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No bargaining chips, no spheres of interest: the Yugoslav origins of Cold War non- alignment

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No Bargaining Chips, No Spheres of Interest

The Yugoslav Origins of Cold War
Non-Alignment

❖ Svetozar Rajak

The First Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), held in Belgrade in September 1961, launched a movement that has now existed for more than 50 years. The movement became the voice of many Third World governments and, for a time at least, posed a challenge to Cold War bipolarity.

Despite the NAM's historical uniqueness and significance, remarkably little has been written about its origins.¹ How, for example, did a quest for active peaceful coexistence and non-commitment to blocs evolve into an institutionalized movement? This article aims to give the NAM greater prominence in the historiography of the Cold War by demonstrating that the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito and Yugoslav diplomats played an important, perhaps crucial, role in the conceptualization of the idea of non-engagement and in the establishment of the NAM. An explanation of the origins of non-alignment is impossible without a comprehensive analysis of the global process of decolonization that was taking place in the 1950s and 1960s and the diverse political, historical, and cultural heritage that influenced actions of the leaders of Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and other Asian and Afri-

1. A notable exception is Alvin Z. Rubinstein's seminal book *Yugoslavia and the Non-aligned World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), which remains an invaluable contribution to the scholarship of the NAM in the Cold War. Yugoslav archival sources that were unavailable to Rubinstein confirm some of his arguments but contravene others. My analysis here goes beyond Rubinstein's and offers new insights into several key issues such as the strategic choices and dilemmas the Yugoslav leadership faced after 1948, the true beginnings of Yugoslavia's non-commitment to blocs, the significance of Tito's first trip to India and Burma for the development of the global "non-engagement" initiative, and the conceptualization of the guiding principles behind the new initiative. This in no way diminishes the importance and relevance of Rubinstein's work. On the contrary, I deem the book essential reading on the topic of non-alignment in the master's course I teach at the London School of Economics.

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can countries that sought non-engagement. These wider developments lie beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, by shedding light on the rationale, motives, and considerations that drove Tito and his aides to pursue the risky road of non-commitment to blocs, the article can contribute to an understanding of the origins of non-alignment. The intellectual and political deliberations that steered Yugoslavia toward non-commitment are representative of the considerations that made this option appealing to Third World countries.

The main aim here is to offer a reinterpretation of the origins of Yugoslavia's road to non-alignment and elucidate the roots and conceptualization of Tito's strategic reorientation. Contrary to the views of some analysts that Tito's intransigence was the *casus belli* of the Yugoslav-Soviet split in 1948, the evidence cited below indicates that Belgrade's foreign policy became truly independent only after Yugoslavia's excommunication from the Soviet fold. Furthermore, the article shows that Belgrade began searching for a "third way" earlier than is acknowledged in the relevant historiography. The search began when, faced with the distinct threat of a Soviet invasion in the early 1950s, Yugoslavia became all but formally incorporated into the Western alliance. Based on previously unknown or inadequately researched documents from the Yugoslav archives, the article also demonstrates that Tito's trip to India and Burma in December 1954, particularly his first encounter with India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, played an exceptionally significant role in the conceptualization of the principles of active peaceful coexistence and non-commitment and in transforming them into a global initiative. Lastly, the article highlights the political and philosophical rationale behind the principles that became embedded in the concept of non-engagement and, later, non-alignment.

A preliminary note of clarification is worthwhile. Although "non-alignment" was first mentioned in Tito's and Nehru's joint statement issued on 22 December 1954, the terms used at the time to depict the new foreign policy initiative were "active peaceful coexistence," "non-commitment," and "non-engagement." "Non-alignment" became universally accepted toward the end of the 1950s, especially after the Belgrade conference in 1961. As much as possible, the discussion here adheres to this etymology.

The Roots of Yugoslavia's Independent Road

Tito became leader of Yugoslavia through the struggle against Nazi occupation during World War II and in the coterminous civil war, achieving a dominant position in Belgrade by 1945. Like thousands of Communist revolution-

