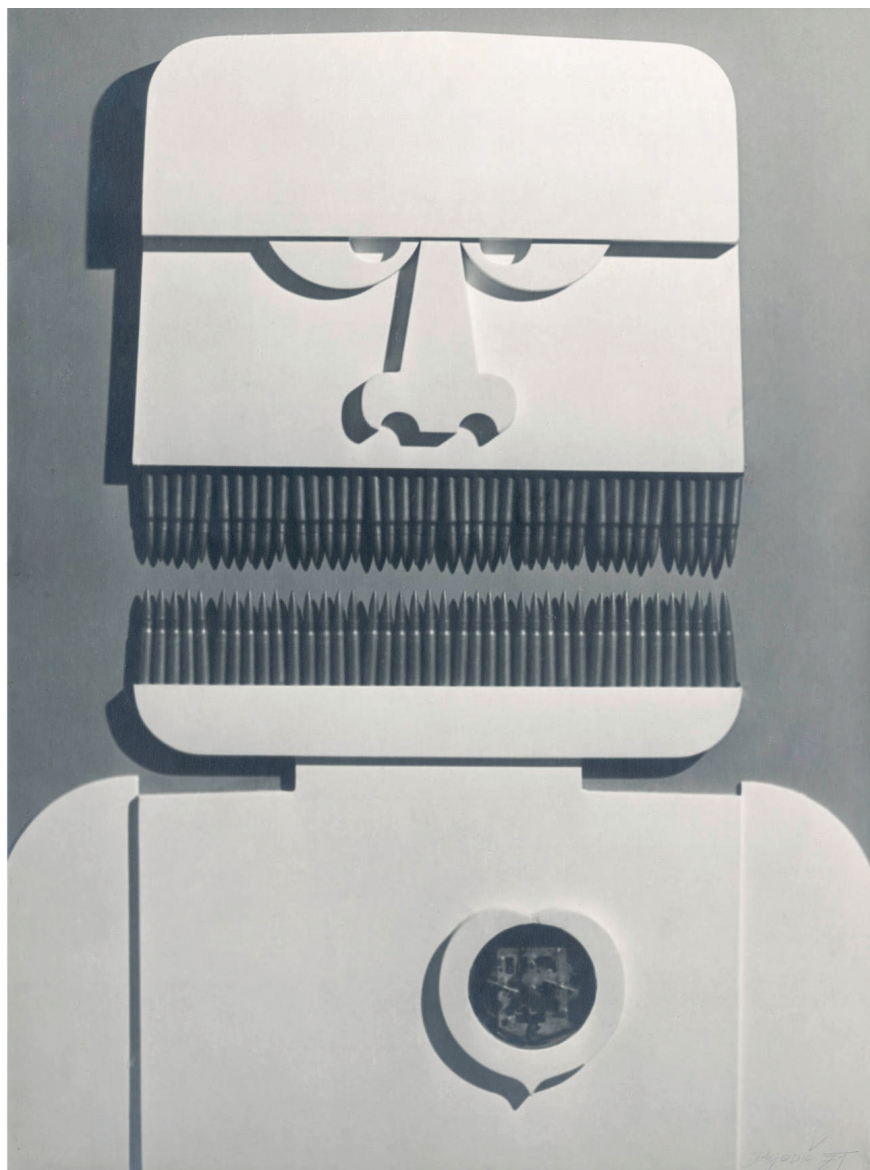


Peace Policies and Practices in Yugoslavia and Beyond



PEACE, UNCONDITIONAL!

Edited by
Sanja Petrović Todosijević and Martin Pogačar

PEACE

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UNCONDITIONAL!



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Belgrade, Ljubljana
2025

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Stane Jagodič, *Peace Talks*, photomontage, 1985

Jovan Čavoški*

Yugoslavia, Formation of the Asian-African Group and Issues of Peace in the United Nations, 1950–1953**

Abstract This chapter deals with Yugoslavia's performance in the United Nations during the early 1950s, when issues of peace and opposition to aggression were at their height in international deliberations. During that time, as Yugoslavia was also facing potential aggression from the Soviet bloc, a number of Asian and African newly liberated nations had started to share similar ideas and aspirations with Yugoslavia: finding means of preserving independence and forestalling foreign interference and interventionism. The United Nations had become the main stage for organizing a new wide coalition against the dictate of the great powers and their immediate threat to world peace and stability.

Keywords Yugoslavia, Asian-African group, United Nations, peace, non-alignment

Introduction

The sudden Soviet-Yugoslav split in June 1948 was truly a watershed moment both for Yugoslavia and the international communist movement. Not only was one nation expelled from the socialist camp and had started charting its own internal and external path of development, but it had also demonstrated that small nations were no longer ready to unquestionably follow orders from the great powers heading big military-political blocs. In parallel to Yugoslavia's defection from the Soviet Union, a wave of decolonization

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was sweeping over Asia, the Middle East and Africa, bringing to the international stage a growing number of newly liberated nations, which also professed their intention not to again fall prey to the great powers, especially their former colonial masters. Each and every one of these nations, irrespective of their continent, shared increasingly similar aspirations, ideas and strivings – above all, remaining independent and developing more prosperous societies, a titanic feat for any nation, in particular a small one. Yugoslavia gradually discovered that, even if it were politically isolated in Europe, the world was a much more suitable stage for seeking new allies and arguing for a universal agenda that guaranteed freedom, sovereignty and territorial integrity to all small countries.

Since the new Cold War system, especially in its initial years, was quite volatile and disruptive, with security crises emerging one after the other, the issue of upholding peace and stability had become a crucial agenda for the majority of world nations, small ones especially, since they were the easiest victims of new great power conflicts. The Korean War (1950–1953) was an evident example. Therefore, the United Nations (UN), a newly established international organization, became the main arena where small and non-bloc nations could make their voice heard and their complaints widely known, while the rules of the UN guaranteed that no one could silence their voice and they could discuss any issue openly and on an equal footing with any of the great powers and blocs. The force of the world's public opinion mattered more and more amidst the very sensitive inter-bloc balance in the world, and this could be ultimately leveraged in favour of the weakest members of the international system. This would be a well-appreciated and quite valuable lesson that Yugoslavia and the Afro-Asian nations would learn inside the UN during the early 1950s, and they would propel that idea and practice well into the Cold War period.

This chapter is largely based on archival documents from the Serbian, Indian, Myanmar, Chinese, British and US archives, as well as on the relevant international literature published during the Cold War years and after.

