

# *The* Internationalist Moment

South Asia, Worlds, and World Views  
1917–39

*Edited by*  
**Ali Raza**  
**Franziska Roy**  
**Benjamin Zachariah**



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and Benjamin Zachariah

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## Preface

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The years between the First and Second World Wars comprise a critical moment in the history of the world. In the aftermath of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, individuals and countries sought new solutions and blueprints for a world of greater stability, equality, and interdependency. The League of Nations or the Communist International inspired many with their models, while other fora for international organization brought together an unlikely range of interests such as pacifism, Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism, national sovereignty, Aryanism, religious mobilization, various forms of anti-imperialism, demands for suffrage, the organization of youth movements, ideologies of feminism, birth control, socialism, communism, civil liberties, romanticism, temperance, nudism, eugenics, or fascism. Their divergent ends and objectives were held together, if temporarily, by a euphoria for the vastness and integratedness of the world and the desire and optimism to remake it and shape the future of humanity.

The essays presented together in this volume are attempts to begin to understand these experiments in political and social mobilization that comprise the “internationalist moment,” through the lens of South Asians’ interactions with a wider world, and the wider world’s interactions with South Asia. Histories of South Asia in the 1920s and 1930s have largely focused on local, community, and national narratives, and have only recently begun to break out of this mould. Earlier histories that have noted these international engagements have subordinated them to the narratives of Indian nationalism or of the particular ideological trends that have interested them, notably the histories of “international communism.” We believe that it is necessary to go further than this. What we present here is also intended to contribute to a growing but as yet inadequate field of the intellectual history of South

Asia; and since ideas are notoriously unable to observe national boundaries, it is unsurprising that such intellectual histories cannot be confined to or by the entity “South Asia,” or to paraphrase Rudyard Kipling via C.L.R. James, “what do they know of South Asia, who only South Asia know?”<sup>1</sup>

Why do we call this period the “internationalist moment”? That there were engagements, people, goods and ideas, crossing (proto-)“national,” state, and/or geographical boundaries before the period between 1917 and 1939 was obvious. But that period is also qualitatively important as a window of time in which an array of movements comprising mostly *nonstate or supra-state actors* were linking up with each other (often becoming more institutionalized in the process), a reminder that the contemporaneous term “international” has in more recent times been almost exclusively appropriated by *states*. The period under consideration is one in which frameworks for understanding the world and one’s place in it included not only the local or national but also relatively distant elements as diverse as the work of Sigmund Freud in Vienna, fascism in Italy or Germany, or Bolshevism in the Soviet Union, as well as those events, tendencies, or trends that had a direct impact on distant places (such as the Great Depression). These frameworks of understanding the world as interconnected became part of the everyday. “Europe” or “America,” San Francisco, New York, Berlin, London, Paris, Tokyo, Shanghai, or Moscow were part of the worlds and world views of people not necessarily involved only in elitist discussions and “cosmopolitan” solidarities. This is also an indication that “internationalist” is itself far from an unproblematic category; there were many forms that internationalism could take, and the essays that follow explore some of these, including those that sought to build a strong potential state. The “moment” then faded away in the 1940s. The next phase of cross-border engagements,

<sup>1</sup> C.L.R. James, *Beyond a Boundary: A Social History of West Indies Cricket* (London: Hutchinson, 1963), preface: “What do they Know of Cricket who only Cricket Know?”; borrowed from “And what should they Know of England who only England know?”, Rudyard Kipling, “The English Flag” (1891), *Collected Verse of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1914), 128, though James’ borrowing is quite against the spirit of Kipling. “South Asia” is a clumsy abbreviation used in this book for the territories that are roughly congruent with the present-day states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh; this does not comprise all of the region bearing that name, but a rough congruence is all that this volume pretends to, especially when speaking of intellectual history.



such as is evident in the Cold War, for instance in “non-alignment,” is an era of *states* acting within rather rigid rules of a post-Second World War “international”—by which is now meant “interstate”—order.

