

# THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE AND INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY, 1923–1961

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INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

Jawaharlal Nehru left a strong imprint on global affairs. Charismatic, handsome and a brilliant orator and writer, he led the largest decolonised country, setting examples with state-driven industrialisation and efforts to establish a new style in foreign affairs. He gave those a face and a voice who, until the end of the Second World War, had been denied looking after their own affairs and having a say in international politics. As Nehru was a towering figure at home and abroad, the years between 1947 and 1964 are rightfully termed the Nehruvian era. Accordingly, books on Indian foreign policy mostly start with the assumption that Nehru was its main or even sole architect. It appears to be self-evident that a country's first prime minister would set everything on the right track, all the more so as Nehru was considered a foreign affairs expert even before India attained independence.

Nevertheless, foreign policy never is a one-man show. Apart from Nehru's main advisor, V.K. Krishna Menon, ministers like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel or G. B. Pant exercised a certain influence. At least equally important was the support and the counsel of officers of India's Foreign Service (IFS), who enabled Nehru to pursue his goals in the international arena. The vast majority of them were neither mere tools to implement decisions nor men or women of Nehru's making. Instead, many of them looked back on distinguished careers in British-trained services of the colonial period. Those formative years, when politics and foreign policy had taken place in a different setting and under partly different predominating political views, had left a lasting impression. What is rightfully termed Nehruvian foreign policy as part of an era, therefore, is not necessarily Nehru's foreign policy but the outcome of the interaction of several actors with diverse ideas and attitudes.

Suranjan Das has criticised Nehru for talking leftist while permitting free rein to rightist forces in the Congress Party.<sup>1</sup> If so, the exception from the rule was foreign affairs, where neither parliament nor party was involved. On this field of policy, the well-known, somewhat leftist and idealist views of the prime minister and Krishna Menon interacted and partly clashed with what might be termed an Indian Civil Service (ICS) school. Indian officers of that service formed the core of the IFS, established and ran the Ministry

of External Affairs (MEA), represented India abroad and counselled the prime minister. This was more than continuance in terms of personnel: Over the quarter century before independence, they had developed a distinct worldview of their own which was rather 'conservative', staunchly anti-communist, sceptical vis-à-vis the US and deeply realist. Around the turn of 1945/1946, the mastermind of the ICS school, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, had authored a conclusive concept for the foreign policy of independent India, the outcome of through and through realist thinking. The conclusion was striking: 'Sentiment must serve, not master the national interest'.<sup>2</sup>

This distinguished the ICS school from Nehru who, when he came to power, confessed that he had not much of an idea about what foreign policy to pursue.<sup>3</sup> Contemporaries drew an even darker picture of the prime minister's capacities in general. According to one of his closest aides, M.O. Mathai, the prime minister lacked an 'original mind. . . . He was all heart and less mind'.<sup>4</sup> Durga Das, a journalist in close touch with politics during the Nehruvian years, characterised Nehru as 'tormented . . . by the spirit of self-questioning. Nehru's genius lay in romanticising politics'.<sup>5</sup> Historian Harish Kapur follows the same line, adding that Nehru's 'irresolute (Hamletian) character always made him question what he really believed in. . . . Nehru was an impulsive intellectual, who liked living with ideas, while playing with them'.<sup>6</sup> This study strengthens these assessments of his pursuit of foreign affairs.

The second established truth to be questioned is that colonies for lack of sovereignty cannot pursue a foreign policy of their own. The British Indian Foreign and Political Department (FPD) appears to confirm this point for being mostly a branch of the Foreign Office in London, its personnel near exclusively European. British India, however, was an unusual colony in many ways. Among others, it was the only member of the League of Nations which lacked sovereignty. It also participated in various international organisations like the International Labour Organisation (ILO), wherefore it has rightly been termed as an 'anomalous international person'.<sup>7</sup> In 1942, Under Secretary for India and Burma David Taylor Monteath lamented that British India's 'international status and functions not justified by its constitutional position' had resulted in '25 years of skating over very thin ice and occasionally putting one's foot through it'.<sup>8</sup>

British India's activities on the international floor during the inter-war period had various facets. Historiography has, first, highlighted the impact of the Congress Party, which, however, was negligible with a most notable exception. Typically, utterances of politicians are overrated as guidelines for post-independence foreign policy. Indeed, statements from those prior to attaining power are often not much in touch with reality, and this is true for India, too. Nehru was living proof of this. His long-lasting interest in international affairs proved to be of little value when he took office in September 1946. As a matter of fact, he had to

learn on the job and relied heavily on ICS officers, who had been trained in classical diplomacy.

