



BANDUNG SPIRIT BOOK SERIES

# **The Rise of Asia 60 Years After Belgrade**



# The Rise of Asia 60 Years After Belgrade

What Non-Alignment in a Multipolar World and for a  
Global Future?

Assessments and Perspectives of NAM 60 Years On

Editor

**Darwis Khudori**

In collaboration with

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Canada), **Isabel Cabana** (Chile/Japan)



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# The Genesis of the NAM—The Initiative of the Five: Josip Broz Tito

Jovan Čavoški

Historically speaking non-alignment was never a concept that was exclusively applied to the policies of Third World states, even though its conceptual origins and the majority of adherents can be largely associated with that part of the world. In fact, socialist Yugoslavia had a formative influence on the character of non-alignment from the early 1950s and it played a very influential role in its gradual institutionalization into a fully-fledged movement throughout the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Unlike many Asian or African non-aligned countries, Yugoslavia's non-alignment, however, was not the logical result of any anti-colonial struggle but a direct outcome of inter-bloc policy dynamics of the Cold War, when Belgrade, a former Soviet bloc member, decided to adopt an independent, realist, active, and flexible approach to world affairs. This implied that Yugoslavia decided to hold high the founding principles of the United Nations (UN) as a guarantee of independence for small nations and a shield against interference of great powers into their internal affairs. Active cooperation with all international actors, based on these widely accepted principles of independence and mutual respect irrespective of the size of the country, firm rejection of bloc divisions, as well as continuous struggle for the world of free and equal nations became the highlight of Yugoslavia's foreign policy engagement during those decades.<sup>2</sup>

Essentially, the strength of Yugoslavia's appeal among non-aligned countries stemmed from the fact that it was a small country that often



acted as a role model for other developing countries in the field of modernization and economic development, especially with respect to the issue of how one could actively receive aid from both blocs, while simultaneously extending its own aid to other non-aligned countries thus somewhat minimizing their involvement with these same blocs. This kind of approach largely contributed to the considerable influence Yugoslavia's President Josip Broz Tito enjoyed among other non-aligned leaders, while his country, as a European state, was highly regarded throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America as a genuine adherent and proponent of non-alignment. According to Tito, the essence of non-alignment was marked by the continuous struggle against the conditions that bred war (bloc politics, spheres of influence, arms race) through lasting concentration of all peace-loving forces in order to better secure international peace and stability.<sup>3</sup> In short, Yugoslavia sought a reduction of Cold War rivalries and the broadening of the political base of non-alignment by encompassing a growing number of newly independent countries and other proponents of non-bloc association, thus enhancing wider international solidarity of different independent factors against the general setting of the Cold War. This was the basis for Tito's universal approach to non-alignment, one which went far beyond any regional, racial, historical or socio-political constraints.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, Yugoslavia was one of the first non-Asian countries that adopted the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence, previously proclaimed as basis of mutual relations by the leaders of India, China, and Burma, not only as means to boost its prestige as a country pursuing an independent foreign policy but also to further recalibrate its position in world affairs. Therefore, Tito started promoting his own brand of peaceful co-existence officially dubbed as "*active peaceful co-existence*" which demonstrated respect for one country's internal development, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, but it also dealt with the various causes of tensions in the world. According to him, this kind of active cooperation between all countries, both bloc ones and non-bloc ones, should be primarily based on the principles of mutual equality and mutual understanding, non-interference, since these were crucial preconditions for achieving success in such interactions. The immediate outcome of all these joint efforts, as viewed by Tito, should be gradual elimination of all international divisions which bred political, economic, social and other causes of war. Essentially, this concept was the basic negation of the divisive Cold War politics, observing peaceful co-existence much wider

than just the two blocs, two socio-political systems or individual states, while concurrently observing the two blocs as the principal obstacle to the worldwide promotion of peace and cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

The 1955 Asian-African conference in Bandung had ushered in an era of Third World summitry. This was the first time when the leaders of formerly colonized nations demonstrated their outright ability to seriously deliberate international problems and offer concrete solutions for them, especially inside the UN fora. These states increased their demands for total decolonization and racial equality, while actively promoting economic and cultural cooperation among them, thus politically galvanizing the entire post-colonial world. However, factors as a poorly defined geographical framework of this conference and regional isolationism, equal representation of both aligned and non-aligned countries, lack of any overarching principles that could bridge the gap among these essentially different participants, as well as divisive political ideas about the Asian-African majority and “white” minority in world politics, somewhat limited the world-wide impact of this meeting. In fact, regional exclusiveness of the Bandung model signaled to the Yugoslav leadership that the non-aligned world should be brought together over much more concrete issues and principles than just geographical representation or shared colonial traumas. Struggle for peace and stability, against all tensions and many conflicts, promotion of cooperation and development, were laudable efforts which demanded putting together a much broader international coalition going beyond just a number of countries in Asia and Africa. As seen by Tito and his comrades, the general concept of non-alignment largely surpassed the narrow geographical divisions of these two continents and it held high some very universal ideas and principles, irrespective of many local and regional constraints.<sup>6</sup>