The UN as the new centre stage for Yugoslavia's foreign policy

Eruption of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict compelled the Yugoslav leadership headed by Josip Broz Tito to chart a new foreign policy course, one not only including Yugoslavia's gradual political, economic and military opening to the Western powers, but one clearly directed at actively operating within the institutions of the UN, a course less ideological than before and much more realistically oriented, more open to all forms of cooperation with the emerging non-bloc factors concurrently being shaped by a number of prominent newly liberated nations in Asia and Africa (India, Burma, Indonesia, Ceylon, Egypt, Ethiopia). Yugoslavia thus decided to redefine its foreign policy to highlight the basic principles of the

UN Charter, especially those parts of that key international document that spoke about the right of each and every country, irrespective of its size and strength, to preserve its own independence and sovereignty, uphold equality in international relations and seek unhindered economic and social development, while conducting negotiations with the great powers on the issues of international peace and security on an equal footing.¹

The main idea behind Yugoslavia's foreign policy realignment in the UN was largely guided by an evident desire to demonstrate to the world the high degree of political, economic and military pressures Yugoslavia was then withstanding from both blocs but especially from the Soviet bloc, which posed the most serious existential threat to Belgrade at the time. Yugoslavia's new main audience inside the UN were small and post-colonial nations which had been gradually becoming the international organization's majority, and they could also empathize with Belgrade's troubles. As Tito once said to domestic and foreign journalists: "I think it is very necessary for small nations to work together, as closely as possible, within the framework of the UN to implement the provisions of the UN Charter... Small nations can play a huge role in preventing a new world war if they fight together against attempts of aggression and for peace, if they fight together and jointly for equal relations between big and small... Small nations can contribute a lot to the preservation of peace and to bringing about the solutions that humanity wants today".²

This was the main reason behind the decision made by Tito and his associates that Yugoslavia would start positioning itself more independently in the international arena, without any immediate great power backing, thus openly presenting its conflict with the USSR and its satellites before the court of the world public opinion at the 4th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) held in September 1949. This daring diplomatic move was undertaken to present the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict to the wider world from the standpoint of a conflict between a great power and a small country, where the small state was being evidently bullied by a great power, thus bringing up a profound debate on a fundamental issue that tackled the very nature of relations between big and small or strong and weak nations in international relations, and obviously garnering numerous sympathies inside the UN, especially among the newly liberated, post-colonial nations, which themselves had been and were objects of such discriminatory and violent practices.³

On that occasion, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Edvard Kardelj, presented the aforementioned dispute in the light of the problem of "peaceful co-existence" between "countries with different social relations", a topic very close to the heart of countries in Asia and Africa. He stressed: "If we depart from the standpoint that every nation has the right to self-determination, as well as to its own way of life, then peaceful cooperation between countries with different state systems is fully plausible. And on the contrary, if

1 Leo Mates, *Međunarodni odnosi socijalističke Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Nolit, 1976), 123–125.

2 Josip Broz Tito, *Govori i članci*, vol. 6 (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 252.

3 Jadranka Jovanović, *Jugoslavija u Ujedinjenim Nacijama 1945–1953* (Beograd: ISI, 1985), 42–43.

that principle is abandoned, then the danger to peace is obvious, not only when dealing with states with different social systems, but also when dealing with relations between states with the same social system”.⁴ The reference to Yugoslavia’s ongoing conflict with the Soviet Union was more than evident. From that moment on, Yugoslavia began acting within the UN primarily based on its own interests and views, pointing out to other members, especially small countries, the danger of bloc policies of pressure and interference in the internal relations of other countries. Even though, due to the danger of Soviet military intervention, Yugoslavia had to establish close relations with the Western powers, in September 1949, Kardelj clearly emphasized at the UN that his country would no longer belong to any of the blocs, while everything else belonged to the sphere of Yugoslavia’s mere tactical foreign policy adjustments.⁵ As one could see, ideas about non-alignment were being slowly delivered in Belgrade, though they still needed to be implemented under more favourable historical circumstances.

In order to intensify its diplomatic activities within the UN and directly participate in all relevant deliberations held there, but also poised to continue actively informing the world public opinion about its ongoing conflict with the socialist camp, at the end of 1949, Yugoslavia decided to run for a seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (SC)⁶, the organization’s most relevant decision-making body. This candidacy provoked a fierce reaction from the Soviet delegation during the 4th UNGA session, which sought all diplomatic means to thwart the Yugoslav initiative, but at the end of October, with the support of a two-thirds majority, Yugoslavia, alongside India and Ecuador, was finally elected to the UNSC with a mandate lasting from 1 January 1950 to 31 December 1951.⁷ In this way, in the case of a potential Soviet bloc military intervention, Yugoslavia would have almost the entire UNSC behind it, and then the collective defence of the country could be organized based on the UN Charter, while mobilizing the world public opinion behind Belgrade, a clear victim of outright aggression, would be a much easier task than before. Likewise, due to this election, the world public could be more immediately and promptly informed by the Yugoslav representatives about any further developments in Belgrade’s current dispute with Moscow, thus keeping all relevant international factors in the loop about its most acute security issue.

During these years, Yugoslavia had proved itself a principled and constructive member of the UN, most often voting together with many Asian and African countries on the most important international issues, although certain differences in views still existed, primarily due to ideological reservations. It was within the framework of the UN that the Yugoslav non-aligned view of the world was finely calibrated, which was particularly evident during Kardelj’s address to the 5th UNGA session held in October 1950, when he openly condemned attempts of the great powers, especially the Soviet Union, to monopolize the international organization to advance their own petty interests.⁸ On that occasion, he emphasized: “The peoples of Yugoslavia cannot agree with the position that today humanity has to choose only between the hegemony of this or that great power. No, we believe that there is another way, and that is the way of a hard but necessary democratic struggle for a world of free and equal peoples, for democratic relations between peoples, against the interference of foreign powers in their internal life and for equality and all-round cooperation of peoples in all areas of life. Only under the condition of respecting these principles can we talk about the establishment of lasting peace”.⁹ This speech left a strong impression on the delegates from Asian and African countries, as it resonated well with their own line of thinking, which then only further strengthened the dialogue and exchanges between these newly found partners in the international organization.

For example, during the 5th UNGA session, the Yugoslav delegation established its first serious contact with representatives from different Asian and African nations, including some that would soon become Belgrade’s closest partners in the Third World during the 1950s, such as Burma. It was precisely these professional and personal ties with the Yugoslav representatives that particularly influenced the Burmese delegates to rely “on our [Yugoslav] evaluations and opinions”, acting on Yugoslavia’s advice to apply for membership in the UN Trusteeship Council against Thailand, which was a bloc-oriented country. Despite Yugoslavia’s, India’s and Indonesia’s strong support, Burma eventually lost this seat by a handful of votes. Nevertheless, its representatives had established very close relations with a group of non-bloc countries where Yugoslavia was also becoming increasingly influential. Burmese representatives then insisted that Yugoslavia should dispatch an official representative to Rangoon as soon as possible to help with rebuilding the country and jointly create an international “third force” outside the blocs.¹⁰

In addition, as for the admission of the newly established People’s Republic of China (PRC) to the UN, Yugoslavia clearly demonstrated its principled position on all basic issues of the UN Charter, even though Beijing had never responded to Yugoslavia’s official

⁴ Ibid., 44.

