

Bandung Conference 70 Years On: Visions of Decolonisation for a Multipolar World Order

Ahmad Rizky M. Umar,
Suci Lestari Yuana,
Luqman-nul Hakim,
Mohtar Mas'oed

10.22146/globalsouth.106735

Department of Politics, Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom

Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

Department of International Relations, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

**Special Issue Editors*

This special issue aims to reflect on the legacies of the Bandung Conference in its 70th anniversary for the emerging multipolar world order. Seven articles in this special issue unpacks the many legacies of the Bandung Conference: from the epistemic visions of a new international order based on self-determination, sovereign equality, and postcolonial justice to the reshaping of the foreign policy of the 'global south' countries. We build on the legacies and pitfalls of the Bandung Conference to rethink what it means by, and what should be done for, the decolonisation agenda in world politics. We argue that the Bandung Conference has been able, primarily, to rethink the structure of international politics by embracing three visions of decolonisation: a political vision of territorial sovereignty and self-determination, an economic vision of equality and justice, and an epistemic vision for cultural and intellectual liberation from colonial legacies. However, these visions of decolonisation are threatened by the return of great power politics, sphere of influence, and the further marginalisation of the global south in an emerging multipolar world order. We argue that the global south needs to use opportunities from the multipolar world order to reassert their voices and agencies while at the same time critical of, and rejecting, the underlying imperial logic of the great powers. This special issue lays out some lessons from the Bandung Conference for a multipolar world order in three key sites of new global struggle: a political struggle to defend sovereignty, an economic struggle for global justice, and an intellectual struggle for equal knowledge production. These are the new Bandung visions for a multipolar world order.

Keywords: *Bandung Conference, Decolonisation, International Order, Global Justice, Multipolar World Order*

Introduction

In his famous speech at the 1955 Asia Africa Conference in Bandung, Indonesia ("the Bandung Conference"), Chinese

Premier Zhou En-Lai declared that "...the rule of colonialism in this region has not yet come to an end, and new colonialists are attempting take the place of the old ones."

Having arrived from a dramatic escape from an attempted assassination, he led the Chinese delegation to the conference and conveyed a forceful message for all participants. For Zhou, after the end of the Second World War, "...[n]ot a few of the Asian and African peoples are still leading a life of colonial slavery. Not a few of the Asian and African peoples are still subjected to racial discrimination and deprived of human rights.... We need to develop our countries independently with no outside interference and in accordance with the will of the people." (Zhou 1955).

It has been 70 years after the Bandung Conference, but the call from Zhou –along with other leaders of ‘the Third World’ in 1955 has still found resonances in contemporary international politics. The Bandung Conference, indeed, has paved the way for global decolonisation. There are 116 states who obtained their independence after the conference, followed by the call for a ‘new international economic order’ and ‘non-alignment’ during the Cold War followed after the Conference. Nevertheless, there have also been denial of self-determination after the Conference — from the long struggle of Palestinian statehood to the treatment of indigenous people in settler-colonial societies. Colonialism, therefore, is not dead, and there are still homeworks to advance decolonisation in a new multipolar international order.

Addressing the contemporary challenges necessitate a rethinking of what *decolonisation* means in contemporary international politics. This special issue aims to

reflect on the legacies of the Bandung Conference by rethinking what ‘decolonisation’ means in the study of World Politics. By reflecting on the contemporary legacies of the Bandung Conference in its 70th anniversary, we argue that decolonisation does not only mean a defence of not only sovereignty and sovereign equality, but also dismantling of an unjust economic system that only enriches one country or social class and sustains global hierarchy, as well as a dismantling of intellectual and cultural hegemony that marginalises, epistemically, the expertise of the global south scholars and practices of knowledge production from the global south. These visions have implications to our understanding of international politics. The multipolar world order, however, has raised questions whether these visions are still relevant and what strategies that the global south should envision to respond to challenges of the contemporary multipolar world order.

This introductory article offers a new conceptual framework to understand the Bandung visions of decolonisation and its contemporary challenges in the emerging multipolar world order. The first section sets out the scene by discussing the visions of decolonisation from the Bandung Conference. The second section brings Bandung’s vision for decolonisation to the wider efforts for decolonising the study of international politics. The third section analyses the challenges of decolonisation under a multipolar world order. The final section offers a new Bandung spirit for a multipolar world order by reflecting on contributions of articles in this Special Issue.

Bandung's Visions of Decolonisation

The Bandung Conference was premised on a normative vision for an egalitarian international order. Scholars have argued that Bandung Conference has powerfully brought a central vision of postcolonial worldmaking: a project to transform the existing hierarchical international order — underpinned by legacies of colonialism and imperialism — into an egalitarian vision of political, economic, and cultural order (Quah 2025, Benabdallah 2024). The Bandung Conference presented a vision of worldmaking to dismantle international hierarchy centred on *self-determination*. At the Bandung Conference, according to Getachew (2019: 88), anticolonial nationalist leaders have endorsed the self-determination as a collective rights of peoples and nations, which made it “a necessary condition for individual human rights.” In so doing, they have made a case for a new world order based on the *equality of all nations* free from colonialism and imperialism (Utama 2025; Pham and Shilliam 2016). This demand ultimately challenged the Wilsonian vision of self-determination, outlined by Woodrow Wilson in 1919 and preserved by the League of Nations, which outlined that self-determinations may only be granted for societies who are *civilised enough* to advance their developments, which clearly established a hierarchy of nations based on standards of civilisation (Manela 2007, Spanu 2020).

