

# **BANDUNG-BELGRADE-HAVANA IN GLOBAL HISTORY AND PERSPECTIVE**

The Deployment of Bandung Constellation  
towards a Global Future



BANDUNG SPIRIT  
BOOK SERIES

# **BANDUNG-BELGRADE-HAVANA IN GLOBAL HISTORY AND PERSPECTIVE**

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**Darwis Khudori** (Ed.)

In collaboration with

**Diah Ariani Arimbi** and **Isaac Bazié**



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### **The Deployment of Bandung Constellation towards a Global Future**

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The logo of Bandung Spirit was designed for the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bandung Asian-African Conference 1955 organised by civil society movements in Indonesia on April 2005. It takes a form of a flower as a symbol of love and peace. The number of petals (50) refers to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, while the five colours symbolise five continents and their cultural diversity. The composition of the petals is such that it gives impression of a collective movement following the movement of the hands of clock, symbolising dynamism, interdependence and solidarity following the time.

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## **AUTHORS' PROFILES**

# The 1961 Belgrade Conference 60 Years On

Jovan Čavoški

We are witnessing today a rapid resumption of an acute phase of great power rivalries, an evident emergence of a new cold war with actors of a similar kind, with new hot wars breaking out as part of this new cycle of great power interventionism, while new bloc-like structures, both political, economic and military ones gradually taking shape around the world, pitting different regions, systems and nations against each other, with one side trying to preserve its own hegemony at any cost and the other one challenging it without any scrutiny. This adverse situation, in many ways, resembles the one from the early stages of the original Cold War that was marked by deteriorating relations between the two superpowers, the US and the USSR, each heading its respective bloc, with a string of perilous crisis situations breaking up all over the world, from Europe to Asia, Africa and Latin America, each signaling a potential escalation that could have ended in a nuclear standoff that could have destroyed mankind as we know it. It was these tense inter-bloc relations, plus different historical factors creating new fault lines between them, that eventually led to the rise of a “third force” in international relations, a non-bloc and independent one, that sought strength in numbers on all continents, without any vertically imposed hierarchy or discipline, but

with a principal stand that the world belonged to everyone, not just the great powers, and everyone had an equal stake in running it or making it more safe for unhindered progress.

It is the 1961 Belgrade Conference, the first conference of non-aligned nations from four continents that until today, together with the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, still holds almost mythical relevance for the political rise of the Third World and the non-aligned option in international affairs in general.<sup>1</sup> However, the Belgrade Conference, as it is sometimes wrongfully perceived in some literature, was not the birthplace of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), since that international organization was only established at the Lusaka Conference in 1970 (and this rings even more true for the Bandung Conference), however, the seminal event in the Yugoslav/Serbian capital was indeed the point of origin for the organized non-aligned initiative, a historically defining moment for the non-bloc, post-colonial and developing worlds, one that globally announced the political emergence of the unofficial non-aligned group. It was the Belgrade Conference that ultimately shaped, in spite of its limited immediate effect, with no planned follow-up, the dominant non-aligned agenda that perseveres until today among the developing nations of the world, one that strictly insisted on an independent foreign policy, not subordinated to any great power interests, one that dedicated equal attention to both security (peace, stability) and developmental issues (socio-economic modernization), thus insisting on such an “universalist” agenda that effectively cut

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the recent works dealing with different aspects of the 1961 Belgrade Conference: Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije 1956-1961* (Beograd: ISI, 2006); Dragan Bogetić, Ljubodrag Dimić, *Beogradska konferencija nesvrstanih zemalja 1-6. Septembar 1961. Prilog istoriji Trećeg sveta* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2012); Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); 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 Boškovska (eds.), *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade* (London: Routledge, 2014); Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organization and Politics (1927-1992)* (Leiden: Brill, 2018); Dragan Bogetić, *Nesvrstanost kroz istoriju: od ideje do pokreta* (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike, 2019); Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars: Asia, Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022) etc.

across any historical, geographical, political, social, economic, cultural and other differences existing among the peace-loving nations of the world. Therefore, by relying upon different archival sources, as well as recent literature, this chapter will try to determine the historical origins, realization, and legacy of the 1961 Belgrade Conference.