⁵ Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 21.

⁶ When the UN was established in 1945, the Security Council, this organization’s core decision-making body for issues of peace and security, the accession of new member states and implementing any changes into the UN Charter, had five permanent members with veto powers, all of which were the victorious powers of the Second World War (US, USSR, UK, France and China). In addition, there were six non-permanent members selected among other UN members on a rotation basis for a period of two years (after 1965 and until today, there are 10 non-permanent members of the UN Security Council).

⁷ Jovanović, *Jugoslavija u Ujedinjenim nacijama*, 86–88.

⁸ Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, 33.

⁹ Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), 507, Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (CK SKJ), III/54, Edvard Kardelj’s report from the 5th UNGA session, 1950.

¹⁰ Diplomatic Archives of the Serbian Foreign Ministry (DAMSPS), Political Archive (PA), year 1950, folder (f) 105, document bb, Note on the Burmese delegation during the 5th UNGA session, 18 December 1950.

diplomatic recognition of 5 October 1949.¹¹ Shortly after the founding of the People's Republic on 1 October 1949, Yugoslav diplomats in the UN received precise instructions from the Foreign Ministry to prepare for an intense debate regarding the admission of Beijing to the international organization in the place of Formosa (Taiwan, Republic of China). They were also instructed to initiate such a debate if necessary and if other countries remained reserved or reticent.¹² On the other hand, Kardelj personally stated during the 5th UNGA session that the PRC was the only legal and legitimate representative of the Chinese people, while Taiwan was an integral part of China; however, the issue between Beijing and Taipei had to be managed peacefully, thus reiterating Yugoslavia's principled position that all internal or external conflicts needed to be resolved in a peaceful manner. Every time this issue was raised in the UN, except once during the Korean War, Yugoslavia had consistently voted for the admission of the PRC to the international organization.¹³ During the 5th UNGA session, India, together with Yugoslavia, strongly backed the proposal regarding the admission of the PRC to the UN, but due to a misstep in coordination between India and Yugoslavia in November, the Yugoslav vote to invite a PRC representative to the debate on the Korean War was overlooked. However, the very next day, this error was corrected.¹⁴ Likewise, since June 1950, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had also been trying to persuade Egyptian officials to support the PRC's admission to the UN, which he argued would ensure the stable future of this organization and further underpin world peace.¹⁵

Yugoslavia, Afro-Asian countries and the Korean War in the UN

Nevertheless, it was the Korean War (1950–1953),¹⁶ like no other major international event at that time, that introduced major changes in both the way the Yugoslav policy within the UN was conducted and the policies of different non-bloc Asian and African countries

operating within the international organization, eventually enabling them all to capitalize on their growing relevance within international fora to elevate their standing in the world while presenting their own views and positions regarding pressing world issues. It was this conflict that enabled the sudden growth of political awareness and national solidarity between the newly liberated nations and Yugoslavia as all of them were then in imminent danger of a direct military confrontation between the superpowers. Major non-aligned countries, like India, were becoming acceptable mediators in the heated relations between the two blocs in Korea. Their opinions were often heeded, if not always accepted, their mediating services were frequently sought, and they were counted on to seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict.¹⁷ During these years, the so-called Asian-African political group within the UN (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines), an informal precursor to the future Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), was established on Indonesian initiative, primarily in connection with the issue of arranging armistice in Korea, while this group also closely cooperated with Yugoslavia, thus providing all these nations with a much needed political capital to exert more influence and pressure on the policies of both blocs. The issue of war and peace became the driving force behind the unity of Asian and African states and Yugoslavia, thus making the UN the most important political arena for the non-aligned countries.¹⁸

Yugoslavia, India and Egypt's status as non-permanent members of the UNSC allowed them to establish close relations through intensive consultations and immediate coordination within the framework of the international organization. Although the Yugoslav proposal, made on the day the war erupted (25 June), that the belligerents, North and South Korea, immediately retreat to the 38th parallel and cease hostilities was rejected outright by the Western permanent UNSC members, Yugoslavia, India and Egypt abstained from the subsequent vote in favour of a new resolution that would strongly condemn North Korean aggression against South Korea, clearly signalling to the great powers that the three countries, as non-permanent UNSC members, would actively participate in any debate related to all major issues and would speak, act and vote only based on their own interests and in the interest of overall peace and stability. A few days later, as the Yugoslav delegation had voted against the proposal to assist South Korea and dispatch UN peace-keeping forces headed by the US (India and Egypt abstained from this vote), the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) Politburo decided that Yugoslavia should assume a neutral position with respect to the Korean War and that its diplomats should resolutely act in the future in that spirit and under such instructions.¹⁹

11 More on the Yugoslav-PRC diplomatic recognition controversy in Jovan Čavoški, "Počeci diplomatskih odnosa Jugoslavije i Kine i uspostavljanje jugoslovensko-kineskih diplomatskih odnosa 1954–1955," in Čedomir Popov, Dragoljub Živojinović, Slobodan Marković (eds.), *Dva veka srpske diplomatije* (Beograd: Balkanološki institut SANU, Institut za evropske studije, 2013), 285–301.

12 DAMSPS, PA, 1949, f-99, 47276, Telegram from the Yugoslav UN mission, 25 March 1950.

13 DAMSPS, PA, 1957, f-106, 27717, China's representation in the UN, 1957.

14 Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu: Odnosi sa velikim silama 1949–1955* (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), 179–180, 185–186.

15 *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series* (SWJN), vol. 14, Part 2 (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1993), 364–365.

16 At the end of the Second World War in Asia, due to the US and Soviet joint occupation of the Korean Peninsula along the 38th parallel, two distinct regimes would be gradually established in the north and south until 1948, with the one in the northern part, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, emulating the Soviet political and socio-economic system, and the one in the south, Republic of Korea, becoming a close ally of the US. Both sides strove to represent a unified Korea, with each preparing for an ultimate showdown over the issue, thereby heightening tensions on the peninsula. In the end, in June 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel and launched an invasion of South Korea. In this effort, they were opposed by the US and their allies acting under the mandate of the UN, while in October that year, the People's Republic of China dispatched hundreds of thousands of "volunteers" to forestall North Korea's collapse under the US onslaught. The conflict raged on until July 1953 without much success achieved by either side, eventually ending in a stalemate along almost the same line from which it had started in 1950.