This normative vision of egalitarian international order has three key dimensions. First, the Bandung Conference embraced political equality for all nations in

world politics regardless of race or status of civilisation. The basis of this political equality was the rejection of colonialism and, as Jack Shield has shown in this special issue, the logic of territoriality that had proliferated in the early 20th century after the First World War through Wilsonian self-determination. By tracing the longer historical origins of the Bandung Conference, Shield argues that Bandung Conference articulates a logic of “territorialisation”, in which its participants articulate a vision of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism through the form of nation-state. This logic evolved from a de-territorialised and diffused vision of anti-imperialism articulated by its predecessor, the League against Imperialism, which was concerned primarily to dismantle Western imperialism. This process of territorialisation was essential in shaping Bandung's political, economic, and cultural vision of decolonisation.

Decolonisation, for Bandung Conference, demands an equal place for non-Western peoples in a new international system characterised by “nation-state monoculture”, where membership in the international system is determined by territories embedded in the nation-state. The Final Communique of Bandung Conference has boldly declared that, “..colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end; and... the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a denial of fundamental human rights” (Problem of Dependent People, point 1c and 1d). By rejecting colonialism, the Bandung Conference was able to put forward political agenda for decolonisation

by, primarily, "...declaring its support of the cause of freedom and independence for all such peoples, and... calling upon the powers concerned to grant freedom and independence to such peoples" (Problem of Dependent People, point 1c and 1d).

Two political ideas underpinned this egalitarian vision of decolonisation, namely a defence of territorial integrity and sovereign equality. The Final Communiqué has clearly established the importance of defending territorial integrity as the core elements of decolonisation. As Quinton-Brown (2024) has argued, participants of Bandung Conference defended territorial integrity as a means to reject the looming great power interventionism during the early Cold War era, which resembled the new logic of colonial expansion. This was clearly articulated in the ten principles, which called for, "abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country" (point 4) "respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively (point 5), "abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers" (point 6), and "refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country" (point 7). In defending their territorial integrity, they embrace sovereign equality, in which all nations should be treated as equal under international law (see also Eslava, Fakhri, and Nesiah 2017, Basu-Meillish and Zachariades 2023). This was illustrated in the bold declaration of the Bandung Conference for, "recognition of the equality of all races and of the equal-

ity of all nations, large and small" (point 3).

Second, the Final Communiqué of the Bandung Conference also outlined three economic foundations, namely development, economic cooperation between Asian and African countries, and a just and fair international economic order. The Final Communiqué has called for strengthening, "...economic co-operation among the participating countries on the basis of mutual interest and respect for national sovereignty." (Economic Co-operation, point 1). In calling for economic cooperation, the Bandung Conference acknowledges the need for not only technical assistance among Asian and African countries, but also a stable commodity trade, international prices, and demand for primary commodities (Economic Co-operation, point 4-5). In so doing, the Conference called for diversification of export trade by processing raw materials before export, strengthening of intra-regional trade, and promotion of international trade that would support development. These proposals, nevertheless, need support from the United Nations and major powers in world politics, which eventually laid the basis for a call for New International Economic Order (NIEO) in the 1970s (Benjamin 2015, Weber and Winanti 2016).

Finally, there is also an aspect of cultural decolonisation. The Final Communiqué has acknowledged the importance of recovering the rich cultural traditions of Asian and African countries, which had been suppressed by colonialism, and embraced mutual learning between Asian and African nations. The Bandung Conference, therefore, called for broadening decolonisation

to the cultural and intellectual sphere, which requires the dismantling of cultural and intellectual superiority of the colonisers (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019, Mignolo 2011). It was against this backdrop that the conference recommended strengthening educational cooperation between Asian and African countries with three key directions: the acquisition of knowledge of each other's country, mutual cultural exchange, and exchange of information (Cultural Co-Operation, point 5). One manifestation of this cultural cooperation, as Christopher Geralle has shown in this Special Issue, is *Kemitraan Negara Berkembang* scholarship from the Indonesian government, which enabled students from developing countries to learn in Indonesian Higher Education institutions.

Decolonising International Relations

These aspects of the Bandung Conference have brought important legacies not only for global decolonisation, but also for the wider efforts to decolonise the way we think about world politics. We note that the Bandung Conference has inspired a rethinking of how we should study International Relations in three ways. At the 'macro' level, Bandung Conference has inspired us to tell a different story of international order. This enables IR scholars to challenge the Eurocentric views of International Relations by engaging with alternative epistemologies and sources of knowledge from the complex realities and subjectivities of the global south. Unpacking alternative epistemologies, in turn would open up more spaces of inquiries in the

study of International Relations by looking at everyday practices and politics, which ground the aspirations of decolonisation to alternative knowledge production process at the 'micro' level. From this perspective, learning from the Bandung Conference has enabled scholars to continuously interrogate power relations, knowledge hierarchies, and global governance structures that would contribute to advance a more equitable international order.