aries around the world, he and his closest aides firmly believed in Iosif Stalin's infallibility and tried to replicate Stalinist institutions and practices as closely as possible. At an extraordinary plenum of the Yugoslav Communist party's Central Committee in mid-1948, Tito discussed the accusatory letter he had just received from Stalin and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and said: "This letter is the result of horrid defamations. False reporting. . . . If the comrades from the Central Committee of the [USSR's All-Union Communist Party] would ask for the transcript [of this meeting], we will send it to them."² In July 1948, several weeks after being expelled from the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) on the basis of Stalin's allegations, Tito declared at the Fifth Congress of the Yugoslav Communist party: "The Communist Party of Yugoslavia has to date honorably fulfilled its historical mission and . . . will prove through its unshakeable loyalty to the science of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin that it has not strayed from the road of this science."³ Some historians, however, argue that Tito's "deviations" from Soviet foreign policy line were a major factor in the Yugoslav-Soviet rupture in 1948.⁴ The focus of this article does not allow for a more detailed analysis of such interpretations.⁵ However, evidence in the Yugoslav archives indicates that prior to Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Soviet bloc Tito was ideologically and politically committed to Stalinism and Stalin's policies. As the most doctrinaire of the East European "peoples' democracies," Yugoslavia was firmly embedded in the Soviet bloc and was considered the most loyal among the Soviet satellites. Stalin awarded the Yugoslav Communists a prominent role at the formative meeting of the Cominform in 1947. Moreover, Belgrade was chosen as the site of the new organization's headquarters.

Manifestations of Tito's autonomous actions prior to the rift in 1948 must not be mistaken for an independent foreign policy. The Yugoslav leader possessed an uncanny ability to adapt his actions to circumstances, which

2. Excerpts from the record of the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY), Belgrade, 12–13 April 1948, are quoted in Vladimir Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948: Knjiga prva* [Documents of 1948: Book One] (Belgrade: Rad, 1979), pp. 225–238.

3. *Peti kongres KPJ: Stenografske beleške* [Fifth Congress of the CPY: Transcripts] (Belgrade: Kultura, 1949).

4. See, for example, A. B. Edemskii, *Ot konflikta k normalizatsii: Sovsko-yugoslavskie otnosheniya v 1953–1956 godakh* (Moscow: Nauk, 2008).

5. The limitations of this article do not allow for a more elaborate discussion of the causes of the 1948 Tito-Stalin split. For my views on the issue, please refer to Svetozar Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War: Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953–1957* (New York: Routledge, 2011); and Svetozar Rajak, "The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945–1956: From the Greek Civil War to Soviet-Yugoslav-Normalization," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 1: *Origins* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 145–162.

served him well in overcoming the insurmountable odds he frequently faced in his life and long political career. Tito was also blessed with a peasant's survival instinct that often helped him miraculously wriggle his way out of dire situations during his interwar covert activities as a Communist International operative and head of the Yugoslav Communists and his wartime role as the leader of the anti-Nazi partisans. Reminiscing about his personal trepidations on the eve of the fateful meeting of the Yugoslav party's Central Committee on 12 April 1948, which was to decide whether to accept or rebut Stalin's accusations, Tito told his official biographer: "Life had taught me that in such critical moments, it is most dangerous to be without a position, to hesitate. In such a situation, one must always react with boldness, resolutely."⁶ These personal traits and acquired skills distinguished Tito from other Comintern-groomed "international cadres." As a trained operative working throughout Europe prior to the Second World War and particularly as the Yugoslav resistance leader during the war, Tito was often forced to make on-the-spot decisions in response to the circumstances surrounding him.

The archival evidence and accounts of Tito's companions suggest that until the 1948 confrontation with Stalin the Yugoslav leader's willingness to accommodate the general principles of "socialist construction" to the domestic circumstances and idiosyncrasies in his country was based on the conviction that such actions were in the spirit of the existing Moscow "line," in accordance with the principles of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, and necessary to expedite the realization of the goals of the international proletarian movement. Whenever Tito's actions met with Stalin's disapproval, the Yugoslav leader adhered to his "internationalist duty," fell into line, and followed directives from Moscow. Often quoted examples of Tito's intransigence prior to 1948, such as the Trieste crisis in 1945 or Tito's territorial demands over Carinthia and Trieste at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, confirm that Tito in the end always dutifully accepted Stalin's diktat.

In June 1948, having been excommunicated from the socialist fold, Tito found himself left out in "the cold." Based on his Communist outlook and the developments on his border with Italy at the time, he sensed that the West was intent on "swallowing" his regime. Faced with a gargantuan struggle for survival, Tito was forced to contemplate distancing Yugoslavia from both blocs, which he now saw as equally threatening. Stalin's banishment pushed Tito into the void between the two Cold War alliances, where he was confronted by simultaneous threats from both East and West. On 18 and

6. Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozii za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* [New Supplements to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito], Vol. 1 (Zagreb: Mladost, 1980), p. 479.

