

Global History Seminar

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‘The Colombo Plan towards the Indo-Pacific: exploratory diplomacy of the long 1950s’

Abstract:

This paper considers the case of a multilateral enabler of new diplomatic and development exchanges, the Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia, which formed in 1950-51 and boasted 23 members from inside and outside the region by the start of the next decade. I argue that the Colombo Plan and its mission of economic development helped to shape new inter- and trans-national relationships across the region in the particularly formative period of the 1950s and early 1960s. I look particularly at the work of development entrepreneurs, the aid projects, the diplomatic encounters behind them and the publicity and promotional efforts that presented them to the wider world. Here we see some of the roots of the modern concept of the ‘Indo-Pacific’