17 Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 100–105.

18 G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Nonalignment* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 102–113.

19 Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu*, 162–165.

The Egyptian side, learning about Yugoslavia's new stance, refused or abstained from voting on the aforementioned resolutions, considering them nothing more but an expression of an inter-bloc conflict, particularly since the UN had previously not reacted in a similar fashion in cases much closer to Egyptian key interests (the Arab-Israeli conflict). As for India, it later backed only one of the resolutions sponsored by the Western countries, seeing this as a way to oppose any attempts of aggression becoming a lawful and acceptable way of resolving bilateral disputes.²⁰ At any cost, India tried to prevent the spillover effect of the Korean conflict into other parts of Asia, thereby not only preserving general peace but, above all, buying time until it was internally stabilized and able to act more decisively on the international stage.²¹ In addition, as for the resolution of the Korean War, India was closely coordinating its efforts with Burma, while Nehru was constantly in touch with the Burmese Prime Minister U Nu, with Rangoon often voting in accordance with Indian advice, against Western-sponsored resolutions, trying to remain neutral as to avoid the Korean War scenario in Burma, where the Chinese nationalists and communists were already engaged in a clandestine border war.²²

Therefore, as early as the beginning of July 1950, Nehru discussed the Korean problem with the recently appointed Yugoslav ambassador, Josip Đerđa. Both concluded that the UN should react impartially and avoid falling under US control, and the USSR, which had been boycotting UNSC proceedings since February, should return to this body as a signal that the two blocs were engaged in meaningful negotiations for resolving this perilous issue, while the People's Republic of China should be urgently accepted into this body to prevent its direct military involvement in the Korean War.²³ Soon enough, Yugoslav ambassador to the UN, Aleš Bebler, Indian ambassador Benegal Rau and Egyptian ambassador Mahmoud Fawzi established close personal and professional cooperation within the UNSC and the UNGA on all major international issues, thus creating an active and effective consultation mechanism, which further contributed to the political rapprochement of these three countries.²⁴

Thus, in August 1950, India proposed to create a committee of non-permanent UNSC members that would deal with crisis issues at times when this body was blocked due to great power intransigence and sharp antagonism between the permanent UNSC members. Most of the non-permanent members agreed to this proposal, Yugoslavia included, and Belgrade expected to have an active role in this future body. However, to avoid irritating the Soviet delegation, which had recently returned to the UNSC, the Indian representative

tried to bypass Yugoslavia in this effort, proposing that Burma should participate in this committee instead of Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the USSR eventually refused to endorse India's proposal, especially due to Yugoslavia's potential involvement, plus Moscow still saw the newly liberated Asian nations as mere imperialist stooges. In addition, the US was both silent and reserved regarding this initiative, while Britain believed that such a body should be established by the UNGA and not the UNSC.²⁵ Such adamant Soviet resistance to the Indian peace initiatives had a decisive effect on Nehru and his associates to pay more heed to Yugoslavia's positions and statements, as well as to study more extensively and closely the details of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict to get better acquainted with ways to handle Moscow more adequately in the future.²⁶

However, when Beijing decided to intervene militarily in Korea in mid-October 1950, the Chinese intervention became the most important issue in regulating this conflict, with India often serving as a diplomatic channel between Beijing and the West to prevent a UN military intervention north of the 38th parallel, an event bound to lead to a direct military clash between China and the US. In addition, India also worked to find a diplomatic compromise between the warring parties to end the war as soon as possible and under terms acceptable to both sides. Unfortunately, many of these diplomatic initiatives failed along the way.²⁷ Yugoslavia also strongly objected to a UN advance beyond the 38th parallel into North Korea, arguing that a return to a territorial and administrative status quo, as well as the gradual retreat of all foreign troops, could be used as a precondition for opening a new round of negotiations on the final resolution of the Korean question under UN sponsorship, where both Korean governments would be encouraged to resolve their issues peacefully through the mediating efforts of non-bloc members of the international organization.²⁸

In order to avoid a further escalation of the conflict, the Indian ambassador Rau had started setting up an informal group within the UN focused on peace mediation. This group, originally called the Arab-Asian group, gradually evolved into an Asian-African group by the end of 1953, and Yugoslavia continuously maintained the closest possible ties with all of its members.²⁹ The group's first diplomatic task was to mediate the eventual declaration of an armistice in December 1950. Although this diplomatic initiative did not bear fruit due to Chinese and US intransigence, it nevertheless succeeded in delaying the initiation of a sharp political debate that would make future Sino-US contacts completely impossible, thus gradually influencing the White House to soften its position

20 Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Nonalignment*, 103.

21 DAMSPS, PA, 1951, f-33, 42331, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in India, 28 January 1951.

22 SWJN, vol. 14, Part 2, 315–316; The National Archives (TNA), Foreign Office (FO) 371/83119, Report from the British embassy in Burma, 1 November 1950.

23 SWJN, vol. 14, Part 2, 317.

24 Dragan Bogetić, *Koreni jugoslovenskog opredeljenja za nesvrstanost* (Beograd: ISI, 1990), 217–218.

25 DAMSPS, PA, 1950, f-106, 417276, Telegram from the Yugoslav UN mission, 26 August 1950.

26 DAMSPS, PA, 1951, f-33, 42666, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in India, 17 December 1950.

27 SWJN, vol. 15, Part 1 (1993), 397–399.

28 Aleksandar Životić, "Insistiranje na principima? Jugoslavija i počeci rata u Koreji (1950–1951)," *Annales: Seria Historia et Sociologia* 24, no. 4 (2014): 597.