The notable exception was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, although he was no systematic thinker and has not left any rules for the conduct of foreign affairs. Nevertheless, means and aims of his South African campaigns became guidelines for the interwar policy around Indians overseas and, to a lesser extent, post-independence foreign policy. Therefore, the Government of India (GoI) attached greatest importance to the Mahatma's approval of its activities abroad. Obviously, this paid tribute to Gandhi's enormous influence on Indian public opinion. Furthermore, the viceroys and their subordinates understood that British India had no more efficient means at hand.

Allegedly, imperial tradition, second, had a tangible effect on the foreign affairs of independent India. Robert J. Blyth has investigated British India's extended neighbourhood policy from Tanganyika over the Gulf and the northern Himalayas to Southeast Asia.<sup>9</sup> Whether this policy as pursued by the FPD has laid down any tradition for independent India is questionable. British Indian foreign and security policy had started from the axiom that the colony was safe behind the walls of the Himalayas. With partition, the Indian Union – with Pakistan – faced an archenemy within the enclosure, and with the Chinese occupation of Tibet four years later, it lost its buffer in the north as well. The coordinates of the colonial period together with its representatives from the FPD had disappeared, with the notable exception of K.P.S. Menon.

What so far has been mostly ignored is the third aspect: a foreign policy pursued by Indians for Indians for two decades by means of classical diplomacy. It began with moderate Indian politicians like Satyendra Prasanno Sinha, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri or Tej Bahadur Sapru representing the colony at international conferences and bodies.<sup>10</sup> From 1923, unconnected with the FPD, British India established a few missions abroad, called agencies, and employed indigenous proto-diplomats. The agents were all recruited from the civil service; only with the third mission in South Africa, created in 1927, an anomaly occurred. This is the aspect of pre-independence foreign policy the first part of this book focuses on.

After the Great War, Great Britain faced a 'crisis of Empire' with unrest in numerous colonial territories and Ireland.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the British had to concede to public demands; in South Asia, this meant helping the case of Indians overseas whenever they were denied equal rights or fair wages. For that purpose, under a completely misleading name, the Department of Education, Health and Lands (DEHL) was established with predominantly Indian personnel, tacitly rivalling the FPD. While the latter kept busy with the Great Game, the former ran agencies in Ceylon, Malaya and South Africa. Moreover, with the notable exception of Europe, it kept an eye on developments in territories with Indian minorities. Deputations were sent to investigate conditions on the ground and to negotiate with the authorities.

This covered large parts of the Empire, including the dominions of Australia, Canada and New Zealand and colonies like British Guiana, East Africa and Fiji. Furthermore, the DEHL observed developments outside the Empire, for example, in the US or Brazil. Indian officials represented the interests of their countrymen abroad, partly against representatives of the same colonial power ruling South Asia. This undoubtedly qualifies as indigenous Indian foreign policy.

Such policy willy-nilly threatened the very foundations of the Empire, which was implicitly built on the assumption of the superiority of the white race. The creation of the DEHL was meant primarily as a gesture to appease the feelings of Indians in British India. They were disappointed for not being rewarded with reforms towards self-governance despite their immense contribution to the Great War. Against the success of the Gandhian campaigns, London and Delhi wanted to demonstrate resolve to support Indian claims, at least abroad. Indeed, the British were jumping from the frying pan into the fire. In particular in South Africa, the official policy in the name of Indians overseas in essence was a continuation of the Gandhian campaigns.<sup>12</sup> Even its means were comparable. Gandhi wanted ‘to convert, not coerce, the wrong doer’.<sup>13</sup> Even if British India had wanted to, it was in no position to coerce the Union government. Instead, it had to convince its counterparts of the fairness of its demands by appealing to common values – via distinguished Indians, finding personal access to South African politicians. Therefore, it was only logical that policy makers (hardly camouflaged) regularly consulted Gandhi: The latter knew everyone relevant in South Africa and commanded unmatched sustainable experience in that type of personal diplomacy. No major decision was taken without the Mahatma’s consent. Cooperation went so far that all agents were suggested by Gandhi.