Perhaps because of its once-close association with the proletarian internationalism of the Communist International (Comintern), “internationalism” has not been the favored term of recent historiography. Cosmopolitanism, transnational history, and global history are the buzzwords of our times. We shall not outline our differences with the approaches used therein in this preface, as we individually have divergent differences with them. Suffice it to say here that we are instead interested in what might be more usefully rendered in terms of *relevant encounters and sites of engagement* rather than impose retrospective categories on the historical actors and contexts that we study; we attempt to identify what might have been spaces, ways of making sense of the world, and modes of communication relevant to contemporaries. A picture emerges from the work presented here of a great flexibility of ideological tendencies: Our historical actors are able to put together for themselves, from the intellectual buffet of the interwar period, a set of ideas that is, at least to an observer in retrospect, far from internally consistent. This might be far more problematic in retrospect than it would seem to contemporaries; as ideologies settle down into recognizable and standardized forms, the uncertainty and ambiguity that begets them are forgotten.

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**Ali Raza, Franziska Roy, and Benjamin Zachariah**

# Introduction: The Internationalism of the Moment—South Asia and the Contours of the Interwar World

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Ali Raza  
Franziska Roy  
Benjamin Zachariah

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
—William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act IV, Scene 3

A little over twenty years is not a long time by historical standards. The internationalist moment can broadly be seen in terms of the unity of the period 1917–39, book-ended by the Russian Revolution and the Second World War. Beginning with the hope that humanity would create a new future for itself, with the help of movements linking up with each other, disregarding the sanctity of states, empires, and governments, it ended with movements diminished or destroyed, disorganized by and organized as states, at war with one another. That the moment passed bears no repeating. We are here, however, to recount the flood and not the shallows; and to place South Asia in the history of that internationalist

flood, from which subsequently the ubiquitous narrative of “nationalist movement(s)” has wrested it.

The internationalism of the times had a number of facets, and although in retrospect a number of classificatory labels suggest themselves—socialist, communist, fascist, Pan-Islamic—the sentiment (and it was often a sentiment) was far less differentiated, more amorphous, than these labels can describe. In a world of apparently infinite hopes and possibilities, individuals journeyed across the terrain of internationalist engagements, geographically and intellectually, while promiscuously drawing from all that these labels describe. The diverse ideologies floated at the time were not seen as mutually exclusive or opposed to one another, but were seen as converging and complementary routes toward a supra-political project that aimed at transforming the future of humanity and, in fact, humanity itself.

At the same time, as movements attempted to resist the confines of states, states resisted and restricted the movements of movements, of people, and of ideas; this is the time of the institution of international—in this case meaning interstate—forms of control and surveillance, when cooperation between police forces, the institution of passport and visa regimes, and the restrictions on international travel that we have come to take for granted were made commonplace.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps, then, the ironic outcome of the internationalist moment was that it created the conditions for its destruction, or at least for the destruction of the internationalism of a nonstatist variety; but we are getting ahead of our story here.

This introduction sets out a context for the essays that follow. It makes a case for the distinctiveness of and relevance of our focus on the period under consideration; it outlines the contours and dynamics of the internationalist moment that we identify; and it sets out the principal approaches that we find useful, situating these in the light of current academic trends.

<sup>1</sup> Radhika V. Mongia, “Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport,” *Public Culture* 11, 3 (1999): 527–56; Radhika V. Mongia, “Historicising State Sovereignty: Inequality and the Form of Equivalence,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, 2 (2007): 384–11. For a history of this phenomenon in the “quasi-colonial states” of the Maghreb and the Middle East, see Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder After 1914* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2008).