## **BELGRADE CONFERENCE AND ITS ORIGINS**

With the initiation of the wave decolonization, at first in Asia and then spreading out to Africa and beyond, during the first decade and a half after the end of the Second World War, it was the strong anti-colonial and anti-imperialist sentiments among these post-colonial nations that triggered their search for a specific position in world affairs, one that excluded any bloc affiliation, since that was often associated with the domination of former colonial masters, and precluded independent posturing that was primarily aimed at preserving one's hardly won freedom and propelling its socio-economic development as a guarantee of a protracted future.<sup>2</sup> These initial political initiatives, organized in this anti-colonial and anti-imperialist spirit, were largely aimed at creating something resembling a permanent organization of Asian and African nations, one where summitry beyond just the few great powers would figure quite prominently as a means of putting together a coherent and collective response to different international challenges, thus making out of these nations both active and responsible world factors. It was this concept of Third World summitry as a new center stage of international politics, at first tested with the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 and 1949, then becoming even more relevant with the Bandung Conference, that eventually exercised direct impact on the general format of the Belgrade Conference and what it stood for, save for the excessive insistence on anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism characteristic for these earlier gatherings, although never neglecting their potent meaning for the post-colonial world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Philip Bradley, "Decolonization, the Global South, and the Cold War, 1919-1962" in Odd Arne Westad, Melvyn Leffler (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 474-485.

<sup>3</sup> G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Nonalignment* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), 51-74, 83-101;

In parallel, nations of Asia and Africa, gradually being joined by nations from other continents, like Yugoslavia, were staging a rebellion inside the United Nations (UN), refusing to be bullied into submission by the great powers as to fit into their voting patterns, thus slowly transforming the international organization into the main stage for the non-aligned to freely present their views, state their grievances and offer their solutions within a dialogue of the equals, especially with respect to some of the critical international issues, like the Korean War, decolonization, lessening of inter-bloc tensions etc. In time, as the experience of organizing the Belgrade Conference, as well as building upon its results, would demonstrate, link between the organization of non-aligned summits and corresponding activities of these nations inside the UN would only grow stronger and more intimate in the future, with the foundations of this specific framework of interaction being set already during these early years.<sup>4</sup> However, what these beginnings also indicated, a quite diverse group of nations from four different continents, with no common association and with so many individual differences separating them, nonetheless, succeeded finding firm ground on one key principle, the strict non-bloc status they all cherished as part of their independent stand that united them all.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the Belgrade Conference, the first Asian-African Conference in Bandung, was not convened at the moment of great peril for world peace and stability, since those were the years of the first inter-bloc détente, although blocs were still expanding their membership into these two continents, with some of their members also attending this event, thus making regional adherence and shared colonial legacy, not non-bloc orientation as it would be the case with the summit in Belgrade, as the two main criteria bringing all these nations to Indonesia in April 1955.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, unlike Yugoslavia, a European country, that would lead the way in convening the first non-aligned conference in Belgrade,

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Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 267-273.

<sup>4</sup>D.N. Sharma, *Afro-Asian Group in the UN* (Allahabad: Chaitanya Publishing House, 1969), 8-22; G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Nonalignment*, 102-113.

<sup>5</sup>National Archives of India (NAI), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), 1871(24)-AWT/53, Arab-Asian unity, July 17 1953.

<sup>6</sup>*Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (Second Series)* (SWJN), Vol. 22 (New Delhi: Nehru Memorial Fund, 1999), 553-554.

this time it was the key non-aligned nations of Asia (India, Burma, Indonesia and Ceylon), merging together both the Asian and African discourse of anti-colonial sentiments, that achieved success in putting together such a diverse coalition of nations from the two continents, one that would jointly strive for forging new forms of solidarity based on the similarities of race, colonial sufferings and future ambitions, irrespective of individual bloc adherence or other outstanding differences. Such an intention, as envisaged by some attendants, would ultimately supplant Cold War divisions and bridge the growing gap between the developed and developing parts of the world, making it a more just and egalitarian place for everyone to exist in.<sup>7</sup>

Even though the Bandung Conference was organized with such high hopes and it was widely recognized as a defining moment in Third World history, though one without protracted existence, its long-term impact, nevertheless, was limited just to the famous “Ten Principles” adopted at this event that primarily related to the issues of peace, stability, equality, cooperation, co-existence, opposition to outside interference, support for universal human rights and similar, that, on the other hand, largely drew their inspiration from the non-aligned agenda openly advocated by its chief non-bloc organizers, not bloc participants. It was this effect of a general moral awakening of Afro-Asia, a post-colonial world that finally took control of its own destiny from the hands of the great powers, which eventually produced a prolonged legacy on which future non-aligned initiatives would build upon, although not much more.<sup>8</sup> In fact, bloc affiliation was never openly denounced at Bandung, naturally since half of participants were, in this way or the other, connected to blocs, while no new proposals for establishing a different world political and economic order were ever made, something that would be present at Belgrade but even more at other non-aligned summits. In addition, regional and racial exclusiveness that neglected non-bloc nations on other continents, with aligned and non-aligned countries sitting together, even though their

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<sup>7</sup> Cindy Ewing, “The Colombo Powers: Crafting Diplomacy in the Third World and Launching Afro-Asia at Bandung”, *Cold War History* 19.1 (2019), 1-19; G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Nonalignment*, 191-223.