29 Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Benegal Rau collection, Correspondence files, Rau's letter to Nehru, December 24 1950; D. N. Sharma, *Afro-Asian Group in the UN* (Allahabad: Chitaniya Publishing House, 1969), 9–14.

to an extent.³⁰ Interestingly, already at the end of July 1950, Chinese Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhou Enlai emphasized the importance of countries such as India, Indonesia and the Arab countries within the UN framework and issued a directive to build better relations with all these countries, irrespective of ideological differences.³¹ It is also important to note that during these and similar deliberations within the framework of the UN, Krishna Menon, Nehru's chief foreign policy aide and negotiator, pioneered the word "non-alignment" in public to define India's policy towards the Korean War.³²

Evidently, the Chinese desire to continue fighting until certain military objectives were achieved, as well as quiet Soviet pressure on Beijing to continue resisting the US in Korea, eventually influenced the continuation of war operations. Beijing also set certain political preconditions before agreeing to a peace settlement, demanding the return of Taiwan and the restoration of its permanent status in the UN, especially in the UNSC, and only then, as the Chinese leadership saw it, peace would be finally achieved and Chinese fundamental interests would be satisfied. None of this was acceptable to the Truman administration, so the Korean War lasted until July 1953.³³ The Yugoslav leadership believed that the Chinese military intervention had compounded the already tense situation on the Korean Peninsula, harshly criticizing Beijing's official refusal to accept UN peace mediation as an unreasonable move that could have escalated into an all-out world war. Nevertheless, although it did not vote together with other socialist countries in the UN on many other issues, Yugoslavia still could not publicly support the US condemnation of China's policy as aggressive and as being the root cause of the war's escalation, since that could only further aggravate the already explosive situation.³⁴ When in January 1951, the US tried to officially characterize China as an aggressor in the Korean War, Yugoslavia abstained from voting on this resolution, as did Egypt, while the only Asian countries that voted against this characterization of the PRC were India and Burma, which were China's neighbours and countries also seeking a *modus vivendi* with Beijing.³⁵

Such a decision endorsed by Yugoslav diplomacy, although imbued with strong criticism of Chinese policies, as they had also contributed to the war's prolongation, primarily relied upon a clear position that all efforts had to be undertaken to preserve world peace and restore stability and predictability to world affairs, and such labelling of China as an aggressor would only further contribute to the final collapse of all peace initiatives and trigger a further escalation of the Korean War.³⁶ When the proposal for an

economic embargo against China was finally put to a vote in June 1951, to avoid causing any further resentment in the US while the negotiations on economic and military assistance to Yugoslavia were being held, and since Belgrade did not have any official political or economic relations with the PRC, Yugoslav representatives in the UN voted in favour of such a resolution for the first and last time, while all other Asian and African countries voted against, abstained or refrained from voting at all.³⁷ Even though not all activities of the informal non-aligned group always bore fruit, the number of members of this group gradually grew, and their opinions had to be taken into consideration by the great powers during all current and future multilateral activities.³⁸

However, already during the Korean War, old ideological prejudices that the Yugoslav communists had previously harboured against the national leaders of the newly liberated countries as being mere imperialist stooges rather than authentic national leaders, as this had been a Stalinist line they had been toeing during the first post-war years, occasionally resurfaced. While Yugoslavia and India had achieved close and constructive cooperation within the UN framework during those years, officials, such as Foreign Minister Kardelj, still viewed Indian policy as duplicitous and opportunistic, aimed at achieving a rotten compromise between the great powers at the expense of small states, Yugoslavia facing potential Soviet aggression included. Returning from the 5th UNGA session, Kardelj pointed out this striking feature of Indian foreign policy: "We have often stood together with India, but starting from completely different positions. India is constantly pushing for an agreement between the great powers; it is, in fact, a kind of Munich. Hence, we did not go together on important issues. Hence, India's policy will be harmful to us in the long run. And the Arab countries stood out more independently [than India]."³⁹

On the other hand, Yugoslav diplomats on the ground, such as Ambassador Đerđa, had a diametrically opposite assessment of Indian policy during the Korean War and gave it a more constructive and realistic dimension: "Despite certain external similarity of the current Indian policy with that of Chamberlain in Munich, such a policy here is closest to reality today and, with certain corrections in its form, it could be applied to the US and the UN as being the most suitable one from the point of view of achieving potential results".⁴⁰ The allusion to Kardelj's comment about Munich was more than obvious, but this episode also indicated that there was a significant gap between what was still thought in Belgrade at the time and what was really happening in Asia. It was the diplomats on the ground who contributed to considerably reducing that confidence gap, eventually fully neutralizing it. This tendency was already evident in Tito's statement to an Indian socialist newspaper in

30 William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 140–142, 152–156; Sharma, *Afro-Asian Group in the UN*, 18–20.

31 Zhou Enlai *nianpu*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1997), 57.

32 *Times of India*, 30 September 1968.

33 Shen Zhihua, *Leng zhan zai Yazhou: Chaoxian zhanzheng yu Zhongguo chubing Chaoxian* (Jiuzhou: Jiuzhou chubanshe, 2012), 234–254.

34 *Titov dnevnik* (Beograd: Novosti, 2009), 86–87; Životić, "Insistiranje na principima," 598–599.

35 Jovanović, *Jugoslavija u Ujedinjenim nacijama*, 132–134.

36 AJ, 836, Chancellery of the Marshal of Yugoslavia (KMJ), I-4-b/11, Edvard Kardelj's instruction to Aleš Bebler, 19 January 1951.

37 DAMSPS, PA, 1954, f-100, 18084, Our position in the UN regarding issues related to the PRC, 1954.

38 David Kimche, *The Afro-Asian Movement: Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973), 37–38.

39 Bekić, *Jugoslavija u Hladnom ratu*, 194–195.

40 DAMSPS, PA, 1951, f-33, 42331, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in India, 28 January 1951.

November 1951, when he was asked about the cooperation between the two countries in the UN: “Practice in the United Nations has demonstrated so far that India’s viewpoint very often coincides with the viewpoint of our delegation. The only important thing is that both sides understand the situation each country finds itself in”.⁴¹

Nevertheless, diplomatic activities of the Asian-African group and Yugoslavia in the UN continued during the 1951–1953 period when several more peace initiatives were launched to establish a truce and stimulate exchanges of prisoners-of-war, an issue that would complicate relations between China and the West until the very end of this conflict.⁴² Since the Indian ambassador Rau suddenly left his post due to health reasons, the leadership of this group was taken over by Krishna Menon, who often created misunderstandings and frictions between the Asian and African delegations, Yugoslavia included, since he often had trouble controlling his arrogance in front of other diplomats.⁴³ The next Indian initiative regarding the exchange of prisoners-of-war, presented in November 1952, was again met with stiff resistance from the Chinese side and was soon abandoned, since Beijing could not agree with some of the Chinese prisoners not wanting to return home but asking to go to Taiwan.⁴⁴ At the same time, in June 1952, a Yugoslav proposal was floated, presented by the new ambassador, Jože Vilfan, to Nehru, that a peace conference on the Korean War should be convened, with India best placed to host such an event, which would be attended by all non-bloc members of the UN, who would significantly contribute to finding a favourable solution for ending this conflict. This idea was also presented to U Nu, but the two Asian prime ministers outright rejected the proposal, because it would mean giving up the neutralist stand that they were both pursuing towards both blocs. Along the way, Nehru emphasized to his Burmese counterpart: “You must know that Yugoslavia is closely connected with the Western bloc, although its internal policies are different.”⁴⁵ This clearly indicated that close political, economic and military ties with the West were becoming a hindrance to Yugoslavia’s policy towards non-aligned countries in Asia and Africa, and Tito was becoming well aware of that.