This resulted in a paradox constellation: Those in charge in British India seriously fought for fair treatment and equal rights of Indians overseas including franchise. At the same time, the authorities did not grant such treatment and rights in British India itself. Regarding the economic side, Bajpai correctly observed ‘that India is not exactly a paradise’ for the underprivileged. ‘Even working for a less than subsistence wage’ abroad ‘may . . . be preferable to starvation or semi-starved dependence on others in India’.<sup>14</sup> Regarding the political status, the contrast was even stronger. South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts in 1922 warned that initially it had not been the people of Indian origin demanding equal franchise. Instead, those he considered as political agitators allegedly had ‘largely created’ such demands.<sup>15</sup>

This warning was obviously true for British India itself too. For a long while, Delhi was not aware of being the sorcerer’s apprentice. Demands for equal rights and fair wages outside the colony sooner or later had to bounce back to the subcontinent. If Gandhi’s aims, tactics and counsel were relevant for relations with other colonies and dominions, why should they be

considered unacceptable back home? In any case, relying on the Mahatma beyond India–South Africa affairs meant giving the very opponent of British rule in South Asia even more weight. Nevertheless, the European officers working in the DEHL did so with the same dedication to their tasks as their Indian colleagues, and the viceroys approved the department’s policy. Only from the late 1930s, British officials and politicians in London and Delhi grew uneasy. The outbreak of the Second World War nipped the debate in the bud. The issue was put on the backburner and its main protagonists were transferred.

Over two and a half decades before India and Pakistan won independence, Delhi pursued a line of foreign policy focusing on the interests of Indians rather than Europeans. Many relevant issues of the interwar period – among them segregation in South Africa or citizenship and franchise in Ceylon – remained on the agenda of independent India, though of much less relevance. This is mirrored in the continuity of personnel. Many of those serving with the DEHL or the agencies were recruited from the ICS or the Madras Civil Service. The IFS, established in 1947, relied heavily on British trained servicemen; all higher ranks were occupied by ICS officers. Three of them represent that continuity more than anyone else. Since the early 1920s, Bajpai was considered India’s leading indigenous foreign policy expert. He was the key figure in the DEHL long before he finally was appointed its member in 1940. From then on, he was part of the Viceroy’s Executive Council, the *de facto* cabinet of British India. An officer of unique qualities, Bajpai was the brain and the motor of the department, representing British India at numerous international conferences. He also selected promising officers, training them as foreign policy experts. Among his discoveries was K.P.S. Menon, who served as agent in Ceylon, led a delegation to East Africa and, for a short while, worked in the department. Furthermore, during the Second World War, he represented British India in China and, thereafter, accompanied the Indian delegation to the United Nations. Whereas he disliked desk work in Delhi and Simla, he was an extraordinary diplomat abroad: a great orator, a capable negotiator and a sharp observer. The third person in focus is Subimal Dutt, another discovery of Bajpai. Dutt’s role during the Raj is difficult to assess, with the notable exception of the eight months he served as agent in Malaya in 1941. His hour came as foreign secretary between 1955 and 1961.<sup>16</sup>

After independence, Bajpai and Dutt represented the ICS school, whereas Menon rather embodied the traditions of the Political Service coined by officers like Olaf Caroe or Hugh Weightman. Unlike Bajpai and Dutt, he also had close links with the Congress Party and especially Nehru, with whom he had been friends since the early 1930s. The three came to form the *troika* of secretaries on top of the MEA between 1948 and 1952. The one calling the shots in Delhi (with an interruption from 1942 to 1947) was Bajpai. The one to shine abroad was Menon, be it in Ceylon, China or the

USSR. Dutt preferred to keep in the background, but his role as Nehru's near invisible but remarkably influential advisor cannot be overstated.