<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement*, 78-83; Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York-London: The New Press, 2007), 40-45.

goals could never be the same, without any coherent joint strategy, beyond just the ten principles, could never become a successful recipe for the future, thus limiting the global and long-term historical impact of Bandung.<sup>9</sup> This was a lesson that was well learned by the organizers of the Belgrade Conference, understanding that Bandung would be the only historical point of convergence between non-alignment and the specific Afro-Asian view of the world and nothing more.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, Yugoslavia, as a European nation and a founding member of the non-aligned group, basically one of the pillars of global non-alignment, due to this restrictive racial, regional and historical criterion could never attend the Bandung Conference, while some bloc nations, which acted in favor of the superpower interests, were strangely present there. This clearly indicated to the Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito that a strict non-bloc and transcontinental character of non-alignment had to be presented as its main criteria when vetting participants in any future initiatives, including summoning a new summit. In the words of one author, “more than any other country, Yugoslavia helped to make of Bandung a prologue to political action rather than a footnote to futility”.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, very early on, it was conveyed to the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru that a new event, different from the one held in Indonesia, except in certain nuances, had to be organized in the future along the lines of strict non-alignment and equidistance towards both blocs, encompassing only non-bloc nations of Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, seeking inspiration from peaceful co-existence, while giving primacy to debating security and socio-economic issues and not just anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism.<sup>12</sup> From Yugoslavia’s standpoint, non-alignment was perceived as a post-colonial doctrine for the political survival and economic development under tense international conditions, one also dedicated to the general betterment of the world, with future security and prosperity, and not

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<sup>9</sup> Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits*, 42-45.

<sup>10</sup> Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Subimal Dutt Collection, Subject File (SF) 86, Asian-African Cooperation – retrospect and prospect, 1955.

<sup>11</sup> Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-Aligned World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 64.

<sup>12</sup> Diplomatic archives of the Serbian Foreign Ministry (DAMSPS), Political Archives (PA), year 1955, folder 54, document 44673, Telegram to the embassy in India, April 9 1955.

historical grievances, acting as its agency and primary orientation.

With the idea of summitry standing firmly in the background, Tito understood well that a road to it had to be paved with many different individual initiatives, one of them being the formation of the active core of non-alignment, primarily consisting of Yugoslavia, India and Egypt, with Indonesia, Ghana and others soon joining in, thus creating both personal and organizational antecedents that would act as harbingers of future actions that would finally lead towards the Belgrade Conference. Even though the Tito, Nehru and Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's tripartite conference at the Brioni isles in Yugoslavia in July 1956 did not bring about any remarkable results, not even enjoying a follow-up, it did serve a significant role of a cornerstone for establishing a subtle mechanism of mutual consultations and coordination that would exercise a decisive impact on the activities that finally led to the first non-aligned summit in Belgrade.<sup>13</sup> In the following few years, Yugoslavia would primarily continue pursuing an active diplomatic course of convening a summit of non-aligned countries in the near future, although with different degree of success, primarily due to certain reservations held by some other members of the group, above all India that considered that the time was just not right. However, this did not dissuade Tito from seeking new partnerships and modalities that would facilitate his intention to organize a major event where one third of humanity would have its clear say on the critical issues that threatened the very future of the entire world.<sup>14</sup> Learning from the past mistakes of Belgrade Conference's predecessors, a new round of initiatives was bound to take place.

## **BELGRADE CONFERENCE AND ITS REALIZATION**

Since the international situation was deteriorating by the day, while possibilities for a superpower dialogue that could diffuse tensions were becoming dimmer, it had become obvious that the forces outside the blocs, possessing enough space for conducting diplomatic maneuvers,

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<sup>13</sup> SWJN, Vol. 34 (2005), 297-304.

