remained in India longer than three years and had to reapply for admission, meaning that they were counted twice. Taking away the right of Indians to marry wives outside the country amounted to the 'sheer persecution of a racial minority' (*The Graphic* 19 September 1953).

There was a hysterical reaction in the White press at the end of April 1953 when the *S.S. Karanja* docked in Durban. A local White-owned daily's headlines blazed 'A dramatic last-minute bid to beat the Union's new ban on Indian wives from entering this country was revealed when the British Indian ship docked in Durban... 81 women and children arrived in Defiance of the Ban.' The authorities found that all the arrivals had completed their paperwork before the ban and they were allowed to land (*Indian Views* 6 May 1953). The *S.S. Kampala*, which arrived on 30 May 1953, brought more wives and children. The authorities refused to allow them to disembark. The NIC sent a telegram to Nehru, who was in England attending the Queen's Coronation, to intervene as this act was 'tantamount to breaking up family life'. Mrs J.C. Gheewalla, a passenger on board the ship, sent a telegram directly to the Queen: 'We wives of Indian nationals ... request your Majesty on this joyous occasion of the Coronation to use your Majesty's authority to help us to join our husbands.... As a wife and mother you will appreciate the suffering this [separation] will bring our children and families' (*Indian Views*

3 June 1953). The wives and children were eventually allowed into the country and, in fact, when the Immigrants Regulation Amendment Bill was introduced in Parliament in September 1953, it stated that women married before 10 February 1953 would be allowed to stay in the country if they were already there, while those still in India were given three years (until February 1956) to enter the Union. Approximately 900 wives and children, described in the White press as ‘beat-the-ban’ wives, stood to benefit from this ruling (*The Graphic* 12 September 1953).

While the Indian High Commissioner had been recalled in 1946, the commission in South Africa was finally closed with effect from 1 July 1954. This was at the insistence of the South African government. The Indian government announced that it had taken the decision with ‘deep regret’ at the request of the South African government (*The Leader* 2 July 1954).

The United Nations Finally Acts

While the UN seemed to wash its hands of the issue of the treatment of Indians in South Africa, Nehru maintained a strong interest in the country. When ANC leader Oliver Tambo and Yusuf Dadoo escaped into exile in the early 1960s, Nehru provided them with Indian travel documents and transport from Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, to London. He also sought to secure the exclusion of South Africa from the Commonwealth (Reddy 1987). Under Nehru’s leadership the South African issue was kept high on the UN’s agenda. Successive Indian delegations led the annual debates against apartheid until 1957 when Ghana became independent. India then requested that Ghana, as the first independent African state, take the lead (Reddy 1991: 16).

Nehru remained adamant that the treatment of Indians in South Africa could not be separated from the legitimate aspirations of the African population. For example, in a speech at Rajya Sabha on 5 December 1958 he said that ‘question of the people of Indian descent in South Africa has really merged into bigger questions where not only Indians are affected but the whole African population’ In the Lok Sabha [Upper House of the Indian Parliament], on 28 March 1960, following the Sharpeville massacre of 21 March where the South African police shot dead a number of unarmed African protestors, Nehru said that ‘the people of Indian descent have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and we have resented that. But the African people have to put up with something infinitely more, and ... our

sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and kin there' (Reddy 1987). The issues of the treatment of Indians in South Africa and of apartheid more generally were merged at the UN in 1962 under the title 'Policies of apartheid of the Government of the Republic of South Africa' (Reddy 1991: 17-18).

The UN's first concrete action was Security Council Resolution 134, which was adopted on 1 April 1960 and which criticised the South African government's handling of the Sharpeville protests. After South Africa became a republic in 1961, it was forced to withdraw from the Commonwealth due to pressure from African and Asian states (Desai & Vahed 2010a: 228-230). India co-sponsored a 1962 UN resolution calling for sanctions against South Africa. At the same time, the UN established a Special Committee against Apartheid (Reddy 1991: 18). India was involved in co-sponsoring another General Assembly resolution in November 1962 requesting member states to impose certain sanctions against South Africa (Reddy 1991: 22). Resolution 1761 (XVII) called on members to break off diplomatic relations with South Africa; close ports to vessels flying the South African flag; 'enacting legislation prohibiting ships from entering South African ports'; 'boycotting all South African goods and refraining from exporting goods, including all arms and ammunition, to South Africa'; and (e) 'refusing landing and passage facilities to all aircraft belonging to the Government of South Africa and companies registered under the laws of South Africa' (Reddy 1991: 23).

India took concrete steps such as stopping South African vessels from entering Indian seaports and prohibiting Indian ships from going to South Africa. South African planes could no longer land at Indian airports or overfly India. The boycott of South African goods was also continued, except for '*bona fide* personal effects of travellers, post cards, letters, aerogrammes and telegrams. Permitted items included books and periodicals; publications like magazines and newspapers'; 'free unsolicited gifts from relations and friends including family and personal photographs if paid for at the letter postage rates, or printed matter rates, if admissible. These cannot be sent by parcel post. The value of such gifts should not exceed Rs. 200'; 'packets containing sweetmeats and blessings for Muslim devotees by the Durgas Committee, Ajmer, provided that no packet exceeds one pound in weight and that packets are accompanied by certificates from the Nizam of the Durgas showing that they are *bona fide* offerings by devotees'; and 'pictorial

representations with religious and social background'. The Indian government promised to 'do everything in their power to bring about the abandonment of the cruel and inhumane' policies of the South African government (Reddy 1991: 24).