However, after Stalin’s sudden death in March 1953, Chinese and Soviet officials finally accepted armistice talks with the US and UN troops, understanding that the Korean War stalemate could no longer be overturned by force. Therefore, Beijing soon agreed to the Indian proposal for a prisoner-of-war exchange, which took place despite some Chinese prisoners avoiding returning home. Nehru interpreted this evolution in Chinese views as a clear signal of significant changes in Chinese policies, but he also saw this move as a concrete diplomatic success for the Asian-African group and their Yugoslav

ally in finally realizing the long-term diplomatic efforts in achieving peace in Korea, even if it would officially be only a truce that precariously remains in place to this day.⁴⁶ More importantly, at that time, Yugoslav observers believed that the causes of the Korean War could be found in the “abnormal situation in Asia where peoples and nations very often feel inferior to ‘whites’”, so the process of normalizing relations throughout Asia should also serve as part of the final resolution of the entire Korean problem. “The peoples of Asia must be enabled to be on an equal footing with all the other peoples of the world”, Yugoslav officials concluded in discussions of the tense situation on the continent with their Western counterparts.⁴⁷ This was a well-articulated position, one that fully encapsulated the essence of current problems in Asia left by Western and Japanese colonialism, resonating well with the diplomatic representatives of Asian nations in the UN and widely welcomed by them and their governments.

Yugoslavia, Afro-Asian countries and UN complaints against aggression

Apart from the aforementioned dimension of the Korean War as a key peace topic in the UN, an issue that turned many non-bloc countries seeking each other’s assistance and cooperation, there was yet another dimension, not as prominent but still significant, which also contributed to the concrete rapprochement of Yugoslavia and different Asian and African non-aligned nations during those years. These were, for example, complaints that both Yugoslavia and Burma lodged to the UNGA against the Eastern and Western blocs that threatened their sovereignty and territorial integrity, thus introducing foreign interference as one of the crucial bonds that influenced the rapid rapprochement between the small non-bloc countries. It was these general and fundamental issues that eventually propelled Yugoslavia’s cooperation with Afro-Asian nations within the UN, since such major issues could override any potential bilateral disagreements between these nations. In fact, any bilateral disputes could have otherwise railroaded many joint initiatives, a tendency that would haunt the NAM for decades.⁴⁸

In November 1951, at the 6th UNGA session, Yugoslavia lodged a complaint against the USSR and Eastern European countries for their policy of overt pressure, economic blockade, subversive activities, threats of aggression, persecution of the Yugoslav minority in the surrounding countries, etc. Regardless of the severity of these accusations, the Yugoslav delegation submitted a more moderate text, made in the spirit of the UN Charter, which many countries, especially small and non-bloc ones, could then support

⁴¹ Tito, *Govori i članci*, vol. 6, 281.

⁴² Stueck, *The Korean War*, 278–280; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 273–274.

⁴³ Rajeshwar Dayal, *A Life of Our Times* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998), 199–201.

⁴⁴ SWJN, vol. 20 (1997), 407–464.

⁴⁵ SWJN, vol. 18 (1996), 541.

⁴⁶ SWJN, vol. 22 (1998), 424–430.

⁴⁷ Stueck, *The Korean War*, 345–346.

⁴⁸ DAMSPS, PA, 1954, f-12, 46451, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in Burma, 13 May 1954.

as they could easily identify with such an agenda.⁴⁹ This move received support from the majority of UN members, so, for the first time, a major power and its allies experienced open international condemnation inside the UNGA for bullying and threatening a small nation.⁵⁰ The Yugoslav policy thus garnered numerous international sympathies, and a concrete contribution was made to ensure that the Soviet-Yugoslav dispute was no longer a source of direct danger to European peace and stability, so any threats of potential military intervention in the Balkans were finally dropped from the public discourse.

As for the Burmese complaint to the UN submitted in March–April 1953⁵¹, the Burmese government wanted to publicly condemn the three-year aggression of renegade Chinese Nationalist (Guomintang, GMD) units on its territory, an action enjoying tacit political and material support from both Formosa and the US.⁵² Burma filed a direct complaint against Formosa with the UN Political Committee, seeking to have the authorities in Taipei declared the aggressor. Burma demanded that these illegal military units be finally disarmed and then subjected to repatriation, while Formosan representatives, for their part, refused any connection with Nationalist units in Burma.⁵³ Already at the end of April, Mexico submitted a compromise resolution, which was adopted by an absolute majority of votes in the Political Committee (only Burma and Formosa abstained from voting), while on the next day, this resolution was adopted in the UNGA again, but this time Burma also voted for it. Although the adopted text was somewhat milder than the one previously submitted by Burma, it still openly condemned the presence of foreign troops on its territory and publicly called for their disarmament, while other countries were warned not to provide any further assistance and support to these outlaws.⁵⁴ Be that as it may, since Formosa was not publicly and unequivocally condemned, with only general formulations about an aggressor endorsed, the Burmese leadership became quite disillusioned with the authority of the UN. On the other hand, due to Rangoon's close political and military ties to Israel, many Arab countries were reluctant to back Burma's bid and put more weight behind this complaint.⁵⁵

49 Vladimir Dedijer, *Izgubljena bitka J. V. Staljina* (Rijeka: Liburnija, 1982), 351–361.

50 Jovanović, *Jugoslavija u Ujedinjenim nacijama*, 89–93.

51 DAMSPS, PA, 1953, f-15, 43523, Statement of the Burmese government on the GMD aggression in Burma, 2 March 1953.

52 As the Chinese Civil War ended with a communist victory in 1949, remnants of the former Guomintang (Nationalist) regime withdrew across the border into Burmese territory, staging guerilla actions from there against the newly established People's Republic of China. These renegade units constituted a serious problem for the Burmese government, especially in the context of an ongoing civil war in that country, also creating trouble in Burma's emerging relationship with Beijing, which was also the goal of officials in Taiwan and the US backing these guerillas. A number of offensives were launched against the Chinese Nationalist units but without much success, until new offensives staged in 1954 and 1955, backed up by Yugoslavia's arms shipments, had managed to secure tangible success on the ground for the Burmese military. See more in Jovan Čavoški, "Arming Nonalignment: Yugoslavia's Relations with Burma and the Cold War in Asia, 1950–1955," *Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 61* (April 2010).

53 William C. Johnstone, *Burma's Foreign Policy: A Study in Neutralism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 225–228.