19 March 1948, the Yugoslav leader received two consecutive *démarches* from Moscow announcing the withdrawal of Soviet military and civilian advisers from Yugoslavia. As a pretext, Moscow accused the Yugoslav authorities of preventing Soviet advisers from carrying out their duties. A second letter from Stalin and Molotov, sent on 27 March, contained an even longer list of accusations, signaling a definite rift with the Yugoslavs. On 12 and 13 April, Tito convened the Yugoslav Communist party's Central Committee to gain support for his dramatic decision to refute Stalin's accusations.⁷ After emotionally charged and, at times, hostile exchanges with Sreten Žujović-Crni, the prominent revolutionary and member of the Yugoslav Politburo who was advising a conciliatory response to Stalin, Tito eventually secured the backing of his Central Committee. At one point, Tito shouted at Žujović-Crni, "Crni, you have given yourself the right to love the USSR more than I do. . . . You want to shatter [the Yugoslav party's] unity; you want to divide [the party's] leadership. . . . Comrades, our revolution does not devour its own children. The children of this revolution are honest."⁸ The Yugoslav party's decision to reject Stalin's accusations was a turning point in the history of the international Communist movement. For the first time, a small European Communist party dared to confront Stalin, the "undisputed Leader of the socialist camp."

On nearly the same day that the initial accusations arrived from Moscow, the Yugoslav regime received a threat from the West. On 20 March 1948, the U.S. and British governments jointly announced their decision to allow Italy to take over the administration of their zone of the Free Territory of Trieste. This transfer was a clear breach of the peace treaty with Italy, signed by the victorious powers—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia—at the Paris Peace Conference in February 1947, which stipulated that changes to the status of the territory could be made only if agreed to by all signatories.⁹ Yugoslavia's opposition to the restoration of Italian sovereignty nearly provoked an armed confrontation with both Italy and, eventually, other Western powers. Tito's room for maneuver was severely limited. Much of his domestic political capital was invested in the promise that Trieste would become part of Yugoslavia. The loss of Trieste

7. Corresponding documents, in Archive of Josip Broz Tito (AJBT), Cabinet of the President of the Republic (KPR), I-2 / 4-2. See also Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* [The New Supplements to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito], Vol. 3 (Belgrade: Izdavačka radna organizacija "Rad," 1984), pp. 220–228.

8. Dedijer, *Dokumenti 1948*, pp. 225–238.

9. The text of the peace treaty with Italy, signed in Paris on 10 February 1947 is in *Dokumenti o spoljnoj politici Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije: 1947* [Documents on the Foreign Policy of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia: 1947] (Belgrade: Savezni sekretarijat za inostrane poslova / Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu / Jugoslavenski pregled, 1984), Vol. I, pp. 125–185.

threatened to erode his domestic popular support at the very time he needed it for the impending confrontation with Stalin. Given the extraordinary Soviet intelligence penetration of the British government, Stalin may have timed his attack on Tito to coincide with the anticipated Anglo-American declaration on Trieste. Thus, when Tito and his aides decided in April 1948 to resist Stalin, they had little alternative.

Stalin's banishment and Yugoslavia's struggle for survival in a bipolar world order that was intolerant of dissent left Tito's regime in international isolation. At first, Western governments were not ready to accept that the Tito-Stalin public spat was anything but a ruse. On the other hand, the lack of precedents and, more importantly, the ideological myopia of Tito and his associates induced them to believe they would be restored to Stalin's good graces once he understood that the accusations against them had been fabricated. Moreover, the Yugoslav leaders' genuine dedication to Communist ideology and hope of once again being under the safety of the Soviet security umbrella made them determined not to do anything that could jeopardize the interests of the international proletarian movement, even if this meant endangering their own existence.¹⁰ Their stance on the matter was not simply the result of Comintern-induced indoctrination. It derived from an unconditional commitment to the "cause," the very same belief that prompted the victims of Stalin's purges in the USSR to admit responsibility for completely fabricated crimes while being led to their deaths.

In the autumn of 1949, however, the prospect of imminent Soviet attack became real. The anti-Yugoslav propaganda intensified, and armed provocations along Yugoslavia's borders with the Soviet-bloc countries became a daily occurrence. Furthermore, high profile trials against prominent leaders throughout Eastern Europe gave the anti-Titoist campaign an alarming momentum. These ominous developments disabused the Yugoslav leaders of their last remaining hope that the conflict was the result of mere "misinformation" and a "family quarrel" that would soon be resolved, prompting them to contemplate a new strategic option.¹¹

Tito finally crossed his Rubicon in December 1950. Following China's entry into the Korean War, he turned to the West for arms and economic aid. The Yugoslavs saw the escalation in Korea as Stalin's decoy and testing of waters for a Soviet intervention against Yugoslavia.¹² Belgrade's foreboding was further augmented in subsequent months by an unprecedented Soviet-bloc

10. Record of the CPY CC Politburo meeting, 30 August 1949, in Archive of Yugoslavia (AJ), Archive of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (ACK SKJ), 507/III/42.