<sup>14</sup> DAMSPS, PA, 1959, f-37, 413975, Telegram from the embassy in India, May 21 1959.

were the ones who could try bringing back a certain level of balance and reason to the negotiating table. The new wave of decolonization ended with most of Africa finally gaining freedom by early 1960s, thus endowing the non-aligned countries with overwhelming numbers inside the UN. There were already calls issued by leaders, like the Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, that the time had come to officially set up a “non-nuclear third force” that would stand as an evident alternative to the irresponsible power politics of both blocs.<sup>15</sup> Taking into account all the upsides that active non-aligned involvement in the UN offered, particularly since that was the only world stage that could not be exclusively controlled by the great powers, these nations finally decided to wield one more tool at their disposal, the power of the world public opinion to influence the delicate balance between the blocs and affect the perception and self-perception of both Washington and Moscow, a factor quite relevant in their strategic rivalry.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the 15<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly (UNGA) session in September 1960 seemed to the non-aligned leaders as an opportune moment to publicly launch such an initiative.

It was Tito and Nasser who were leading the way in organizing a coordinated response in New York, with the Indonesian President Ahmed Sukarno and Nkrumah closely shadowing them, although Nehru was still harboring his old reservations. Nevertheless, the five leaders were quite determined to unlock the superpower stalemate in the UN and diffuse international tensions by pressing on with their insistence on completing decolonization and establishing a new global mechanism for holding successful disarmament talks. Either through the so-called joint “Initiative of the Five” or through individual efforts of these leaders in their direct contacts with the US and Soviet leaders, they had managed to iron out a wider consensus that clearly demanded more responsibility and readiness from the superpowers for scaling down the conflict potential in the world.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to some private assurances, bloc representatives,

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<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> Archives of Yugoslavia (AJ), 837, Cabinet of the President of the Republic (KPR), I-2/12, Tito’s report on his trip to the UN, October 13 1960.

<sup>17</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/12, Note on Tito-Nasser talks, September 25 1960; Note on Tito-Nehru talks, September 28 1960.

particularly Western ones, startled by the possible world public opinion backlash, decided to subvert the non-aligned resolution through raising certain procedural matters, eventually forcing the hand of the five leaders to withdraw their proposal, even though it had received wide backing in the UN.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, this was still a moral victory for the non-aligned who proved their worth in world politics as both active and constructive factors, grudgingly compelling the superpowers to listen to their criticism and take into consideration some of their opinions. Such developments also demonstrated that at the moment of intense superpower confrontation any activities promoted by the non-aligned proved to be far more effective due to the heightened sensitivities displayed by both Washington and Moscow.

It was Tito who understood well all these lessons, considering that a new summit had to be closely related to the future activities in the UN. The two events, the non-aligned summit and the UNGA session, as he saw it, had to work hand-in-hand with respect to pressing world issues, like preservation of peace, disarmament, expanding the role of the UN etc., thus providing the non-aligned with an adequate diplomatic tool of exercising relentless pressure on the superpowers that could ultimately break the deadlock the world was in, with the blocs caving in on certain key points. Weight of one third of humanity, in Tito's mind, had to bring about some positive results.<sup>19</sup> In this respect, he decided to sail around West and North Africa in early 1961, soliciting support from new and old allies alike for his idea of holding a non-aligned conference that same autumn. Soon enough, Tito and Nasser, joined by Sukarno and Nkrumah, with Nehru only reluctantly backing them up, officially issued an invitation to 21 non-aligned countries to join them in initiating formal preparations for the first non-aligned summit.<sup>20</sup> Reasons for Nehru's reluctance were in his understanding that India alone, due to its huge size and overall importance, enjoying favorable relations with both superpowers, had far better chances of success in its mediating efforts than, as seen in New Delhi, being shackled by a multilateral format where so many diverse

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<sup>18</sup> DAMSPS, PA, 1960, f-140, 426134, Telegram from the UN mission, October 6 1960.

<sup>19</sup> DAMSPS, PA, 1961, f-116, 45196, Telegram from the embassy in India, March 17 1961.

<sup>20</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-2/13, Tito's report on his visit to West and North African countries, April 29 1961.

individual interests had to be reconciled beforehand.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, idea about Bandung being the better framework for political interactions of Third World nations was still being pursued by Sukarno on the sidelines, although he had to drop his activities when Tito's idea finally gained the upper hand.<sup>22</sup> Irrespective of certain individual differences, all these leaders ultimately understood that collective interests far outweighed any singular reservations.