However, being exposed to constant pressure exercised by both blocs, while in the late 1950s and early 1960s the Cold War was getting into another phase of “hot” confrontation, Tito did nurture the idea of finally organizing a conference of all truly non-aligned nations from all continents that could then deal with the pressing issues of nuclear disarmament, East-West relations, lessening of international tensions, and economic development. On the other hand, Tito never nurtured the idea of setting up another bloc of neutralist countries, since this would not only face strong opposition from the Indian and Egyptian leaders, Nehru and Nasser, but it would also be contrary to the basic principles

of non-alignment.<sup>7</sup> This kind of tense international situation triggered different demands for organizing a concerted action of leading non-aligned countries, while the forthcoming 15<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly (GA) session in September 1960 seemed to be the right place for all these nations to publicly state their claims and make their demands heard in all major world capitals. The sheer fact that Cyprus and 16 West and Central African nations had gained their independence that same year seemed like an auspicious sign that the number of non-bloc nations had been on the rise, thus putting additional weight behind such political initiatives.<sup>8</sup>

Since the Soviet leader Khrushchev was actively lobbying for his “troika” proposal for the UN reform, he also wanted to solicit support from the leaders like Nehru, Nasser, and Sukarno, but he was not glad that Tito would be also present in New York, particularly in the light of a new round of the Soviet-Yugoslav ideological conflict.<sup>9</sup> For the same reasons, the Chinese side was also unhappy that Tito would be there since, in their mind, he could exert harmful influence of different Asian and African countries that trusted him and they would go along with his plans for organizing a non-aligned conference, one that would exclude China as an aligned Asian nation.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, while facing such a mounting challenge launched by the blocs, both Tito and Nasser decided to closely coordinate their activities at this UNGA session, particularly when it came to the debate on the issues of ending colonialism, especially in Congo, and setting up a working mechanism for global disarmament talks. The two leaders had also reached a consensus that the Soviet UN reform proposal should be rejected without any substantial consideration. Basically, Yugoslavia stood firmly behind any initiatives launched by a number of non-aligned nations in order to assist in setting off a new round of constructive dialogue between the superpowers which would eventually diffuse world tensions.<sup>11</sup>

Since Nehru was still having his reservations about any joint non-aligned actions in the UN, Tito, strongly backed by Nasser, made a decision to act in a coordinated fashion with also Sukarno and Nkrumah as the driving force behind this new initiative of, in Tito’s words, “putting down this conflagration” between Washington and Moscow.<sup>12</sup> All preliminary documents were largely drafted by the Yugoslav and Egyptian diplomats, often being shadowed by their Indonesian and Ghanaian counterparts. Still, gravity of the international situation ultimately compelled leaders of all five non-aligned countries, India

included, to close in their ranks and act in a concerted manner when formulating and submitting this joint appeal as a new resolution calling for a new round of the superpower dialogue. This decision was made during the meeting of the five leaders on September 29 inside the premises of the Yugoslav UN mission.<sup>13</sup> During Tito's earlier meeting with the U.S. President Eisenhower, it seemed that the Americans would endorse any non-aligned mediation, since, in the words of the U.S. leader, "*non-bloc countries could exercise a positive role in today's situation*".<sup>14</sup>

However, as a means of avoiding any international criticism of being uncooperative but still not aspiring to give in to any non-aligned demands, the U.S. and British diplomats decided to render this joint initiative of five leading non-aligned countries largely ineffective by submitting a number of amendments to its text with an aim of watering down its contents, blunting its edge, thus compelling these five leaders to eventually withdraw the proposed text of their resolution. Despite the fact that such a document still received majority of votes in the GA (41 votes for, 37 against, and 17 abstentions), that was still not enough to proceed, since both blocs were clearly reluctant to then back it up or accept any of its recommendations afterwards.<sup>15</sup> This state of affairs clearly demonstrated that there was no point insisting on such mediation which could not be henceforth implemented. Nevertheless, this was still a significant moral and political victory for these non-bloc countries, since both sides of the Cold War were still forced to listen to their grievances and seriously take into consideration their objections, if not now, then in the near future.<sup>16</sup>