## The Moment(um) of Internationalism and the Nature of the Moment

Why do we call it the “internationalist moment”? The period 1917–39 was of course not entirely without precedent in terms of the interconnect-edness of the world and the engagement of South Asians with that world. Such engagements had long been in evidence in political and intellectual life before 1917. Notable among these were the 1905 Russo-Japanese War,<sup>2</sup> the 1911–13 Balkan Wars,<sup>3</sup> various nationalist movements and their intellectuals and heroes (Mazzini and Garibaldi,<sup>4</sup> the Young Turks, Egypt,<sup>5</sup> the Irish nationalist movement<sup>6</sup>). Intellectual engagements

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Amiya K. Samanta (ed.), *Terrorism in Bengal: A Collection of Documents* (Calcutta: Government of West Bengal, 1995), Volume I, 224; Steven G. Marks, “‘Bravo, Brave Tiger of the East!’ The Russo-Japanese War and the Rise of Nationalism in British Egypt and India,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective*, ed. John Steinberg et al. (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2005), 609–27.

<sup>3</sup> The Balkan Wars had, for instance, in conjuncture with the Tripolitan war, led to fears among Indian Muslims regarding the future of the Ottoman Empire and the safety of the holy places of Islam, and were the direct impetus which led to the founding of the Anjuman-Khuddam-i-Ka’aba. Cf. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 22–23, 34–37.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Heehs, *The Bomb in Bengal: The Rise of Revolutionary Terrorism in India 1900–1910* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993). See also excerpts from the Jugantar in Kabita Ray, *Revolutionary Propaganda in Bengal. Extremist and Militant Press 1905–1918* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 2008), 48–49. A Bengali book on the lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi was also standard literature to be read by every member of the early Anushilan Samiti (along with one on Napoleon and another on George Washington): see RH Syned Hutchinson, DIG of Police, IB, Calcutta, May 1, 1914, “Note on the Growth of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal, Eastern Bengal and Assam, and United Bengal,” Appendix C, “Rules for the Membership of the Anushilan Samiti,” in *Terrorism in Bengal*, ed. Amiya K. Samanta, Volume I, 272–74.

<sup>5</sup> K.F. Nariman, *What Next* (Bombay: Bombay Book Depot, 1934), see esp. Chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Silvestri, “The Sinn Fein of India’: Irish Nationalism and the Policing of Revolutionary Terrorism in Bengal,” *The Journal of British Studies*, 39, 4 (October, 2000): 454–86; Michael Silvestri, “The Bomb, Bhadrakol, Bhagavad Gita, and Dan Breen: Terrorism in Bengal and its Relation to the

reached back to the mid-nineteenth century, incorporating Friedrich List on political economy,<sup>7</sup> Theosophy and esoteric Christianity centered on India as the spiritual lynchpin of the world,<sup>8</sup> an assumption taken on board by early (Hindu) nationalists, convinced of the special destiny of India in the world.<sup>9</sup> Anarchism, socialism, the Suffragettes, Romanticism, various theories of nationalism and nationality<sup>10</sup> were discussed by politically conscious circles in India and in exile.<sup>11</sup> Revolutionary “terrorists” in Bengal and “extremist” nationalists were acquainted with events

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European Experience,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, 1 (2009): 1–27; Kate O’Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); Michael Silvestri, *Ireland and India: Nationalism, Empire and Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1966).

<sup>8</sup> Any number of references coming from people with diverse views could be given here, from Tagore’s pacifist pan-Asianism and its “eastern” virtues to the radical nationalists and their religious symbolism. See, for instance, the article in the militant paper *Bande Mataram*, March 2, 1908, stating that “India is the guru of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profound maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould [sic] the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit. But *swaraj* is the necessary condition of her work and before she can do the work, she must fulfill the condition.” Quoted in Kabita Ray, *Revolutionary Propaganda in Bengal*, 132–33.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Zachariah, *Playing the Nation Game: The Ambiguities of Nationalism in India* (New Delhi Yoda Press, 2011), 88, 180–82.

<sup>10</sup> See Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism. Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), esp. pp. 7–15 on the impact of “Western” romanticist notions (Fichte, Hegel, Herder, Schlegel) on the conceptualization of the nation among Indian nationalists. Reading Savarkar’s *Hindutva* or Golwalkar’s *We or our Nationhood Defined* (which he himself claimed was based on Savarkar’s *Hindutva*) one can see in both texts the importance not only of German romanticists but also British influences (which were in turn partly taken over from German ideas). V.D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1928); M.S. Golwalkar, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1938).