A New Story of International Order

IR scholars have regarded Bandung Conference — instead of the standard 'Westphalian Peace Conference' or the end of the Second World War, as a birthplace of modern international order. For Carvalho, Leira, and Hobson (2011), International Relations as a discipline has been haunted by a 'myth of Westphalia', which assumes that modernity began after the Peace of Westphalia in the 17th century. Other views put the 'benchmark date' later at the 19th century or the end of the Second World War (Buzan and Lawson 2014, 2016, Waltz 1979, Ikenberry 2009). These assumptions have missed the point that these 'benchmark dates' were almost exclusively European in nature. European colonialism has rendered impossible the proper recognition of Asian and African agents in the history of modern international borders, and thus sustained the Eurocentric narrative that put Euro-American agents at the centre of modern international order (Hobson 2012, Kayaoglu 2010).

Therefore, an alternative view has emerged to regard the Bandung Conference

as the foundational moment for modern international order. The Bandung Conference has been exceptional in bringing about the global 'decolonisation' that would enable Asian and African countries to be regarded as agents in world politics (Umar 2019, Shilliam and Pham 2016, Eslava and Fakhri 2017). Bandung's principles—anti-colonialism, non-alignment, and South-South cooperation—also offered an alternative to Cold War bipolarity and enabled the emergence of the 'Third World' as a political bloc amid US-Soviet contestation (Phillips 2016, Guan 2018). Bandung Conference also envisions an international order based on 'global pluralism' — equality of all countries regardless of its economic position and ideology — rooted in a shared colonial past, with a transformation agenda to structure international political and economic order (Wu 2023, see also Dunne, Devetak, and Nurhayati 2016).

The Bandung Conference has also paved more avenues for the emergence of new blocs — the Third World — that reconfigure the structure of global political contestation during and after the Cold War, as well as new political initiatives such as the Group of 77, New International Economic Order, the Non-Aligned Movement (Dinkel 2018, Alvian, Putrowidjoyo, and Fadhila 2024, Gray and Gills 2016). Against this backdrop, Bandung Conference has become a key moment for 'solidarist internationalism' that reconciles the Asian and African countries under a single banner of intercontinental solidarity (Weber and Winanti 2016, Hongoh 2016). The Bandung Conference also played a role in the development of international

law, particularly those related to the matters of the Third World countries (Eslava, Fakhri, and Nesiah 2017).

Challenging Eurocentrism

IR scholars have also discussed the Bandung Conference as a moment of resistance against colonialism, which later inspired many forms of global decolonisation agenda. Mignolo (2011), for example, has forcefully argued that the Bandung Conference provided options for the global south countries for epistemic delinking: one way to intellectually break free from the dark legacies of Western colonialism (see also Shilliam and Pham 2016). For postcolonial and decolonial scholars in IR, the Bandung Conference offers new ways of thinking about international politics by, primarily, dismantling the epistemic hierarchies embedded in mainstream IR discipline (Hakim, Sugiono, and Mas'ood 2021, Umar 2024).

Postcolonial and Decolonial IR scholars have been critical of the representation of non-Western societies as 'other', and broader moves have been made to recentre non-Western voices in IR (Ling 2002, Buzan and Acharya 2010, Seth 2013). This Western-centrism is not simply reproduced through the domination of Western scholarship, but also involves gatekeeping of non-Western scholars in the global avenues of knowledge production (Umar 2024, Cho 2023). In addition, IR as an academic discipline is also still centred in the West where the basic institutional infrastructure of knowledge production — professional association, academic journals, conferences, and PhD scholarship — are

based, whilst at the same time marginalising those in the global south (Waheed and Malik 2024, Gani and Marshall 2022).

By bringing Bandung Conference — and its legacies — at the forefront of academic conversation in IR, scholars have attempted to question and challenge the Eurocentric foundations that center Western civilisational and racial superiority (Capan 2017, Sabaratnam 2020, Sen 2023). In so doing, they advocated for methodological pluralism and centering Global South perspectives (Picq 2013, Viramontes 2022). These scholars also argue that dominant IR paradigms marginalize postcolonial experiences by privileging Western-centric analyses of sovereignty, security, and development (Tripathi 2021, Vogel et. al 2024). This critique aligns with broader decolonial efforts to diversify knowledge production and challenge the assumption that Western theoretical models offer universal explanations for global politics (Chakrabarty 2008, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019, Alejandro 2018).

Everyday Politics and the Global South

This engagement has in turn enabled IR scholars to open up new spaces of inquiries to unpack complexities of international political realities, primarily by introducing an interdisciplinary approach to decolonization. This approach resonates with broader aesthetic and emotional turn in IR, which emphasize how knowledge and representation shape global hierarchies (Bleiker 2001, Hutchison 2016). Scholars, for example, has assessed that International Relations is not only about 'state matters', but also include

on-the-ground practices like everyday protection of refugees (Prabandari and Adiputra 2019, Missbach and Adiputera 2021), or the role of new technologies in society — from platform economies, Internet of Things, to artificial intelligence — in reproducing post-colonial inequalities (Yuana 2024, see also Ghosh et. al., 2021).

This development is important not only for IR as a discipline as such, but also to understand how practices of injustice and legacies of colonialism have been perpetuated in *everyday politics*, and not only in the relations among states. Understanding science and technology as a part of 'everyday' international political issues is crucial to understanding state-centric bias in IR and foregrounds non-human agency, aesthetic practices, and technological infrastructures (Yuana, Madasari, & Hadiyantono, 2025). Understanding everyday practices is also important to understand refugee protections. As Prabandari (2023) has shown the relative absence of robust refugee policies from the state has enabled the humanitarian roles citizens to step up with humanitarian protections (see also Kuncoro and Prabandari 2024).