This book investigates the long lines of Indian foreign policy between 1921 and 1961. Its starting point is India's first diplomatic mission around the issue of Indians overseas, the dominions tour of Srinivasa Sastri, accompanied by the young Bajpai. In 1961, with the end of the terms of Menon in Moscow and Dutt as foreign secretary, an era ended during which ICS officers, who had learned foreign affairs around the issue of Indians overseas, had a strong impact on India's external relations. This monograph provides the first history of the DEHL, highlighting its set-up and internal functioning, its main activities, its foreign policy style and the selection and role of its officers. From this perspective, it is also a contribution to the hitherto unwritten history of Indians in the late years of the ICS. It analyses the mindset prevalent in the department, especially political views relating to the rest of the world. After investigating developments during the Second World War it turns toward Nehruvian foreign policy, investigating, among others, the establishment of the IFS and the MEA. It further analyses to what extent the worldview of prominent IFS officers with a British service background influenced Indian foreign policy from 1947, and to what extent this worldview was reconfirmed, modified or abolished during the Nehruvian years.

It would have been desirable to follow a large group of these officers, finding out where exactly they consented and differed. Unfortunately, the lack of sources made this near impossible. In Bajpai's case, there is a tremendous number of official files documenting his work, allowing reliable conclusions on his mindset notwithstanding the lack of private papers. This, however, is not true for the majority of those who held lower ranks in the DEHL and the MEA, with the exceptions of Menon and Dutt. The former's terms in Ceylon, East Africa, China, and the USSR are rather well documented in the files of both departments. Moreover, he has left diaries covering three decades from 1918. In the case of Dutt, there are sufficient official files on his terms in Malaya and West Germany and for the years he served as foreign secretary. Detailed diaries complement the picture.

Though the book focuses on these three officers, it is no triple biography. Random findings about the role of other officers during the Raj have been essential to complete the picture, and from 1947 onwards there is no lack of material documenting work and views of numerous other Indian diplomats. Therefore, this study also contributes to the history of the little researched roots of the IFS and the MEA as an institution.

Methodologically, this book to a large extent relies on archival sources. Earlier research on Indian foreign affairs willy-nilly was based upon public statements plus memoirs of protagonists, the latter a not too reliable source. Apart from having been written decades after the actual events, their main intention is highlighting the contribution of the author rather than drawing

a balanced picture appreciating the merits of others. Especially in the case of the history of Indian foreign policy, again and again retold narratives and clichés dominate the discussion, established on and strongly coloured by the recollections of a few. Today, official files, correspondences and diaries allow more reliable analyses of opinion-forming and decision-making processes. This monograph is written with the intention to draw a more authentic picture, which together with the research of colleagues will sooner rather than later amend, if not replace, partly outdated narratives.

For the pre-independence years, archival research has been undertaken in the National Archives of India, housing the files of the DEHL for the years from 1923 to 1941. For the years from 1927 to 1930 and particularly from 1938 to 1941, though, files are available at random only. To a lesser extent, documents of the FPD offer additional insights as far as they relate to the worldview of the higher ranks, the institutional rivalry with the DEHL, the selection of ICS officers for the Political Service and the work of K.P.S. Menon. Files of the Home Department help understand the process of Indianisation of the services. The same is true for the collections of the State Archives of Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Madras Province provided most agents, but other provincial governments too were involved in discussions around the selection of personnel and the balance between European and Indian officers. Furthermore, those archives occasionally allow insights into the careers of officers who later joined the IFS. British archives offer the opportunity to understand the perception of the changes in British India through the eyes of Europeans. The Centre of South Asian Studies at Cambridge holds private papers of British ICS officers and even of some of their wives. In the manuscript collection of the British Library, similar papers of higher-ranking officers are found, including a few Indians. The India Office Records provide official exchanges between Whitehall and Delhi. They are concerned with changes in the ICS in the interwar period but also with issues related to the work of the DEHL. Only owing to the documentary available on Dutt's posting in Malaya and that of Bajpai in Washington has it been possible to assess their performance.