However, unlike the preparations for the Bandung Conference where five Colombo Powers decided everything on behalf of all future participants, Tito and Nasser chose to pursue a wider and more inclusive format, one where all preliminary invitees, and some new ones too, would take active part in organizing the summit, primarily by attending the preparatory meeting convened at the level of foreign ministers in Cairo in June. The main role of this gathering was to put together the list of future participants and set down the basic agenda of the forthcoming event, one that would tackle all major world issues and correspondingly induce the widest possible consensus. Although there was some diplomatic wrestling over participation of certain nations, with some delegates insisting on the widest possible attendance, while others advocated more exclusive one, in the end 25 nations were finally invited to come to Belgrade, venue of the future summit, that early September. What is even more important, for the very first time, concrete criteria for one country being considered non-aligned and member of the group were scrupulously defined at this event, a definition that would, with only minor modifications remain actual until nowadays. These criteria were: adherence to the policy of independence based on the principles of active peaceful co-existence; active support for the national liberation struggle; not becoming a party to multilateral military-political alliances created in the context of the East-West conflict; not becoming a party to any bilateral military alliances created in the context of the East-West conflict; non-compliance with the establishment of military bases of great powers on the national territory.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> DAMSPS, PA, f-116, 416838, Telegram from the embassy in India, April 28 1961.

<sup>22</sup> Chinese Foreign Ministry Archives (CFMA), 105-01044-01, Indonesia plans for convening second Afro-Asian conference, May 11 1961.

<sup>23</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-4-a, Final report from the Cairo preparatory meeting, June 1961.

On the other hand, preparations for the Belgrade Conference would also reveal two additional trends that would often mark diplomatic activities of non-aligned countries in the future, particularly when new summits were being organized. One was the latent internal conflict between different members of the group, above all one between the “moderates” and the “radicals”, that would be quite present in the mid-1960s and late 1970s, while the other one was active foreign interference of great powers into the affairs of non-aligned countries through sabotage or coopting of different participants. As for the first trend, it was already evident during the preparatory meeting when India and some “radical” African and Latin American countries clashed over the anti-imperialist credentials of some potential attendees, with Indian representatives insisting on more loose criteria and wider attendance that proved to be unacceptable to the other side.<sup>24</sup> This internal clash openly demonstrated that New Delhi was losing some of its old appeal among certain non-aligned nations that were becoming more revolutionary prone, while this created additional trouble for the Yugoslavs over the uncertainty of Nehru’s personal attendance of the summit. In this case, Tito would do his utmost to get his Indian counterpart to eventually come to Belgrade and directly support his efforts.<sup>25</sup>

However, as for the second trend, the US, USSR and China were quite active behind-the-scenes to project their influence on the future event or even try to sabotage it altogether. The Soviets already displayed dismay with Tito’s expanding influence in the Third World, considering that Yugoslavia was trying to lure Asian and African countries away from the Soviet bloc. Even though Moscow was more satisfied with the summit agenda than Washington, it still chose to gain influence over summit proceedings through certain participants (Ghana, Cuba), while, right on the eve of the conference, the Soviets decided to re-start nuclear tests, thus casting a long shadow over Tito’s international debut and his nuclear disarmament agenda.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the US were even

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<sup>24</sup> NAI, MEA, CON/27/61-AFR I, Some aspects of the preparatory meeting of the conference of heads of states or governments of non-aligned countries, June 1961.

<sup>25</sup> DAMSPS, PA, f-117, 424796, Telegram from the embassy in India, August 12 1961.

<sup>26</sup> DAMSPS, PA, 1961, f-118, 426269, Foreign Secretariat’s circular telegram, August 28 1961.

more reserved towards the entire event, actively trying to dissuade some nations, above all Latin American ones, from participating at all, while concurrently striving to influence some attending “moderate” countries, like India, to act more apprehensively towards US interests, thus causing even more anti-Western sentiments. It would be only the erection of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet resumption of nuclear tests that would bring about some balance into summit’s handling of respective superpower interests, without any excessive tilting towards either side.<sup>27</sup> As for China, it was already disturbed with Yugoslavia’s significant presence in Afro-Asia, considering that Tito was poised at setting up a “third bloc” with himself at the helm, a move that would, as they feared, undermine Beijing’s positions in the Third World. Since preparations for the summit were already underway, the Chinese decided to rely upon certain nations, above all Indonesia, to defend their stance in Belgrade, while they would actively try to unmask Yugoslavia’s “false anti-imperialist and anti-colonial credentials”.<sup>28</sup>

These were all disturbing developments indeed, so Tito had to make clear to everyone coming to Belgrade that the overall success of the summit depended on all participants rising above the demands of everyday politics, while only focusing their attention on major international issues which had to be dealt with in a serious manner and presented to the world as a constructive proposal for managing an already escalating crisis situation. Therefore, as he personally conveyed to Sukarno, everyone had to act responsibly for this summit not to be perceived by the superpowers as “a frontal assault against the blocs”.<sup>29</sup> Since this was the very first non-aligned summit, as Tito envisaged, it had to stand for something more than just personal grievances or petty individual interests. Soon enough, the Yugoslav side officially informed all participating countries that the central goal of the Belgrade Conference should be the lessening of world tensions, achieved through a “realistic and objective, moderate

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<sup>27</sup> National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, Central Decimal Files (CDF), 1960-63, box 732, 396.1-BE/8-361, Memorandum for the President: Belgrade Conference, August 3 1961.