This engagement with decolonization extends beyond theory to applied research in energy transitions, climate justice, and disasters. With a complex geographical landscape, Indonesia faces an equally complex challenge environmental problems, which are entangled with social, cultural, and political dynamics in the changing society (Triyanti et. al., 2023). One of these issues is related to access to water and, more broadly,

According to Marwa (2024) in her research in Jakarta's urban settlement, the water problem in Jakarta actually intersects with gender, social relations, and economic redistribution. In this sense, an environmental issue — more specifically water — has become an issue of environmental justice that requires more-than-technical solutions (Lobina, Wegmann, and Marwa 2023). These stories thus show the global intersections between the 'local problem' of the global south with the wider issues of global justice and inequalities.

Similar lessons can be learned from other problems recently faced by the global south. The COVID-19 pandemic also reflect the collective vulnerability of the poor, which has been rooted with the wider issues of global inequalities and incapacities of the global south to deal with health emergency and vaccination (Mas'udi and Winanti 2020, Umar and Wicaksono 2020). Similarly, studies on energy transitions highlight how the global south navigates geopolitical constraints and climate finance, often within neocolonial structures (Winanti et al., 2021, Nurhidayah et. al., 2024). In resource-rich countries (including Indonesia), the issue of energy transitions often involve many social, political, and economic considerations due to collective vulnerabilities of people and absence of comprehensive state responsibility to deal with energy transition (Winanti and Hanif 2020).

To sum up, Bandung Conference has opened up a new possibility for 'epistemic and cultural decolonisation': to think about world politics differently by centring the

agencies of postcolonial societies. The Bandung Conference is not simply a statement of 'decolonisation' in terms of state independence. As Christopher Gervelle has discussed in this special issue, Bandung Conference also entailed *intellectual liberation*: disrupting Western hegemony in knowledge production that marginalises non-Western peoples. Bandung Conference, therefore, it is also a broader vision for 'decolonising' the multiple scales of global politics: from the global power asymmetries the global politics and economy to the reproduction of global injustice in everyday politics.

The Emerging Multipolar World Order

In 2007, the global financial crisis hit two global financial centres - the Wall Street and the City of London — and led most of the Western countries in economic crisis. This moment thus marked the slow decline of the Western-led liberal international order after the Cold War. The second decade of the 21st century also witnessed the rise of China and its 'alternative' forms of partnership with the global south, as well as the more assertive Russia to regain its influence in its Eurasian neighbour. At the same time, these countries established transregional groupings that also involve global south countries, including BRICS+ (established in 2006), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Collective Security Treaty Organization, and Eurasian Economic Union (Kireeva et. al 2019, Kuznetsov 2022). Furthermore, the election of President Donald Trump and the rise of far-right movements across Europe steadily accelerates this trend, particularly

with the the rifts between United States and its Western allies (notably EU and Canada), tariff wars, threats to annex Greenland and Canada, as well as ongoing wars in Gaza and Ukraine with no end in sight.

Scholars have characterised this emerging trend as a 'multipolar international order', in which there are multiple powers with their own influence and logics of engagement who want to shape the rules of international order (Wijaya and Jayasuriya 2024, Dolan 2018, see also Hakim et. al 2021). Three key aspects characterise this new, emerging multipolar international order. The first aspect is the rise of new global powers. The 2007 financial crisis has not only revealed a severe capitalist crisis, but marked the changing of material conditions wherein global economic growth moved from the G7 countries to the so-called emerging economies. As early as 2010, OECD (2010) had acknowledged that there was a shifting wealth which resulted in changing geography of the global economy. They predicted that the emerging economies would control 60% of the global economy by 2030 and urged the developed countries to strengthen the North-South relations through various mechanisms, most notably the G20 (Hakim, 2019).

The second aspect is the rise of global strategic competition and transregional cooperations across the world. This is associated with the decline of US unilateralism, enjoyed since the end of World War II, and the post-Cold War unipolar order. Economically, the rise of China, and its global economic initiatives economic groupings, has not only directly

challenged the US dominance but also shaped economies and political dynamics in the regions, especially in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Pacific (Yuliantoro and Dinarto 2019, Yuliantoro 2021, Xuetong 2018). In the meantime, at least since 2013 Russia has challenged the US-NATO alliance militarily and forced the former to build a strategic alliance with China in various ongoing and potential conflict zones (Kortunov 2020). Such a strategic competition has brought about geopolitical tensions in which the nexus of security and economy is increasingly intertwined in transforming post-unipolar world order.

The third aspect is the redefinition of roles of the global south countries amid the rise of multiple new emerging powers. Tectonic dislocations of world politics, as mentioned in first and second points, have opened up the new space for redefinition of the political roles of among the Global South countries. With the decline of Western liberal hegemony, a multipolar world order has provided the global south options to choose its alignment with states that support its interest. The multipolar world order is not only dominated by great powers — the United States, Russia and China — but also witnessed the rise of regional powers who actively negotiate the current international order, particularly across Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Bajpai and Laksmana 2023, Goddard 2018). These changing material conditions amid a reordering of international order have opened the spaces for the redefinition of the role of global south, which has been previously marginalised during the

Cold War and in the post-Cold War liberal international order.