For the Nehruvian years, the research is based on files of the MEA, available both in the National Archives and (owing to special permission) the internal archives of the ministry and the Indian Embassy in Berlin. The manuscript section of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) holds various private papers and collections of ICS officers who joined the IFS, most prominently K.P.S. Menon and Subimal Dutt. The *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* are another relevant source for internal communication and decision-making in the early years of independent India.<sup>17</sup> As Bajpai, Dutt and Menon spent various terms abroad, archives in host countries have been investigated, first, for a better understanding of their tasks and, second, to get an idea how they were perceived. Therefore, the archives of the foreign ministries in Berlin and Moscow have been visited as well as the



National Archives of the United Kingdom in London. Besides, Bajpai's work in Washington is reflected in the *Foreign Relation Series of the United States*.

The body of literature around Indian foreign policy is steadily growing, but overall views are rare. *A Diplomatic History of Modern India* by Charles M. Heimsath and Surjit Mansingh remains the most comprehensive work for the early years. It correctly states that British India during the interwar years 'achieved a measure of autonomy in international affairs unprecedented for a non-self-governing dependency'.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it acknowledges the issue of Indians overseas, though only as far as discussed at imperial conferences shortly after the Great War and its repercussions after independence.<sup>19</sup> The most recent overall view has been authored by Jayanta Kumar Ray and provides the state of the art in terms of historiography written without access to archival sources.<sup>20</sup> Partly drawing century-long lines from pre-independence history to India's contemporary relations with its immediate neighbours and the great powers, the issues discussed in this monograph do not come into the focus. Harish Kapur is the one historian who has emphasised the impact of advisors on Nehru. Though he too considers the prime minister the sole architect of Indian foreign policy and overlooks the professional experience gathered around the issue of Indians overseas, he highlights the role of Secretary-General Bajpai and his successor, Narayanan Raghavan Pillai. Without having consulted archival sources, he names main points of difference between Bajpai and Nehru, the former taking care for thoughtful positions 'in an atmosphere that was suffused with "high morality"'.<sup>21</sup> Regarding Pillai, he properly assesses his personality without providing any details on his work or influence.

Most recently, Deepak Gupta in a non-academic monograph has shown interest in the Indians in the ICS.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, the only monograph on the ICS as a whole, by David Potter, says almost nothing about the issue.<sup>23</sup> An article by the same author about manpower shortage, however, investigates causes and effects of the decision for Indianisation.<sup>24</sup> Ann Ewing's research of the interwar period relies only on interviews with British officers.<sup>25</sup> In Arudra Burra's investigation of the relationship between the ICS and the independence movement, once again British views dominate, combined with those of Indian politicians.<sup>26</sup> The analysis of T.H. Beaglehole not only provides statistical data around the Indianisation of the ICS but is also a useful overview of career paths in the service.<sup>27</sup> The most reluctant Indianisation of the Political Service has been investigated by W. Murray Hogben.<sup>28</sup> Various Indian ICS officers have left memoirs, though usually lacking any details about the pre-independence part of their careers. N. B. Bonarjee and Jayavant Mallanah Shrinagesh form the exception, the latter discussing the dilemma between loyalty to his British superiors and to his countrymen.<sup>29</sup> The recollections of H. M. Patel with the introduction by Sucheta Mahajan are most useful in this context as well.<sup>30</sup> As of today, there are only two full biographies of Indian ICS officers: On the basis of private papers, Ashna Sen

has written the story of her grandfather, S. M. Murshed, nominated to the service;<sup>31</sup> and in 2017, the present author published the political biography of Subimal Dutt, one of the protagonists of this book.<sup>32</sup>