<sup>28</sup> CFMA, 109-02355-01, Views on Yugoslavia’s plans for a non-aligned conference, August 7 1961.

<sup>29</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a, Indonesia, Note of Tito-Sukarno talks, June 16 1961.

and constructive” approach, while a clear consensus had to be reached beforehand as to avoid this event being seen as one edging closer to either side of the Cold War, thus potentially causing an internal ideological rift. Furthermore, Yugoslavia also considered that issues of economic development and general inequality had become crucial for reinventing the role of non-aligned countries, therefore they had to be accorded a prominent place during the summit.<sup>30</sup> Everything was ready for the seminal event to finally take place.

## **BELGRADE CONFERENCE AND ITS LEGACY**

The Belgrade Conference was organized on September 1–6 1961, with heads of state or government from 25 non-aligned countries attending it as full participants, together with three observer countries from Latin America, while representatives of 40 different national-liberation movements from all over the Third World were also present on the margins of this gathering. There were less delegations being present in Belgrade than in Bandung but this time these were all authentic non-aligned countries and there were no bloc members or similar affiliates as before. In this respect, in spite of many individual differences, the non-bloc criteria of attendance and participation in the loose and unofficial non-aligned group still reined high, leaving out any geographical or historical considerations, or controversies, that could have only fomented unnecessary divisions.<sup>31</sup> Eyes of the world were directed at the Yugoslav/Serbian capital at that time, with many observers concluding that the non-aligned world was finally speaking in one voice, demonstrating unanimity previously not seen at other events, primarily thanks to Yugoslavia’s high organizing capabilities. Such views only further proved the centrality of the Yugoslav role in the affairs of the non-aligned world.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> DAMSPS, PA, 1961, f-117, 424464, Foreign Secretariat’s circular telegram, August 10 1961.

<sup>31</sup> Dragan Bogetić, *Nesvrstanost kroz istoriju*, 77-87; Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits*, 56-63.

<sup>32</sup> NARA, RG 59, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Box 2, 396.1/11-1461, The Belgrade Conference in retrospect, November 14 1961.

As contemplated by Tito as the host, this summit, a direct expression of free will of one third of humanity, a “consciousness of mankind” as he colorfully put it, was intended to demonstrate to both blocs that non-aligned countries had become an unavoidable factor of world affairs, a collective actor that could have, through its sheer numbers, affect the global balance of power, but always standing for the general interest of everyone, thus actively promoting peace, stability, equality, progress and cooperation. His general idea was to use the Belgrade Conference to set the foundations of a permanent and organized cooperation of non-aligned countries in the future, though nothing resembling the NAM yet, but with a coherent long-term strategy, with both security and developmental issues acting as the pillars of the new non-aligned global agenda. This kind of approach, as he saw it, would propel the non-aligned not only to deal with the current events in the world but also to chart out a specific and long-term political, economic, social, cultural role for themselves, one that had to be pursued within the general Cold War framework but with an aim of gradually restructuring the entire world order. What also was set down by Tito at this event was the principle of adopting all decisions through consensus, a technical formality that would remain characteristic for the NAM’s decision-making process until nowadays.<sup>33</sup>

Three sets of issues dominated the conference proceedings: anti-colonialism, world security situation and economic development, something that would more-less remain a constant for all future non-aligned summits. In addition, what would also be characteristic for the NAM in the future, was the emerging factionalism between proponents of one or the other line in non-alignment, with such divisions sometimes escalating to an extreme level, something already seen during the preparatory meeting. One group of leaders present in Belgrade, led by Sukarno, gave obvious prominence to anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, considering that remnants of colonialism and the neo-colonialist resurgence represented the greatest peril to the freedom of the post-colonial world, with the tense relationship between the developed

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<sup>33</sup> Dragan Bogetić, *Nova strategija spoljne politike Jugoslavije*, 372-373; *Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, Belgrade, September, 1-6, 1961* (Belgrade: GOY, 1964), 17-22.

and developing parts of the world becoming a new paradigm of the global equilibrium. The East-West conflict, as he considered, was being rapidly supplanted by a North-South one. On the other hand, another group, headed by Nehru, understood well all the evils of colonialism and perils of neo-colonialist control but they also admonished that excessive insistence on these issues could have triggered a revanchist drive that could have consequently set the non-aligned on a collision course with the blocs. Therefore, these leaders advocated a moderated response in this respect, one that would guarantee national liberation without bloc confrontation.<sup>34</sup>