54 *Kuomintang Aggression against Burma* (Rangoon: Ministry of Information, 1953), 23–100.

55 National Archives of Myanmar (NAM), 15/3(6), File 156, Arab reactions to Burma's cooperation with Israel, 20 October 1953.

Nevertheless, on this occasion, the Yugoslav delegation worked closely with its Burmese colleagues and actively assisted them in their efforts, so the Burmese government was sincerely grateful for such strong and unwavering support, highlighting the personal commitment of the Yugoslav ambassador, Leo Mates.⁵⁶ The Burmese press increasingly wrote about Yugoslavia's active support for the Burmese complaint in the UN and the deep friendship between the two countries.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the US embassy in Belgrade followed the Yugoslav-Burmese rapprochement with concern, as well as their cooperation in the international organization, especially since the Yugoslav public opinion was becoming increasingly favourably disposed towards Burma and very critically disposed towards the US.⁵⁸ Apart from Yugoslavia, Burma also enjoyed strong support from India, where Nehru personally backed the Burmese initiative, considering it the only acceptable move within the framework of the existing situation.⁵⁹ However, there were also some in the Indian government, such as Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Pillai, who conveyed to a US diplomat that the Burmese had filed a complaint to the UN, "not knowing how much influence India had".⁶⁰ This was also one of the reasons why the Burmese began to look for partners and alternatives outside their regional context, with Yugoslavia becoming their favourite choice in 1952–1953.

Rise of the Asian-African group in the UN and its wider role

As we have seen, the Korean War managed to connect and organize non-aligned factors within the UN, bringing closer nations with similar aspirations from three different continents – Asia, Africa and Europe. This was the time when, in propagating a neutralist or a non-aligned foreign policy, countries of South and Southeast Asia took the lead in this effort, and gradually, while creating a spirit of wider Afro-Asian solidarity, the group began to spread to Arab countries and Yugoslavia, even though official Belgrade could never formally be a member of such a strictly regional framework. This was how the Asian-Arab and later the Asian-African group within the UN was established as a collective response of small countries to the pressures exerted on them by the great powers during the voting procedures for various resolutions.⁶¹ As Nehru saw it, the time had come for the countries of Asia and Africa to voice their opinions publicly

56 DAMSPS, PA, 1953, f-99, 47372, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in Burma, 20 May 1953.

57 *Burma Weekly Bulletin*, 29 April 1953.

58 National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, Central Decimal Files (CDF), 690B.9321/4-353, Yugoslav press comments on Chiang Kai Shek's forces in Burma, 3 April 1953.

59 SWJN, vol. 21 (1997), 529–541.

60 NARA, RG 59, CDF, 690B.9321/3-2953, Telegram from the US embassy in India, 29 March 1953.

61 Dayal, *A Life of Our Times*, 204–205.

and stop taking it for granted that Western Europe and North America had to play the leading roles in the world.⁶²

However, intense cooperation between Yugoslavia and different Afro-Asian nations went beyond the Korean War issue and dealt with many existential problems for these countries. It was the recognition of the social and economic needs of underdeveloped countries as a “responsibility of the entire world” that had a decisive effect on fostering greater cohesion among all these nations and building up their collective consciousness. The Asian-African group in the UN, backed by Yugoslavia, became a significant factor in the decision-making process, without any of the participants ever being connected by any ideological bonds, military pacts or any similar links. What, however, united all these diverse countries, scattered on two continents (plus Yugoslavia), was the absence of commitment “to either side in the East-West conflict” and the effort “to take an independent attitude on the important issues of the day”. Although this grouping was not always effective in voting on issues affecting the relations between the two blocs, since some Asian or African countries nurtured close relations with either of them, it nevertheless demonstrated a fairly high level of organization in dealing with some other important issues that touched upon the overall position of all post-colonial and developing countries. In fact, this group had become “the best and only instrument for mobilizing an independent body of thinking on the basic issues in front of the UN”.⁶³

It was precisely the problem of ending colonialism that largely contributed to the convergence of positions of the Asian and African delegations in the UN, so that the highest degree of agreement was found around the issues of seeking independence for Palestine after the establishment of the State of Israel based on previous UN resolutions, pushing for the rapid decolonization of Tunisia and Morocco, the condemnation of the Apartheid policies in South Africa, etc.⁶⁴ Already at the end of 1952, some Arab countries, during a meeting in Cairo, seriously considered the proposal for convening an Afro-Asian conference to deal with the colonial question. However, although India was one of the countries most interested in “building a machine of Asian-African cooperation”, Nehru was reserved on the matter, suggesting that cooperation within the framework of the UN should only be strengthened.⁶⁵ With respect to such views, Nehru enjoyed the support of K.M. Panikkar, Indian ambassador to Beijing and later Cairo, who believed that the only cohesive factor of Asian and African countries was “resistance to Western pressure” and the harsh colonial experience, and there were few other bonds that essentially united them, while the specific relationship between the Islamic world and India, due to its conflict with Pakistan, already made this group’s functioning very difficult. Therefore, the creation of

a permanent Afro-Asian organization or convening a large international conference of that type, according to Panikkar, was premature and unnecessary for now.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Nehru was convinced that the close diplomatic coordination of the Asian-Arab group, above all on the issue of Korea and Tunisia, could strengthen its positions for advancing future joint actions.⁶⁷

However, Arab countries, above all Egypt and Syria, actively advocated the idea of strengthening Afro-Asian solidarity, organizing permanent mechanisms of cooperation and convening a large international conference that would, first of all, deal with the issues of foreign domination and bloc penetration into Asia and the Middle East.⁶⁸ The Arabs were also backed by Indonesia, which, at the end of 1952, proposed the creation of a neutralist economic bloc that would include independent Muslim countries, India, Burma, Ethiopia, Thailand, etc.⁶⁹ It was becoming increasingly obvious that the fear of the Cold War’s spreading and organization of certain regionalist responses to bloc policies, as well as the consistent struggle against colonialism within that larger framework, had heavily influenced the establishment of closer ties between all these countries. This also served as fertile soil for Yugoslavia to spread its ideas and shape policies of this larger grouping that shared Belgrade’s fundamental interests.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, different attitudes gradually gained the upper hand in India as well. Thus, the Indian ambassador to the UN, Rajeshwar Dayal, the latter ambassador to Yugoslavia, after intensive consultations with his colleagues from other Afro-Asian countries, as well as reflecting his experiences dealing with all of them during mediating efforts related to the Korean War, proposed to his government that cooperation with all these nations should also go beyond the framework of the UN, and time was ripe to convene a large Asian-African conference as a signal to the wider world that post-colonial nations had become a significant international political factor. He pointed out that positive moments in India’s cooperation with Afro-Asian nations far outnumbered the negative ones, as Panikkar had also previously pointed out.⁷¹ Since this was still a very diverse group of nations, with European countries like Yugoslavia also drifting towards it, it was necessary to work intensively with all these nations and advocate a common agenda, at least a minimal one.