There is a growing body of literature around the history of Indians overseas. Sugata Bose's overview provides a useful introduction,<sup>33</sup> but the most profiled author on that field remains Hugh Tinker. His books cover emigration from South Asia, the history of indentured labour and the discussions of the early 1920s together with the struggle for political rights in the Empire and the Commonwealth.<sup>34</sup> The contribution of Srikant Dutt is of relevance for his analysis of the mindset and the social history of Indians overseas.<sup>35</sup> Recently, Sunil S. Amrith has focused on Indian emigration south-eastwards; his chapters on interwar Malaya are most valuable for this study.<sup>36</sup> The fate of Indian labourers in Ceylon until 1940 has been investigated by Patrick Peebles in a monograph with many factual errors and doubtful assessments.<sup>37</sup> K. L. Gillion and John Dunham Kelly have examined the history of those in Fiji, focusing on debates of the early 1920s.<sup>38</sup> South Africa has drawn much attention for obvious reasons. For this study, Goolam Vahed's observations around 'the making of "Indianness"', Dhupelia-Mesthrie's biography of Manilal Gandhi and Cheddie Anand's work around Indian political organisations have been particularly useful.<sup>39</sup> For East Africa, Robert G. Gregory provides a comprehensive overview from 1890 onwards.<sup>40</sup> The case of the Indian struggle in Kenya especially has been researched in much detail with excellent contributions by Sana Aiyar, Levi I. Izuakor and Christopher P. Youé.<sup>41</sup> Stephen G. Rabe in his study of British Guiana in the Cold War has touched on the history of Indians in the colonial period.<sup>42</sup>

Research around British Indian foreign affairs in the interwar years is dearly lacking. T. A. Keenleyside analyses nationalist Indian attitudes towards Asia and elaborates how they stood in the way of Pan-Asianism and, therefore, formed a 'troublesome legacy' after independence.<sup>43</sup> Bimla Prasad's book on the origins of Indian foreign policy focuses exclusively on the Congress Party and must be considered outdated.<sup>44</sup> The same is true for the contribution of S. R. Mehrotra.<sup>45</sup> A. Appadorai even falsely holds that 'the exclusion of Indians from the decision-making process in India's foreign policy before the country achieved independence' was a feature of the interwar years.<sup>46</sup> Only recently, Vineet Thakur has published on the first politician-diplomats, all moderates, whose general role has been researched in detail by B. R. Nanda.<sup>47</sup> V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, the main protagonist of this group in this monograph, has been dedicated a useful biography by his secretary, P. Kodanda Rao.<sup>48</sup> The role of Indian agents during the Second World War has but been touched, and only in the case of Bajpai. Johannes Voigt mentions his role in land-lease negotiations and projects for Indo-US cooperation on war production.<sup>49</sup> Bajpai also plays a minor role in Auriol Weigold's research around British Indian propaganda in the US.<sup>50</sup>

The Indian interim government was in power for less than a year, but its decisions shape South Asia until today. Given its relevance, the lack of research comes as surprise. Only recently, Rakesh Ankit has authored a monograph. Notwithstanding valuable research on various departments and personalities, both the MEA and Bajpai have been left out completely.<sup>51</sup> Subrata Mitra has emphasised the phenomenon of the strong influence of the ICS and its officers from the transition period until today but has not gone into historical detail.<sup>52</sup> The aspect of continuity plays a role in V. Subramaniam's volume on the social background of Indian administrators as well.<sup>53</sup> Helpful for understanding the relevance of civil servants in years of transition has been the research of Andreas Eckert on their key role in colonial and post-colonial Tanzania, where, unlike in India, they came to form the government.<sup>54</sup> Regarding foreign affairs, at least India's policy in the formative years of the UN has come into the focus. Manu Bhagavan has investigated the Indian role in the making of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, while Lorna Lloyd and Vineet Thakur separately covered India's first success at the UNGA with a resolution against the discrimination of people of Indian origin in South Africa.<sup>55</sup> An important contribution on early Indo-Soviet relations before and after independence is authored by Rakesh Ankit.<sup>56</sup>