Nevertheless, the emergence of multipolar world order does not necessarily lead to consolidation of the global south. The rise of China has led to a new ontological security dilemma of Southeast Asian countries, in which Southeast Asian countries are divided over who to engage with in order to secure regional order (Umar and Santoso 2023). Indeed, following the waves of decolonisation and neoliberal globalisation, the global south is still embedding itself within the old world political-economic structures by creating dependence with the Western countries (Levander and Mignolo 2011, Grovogui 2011). In a multipolar world order, this pattern of dependence can still be exploited with great powers who want to side with the global south for their own interest. Countries like Russia and China, while claiming to be “allies of the global south”, did have their own interests that contradict the interest - or the belief held by - global south countries. It is evident from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which violates a small state's basic rights for sovereignty (Wardhani and Dharmaputra 2024).

It is in this central issue that the core of the Bandung Spirit — the decolonisation of world politics — is urgently reinvented and contextualised within the current transformation of the world order (Prasad 2014). In the past, proponents of the Bandung Conference had met some pitfalls in advancing the agenda for the third world in the aftermath of the conference. Even though third world countries have been

able to propose initiatives to decolonise international economic order - including through the creation of the Group of 77 and the New International Economic Order — they failed to advance their agenda amidst the waves of neoliberalism since the 1980s (Golub 2013, Benjamin 2015). As such, the global south remains entangled in asymmetric economic relations that constrain its broader pathways to delink from Western colonial legacies. As Mas'ood (2023) has critically discussed, state independence does not always equal full sovereignty, as colonial legacies persist in various forms: from the unjust global economic institutions, unfair trade policies, and governance frameworks sustain neocolonial dependencies (see also Kvangraven 2021).

Thus, changing material conditions and the spaces of contestation require the global south to renew its solidarity and collective consciousness to challenge the imperial logics of great power politics. To establish collective consciousness, the global south needs to cultivate a specific political project to navigate the current multipolar world order. The global south needs to challenge emerging power structures that shape not only patterns of interactions in world politics (including the global south position in it) but also the practices of knowledge production in a way that exploit the global south for the interest of any great powers, whatever form it is. Without clear agenda setting and emancipatory projects to transform the current multipolar order, the global south would continuously be mediocre in global politics.

The New Bandung Vision for Multipolar World Order

This special issue aims to tackle this intellectual and political challenge by revisiting the legacies of the Bandung Conference in its 70 years anniversary. We use the 70 years anniversary of the Bandung Conference to lay out a new agenda for global decolonisation to navigate the emerging multipolar world order. Articles in this special issue reflect on the contemporary challenges of the Bandung Conference for a multipolar international order in three key sites of global struggle: a political struggle to defend territorial sovereignty and non-interference, an economic struggle for global justice and redistribution of public goods, and an intellectual struggle for equal knowledge production.

The first site of the struggle is political and diplomatic struggle to defend state sovereignty. Jack Shield begins by presenting what was the most significant legacy of the Bandung Conference: territorial sovereignty. Participants of the Bandung Conference have wholeheartedly propose and support the recognition of territorial sovereignty as the basic principles of international order. To defend territorial sovereignty, global south countries need three key aspects: rights for self-determination for people under colonialism, sovereign equality under international law, and non-intervention as well as denunciation of illegal use of force. The clear agenda of the global south is to defend this right from great powers' interference — whoever it is — while at the same time advancing peaceful coexistence among great powers.

Defending territorial sovereignty and sovereign equality in world politics necessitate a clear diplomatic strategy of the global south. However, global south countries face a dilemma in devising relevant foreign policy and diplomatic strategies for a multipolar world order. Aldi Haydar Mulia, Rama Ardhia Prastita, and Muhammad Daffa Arnanda explore Indonesia's foreign policy dilemma between decolonisation and development. Assessing the history of Indonesia's foreign policy since the Bandung era, the authors argue that Indonesia articulated, and later shifted, its foreign policy commitment since the Bandung Conference. While the Bandung Conference was able to challenge the neocolonial structure of world politics, its vision was not consistently applied by its proponents. By looking at Indonesia's foreign policy, the authors argue that the lack of clarity and coherent vision Indonesia's foreign policy vision has hindered the full articulation of decolonisation in world politics, combined with the Cold War and domestic instability that President Sukarno has faced in the 1960s.

Faris Rahmadian, Otto Hospes, and Katrien Termeer found a similar dilemma faced by Southeast Asian countries in devising diplomatic strategies. By conducting a systematic literature review of diplomatic strategies pursued by Southeast Asian countries since their independence, the authors argue that the diplomatic strategies of Southeast Asian countries have been shaped by, among others, their past histories of colonialism and neutrality in international politics. However, these diplomatic strategies are

limited to defend Southeast Asia from great powers' interference. Increased tensions between the United States, Russia, and China, combined with disunity among global south countries due to close relations with either great powers pose a dilemma as to how a unified global south strategy can be achieved.

The second struggle is the economic call for just economic order. Muhammad Ikhwan Nuril Anwar argues in this special issue that Indonesia's development discourse during President Joko Widodo did not reflect the spirit of economic decolonisation as articulated by the Bandung Conference. Instead, Joko Widodo articulates development policies that sideline local communities, overlook sustainable practices, and worsen environmental inequalities. Anwar shows this tendency by undertaking an ecofeminist analysis of three prominent megaprojects, including the *Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN)* new capital city project, nickel industry downstreaming, and the Food Estate program. These projects have not only had domestic repercussions, including in social and environmental issues, but also had increased Indonesia's reliance on external partners who fund the programs, particularly China.