11. Transcript of the Third Plenum of the CPY Central Committee (CC), 29–30 December 1949, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/7.

12. Record of the CPY CC Politburo meeting, 4 December 1950, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/53.

military build-up and multiplication of “military exercises” on Yugoslavia’s borders following Stalin’s rearmament initiative in January 1951.¹³ From then on until the full normalization with the Soviet Union in 1956, Yugoslavia gradually incorporated itself into the Western defense system. Its strategic usefulness was rewarded by generous U.S. military and economic aid. Western, namely U.S., military assistance on an unprecedented scale enabled Yugoslavia to build capabilities against the Soviet and East European threat. At the same time, economic aid, in particular the U.S. food relief program, helped Tito’s regime escape large-scale famine and economic and social collapse in the early 1950s.¹⁴ From 1950 to 1955, Yugoslavia received more than \$700 million in economic aid and close to \$1 billion in military aid.¹⁵

Despite this dependence on U.S. arms and food deliveries, Tito resisted pressure to bring Yugoslavia formally into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).¹⁶ He perceived association with the West as only a temporary marriage of convenience.¹⁷ Tito was convinced that irrespective of his cooperation and a de facto military alliance against the USSR, the West would never cease to entertain hopes of changing the character of his regime. He warned his Yugoslav comrades: “They see in us a Communist country. They want to make a Satellite out of us.”¹⁸ When Soviet pressure intensified in December 1949, Tito insisted at the meeting of the Yugoslav party’s Central Committee that “it is particularly important now, in light of the [changed Yugoslav] position toward the imperialist world that we, especially younger members of the party do not forget that we are a socialist country.”¹⁹ To Tito,

13. Mark Kramer, “Stalin, the Soviet-Yugoslav Split, and Soviet Efforts to Reassess Control: A Reassessment,” in Svetozar Rajak, ed., *The Balkans and the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

14. Tito’s report to the Sixth Congress of the CPY/League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY), Zagreb, 3 November 1952, published in *Borba*, 4 November 1952, p. 1; and transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27–28 May and 2 June 1955, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/I-56.

15. National Intelligence Estimate 31–55, “Yugoslavia and Its Future Orientation,” 23 February 1955, in U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Electronic Reading Room (www.foia.cia.gov, henceforth cited as CIA-ERR). See also the collection of documents in “From National Communism to National Disintegration: US Intelligence Estimative Products on Yugoslavia, 1948–1990,” conference organized by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and the National Intelligence Council, 7 December 2006, Washington, DC). Documents from this collection are now available online at CIA-ERR.

16. Record of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the LCY, 27 November 1952, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61.

17. Transcript of the Meeting of the LCY Executive Committee, 19 July 1954, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/62a.

18. Record of the meeting of the LCY Executive Committee, 27 November 1952, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/61. See also the record of the Second Plenum of the Central Committee of the LCY, 16 May 1953, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/II/10.

19. Transcript of the Third Plenum of the CPY Central Committee, 29–30 December 1949, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/II/7.

international isolation was perhaps the most threatening consequence of the 1948 expulsion from the Cominform.²⁰ Ostracized, under economic blockade, and subjected to fierce propaganda attacks from Yugoslavia's former patrons in Moscow, and with the West initially reluctant to offer full support, the Yugoslav leaders found themselves alone and exposed. Such complete isolation from both blocs was unique during the Cold War. A U.S. intelligence report from the mid-1950s concluded: "Since June 1948 . . . [Yugoslavia's] international position has been anomalous."²¹ Tito was forced to learn a lesson he would never forget, namely, that he must avoid relying exclusively on one bloc. Although excommunicated from the Marxist-Leninist camp, the Yugoslav leaders never entertained illusions that they would be safe in the opposite bloc. When justifying the establishment of relations with the West at the Third Plenum of the Central Committee in December 1949, Edvard Kardelj emphasized that leaders in Belgrade were determined not to allow the

[the West] to bargain with the Soviet government at [Yugoslavia's] expense . . . [Yugoslavia] must not come into the situation when, for example a sudden decision by the American government to cancel our purchases would completely halt the economic development of our country. We must shield ourselves from any such surprises. 1948 and 1949 must never happen again.

At this point, Tito interjected: "The experience in the East must be an abject lesson."²² Having suffered for taking a stand against Soviet hegemony in their own bloc, the Yugoslavs were determined not to fall prey to the same pressure on the other side. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) concluded at the time: "The dominant concerns of [Tito's] regime will almost certainly remain those of insuring its own survival and avoiding foreign domination."²³ Indeed, this became the driving force and principal rationale behind Yugoslavia's effort to remain outside both blocs. Expulsion from the ideological fold and perception of a threat from both the East and the West induced Tito to

20. Ibid; and Tito's report to the Sixth Congress, published in *Borba*, pp. 1–2. See also the record of the meeting of the LCY Executive Committee (renamed Politburo), 27 November 1952, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/II/61.