<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, the speech by the Congressmen Dr Nalinaksha Sanyal at the World Youth Peace Congress: “India and the World Youth” (Speech of Dr Sanyal at the Eerde Conference, August 19, 1928) in *To the Youth of My Country*, ed. Durlab Singh (Lahore: Hero Publications, 1946), 15–24.

and literatures across the world.<sup>12</sup> Iconic moments which brought these engagements into focus include Swami Vivekananda's colorful turbans at the Chicago World Congress of Religions in 1893 and his American lecture-tours thereafter;<sup>13</sup> and Madame Cama's hoisting of an Indian national flag at the 1907 Stuttgart meeting of the Second International; the latter is also a reminder that among earlier attempts to create platforms and movements that transcended state boundaries, the most obvious were the First and Second Internationals.<sup>14</sup>

The global arena also played host to a variety of political networks that engaged with South Asian politics. Movements and networks that did so included circles surrounding the clergyman J.T. Sunderland in the United States,<sup>15</sup> and the *Gaelic American*, whose support of the Irish nationalist cause included space for other national liberation movements such as the Indian.<sup>16</sup> Others were founded and run by South Asians themselves. The best-known and most celebrated example of this was the Ghadar Party that was founded in North America in 1913 and which issued a revolutionary call for the overthrow of the British Empire in India.<sup>17</sup> Across the Atlantic, such efforts had already been preceded by Shyamji Krishnavarma, founder of the Indian Home Rule Society and

<sup>12</sup> There was an intense engagement with strike movements and forms of passive resistance in Europe in the militant press of the time, predating Gandhi's *Satyagrahas*. See, for instance, articles in the *Bande Mataram* referring to practices of passive resistance to eighteenth century America and contemporary Europe (*Bande Mataram*, April 1907, in Kabita Ray, *Revolutionary Propaganda in Bengal*, 134–35).

<sup>13</sup> Gwilym Beckerlegge, *The Ramakrishna Mission: The Making of a Modern Hindu Movement* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Amit Kumar Gupta, "Defying Death: Nationalist Revolutionism in India, 1987–1938," *Social Scientist* 25, 9–10 (September–October, 1997): 3–27.

<sup>15</sup> On the circle of Christian American anti-imperialists cf. Alan Raucher, "Anti-Imperialists and the pro-India Movement, 1900–1932," *Pacific Historical Review*, 43, 1 (February 1974): 83–110.

<sup>16</sup> Michael O'Dwyer, relating the Indian to the Irish troubles in his statement before the Hunter Committee, actually referred to the Sinn Féin as Irish "Swadeshists" who aimed for Irish "swaraj," and following in the footsteps of their counterparts in Punjab had allied themselves with the enemy of the King. Cited in Verney Lovett, *History of the Indian Nationalist Movement* (London: John Murray, 1921 [1920]), Appendix V, 293.

<sup>17</sup> Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University

India House in London in 1905, and a newspaper, the *Indian Sociologist*, whose intellectual deity was Herbert Spencer, posthumously appropriated for the Indian nationalist cause.<sup>18</sup> Further eastward in Europe, the Berlin India Committee was founded in 1914, coordinated largely by Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, a former inmate of India House and co-worker of Shyamji Krishnavarma, who was among those of the “Berlin India Committee” who worked with the German government during the First World War in conspiring to end British rule in India.<sup>19</sup> “Chatto” was joined from America by another former India Houser, Har Dayal, by now associated with the beginnings of the Ghadar Party, marking the renewed crossing of paths of old colleagues on different personal and historical trajectories.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly then, there were a series of engagements between South Asia and the wider world prior to 1917, and many of these engagements became the basis for the interwar internationalism which is the subject of this book: Ghadar networks, the Berlin India Committee,<sup>21</sup> the Irish connection.<sup>22</sup> Lest it be forgotten, pre-existing networks coalesced or engaged with other networks. In particular, the Khilafat Movement was a continuation of a Pan-Islamic internationalism whose greatest success was at its moment of obsolescence at the end of the Ottoman empire;<sup>23</sup> this particular internationalist sensibility was flexible enough to connect with an unlikely ally in the internationalism of the Bolshevik Revolution,