The third struggle is the intellectual struggle for equal knowledge production. Even though there have been attempts for epistemic decolonisation, especially to delink the discipline of International Relations from its Western-centric intellectual hegemony, the West still dominates the sphere of knowledge production. To deal with these challenges, global south countries need to turn to key policy proposals outlined in the

Final Communique of the Bandung Conference to improve *south-south cooperation*. One strategy is to improve the economic, cultural, and educational relations between the global south countries. Reflecting on *Kemitraan Negara Berkembang*, a program by the Indonesian government to give scholarships for students from global south partners, Christopher Paller Gerale highlights one overlooked aspect of south-south cooperation: a strong partnership needs to be cultivated from below by involving citizens. Gerale argues that the KNB scholarship program fosters South-South cooperation, disrupts Western-centric knowledge hierarchies, and contributes to capacity building in the Global South. This program brings the cultural co-operation vision of the Bandung Conference further by prioritizing mutual respect, equitable development, and the decolonization of knowledge among the host institutions and scholarship recipients.

Finally, we need to note that the Bandung Conference was not perfect. One striking issue is the Palestine Question, which is primarily an issue of continuing colonial legacies under the form of land occupation (Sayegh 1965, Nabulsi 2023). In this special issue, Nurul Fajriyah and Siti Muti'ah Setiawati highlight one unfinished political agenda of the Bandung Conference: the Palestinian independence. Indeed, many participants of the Bandung Conference — particularly delegates of the Arab countries — have voiced support for the independence in the United Nations (Samour 2017). By analysing Indonesia's view and support towards Palestinian independence, the authors argue

that global south solidarity is essential in supporting the struggle for Palestinian independence, even though the efforts have not been successful in bringing about the rights for self-determination for Palestinians. Fajriyah and Setiawati's analysis highlights another pivotal issue in advancing south-south cooperation in a multipolar world order, namely humanitarian solidarity.

However, in a multipolar world order, expressing solidarity alone is not enough to push for a political change in global politics. This special issue has brought a final reflection: a global solidarity needs to be pushed further to establish a concrete political agenda to negotiate the collective interest of the global south with the emerging great powers. For example, to resolve the Palestine Question, Indonesia — and other global south countries — should advance a more concrete political agenda to negotiate Palestinian independence with the great powers, especially those who currently support Israel. Similarly, the global south needs to have a collective stance to stand up to Donald Trump's unjust tariff and the looming US-China trade war, which could affect the development agenda of the global south. Thus, while a multipolar world order may create an opportunity for the global south to engage with multiple great powers in world politics, a real political change will only materialise with a consistent political agenda from a *united* global south. This is the ultimate lesson from the Bandung Conference 70 years ago for the contemporary multipolar world order.

References

- Acharya, A. (2016). Studying the Bandung conference from a Global IR perspective. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(4), 342-357.
- Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (Eds.). (2009). *Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives On and Beyond Asia*. Routledge.
- Alejandro, A. (2018). *Western dominance in international relations?: The internationalisation of IR in Brazil and India*. Routledge.
- Alvian, R. A., Putrawidjoyo, A., & Fadhila, Z. (2024). The Diversity of Solidarity in South-South Cooperation: A Case of bapa+ 40. *Bandung*, 11(2), 295-321.
- Guan, A. C. (2018). *Southeast Asia's cold war: An interpretive history*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Bajpai, K., & Laksmana, E. A. (2023). Asian conceptions of international order: What Asia wants. *International Affairs*, 99(4), 1371-1381.
- Benabdallah, L. (2024). Africa-Asia: a tale of worldmaking between alterity and contestation. *African Affairs*, 123(491), 223-241.
- Benjamin, B. (2015). Bookend to Bandung: The New International Economic Order and the Antinomies of the Bandung Era. *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 6(1), 33-46.
- Bleiker, R. (2001). The aesthetic turn in international political theory. *Millennium*, 30(3), 509-533.
- Buzan, B., & Lawson, G. (2014). Rethinking benchmark dates in international relations. *European Journal of international relations*, 20(2), 437-462.
- Capan, Z. G. (2017). Decolonising international relations?. *Third World Quarterly*, 38(1), 1-15.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press.