21. National Intelligence Estimate 31–55 (see note 16 *supra*).

22. Transcript of the Third Plenum of the CPY Central Committee, 29–30 December 1949, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, 119/III/7. Kardelj, Tito's second-in-command, the regime's ideologue, and, until 1953, Yugoslavia's foreign minister, frequently served as the promulgator of new ideas at meetings of the Politburo and Central Committee. However, he was not the originator of these ideas; rather, he was just officially transmitting proposals that had already been discussed by Tito and three or four of his most trusted aides. Besides Kardelj, the core group included Aleksandar Ranković, Tito's official deputy and head of the security apparatus. Tito often used Kardelj to test out new concepts with the wider party and state leadership.

23. National Intelligence Estimate 31–55 (see note 16 *supra*).

maintain a distance from both blocs. The ensuing international isolation prompted him to search for allies.

The Yugoslav regime did not abruptly stumble into non-alignment, nor did the concept occur to Tito as an epiphany. It was the result of a gradual process of rationalization that, on the one hand, required an analysis of the changes under way in the international system, and, on the other hand, took account of the reality that Belgrade's foreign policy options were conditioned by circumstances outside its control. Dependent on the West for protection from the Soviet threat and for economic survival, Tito had to play his cards carefully. Thus, the initial deliberations about the road between the two blocs were confined to Tito and his innermost circle.²⁴ While contemplating a new foreign policy strategy, Tito occasionally found it necessary to reassure Washington. In January 1953 he "solemnly declared" to the U.S. ambassador in Belgrade that "[isolationism and neutralism] were abhorrent both to him and to his people."²⁵ Several years had to pass before Belgrade was able to conceptualize the new approach and identify possible allies. Most importantly, a favorable shift in the "correlation of forces" surrounding Yugoslavia had to occur before Tito and his aides could pursue a new foreign policy orientation. The conceptualization of Yugoslav non-engagement underwent three phases. The first involved secretive high-level discussions which concluded that independence from both Cold War alliances was possible by playing one against the other. Traumatized by the isolation that followed the split with Stalin, Tito and his associates also understood that the new strategy was impossible without the fulfillment of two conditions. On the one hand, Yugoslavia would need to secure international support for its new foreign policy position. On the other hand, the new strategic option was possible only after the Soviet threat had been eliminated or sufficiently defused. During the second phase, Yugoslav leaders identified possible allies in the quest for non-commitment to either bloc. The third phase began with Belgrade's shift away from the West in the autumn of 1954. Taking advantage of the opening created by the incipient normalization of relations with the Soviet Union in the wake of Stalin's death, Yugoslav leaders felt emboldened to begin establishing contacts with possible allies in Asia. During a visit to India in December 1954, Tito publicly declared Yugoslavia's new foreign policy orientation for the first

24. Third Plenum of the CPY CC, Transcript, 29–30 December 1949, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, II-7; Record of the CPY Politburo meeting, 28 June 1950, in AJ, 507/III/49; and "Discussion on our relations with the USSR and the Cominform countries, 20. X. 1953, at comrade Kardelj's," Record of Yugoslav leadership's policy discussions (without Tito but per his instructions) at Kardelj's home in Belgrade, 20 October 1953, in AJBT, KPR, I-5-v/297.

25. The Ambassador in Yugoslavia (Allen) to the Department of State, 8 January 1953, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, Vol. VIII, pp. 1333–1335.

time. He set out to elaborate a rationale for a policy of non-commitment to blocs and to win backers for it.

Conceptualization: Yugoslavia in Search of Policy and Allies

The Yugoslav strategy of playing one bloc against the other was contrived from discussions within Tito's innermost circle. In the nascent Cold War system, there were no precedents or models for the Yugoslavs to emulate. The notion of "[taking] advantage of the existing rivalry in the World, in order to secure [Yugoslavia's] survival and further consolidation" was first broached to a wider circle of the Yugoslav leadership by Kardelj at the party's Central Committee plenum in December 1949.²⁶ Symptomatic of the deliberations that were taking place at the time was Tito's indiscretion in front of the U.S. ambassador in Belgrade, George V. Allen, six months later. Provoked by Allen's criticism of Yugoslavia's "passivity" in the United Nations (UN) following the outbreak of the Korean War, Tito responded that "[Yugoslavia] would rather be ostracized for being an independent country than end up in the pit of one of the blocs."²⁷ The concept of a "third way" was taking shape gradually. Speaking on Korea at the Fifth UN General Assembly, in the autumn of 1950, Kardelj proclaimed that

the people of Yugoslavia cannot accept the postulate that humanity today has only one choice—a choice between a domination of one or the other bloc. We believe that there exists another road. True, it may be a difficult one but, at the same time, it is an unavoidable one. It is the road of democratic struggle for a world in which people are free and equal, for democratic relations between nations that would eliminate outside interference in internal affairs of nations, and for a full peaceful cooperation between nations based on equality.²⁸