Hence, leaders like Nehru, Nasser and many others, still considered the deteriorating situation in the world, issues of war and peace, as the main topic that had to be effectively dealt with at this event, since an inter-bloc armed conflict could have ended with humanity's disappearance, irrespective of long-term neo-colonialist challenges. A moral-political pressure, as they thought, had to be administered on behalf of the non-aligned, so that the blocs understand that the time had become ripe for finding an appropriate solution, but there were still disagreements, mainly between Nehru and some other leaders, whether the non-aligned had the strategic acumen to facilitate such a desired outcome and whether a low-key diplomacy and not public action was crucial to it. Therefore, accent was put by the majority of participants on promoting disarmament and stimulating multilateral negotiations that could put the escalating superpower conflict under control, especially if the line of peaceful co-existence and mutual accommodation was actively pursued. In this respect, the role of the UN as the center stage for such a comprehensive multilateral dialogue was stressed again but, what was also emphasized was the need to reform its bodies, so that non-aligned countries would have more tangible presence in them, as well as a more meaningful say.<sup>35</sup>

In the end, unlike at any previous gatherings, economic and developmental issues were also gaining importance within the non-aligned discourse, with underdevelopment and inequality, both triggered

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<sup>34</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-4-a, Survey of speeches of heads of delegations on the first, second, third day of the conference.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

by economic domination of developed nations, standing at the forefront of such discussions. Resolution to the unfavorable socio-economic position of the non-aligned world was sought by the attending leaders in the creation of domestic prerequisites for rapid economic emancipation, accelerated industrialization of the Third World, greater levels of economic planning, enhanced South-South cooperation by supplementing each other's potentials, pricing control of the commodities exported to the North, elimination of trade barriers between the blocs and developing nations, as well as increased economic aid from the developed countries.<sup>36</sup> In fact, these were all concrete proposals and measures that could have, if implemented appropriately, truly ended the perils of neo-colonialism and created stable and prosperous societies, without the need of launching any armed struggle. Therefore, economic ideas presented at the Belgrade Conference would become the backbone of the socio-economic agenda of the NAM during the 1970s, especially when the concept of the New International Economic Order was officially presented to the world.

In spite of his “infamous” speech on September 3, when he openly sided with the Soviets over Berlin and the resumption of nuclear tests, thus surprising many attending the summit, Tito, with respect to all these major sets of issues, also gave his concrete contribution, thus actively shaping the general consensus.<sup>37</sup> He understood well that the anti-colonial struggle needed its successful outcome, especially since Yugoslavia was one of its greatest backers in the case of Algeria, Angola and other places. However, he also comprehended that excessive pedaling of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle could give rise to extremist policies that could eventually undermine the entire non-aligned agenda. Nevertheless, it was during the Belgrade Conference that Tito decided to officially recognize the Provisional Government of Algeria, although de facto he had done that two years before, with Ghana, Afghanistan and Cambodia following in his footsteps.<sup>38</sup> In this way, Tito stood in line with both factions inside the non-aligned group, simultaneously backing anti-colonial struggle and moderating its potentially negative effects,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-4-a, Tito's speech during the general debate, September 3 1961.

<sup>38</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-4-a, Note of Tito-Nkrumah talks, August 30 1961.

even though in his basic views he was far closer to Nehru's stance than Sukarno's.

As for the international situation, Tito surprisingly demonstrated non-alignment with a pro-Soviet tilt, probably an outburst of his frustrations with overt Western attempts at sabotaging the entire event, which he naturally saw as a direct insult to him as a host. Nevertheless, he offered some rather constructive solutions for the resumption of multilateral disarmament talks where all countries, under the auspices of the UN, would engage themselves in intensive negotiations under the multi-phase mechanism where some pressing issues would be dealt with first, since the destiny of the world depended on them, while the lofty goal of total nuclear disarmament would be left for later on, so that it would not serve as an obstacle to achieving some concrete results in the nearest future. Tito also proposed to freeze military expenditures of the great powers at the level of 1960 not only as a bona fides gesture but also as a means of liberating funds for increasing economic aid to the Third World. In this light, he made a direct link between the security and economic issues within the non-aligned agenda, thus creating a new paradigm for their activities, one where political and economic emancipation, as well as enhanced multilateral cooperation, were firmly interconnected as a precondition for the total liberation of states, outside the old anti-imperialist and anti-colonial matrix. In this respect, he proposed to organize a world economic conference soon, one where divergence between developed and developing nations would be seriously tackled.<sup>39</sup>