- De Carvalho, B., Leira, H., & Hobson, J. M. (2011). The big bangs of IR: The myths that your teachers still tell you about 1648 and 1919. *Millennium*, 39(3), 735-758.
- Devetak, R., Dunne, T., & Nurhayati, R. T. (2016). Bandung 60 years on: revolt and resilience in international society. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(4), 358-373.
- Dinkel, J. (2018). *The non-aligned movement: genesis, organization and politics (1927-1992)* Leiden: Brill.
- Dolan, C. J. (2018). *Obama and the emergence of a multipolar world order: Redefining US foreign policy*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Eslava, L., Fakhri, M., & Nesiah, V. (Eds.). (2017). *Bandung, global history, and international law: critical pasts and pending futures*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gani, J. K., & Marshall, J. (2022). The impact of colonialism on policy and knowledge production in International Relations. *International Affairs*, 98(1), 5-22.
- Getachew, A. (2019). *Worldmaking after empire: The rise and fall of self-determination*. Princeton University Press.
- Ghosh, B., Ramos-Mejía, M., Machado, R. C., Yuana, S. L., & Schiller, K. (2021). Decolonising transitions in the Global South: Towards more epistemic diversity in transitions research. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 41, 106-109.
- Goddard, S. E. (2018). *When right makes might: Rising powers and world order*. Cornell University Press.
- Golub, P. S. (2013). From the New International Economic Order to the G20: how the 'global South' is restructuring world capitalism from within. *Third World Quarterly*, 34(6), 1000-1015.
- Gray, K., & Gills, B. K. (2016). South-South cooperation and the rise of the Global South. *Third World Quarterly*, 37(4), 557-574.
- Grovogui, S. (2011). A revolution nonetheless: The Global South in international relations. *Global South*, the, 5(1), 175-190.
- Hakim, L. N. (2021). G20 sebagai Global Governance: Tantangan Negara-Negara Emerging Economies. In Winanti, P.S. and Mas'udi, W. (eds.) *G20 di Tengah Perubahan Besar: Momentum Kepemimpinan Global Indonesia?* Yogyakarta: UGM Press.
- Hakim, LN., Sugiono, M., and Mas'ood, M. (2021). *The Global South: Refleksi dan Visi Studi Hubungan Internasional*. Yogyakarta: UGM Press.
- Hobson, J. M. (2012). *The Eurocentric conception of world politics: Western international theory, 1760-2010*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hongoh, J. (2016). The Asian-African Conference (Bandung) and Pan-Africanism: the challenge of reconciling continental solidarity with national sovereignty. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(4), 374-390.
- Hutchison, E. (2016). *Affective communities in world politics* (Vol. 140). Cambridge University Press.
- Ikenberry, G. J. (2019). *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*. Princeton University Press.
- Kayaoglu, T. (2010). *Legal imperialism: Sovereignty and extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kireeva, A., et. al. (2019). *The regional world order: Transregionalism, regional integration, and regional projects across Europe and Asia*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kortunov, A. (2020). The world order crisis and the future of globalization. *Russian International Affairs Council*.
- Kuncoro, H. R., & Prabandari, A. (2024). A Responsible Sovereign? Between Sovereignty and Responsibility in Refugee and Asylum Seeker Protection in Indonesia—The Case of Presidential

- Regulation No. 125 of 2016. In Kneebone, S., Mariñas, R., Missbach, A., & Walden, M. (Eds.). (2024). *Refugee Protection in Southeast Asia: Between Humanitarianism and Sovereignty*. London: Berghahn Books..
- Kuznetsov, D. A. (2022). Transregional integration amid megatrends. In Lebedeva, M. M., & Kuznetsov, D. A. (Eds.). (2022). *Megatrends of world politics: globalization, integration and democratization*. London: Routledge.
- Kvangraven, I. H. (2021). Beyond the stereotype: Restating the relevance of the dependency research programme. *Development and change*, 52(1), 76-112.
- Levander, C., & Mignolo, W. (2011). Introduction: the global south and world dis/order. *The Global South*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Ling, L. H. M. (2002). *Postcolonial international relations: Conquest and desire between Asia and the West*. New York: Palgrave.
- Lobina, E., Weghmann, V., & Marwa. (2019). Water justice will not be televised: Moral advocacy and the struggle for transformative remunicipalisation in Jakarta. *Water Alternatives*, 12(2), 725-748.
- Manela, E. (2007). *The Wilsonian moment: self-determination and the international origins of anticolonial nationalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Marwa. (2024). Situating the urban poor in informal settlement within Jakarta's water governance shift to remunicipalisation. *Geoforum*, 148.
- Mas'ood, M. (2023). *Dekolonisasi Studi Hubungan Internasional Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Institute of International Studies UGM.
- Mas'udi, W., & Winanti, P. S. (2020). *The New Normal: Perubahan Ekonomi dan Politik akibat COVID-19*. Yogyakarta: FISIPOL UGM.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de) coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience. *Postcolonial studies*, 14(3), 273-283.
- Missbach, A., & Adiputera, Y. (2021). The role of local governments in accommodating refugees in Indonesia: investigating best-case and worst-case scenarios. *Asian Journal of law and Society*, 8(3), 490-506.
- Nabulsi, J. (2023). Reclaiming palestinian indigenous sovereignty. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 52(2), 24-42.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2019). When did the masks of coloniality begin to fall? Decolonial reflections on the Bandung Spirit of decolonization. *Bandung*, 6(2), 210-232.
- Nurhidayah, L., Alam, S., Utomo, N. A., & Suntoro, A. (2024). Indonesia's Just Energy Transition: The Societal Implications of Policy and Legislation on Renewable Energy. *Climate Law*, 14(1), 36-66.
- Pham, Q. N. and Shilliam, R. (Ed.). (2016). *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial orders and decolonial visions*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Phillips, A. (2016). Beyond Bandung: the 1955 Asian-African Conference and its legacies for international order. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(4), 329-341.
- Picq, M. L. (2013). Critics at the edge? Decolonizing methodologies in international relations. *International Political Science Review*, 34(4), 444-455.
- Prabandari, A. (2023). Emotions and Everyday Practices of Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Indonesia. *PhD Thesis*, University of Queensland.
- Prabandari, A., & Adiputera, Y. (2019). Alternative paths to refugee and asylum seeker protection in Malaysia and Indonesia. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 28(2), 132-154.