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of California Press, 2011); Harish K. Puri, *Ghadar Movement: Ideology, Organisation and Strategy* (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Harald Fisher-Tine, “Indian nationalism and the ‘World Forces’: transnational and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First World War,” *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007): 325–44.

<sup>19</sup> Nirode K. Barooah, *India and Official Germany 1886–1914* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1977); Nirode K. Barooah, *Chatto: The Life and Times of an Indian Anti-imperialist in Europe* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Horst Krüger, “Har Dayal in Deutschland,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, X, 1 (1964): 141–69.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Oesterheld, *Der Feind meines Feindes ist mein Freund: Zur Tätigkeit des Indian Independence Committee (IIC) während des Ersten Weltkrieges in Berlin* (unpublished Magisterarbeit, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> O’Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire*.

<sup>23</sup> See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Popular Mobilisation in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

as the Hijrat Movement was diverted by force of circumstance and a fast-moving geopolitics toward Soviet Central Asia.<sup>24</sup>

The onset of the Bolshevik Revolution marked the beginning of an interwar moment that was qualitatively different from earlier and later phases of cooperation and movements across geographical and political boundaries. What differentiates this moment is the peculiar convergence of varying political and intellectual strands that prominently emerged to the fore in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. A conjunctural situation thus emerged that opened a window to internationalism, through which various breezes would blow before the window closed again.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1917, therefore, stands out as the moment's defining moment. The October Revolution had a momentous impact on European politics; its shock waves also reverberated across the globe, and especially in colonized territories, with its call for the overthrow of imperialism and support for "national self-determination." What is extremely important to note here is that the engagement of South Asians—and more generally "oppressed peoples"—with the Bolshevik Revolution was not necessarily an ideological or theoretically informed one. This was in other words the "Leninist Moment" within the internationalist moment, which was far more sustained and far-reaching than its "Wilsonian" counterpart;<sup>26</sup> perhaps it is better to call it the Brest-Litovsk moment, after the Soviet declaration of its principles of peace and reconstruction of a postwar world.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For an account, see Shaukat Osmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary: Sojourn in the Soviet Union* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1977), 3–36. See also Ali Raza's essay as follows.

<sup>25</sup> We are aware of the mixed metaphors here: the "window" that opens and closes comprises the "moment," which is comprised of (sub-) "moments." We should add here that the window we have in mind is that peculiar to Mediterranean and Indian imperial architecture: wooden shutters on the outside, with slats that can be raised and lowered, and glass on the inside.

<sup>26</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Compare, for an earlier and far more insightful analysis, Arno Mayer, *Wilson vs Lenin: Political Origins of the New Diplomacy 1917–1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963 [1959]); for the engagement of Indian nationalists with the October Revolution, see Panchanan Saha, *The Russian Revolution and the Indian Patriots* (Calcutta: Man Sanyal, 1987), on the dissemination in contemporaneous press and literature see esp. pp. 110–37.

<sup>27</sup> E.H. Carr, *International Relations Between the Two World Wars, 1919–1939* (London: Macmillan, 1947).