Nehru inspired many South Africans who developed a powerful affection for him. When he died in 1964, Monty Naicker sent a letter of condolence to Indira Gandhi:

at the irreparable loss mankind has suffered at the death of India's beloved Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The democratic world has lost one of the greatest torch bearers of freedom of our times. He was a great inspiration to peoples the world over who believed in and fought for the brotherhood of man. With the rest of the democratic world we mourn his loss for he was to us one of the most outstanding symbols of freedom in this age of conflicts. On this sad occasion we can do no more than pledge to uphold the noble ideals of peace and freedom which were so dear to the hearts of Pandit Nehru (Desai & Vahed 2010b: 231).

Conclusion

Nelson Mandela was released in February 1990 after being incarcerated for 27 years. In August of that year he visited India to huge popular acclaim. This was affirmation of the historic links between India and South Africa and Mandela's personal admiration for Nehru. He explained this admiration to his biographer Anthony Sampson: 'When a Maharaja tried to stop him he [Nehru] would push him aside. He was that type of man, and we liked him because his conduct indicated how we should treat our own oppressors.' As a budding young lawyer in the 1940s, Mandela read most of Nehru's works and quoted him in his speeches. He used Nehru's phrase 'there is no easy walk to freedom anywhere' in his first major political speech in September 1953 and the title of his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* echoed Nehru. Mandela was also a recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1980. Nehru appealed to Mandela and a generation of African leaders because he was a socialist and modernist, and worked hard to bring the apartheid regime to account at the UN, and to forge a broad internationalism (Guha 2012).

After becoming president, Mandela visited India again in 1995 and 1997 in a quest to develop bilateral ties. The Red Fort Declaration of March 1997, signed during Mandela's visit, outlined the vision of a 'unique and special relationship' between South Africa and India, underpinned by mutual interests and perceptions. South Africa-India Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) meetings were held annually to address bilateral political issues and ways to advance economic co-operation in areas such as mining, engineering, financial services, and agro-processed products. South Africa and India are also joint members of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM), the Commonwealth and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC), and *BRICS*, an acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. This organisation was originally founded as BRIC in 2003 but changed to BRICS when South Africa joined in 2011 (Vahed 2014: 10-12).

When Nehru took up the struggle against apartheid he saw it as part of a broader struggle against colonialism and imperialism. He worked hard inside the UN to apply pressure on South Africa but also sought to build a political bloc around the NAM. While South Africa and India share many common problems, such as inequality, poverty, poor service delivery, and high levels of unemployment, BRICS does not have a grand 'Nehru-ian' vision but seems bent on pursuing neo-liberal economic policies which increase inequality in these countries. Worryingly, the cosy relationship enjoyed by the Indian capital and the ANC government has led to mounting anger amongst many Africans about what they see as Indians exploiting and taking advantage of politically connected Africans for their benefit (Vahed 2014: 14-16). This echoes sentiments from the 1950s when the political alliance between Africans and Indians was viewed negatively.

How should we assess Nehru's internationalising of the issue of apartheid? The problem for Nehru and other opponents of apartheid was that South Africa refused to be drawn on the merits of its racial policies but insisted throughout that the UN did not have the right to intervene in its domestic policies. There was a contradiction in South Africa's position. It insisted that Indians were temporary sojourners in the country who would be returned to India, yet was adamant that while they were in the country they had no recourse to India. Western countries resisted intervention in South Africa whom they saw as a bulwark against communism during this Cold War era. In the scheme of matters that the UN had to attend to, the conflict

between India and South Africa was a relatively minor one. However, India helped to keep the world's focus on South Africa until more 'Third World' countries became independent and were in a position to take concrete action against the country. Nehru's other great contribution was to emphasise that Indians in Africa were part of the African continent and, as citizens of African countries, should contribute to the upliftment of that continent and stop seeing themselves as 'Indian'. He called for Afro-Indian unity and provided moral and material support to the country's main liberation movement, the ANC.

The inputs of Nehru and Indian South Africans in the 1940s and 1950s were brave ones at a time of utter racism and a ruthless apartheid regime. They were willing to take risks in confronting that regime, in forging Afro-Indian unity, and in keeping the issue of apartheid alive nationally and globally. India's contribution to South Africa was about more than mere trade relations and economics. These organisations and individuals contributed towards a rich tradition of intellectualism and international politics, contributing significantly to the making of a democratic South Africa and its standing in world politics today.

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Goolam Vahed
History
School of Social Sciences
University of KwaZulu-Natal
vahed@ukzn.ac.za