The set-up of the IFS and the MEA is discussed in detail in Vineet Thakur's *Postscripts on Independence*. Notwithstanding the extensive usage of not too reliable memoirs, this is by far the best study on this subject. Pallavi Raghavan's text provides both useful observations on the continuity of foreign policy institutions and personnel with an emphasis on Bajpai, as well as basic errors: Two out of the four wartime heads of mission are wrongly named; the DEHL is completely overlooked, with its successor, the Department for Indians Overseas, seemingly popping up out of the blue in 1941.<sup>57</sup> The overview of the foreign policy bureaucracy by Jeffrey Brenner is of a most general nature, and the same is true for the rather outdated book of Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya.<sup>58</sup> Former Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit has highlighted the role of the three protagonists of this study.<sup>59</sup> The author's biography of Foreign Secretary Dutt provides detailed insights into the internal working of the MEA, tensions in the IFS and decision-making in the Nehru years, next to certain foreign policy aspects such as relations with China, Germany or the USSR.

There is no lack of books on Nehruvian foreign policy, but when Indian archives opened in the new millennium, the quality of research ascended to a new level. Before, only Sarvepalli Gopal, as director of the Historical Division of the MEA (himself an eyewitness to the Nehru years), had full access to all archival material. Until today, it has been impossible to cover this era without referring to his biography of Nehru.<sup>60</sup> Srinath Raghavan has set standards, among others with his book on crisis management in the Nehru years.<sup>61</sup> Another example is Rakesh Ankit's study of the international

dimensions of the Kashmir conflict, covering the years up to 1966.<sup>62</sup> Studies on India's bilateral relations with western countries, based on extensive archival research, have helped to understand motives and conflicts in Indian foreign policy. Paul McGarr has recently investigated Indo-American and Indo-British relations, whereas Srinath Raghavan has focused on the history of the US in South Asia.<sup>63</sup> A history of Indo-Canadian relations has been authored by Ryan Touhey.<sup>64</sup> Monographs by Johannes Voigt and the present author about India's complicated relations with East and West Germany have unearthed major contradictions in opinion-forming and decision-making.<sup>65</sup> Research on India's other partners among the Soviet satellites is lacking, but Andreas Hilger has recently authored a detailed study of Indo-Soviet relations based on extensive research in archives of both countries.<sup>66</sup>

The difficult relations between India and China, and especially the boundary conflict, have attracted much scholarly attention. Bérénice Guyot-Réchar'd's recent award-winning monograph draws long lines, investigating the pre-history of the border war of 1962 over half a century.<sup>67</sup> A decisive moment, when Bajpai and Home Minister Patel challenged Nehru's China policy in vain, has been analysed by Chandrashekhar Dasgupta.<sup>68</sup> The present author has researched the crucial years between 1955 and 1961, when Dutt formulated a strategy to settle the dispute.<sup>69</sup>

Quite a few Indian diplomats of the Nehruvian years have left memoirs, the majority providing little of relevance for researchers. Among the set of recollections of K.P.S. Menon, *Many Worlds* offers some valuable insights.<sup>70</sup> More important are those of Gundevia and Tyabji, throwing light on the internal workings of the MEA.<sup>71</sup> Dutt's *With Nehru in the Foreign Office* is based on thorough archival work, with useful chapters on the boundary conflict with China,<sup>72</sup> and his unpublished autobiography, among others, provides intimate insider knowledge of the Nehru years.

The present monograph explains how the issue of Indians overseas became a national concern before the outbreak of the Great War. Since the colonial power was unwilling to fulfil promises for more Indian rights in return for British India's contribution to the war, the GoI adopted the struggle for fair wages and political emancipation of people of Indian origin abroad. A part of that policy was the establishment of the DEHL, which quickly acted with a vigour not intended by its creators and witnessed the rise of Indian officers.

Chapter 2 outlines the personal and professional backgrounds of three key protagonists embodying the continuity of foreign policy from the inter-war years into the Nehru years. With his comet-like rise in the ICS and the department, Bajpai personifies how the policy around overseas Indians quickly gained relevance. K.P.S. Menon was India's most outstanding diplomat between 1929 and 1961, excelling on various postings abroad. Subimal Dutt, for most parts of his career a 'desk-man', worked mostly in the background. When he came to consider Nehru misled, he took the initiative, modifying the course of Indian foreign policy between 1956 and 1961.