The Bolshevik and Wilsonian declarations on national self-determination were accompanied by other intellectual and political trends related to world peace, international cooperation, universal suffrage, and women's rights. All of these emerged before or during, and merged decisively with the end of, the Great War. The war itself was decisive in the perceived destruction of the old world and the creation of the hopes and possibilities for a new one. After the cessation of hostilities, there was a heightened awareness of the interconnectedness of the world and a renewed hope for its future prosperity. A stumbling block for future peace and understanding was considered to be the petty, vested-interest-based politics of the "old guard" that had brought the world to the brink of destruction. Mere politics became associated with something "low" and linked to the "Western" system of states. Hence, we see a distrust of "politics" rather than a distrust of the state (seen as a necessary building block in the balance and progress of the world). The platforms we deal with here tended to view peace as something that would naturally flow from cultural encounters and real interhuman interactions that transcended ostensibly rigid political divisions. Keeping away from such disagreements based on "mere politics" was part of the etiquette of many of the cross-cultural meetings taking place. Where, before the war, a belief in a possible utopia of peace had often been somewhat romantic and optimistic, the postwar period was simultaneously marked by a darker and more dystopian undercurrent to visions and ideologies. The (elusive) program of disarmament at the level of institutional international politics was watched warily.

There was also a greater realization of the importance of India to the world and the importance of the world to India.<sup>28</sup> This was evident not just to intellectuals; a wider awareness of such interconnectedness was achieved not least through the experiences of large numbers of soldiers and laborers that were sent across the world in the service of the British

<sup>28</sup> The introduction to a 1922 publication reads "India is the centre of world politics and none can ignore importance of India in world politics. In short, [the author] has tried to show that world peace depends upon freedom of Asia through India independence and thus Indian question should attract keenest interest of the statesmen of all countries. He urges his countrymen to make the question of Indian independence an international issue." Introduction "by an Asian Statesman," Tokyo, Japan, June 15, 1922, to Taraknath Das, *India's Position in World Politics* (Calcutta: Saraswat Library, 1922), 14.



Empire.<sup>29</sup> The destruction of the certainties, social stability, and hierarchies of the old world by the new post-Great War world, in Europe and elsewhere, was an enabling factor in creating a new perception of the world. An earlier, narrower set of knowledge and experiences of interconnection among Indian elites, soldiers, or seamen (for it was the lascars who were the largest group of South Asian travelers across the world before the Great War), was far enlarged by the war.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> For a bibliographical overview of the available literature, see Franziska Roy and Heike Liebau, "Introduction," in *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany*, ed. Franziska Roy et al. (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011), 1–14. On the Indian labor corps, see Radhika Singha, "Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq: The Jail Porter and Labor Corps, 1916–1920," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, 2 (2007), 412–45. More extensive writing exists on the larger contingents of Chinese and African labor corps. On soldiers' letters from the theatres of war, see David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War. Soldiers' Letters, 1914–1918* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999). Among the newest studies are Santanu Das's collection of essays dealing with engagements and involvement across the Empire: Santanu Das (ed.), *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On Indian soldiers specifically, a newer study is Gajendra Singh, *The Testimonies of Indian Soldiers and the Two World Wars: Between Self and Sepoy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); see also Gajendra Singh, "The Anatomy of Dissent in the Military of Colonial India During the First and Second World Wars," *Edinburgh Papers In South Asian Studies* 20 (2006): 1–45.

<sup>30</sup> Gopalan Balachandran, *Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c. 1870–1945* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012); Rosina Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain 1700–1947* (London: Pluto Press, 1986); Gopalan Balachandran, "Searching for the Sardar. The State, Pre-capitalist Institutions, and Human Agency in the Maritime Labour Market, Calcutta 1880–1935," in *Institutions and Social Change in South Asia*, eds Sanjay Subramanyam and Burton Stein (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 206–36; Ravi Ahuja "Networks of Subordination: Networks of the Subordinated. The Case of South Asian Maritime Labour under British Imperialism (c. 1890–1947)," in *Spaces of Disorder in the Indian Ocean Region*, eds Harald Fischer-Tiné and Ashwini Tambe (London: Routledge, 2008), 13–48; Franziska Roy, "South Asian Civilian Prisoners of War in First World War Germany," in *When the War Began, We Heard of Several Kings*, eds Franziska Roy et al., 149–84, 51–95; Ali Raza and Benjamin Zachariah, "To Take Arms Across a Sea of Trouble: The 'Lascar System,' Politics and Agency in the 1920s," *Itinerario* 36, 3 (December 2012): 19–38.