Kardelj's statement revealed an embryonic notion that a position between the two blocs was possible. At a Politburo meeting held on 5 December 1950, a day after the Yugoslav leadership made a monumental ideological U-turn and decided to seek U.S. military aid, he proposed that the time had come for Yugoslav foreign policy to free itself from the single-minded focus on "us [Yugoslavs] and the Russians." Echoing this, the Politburo decided to set up a top

26. Third Plenum of the CPY CC, Transcript, 29–30 December 1949, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX, II-7.

27. Record of the CPY Politburo meeting, 28 June 1950, in AJ, 507/II/49.

28. Kardelj's speech at the Fifth Annual Session of the UN General Assembly, 20–28 September 1950, is quoted in Leo Mates, *Nesvrstanost: Teorija i savremena praksa* [Non-Alignment: The Theory and Current Practice] (Belgrade: Institut za međunarodnu politiku i privredu, 1970), p. 216.

quality research institute that would provide, free of any ideological tunnel vision, expert insights into the politics and economics of the outside world and the opportunities offered to Yugoslavia.²⁹ In the autumn of 1953, at the apex of the Trieste crisis, Tito's top aides reasserted the position that Yugoslavia must "make better use of current [international] relations and existing global antagonisms."³⁰ This balancing act was a risky venture, however. On the one hand, the new strategy was designed to avoid jeopardizing the continuation of Western support against possible Soviet aggression. On the other hand, the goal was to create the necessary leeway from either bloc and prevent East-West accommodation over Yugoslavia. Tito's almost panicky reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 confirms a fear that never left him, namely, that an East-West accommodation would provide the Soviet Union with a blank check to settle scores with Yugoslavia once and for all.

Yugoslav leaders were determined never to repeat the lesson of 1948—the country's complete international isolation and nearly fatal vulnerability. Tito and his aides understood that they would need international support and allies if they were to use the rivalry between the two ideological camps to forge an independent position from both. Looking for support, the Yugoslavs first turned to those most proximate to their still prevailing ideological *Weltanschauung*—to the non-Communist European Left. This in itself was a major departure from the existing Stalinist paradigm, which stipulated that West European Socialists and Social Democrats were the "lackeys" of the bourgeoisie and a more dangerous enemy than the capitalists themselves. At a June 1950 Politburo meeting, Kardelj optimistically identified "new tendencies" akin to a "new movement" within the traditional European Socialist and Social Democratic parties that could provide backing for Yugoslavia's new position.³¹ The Yugoslav party leaders set out to establish or strengthen their relations with several of these parties, first and foremost with the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD), which was the most prestigious and the one with the longest tradition. The first contact occurred on 12 March 1952, when Vladimir Dedijer, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Yugoslav parliament met Erich Ollenhauer, the successor to the ailing SPD president, Kurt Schumacher. From then on, the Yugoslav ambassador in Bonn, Mladen Iveković, maintained regular contacts with Ollenhauer and

29. Record of the CPY CC Politburo meeting, 5 December 1950, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/54.

30. "Discussion on our relations with the USSR and the Cominform countries, 20. X. 1953, at comrade Kardelj's," Record of Yugoslav leadership's policy discussions (without Tito but per his instructions) at Kardelj's home in Belgrade, 20 October 1953, in AJBT, KPR, SSSR, I-5-v/297.

31. Record of the CPY Politburo meeting, 28 June 1950, in AJ, 507/III/49.

other prominent SPD officials, especially Willy Eicher and Fritz Heine.³² In February 1953, representatives from a European and Asian Socialist and Social-Democratic parties were officially invited to the Fourth Congress of the Yugoslav Popular Front. Speaking at the congress, Kardelj appealed to the Socialists to back Yugoslavia's "road," and Dedijer urged them to stop supporting either superpower because both were locked in a struggle for global supremacy.³³ Before long, however, the Yugoslavs realized it was one thing for the West European Socialist and Social Democrats to support Belgrade against Moscow and quite another for them to renounce their allegiance to the Western alliance.