The Belgrade Conference ended with a compromise expressed in the two main final documents: the "Declaration of the Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries" and the "Statement on the Danger of War and the Appeal for Peace". These documents insisted that peace was paramount, war was not inevitable, all nations in the world, both big and small, were responsible for peace being ultimately preserved, while eradication of colonialism, arms race, poverty, inequalities, confrontation etc. should be done without any hesitation, though not through instigation of additional armed conflicts, while a new and more peaceful, egalitarian and prosperous world should be created through

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<sup>39</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-4-a, Tito's speech during the general debate, September 3 1961.

an all-encompassing implementation of the principles of peaceful co-existence and by holding the direct dialogue between all relevant factors in the world. All these messages were personally conveyed to the leaders of the superpowers with very high hopes.<sup>40</sup> Even though the Belgrade Conference could not create a breakthrough in this respect, it did draw a lot of attention from the blocs, with both sides poised at stemming summit's immediate results. The Soviets were generally pleased with the messages sent out from Belgrade, considering that anti-colonial and anti-imperialist spirit was present enough, and they were also pleased with Tito's performance, although the Yugoslav president admonished them that these were only his own views. However, the Americans were genuinely angered with Tito's stand, openly determined to limit their economic aid to Yugoslavia and correspondingly punish him for his maverick's approach.<sup>41</sup> These adverse reactions clearly indicated that the non-aligned had already gained their relative weight in international relations, even if sometimes that weight seemed as more perceived one than real. Nevertheless, activities of both blocs, at least in the short-term, were real enough, thus affecting the overall dynamics of the Cold War.

On the other hand, if we discuss the legacy of the Belgrade Conference, then we could name the following outstanding features, all firmly related to Tito's immediate influence on the summit proceedings. Primarily, the main legacy stands with the creation of the security-economic paradigm of the non-aligned agenda, where both these dimensions were then closely interconnected and made paramount, while the non-aligned discourse in general was moved away from the old considerations. This new orientation would become a point of reinvention of the NAM's crucial role in the future. In this spirit, Tito's proposal for creating a new format of disarmament talks within the UN would also find its realization in the formation of the 18 Nations Disarmament Committee in 1962, with eight non-aligned and neutral members also taking active part in its work, thus creating a formal stage where the non-aligned could equally,

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<sup>40</sup> G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 300-302; Leo Mates, *Počelo je u Beogradu: 20 godina nesvrstanosti* (Zagreb: Globus, 1982), 47-52.

<sup>41</sup> AJ, 837, KPR, I-3-a, USSR, Note of Tito-Yepishev talks, September 20 1961; NARA, RG 59, CDF, 1960-63, box 733, 396.1-BE/9-2161, Telegram from the embassy in Yugoslavia, September 21 1961.

and without any inhibitions, discuss these sensitive security issues. In the end, based on Tito's economic proposals, already during the 16<sup>th</sup> UNGA session, preparations for the world economic conference would start, thus eventually transforming themselves into the permanent UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964, the main stage for the North-South dialogue for the following three decades, thus becoming the initial attempt to trigger the overhaul of the entire international economic system.<sup>42</sup> This would become another main characteristic of the NAM's future activities, and the Belgrade Conference stood right at its origins.

## CONCLUSION

The 1961 Belgrade Conference was indeed a seminal event in the history of the non-aligned world, a place where many of its long-term features and aspirations were clearly shaped, while foundations of its political and economic agenda that would dominate NAM's affairs for decades were also formulated there. All that hard work was done through intensive and largely constructive dialogue between two dozen non-bloc representatives coming from four different continents, with so many diverse things separating them, but their desire to establish, at first informal but later on formal, global alternative to the domination of rich and powerful states proved to be far more resilient than anything potentially standing between them, thus providing these nations with even more concrete substance in their international dealings. Furthermore, at this gathering a dynamic political consciousness of the non-aligned was also decisively molded, one that continuously inspired them to seek collective actions as ultimate remedies for eventually rectifying the injustices and inequalities of the world they lived in, thus pushing them to strive for rearranging their position within the existing international hierarchies, while sharpening their instincts for comprehending the nature and course of key global trends. Even though the NAM was not formally established at Belgrade, since that would occur almost a decade later, this summit

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<sup>42</sup> G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, 313-314; Lorenz M. Lüthi, *Cold Wars*, 296-297; Sara Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 96-103.

became, nonetheless, the starting point and a lasting inspiration for the more-less organized history of the non-aligned factor in world affairs during the Cold War years and beyond.