It was the confluence and fusion of these trends which made the interwar period a particularly heady and exciting moment for political actors around the world. This era was marked by the spirit of internationalism which tied together the struggles of oppressed peoples (of various varieties) around the world. This was a spirit which enabled its actors to imagine themselves as citizens of the world. In their world-view, India was inextricably tied to struggles across the globe. Thus, an eloquent "Appeal to the Oppressed Peoples of the East" could be issued:

Oh, sufferers of the East dreaming of freedom from iron, chains, it is your duty to follow the example of India....

India has offered thousands of sacrifices for freedom. India, which had been baked and burnt in the fire of repression, calls upon all the oppressed nations. It is your duty to heed its call and act.

India proclaims by beat of drum that if you wish to free your homes, liberate your countries from the grip of tyrannical oppression, come, sympathize and unite with us, struggle for India's liberation and your freedom will automatically be won. It is India's freedom alone on which depends the honour and safety of your homes.<sup>31</sup>

Quantitatively, the movement of people to places far away, though contested and obstructed by the vicissitudes of geography, by states, by passport and visa regulations, and international and imperial police forces, became more frequent in the interwar period, with Indians in motor cars stranded on the continent, or Indians on bicycles wandering around Europe or North Africa no longer uncommon incidents.<sup>32</sup>

The internationalist moment was also marked, at least in its initial years, by the amorphous contours of its politics. This is not to suggest that "left" and "right" in the conventional sense did not matter, but rather that owing to the nearly seamless confluence of multiple political and intellectual trends, a number of political, intellectual, or social trends in the initial phase of the interwar period were difficult to neatly categorize or classify. Drawing clear boundaries between a variety of political and intellectual tendencies, upon which political and social actors of

<sup>31</sup> G. Adhikari (ed.), *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol. 1 1917–22 (New Delhi: People's Publishing House), 138–37.

<sup>32</sup> There were regular articles on world tours by youth published in a variety of papers, the *Bombay Chronicle* being among the more interested ones. See also the column "adventures..." in the *Volunteer*, the journal of the Indian National Congress' youth wing, the Seva Dal.

the times drew, was therefore no easy task for our actors, irrespective of whether they were placed in “international” or “national” contexts, or more often than not an amalgamation of the two. Toward the end of the 1920s a distinction between “fascists” and “socialists” began to be more strongly made, but this did not stop people from crossing the now-strongly-drawn battle lines between the two, or from wandering along these lines in a drunken straight line, not always conscious of the route.

## Conceptual Tools and Historiographical Perspectives

Given this fluidity, where do we begin to place the internationalist moment in historiography? Terminologically, the contemporaneously favored term “internationalism” seemed apt for the purposes of this volume. Yet that term has not been in favor of late, perhaps because of its once-close association with the proletarian internationalism of the Communist International (Comintern).<sup>33</sup> Instead, in what we might call a historiographical “scramble for the transnation,” new terminologies have taken center stage; “transnational” or “global” histories are written with a focus on a concern with “cosmopolitanism.”<sup>34</sup> It is necessary,

<sup>33</sup> There have been instances in which this term has been used by historians, but more often than not, rather loosely, as a label that is devoid of meaning. More recently, this term has been resuscitated by Emily S. Rosenberg who has drawn attention to prewar groups who called themselves “internationalists.” She points out how “internationalism” was conceived in many circles as an idea that sought to bind nation-states in peaceful coexistence through a parallel attempt to strengthen national and imperial borders. See Emily S. Rosenberg, “Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World,” in *A World Connecting 1870–1945*, ed. Emily S. Rosenberg (Cambridge, Mass and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). This is a useful corrective to the assumption that internationalism is merely the province of (in our period) the Third and Fourth Internationals: the decentering of statist perspectives that we refer to in this volume was not the only internationalism on offer.

<sup>34</sup> See, for instance, Sugata Bose and Kris Manjappa (ed.), *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann (eds), *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain,*