After the disappointment with the West European Left, Yugoslav leaders saw Third World countries and the ex-colonial domains that had recently gained independence as the only remaining alternative. But with the process of decolonization still in its infancy in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was difficult to distinguish who among the new nationalist political movements and personalities in these countries was truly independent of their ex-colonial masters. More importantly, Belgrade at the time knew very little about the Third World. Upon returning from his first trip to India and Burma, Tito admitted to having had "very limited knowledge about these countries."³⁴ Worse still, the ideologically minded Yugoslav leaders all too easily fell victim to Eurocentric and Marxist sectarian stereotyping of the Third World. Many of Tito's aides considered it untoward and unwise to link Yugoslavia with what his then Chief of Army Staff, Koča Popović, and Deputy Foreign Minister Veljko Mićunović dubbed "the world of *miserables*." Kardelj also initially opposed collaboration with the "feudal lords" who, in his opinion, ruled the newly liberated colonies. It was certainly very difficult to identify allies in the Third World who were willing to stand apart from both blocs and against the nascent Cold War order at its most contested juncture. In a moment of doubt, Kardelj admitted in 1951: "A third force is not possible. The only possibility for a socialist country like ours is to exploit the contradictions, which emerge in one or in the other camp."³⁵ Nonetheless, despite the skepticism and frustration, the search for allies continued. By the end of 1951, Yugoslav leaders shifted their focus toward the Asian ex-colonies. In the autumn

32. Records of meetings between SPD leaders and Yugoslav officials, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX/87/II.

33. Darko Bekić, *Jugoslavija u hladnom ratu: Odnosi sa velikim silama 1949–1955* [Yugoslavia in the Cold War: Relations with the Big Powers 1949–1955] (Zagreb: Globus, 1988), p. 463.

34. Speech by the President of the Republic in the Federal People's Assembly, 7 March 1955, in AJ, 837, II-5-b-1.

35. "Archives of Slovenia (AS), Dedijer, t. e., 7, Spomini tov. Kardelja, 25.12.1951, pp. 42–43," quoted in Jože Pirjevec, "The First Steps of Yugoslav Non-Aligned Foreign Policy: Ambassadors Djerdja and Vilfan in New Delhi," paper presented at the International Conference on the Non-aligned Movement, Zurich, Switzerland, 2–4 June 2011.

of that year, at a meeting of the heads of departments of the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry, Josip Djerdja, who had just returned from his posting as the first Yugoslav ambassador in New Delhi, suggested that Yugoslavia could rely more on the newly liberated colonies, particularly India, as a way out of international isolation. Kardelj, presiding as the foreign minister, immediately interrupted the meeting and informed Tito via a secure phone line that Djerdja had come up with some interesting ideas about a foreign policy strategy “along the lines we have been discussing.” Tito promptly ordered both to his nearby residence for further deliberations.³⁶

Several considerations ensured that Asia and particularly India became the focus of Belgrade’s attention. The Korean War and debates at the UN provided Third World countries with an opportunity to voice opposition to the existing Cold War divisions. Most prominent and proactive among these were the newly liberated countries of Asia; especially, India, Burma, and Indonesia. They took the lead in drafting and tabling resolutions aimed at preventing the spread of the Korean War and at reducing tensions in Asia. During 1950 and 1951, Yugoslavia and India often found themselves taking similar positions on a number of UN initiatives and resolutions. In September 1950, Yugoslavia supported India’s proposal regarding the People’s Republic of China’s UN membership. A month later, both countries abstained from voting on the Eight Nation resolution calling for UN troops to cross the 38th parallel. This record suggested to the Yugoslavs that India harbored a similar outlook on the international situation. Another factor that made some Asian countries attractive to Yugoslavs—a factor that largely escaped historians’ attention—was the two countries’ ideological proximity.³⁷ In the early 1950s, Socialist parties played a prominent role in the political life of several Asian countries, including Burma, India, and Indonesia. The establishment of the Asian Socialist Conference in January 1953 in Rangoon reinforced the impression of the ascendancy of Socialism in Southeast Asia. Belgrade dispatched a high-profile delegation, headed by Milovan Djilas, the regime’s ideologue and a member of Tito’s innermost circle, to attend the conference. The delegation brought back valuable insights and information about Asia. This, in addition to more qualified reporting from higher-caliber diplomats now being posted to several Asian countries, such as Josip Djerdja and Jože Vilfan in India, helped to dispel the Yugoslav leadership’s initial ideologically tainted reservations regarding the “feudal” leadership in these countries.³⁸ As Tito admitted in an interview

36. Vladimir Dedijer, *Novi prilozi za biografiju Josipa Broza Tita* [New Supplements to the Biography of Josip Broz Tito], Vol. 3 (Zagreb-Rijeka: Mladost-Liburnija, 1980), p. 554.