The following chapters focus on those parts of the world where the DEHL was active, South Africa and Ceylon being the most difficult cases. Personal diplomacy and two round table conferences buried all schemes for expatriation, enhanced the status of South African Indians and led to the establishment of an agency. In Ceylon, the GoI successfully negotiated minimum standard wages, but Sinhalese nationalism was after depriving even domiciled people of Indian origin of political rights and replacing them as a workforce. As British India underwent a comparable process of Indianisation, it faced difficulties turning down similar demands of another Asian ethnicity; no lasting solution was found.

In East Africa, where the Colonial Office vetoed an agency, a conflict occurred between Indian traders and white settlers trying to take control over Kenya. Delhi warded off such attempts and ensured that equal franchise for people of Indian origin was acknowledged on principle. In Zanzibar, Europeans tried, in vain, to exclude long-established Indian businesses from the profitable clove trade. Malaya, with its ongoing demand for Indian labourers, was mostly willing to cooperate and compromise. After the outbreak of the Second World War, the rubber boom, combined with a repressive government policy, caused severe conflicts that were not settled until the Japanese invasion. Unlike Malaya, Fiji witnessed violent conflicts in the early 1920s, but when the situation calmed down in the course of intense bilateral talks, the economic situation of Indian labourers improved.

Various schemes of the governors of British Guiana to attract even more Indian labourers failed due to financial stringency in Georgetown and lack of interest in Delhi. In Australia and Canada, people of Indian origin were discriminated against in certain provinces. After informal talks, the Australian government convinced Queensland to grant Indians full political franchise; this did not occur in the Canadian province of British Columbia until 1947. Negotiations with the US fell under the competence of the Foreign Office, but when Indians were declared ineligible for citizenship and immigration of Asiatics was banned, the EHL Department was consulted, though to no avail.

The ups and downs of Bajpai's and Menon's careers during the Second World War stand for the emancipation of India, or rather the lack of it. Whereas the former fell from grace, the latter considered his appointment as agent-general in Chungking a career jump. Bajpai's status over the years became the bone of contention among British politicians, some anxious not to encourage Indian nationalism while others seeing the time ripe to enhance British India's standing on the international floor and train a cadre of Indian diplomats. Though Bajpai considered his term frustrating, it made him an expert in early Cold War politics, which to a lesser extent was true for Menon as well, as he accompanied the Indian delegation to the San Francisco Conference.

December 1946 saw a turnaround, because Nehru understood that newcomers were not capable of setting up a foreign ministry or properly representing new India abroad. Calling back Bajpai to establish the IFS and the MEA meant ensuring ICS dominance in foreign policy. For his return to China, Menon, on the contrary, exercised no influence on that process at all. Although he was appointed foreign secretary in the spring of 1948, he remained nearly invisible over the next four years.

Until the end of his term in the summer of 1952, Bajpai exercised much influence on foreign affairs. Though he never broke with Nehru, his ideas were distinctly different from those of the prime minister. He was opposed to Nehru's decision to appoint career changers as heads of the most important missions abroad. Regarding the Kashmir conflict, he favoured a pragmatic, sustainable compromise. Furthermore, Bajpai tried to keep relations with the West as friendly as possible, struggling with the prime minister's and Krishna Menon's anti-western reflexes. Finally, Bajpai, in vain, urged Nehru to prepare for the possibility of a military conflict with communist China. His attitude vis-à-vis the USSR, too, was characterised by caution, partly caused by his pronounced anti-communism.

Bajpai's departure led to a power vacuum in the MEA, and Indian foreign policy became less realist and cautious. This lasted until late 1955, when Secretary-General N. R. Pillai and Foreign Secretary Dutt formed an efficient tandem. After India's disastrous performance in the Hungarian crisis, Dutt managed to alert Nehru to the Chinese threat and formulated the first-ever Indian strategy in the boundary conflict. Trying to keep relations with the West friendly, Dutt, however, had no means to limit the influence of K.P.S. Menon, the ambassador in Moscow, on the prime minister and Indo-Soviet relations. Painting the USSR in brightest colours, Menon functioned as a door-opener for bilateral friendship.

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## INTRODUCTION

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