Essentially, this entire endeavor at the UN clearly demonstrated that major non-aligned nations were quite capable of assuming a role of responsible global mediators in the matters of peace and security, thus inciting some of them to start seriously contemplating that international conditions for convening a new conference of non-aligned nations were already ripe enough. In one of his statements made in New York, Tito said: "*I remain convinced that at this General Assembly non-aligned forces are becoming more numerous, unified, and aware of the dangers threatening mankind... They have become a factor great powers must take into account*".<sup>17</sup> This undeniably indicated that the destiny of the mankind should not be just left in the hands of few great powers but it should become a joint responsibility of all countries in the world. In fact, Tito personally experienced in New York that there was still enough political potential and good will among so many different non-aligned countries

to forge an extensive political front with respect to some of the crucial international issues, thus making their voice heard, while also stating their claims in front of the world public opinion.

These latest developments also served as an inspiration for Tito to set off on a prolonged journey to West and North Africa in early 1961, when he managed to win support from a number of African and Arab leaders for convening a non-aligned summit in September, right on the eve of the 16<sup>th</sup> UNGA session that autumn, where all these representatives could freely discuss any substantial international issues like the preservation of peace, ending colonialism, disarmament, nuclear test ban, new international role for the UN, etc. Afterwards, as envisaged by Tito, this joint stance could be then presented to both superpowers as a unified resolution, a clear voice of one third of humanity, not just of five non-aligned countries as had been the case in 1960. This was considered as a last-stand attempt by the “*consciousness of mankind*”, as he dubbed the non-aligned, to break the dangerous deadlock which had engulfed the international organization, thus bringing back sinister memories of the pre-Second World War events.<sup>18</sup> The overwhelming presence of these nations at the summit and inside the UN afterwards, almost half of all UN membership, could have ultimately provided Tito and his allies with a serious political leverage in this respect. Therefore, events in New York in September 1960 served as a serious stimulus for Tito, Nasser, and others to make a final push and have a formal non-aligned summit in Belgrade a year later, thus officially starting the history of the NAM. As one author wisely said, “*Tito’s ideas fell on receptive ears; he struck the right note with the right audience at the right moment in time*”.<sup>19</sup>

## Notes

1. Roy Allison, *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 4.
2. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 281.
3. Dragan Bogetić, “Tito i nesvrstani: iskušenja na putu stvaranja asocijacije vanblokovskih država” in *Tito – viđenja i tumačenja* (Beograd: INIS, Arhiv Jugoslavije, 2011), 406-407
4. Jovan Čavoški, “Between Great Powers and Third World Neutralists: Yugoslavia and the Belgrade Conference of the Nonaligned Movement 1961” in Nataša Mišković, Harald Fischer-Tine, Nada Boškowska (eds.),

- The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade* (London: Routledge, 2014), 187-188.
5. Leo Mates, *Koegzistencija* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1974), 12-21.
  6. Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 43-45.
  7. Diplomatic Archives of the Serbian Foreign Ministry (DAMSPS), Political Archive (PA), year 1960, folder (f) 140, document 424227, Telegram from the embassy in India, September 15 1960.
  8. Anirudha Das Gupta, A.S. Shahid, "Ghana's Non-Alignment under Kwame Nkrumah" in K.P. Mishra, *Non-Alignment: Frontiers and Dynamics* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1982), 401.
  9. Ilya Gaiduk, "New York, 1960: Die Sowjetunion und die dekolonialisierte Welt auf der Funfzehnten Sitzung der UN-Vollversammlung" in Andreas Hilger (ed.), *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt: UdSSR, Staatssozialismus und Antikolonialismus im Kalten Krieg* (München: R. Oldenburg Verlag, 2009), 107-115.
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  11. Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), 837, Cabinet of the President of the Republic (KPR), Note on Tito-Nasser talks, September 25 1960
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  13. Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956-1961* (Beograd: ISI, 2006), 345-347.
  14. AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/12, Note on Tito-Eisenhower talks, September 23 1960.
  15. DAMSPS, PA, 1960, f-140, 426134, Telegram from the UN mission, October 6 1960.
  16. AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/12, Tito's report on his trip to the UN, October 13 1960.
  17. Josip Broz Tito, *Govori i članci*, Vol. 16 (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1962), 70.
  18. Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 49-56.
  19. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned World*, 117.

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