Analyzing Dayal’s proposal, officials at the Indian MEA concluded that there were two basic ties that nevertheless held together this diverse group within the larger

62 Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters to Chief Ministers*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 492.

63 National Archives of India (NAI), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), 1871(24)-AWT/53, The Asian-African group, 23 May 1954.

64 Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 274–275.

65 NAI, MEA, 1871(24)-AWT/53, Nehru’s letter to R.K. Nehru, 11 April 1954.

66 NAI, MEA, 1871(24)-AWT/53, Panikkar’s letter to Nehru, 21 April 1953.

67 DAMSPS, PA, 1952, f-92, 49073, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in India, 9 July 1952.

68 NAI, MEA, 1871(24)-AWT/53, Dayal’s letter to R.K. Nehru, 2 April 1953.

69 Kimche, *The Afro-Asian Movement*, 42–43.

70 DAMSPS, PA, 1953, f-97, 43447, Telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in India, 15 July 1953.

71 NAI, MEA, 1871(24)-AWT/53, Dayal’s letter to R.K. Nehru, 11 June 1953.

international framework, namely, their consistent struggle against colonialism and a non-aligned foreign policy course that implied strong opposition to bloc divisions, even though that some Asian and African countries were becoming bloc allies. It was therefore decided to cautiously support the idea of convening an Asian-African conference, but a certain deviation was made when it was pointed out that a permanent organization should not be created and this should only be an ad hoc event.⁷² Nehru still believed that the larger this group was, the less cooperation there would be between its members and the less effective it would be, so he suggested to the Indonesian Foreign Minister that strict criteria for participation had to be established beforehand based on the stance of certain countries towards the Cold War, that is, distinguishing between those countries that pursued an “independent policy of avoiding war” and those that belonged to certain pacts, alliances or similar groups edging towards the two blocs.⁷³

Since there were still some lingering reservations among Indian officials, it was decided to encourage Egypt to undertake such an initiative to be the convening party of such a conference in order to bridge all existing differences, which was logical due to the growing personal and professional ties between Nehru and the new Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, already in August 1953, Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo officially presented the idea of convening a big Asian-African conference, and in April 1954, that issue was also put up for consideration during the upcoming conference of five Asian prime ministers in Colombo.⁷⁵ At the same time, in March, Indonesia, through its diplomatic representatives, simultaneously sought to establish a wider “Asia-Africa group” headed by Indonesia, India and Egypt, which was seen as an effort launched by official Jakarta to create its own neutralist response to Western bloc initiatives.⁷⁶ This was the final impetus for leading Asian non-aligned countries to pave the way towards the famous Bandung Conference held in April 1955, an event that would shape the political consciousness of Afro-Asia and act as a precursor to the NAM, in spite of many inherent differences between the two, while also creating a favourable atmosphere for Tito’s forthcoming visits to India and Burma in 1954–1955, a trip that would bring Yugoslavia to the forefront of all non-aligned global initiatives, making it Afro-Asia’s principal European ally.⁷⁷

Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, during these early years, Yugoslavia had already discovered the paramount importance of the UN for the position of small states within the Cold War international system, especially through operating the means of mobilizing the world public opinion in the event of pressures exercised against these nations by the great powers, thus eventually reining in the perilous and harmful ambitions of the big and bringing more stability and predictability into their behaviour. Likewise, during this initial period, the UN had proved to be Yugoslavia’s bridge to non-bloc countries of Asia and Africa, a place where they could all get to know each other better and learn from each other, with both sides discovering the identical character of their stances, aspirations and views, but also the similarity of the dangers they had been facing and the challenges that awaited them, especially in terms of enhancing their security and boosting their economic development under the tense conditions of the Cold War. Therefore, the UN finally became an important forum where Yugoslavia and other non-bloc Asian and African countries could, on an equal footing with the great powers, conduct a dialogue about the basic principles of the existing world order, struggling for world peace and stability that they desperately needed for preserving their existence and guaranteeing their unhindered future evolution. It was the issues of peace and security that dominated their agenda then and afterwards, thus becoming a crucial part of the non-aligned discourse for decades to come. This was the key multilateral framework within which concrete bilateral ties with Afro-Asian countries had yet to be further developed, but without which a global impact of a growing coalition of non-bloc nations would have been quite improbable. In addition, Yugoslav diplomats posted to these countries were simultaneously breaking ground to firmly position their country within the non-aligned world, thus creating a new impact group that would increasingly act as the third force in the bipolar Cold War world order.

72 NAI, MEA, 1871(24)-AWT/53, Arab-Asian unity, 17 July 1953.

73 SWJN, vol. 24 (1999), 553–554.

74 NAI, MEA, 1871(24)-AWT/53, Kidwai’s letter to Panikkar, 18 March 1954.

75 PRC Foreign Ministry Archives (ZWD), 207-00085-19(1), On the issue of Afro-Asian conference, 4 September 1954.

76 ZWD, 207-00085-17(1), On the issue of Afro-Asian conference, 15 December 1954.

77 Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 40–45.

Summary

This chapter deals with the evolving relationship between Yugoslavia and a growing number of newly liberated Asian and African countries within the United Nations (UN) during the early 1950s. While nations in Asia and Africa were undergoing rapid decolonization, with Yugoslavia expelled from the Soviet bloc, both sides eventually discovered that great power and bloc policies were inherently contrary to the fundamental national interests all these countries professed. Both Yugoslavia and these nations were seeking to remain independent, well outside great power control, while protecting their sovereignty, achieving equality, and boosting their socio-economic development, thus creating a firm common ground for stimulating rapprochement between nations that historically had no or very little contact. It was the UN as the key international organization that provided a fresh platform for non-bloc nations from three different continents to get to know each other better, ultimately reaching an increasing understanding that their role in preserving world peace and stability, especially under the tense conditions of a volatile bipolar balance of power, as the Korean War had demonstrated, was becoming more concrete and prominent, and that many issues could not be essentially resolved inside the UN without their direct involvement and participation. In this way, the UN became a bridge over which Yugoslavia established close, intensive and meaningful ties with a number of leading non-aligned nations from Afro-Asia, thus complementing the extraordinary work of its diplomats on the ground labouring for the same cause – Belgrade's immediate involvement with the non-aligned world in the future.

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