- Prasad, V. (2008). *The darker nations: A People's history of the third world*. New York: The New Press.
- Prashad, V. (2014). *The poorer nations: A possible history of the global south*. Verso Books.
- Quah, S. J. (2025). An anatomy of world-making: Sukarno and anticolonialism from post-Bandung Indonesia. *American Journal of Political Science*, First View.
- Quinton-Brown, P. (2024). *Intervention Before Interventionism: A Global Genealogy*. Oxford University Press.
- Sabaratnam, M. (2020). Is IR theory white? Racialised subject-positioning in three canonical texts. *Millennium*, 49(1), 3-31.
- Samour, N. (2017). Palestine at Bandung: The Longwinded Start of a Reimagined International Law. in Eslava, L., Fakhri, M., & Nesiah, V. (Eds.). (2017). *Bandung, global history, and international law: critical pasts and pending futures*. Cambridge University Press, p. 595-615.
- Sayegh, F. A. (1965). *Zionist colonialism in Palestine* (Vol. 1). Beirut: Research Center, Palestine Liberation Organization.
- Sen, S. (2023). Decolonising to reimagine international relations: an introduction. *Review of International Studies*, 49(3), 339-345.
- Seth, S. (Ed.). (2013). *Postcolonial theory and international relations: A critical introduction*. Routledge.
- Shilliam, R. and Pham, Q.N. (Ed.). (2016). *Meanings of Bandung: Postcolonial orders and decolonial visions*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Spanu, M. (2020). The hierarchical society: the politics of self-determination and the constitution of new states after 1919. *European Journal of International Relations*, 26(2), 372-396.
- The Final Communique of the 1955 Asia Africa Conference.
- Tripathi*, S. (2021). International relations and the 'Global South': from epistemic hierarchies to dialogic encounters. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(9), 2039-2054.
- Triyanti, A., Indrawan, M., Nurhidayah, L., & Marfai, M. A. (2023). *Environmental Governance in Indonesia* (p. 513). Springer Nature.
- Umar, A. R. M. (2019). Rethinking the legacies of Bandung Conference: Global decolonization and the making of modern international order. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 11(3), 461-478.
- Umar, A. R. M., & Wicaksono, T. (Eds.). (2020). *Small States, Strong Societies: Essays on Covid-19 Responses in Southeast Asia*. ASEAN Studies Center.
- Umar, A. R. M., & Nuraini Santoso, Y. (2023). AUKUS and Southeast Asia's ontological security dilemma. *International Journal*, 78(3), 435-453.
- Umar, A. R. M. (2024). 'Which part of your work is IR?' on western dominance and the discipline of International Relations in Indonesia. *Alternatives*, 49(3), 180-189.
- Utama, W. S. (2017). *Konferensi Asia-Afrika 1955: Asal Usul Intelektual dan Warisannya bagi Gerakan Global Antiimperialisme*. Marjin Kiri.
- Utama, W. S. (2025). *Vision for the Future: An Intellectual History of the 1955 Bandung Conference*. New Delhi: Leftword Books.
- Viramontes, E. (2022). Questioning the quest for pluralism: How decolonial is non-Western IR?. *Alternatives*, 47(1), 45-63.
- Vogel, B., et. al. (2024). Upholding Hierarchies of Knowledge Production: Mundane Obstacles to Global International Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*, Firstview.

- Waheed, A. W., & Malik, M. (2024). Eurocentrism and the constraints in alternative knowledge production: the case of Pakistani international relations. *International Relations*, 00471178241293014.
- Waltz, K. N. (2010). *Theory of international politics*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Wardhani, B., & Dharmaputra, R. (2024). Indonesia's ambivalence in the Russia-Ukraine war: Balancing equal sovereignty norms with a familial approach. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 45(4), 627-642.
- Weber, H., & Winanti, P. (2016). The 'Bandung spirit' and solidarist internationalism. *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 70(4), 391-406.
- Wijaya, T., & Jayasuriya, K. (2024). A new multipolar order: combined development, state forms and new business classes. *International Affairs*, 100(5), 2133-2152.
- Winanti, P. S., & Hanif, H. (2020). When global norms meet local politics: Localising transparency in extractive industries governance. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 30(5), 263-275.
- Winanti, P.S. et. al. (2021). *Ekonomi Politik Transisi Energi di Indonesia: Peran Gas dalam Transisi Energi Baru dan Terbarukan*. Yogyakarta: FISIPOL UGM.
- Wu, W. Three Concepts of Internationalism in the Global South: Solidarism, Pluralism, and Developmentalism. *Global South Review*, 5(2), 65-87.
- Yan, X. (2018). Chinese Values vs. Liberalism: What Ideology Will Shape the International Normative Order?. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 11(1), 1-22.
- Yuana, S. L. (2024). Contestation, Conflict, and Crisis in Transition: The Embedding of Ridesharing in Indonesia. *PhD Thesis*, Utrecht University.
- Yuana, S.L., Madasari, O., and Hadiyanto, T. (2025). *STAIR and the Futures of International Relations from Indonesia*. Yogyakarta: Institute of International Studies.
- Yuliantoro, N. R. (2021). *Menuju kekuatan utama dunia: sekilas politik luar negeri cina*. Yogyakarta: UGM Press.
- Yuliantoro, N. R., & Dinarto, D. (2019). Between revisionist and status quo: the case of China's leadership in the AIIB. *Jurnal Hubungan Internasional*, 7(2), 169-177.
- Zachariades, A., & Basu-Mellish, J. (2023). From Empires to Nation States? Enduring Legacies and Historical Disjunctures. *Millennium*, 52(1), 3-8.
- Zhou En-Lai. (1955). Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference. *Achieved by Wilson Centre*. Accessible here: <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/main-speech-premier-zhou-en-lai-head-delegation-peoples-republic-china-distributed-plenary>