37. The exception being Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-aligned World*, pp. 40–43.

38. Although Djilas headed this fact-finding mission and participated in deliberations regarding the new Yugoslav strategy, the documentation does not indicate that he played a pivotal role in its concep-

for the Belgian magazine *Le Peuple* upon his return from India and Burma, “when we embarked upon finding a ‘modus-vivendi’ [between the two Blocs] who could we turn to in the first place if not to Asian countries?”³⁹

Although the two countries formally established diplomatic relations on 5 December 1948, relations between Yugoslavia and India remained embryonic until 1954. Indian suspicions about Yugoslavia’s true non-engagement credentials were probably to blame for this. Before 1948, India regarded Yugoslavia as a Soviet satellite and in the early 1950s, after Belgrade started receiving military aid from the United States, India viewed Yugoslavia as a member of the Western bloc.⁴⁰ Leaders in New Delhi could not contemplate that a small European country receiving extensive Western economic and military aid could remain outside the Western bloc. Until the autumn of 1954, India was represented in Belgrade by its ambassador in Rome, further proof of how little it valued its relations with Yugoslavia. Belgrade, on the other hand, was keen to improve links with New Delhi and appointed high-caliber diplomats as ambassadors to India. Djerdja, the deputy foreign minister, served as Yugoslavia’s first ambassador to India from April 1950 until the autumn of 1951. Vilfan, Djerdja’s successor, became a highly influential chief of Tito’s cabinet upon his return from India in March 1953.⁴¹ In November and December 1952, Belgrade dispatched a fact-finding “mission of good will” to India. In January 1953, after returning from the First Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, Djilas and Aleš Bebler, the Yugoslav deputy foreign minister, visited New Delhi. Yugoslavia’s pronounced interest and the rationale behind it were clearly elaborated in an assessment report on India’s foreign policy and international position, a report compiled by Yugoslav Foreign Ministry experts ahead of Tito’s visit in 1954. The report concluded that with a huge population, crucial geostrategic position, and rich cultural and historic heritage India was poised to play a major role in the world, particularly in Asia. Yugoslav experts pointed out that India’s foreign policy engagement and international prestige “far exceeded its current economic and military strength.”⁴² This seemed to corroborate the notion that a country could play a role in global politics beyond the limitations imposed by its economic and military resources and capabilities—something that clearly appealed to Tito and his

tualization. Most likely, his impact on Yugoslavia’s non-engaged foreign policy was limited even before he was expelled from the ruling party organs in January 1954. Hence, the article focuses on the role of the key strategist of Yugoslavia’s new foreign policy, Tito, and, to a smaller extent, Kardelj.

39. Tito’s interview and conversation with Albert Hosiaux, the editor-in-chief of *Le Peuple* magazine, 14 April 1955, in AJ, 837, IV-1-b.

40. Analytical monograph “India,” prepared by the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry for Tito’s trip to India, November 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-1.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

aides, who believed that a prominent role in international affairs would help Yugoslavia withstand subjugation by either superpower. The report also listed numerous principles of India's foreign policy that further strengthened its ability to pursue an independent course: mutual cooperation between countries, non-interference in the affairs of others, opposition to the existing blocs, and anti-colonialism.⁴³

However, the Yugoslavs had to tread with extreme caution when contemplating a foreign policy detour. Yugoslavia could ill afford to be seen as neutralist by the United States, its security guarantor and the provider of an economic lifeline. As long as there existed a "clear and present danger" of Soviet aggression, Yugoslavia's struggle to remain outside the two blocs had to be played out as a subtle balancing act. Yugoslavia struggled to avoid formal linkage to NATO without endangering its security imperative to remain within the Western defense system and under the U.S. security umbrella.

The pivotal change in the "correlation of forces" that finally allowed Yugoslavia to embrace a new strategic orientation occurred in the summer of 1954. After six years of an increasingly ominous Soviet threat, including daily border clashes, an economic blockade, propaganda warfare, and international isolation, the summer of 1954 brought the unexpected prospect of a normalization of relations with the USSR. Out of the blue, Belgrade received a letter, dated 22 June and signed by Nikita Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), on behalf of the CPSU Central Committee. This was the first direct communication between the Soviet and Yugoslav leaders since the 1948 rupture. The letter proposed the normalization of relations and initiated a secret correspondence between the two leaders.⁴⁴

By early November 1954, several of Moscow's public goodwill gestures, coordinated through the secret correspondence, convinced Tito and his associates that the Soviet initiative was genuine and that the prospect of the removal of the Soviet threat was real.⁴⁵ The normalization of relations with the USSR offered Tito the much-hoped-for maneuvering space to curtail dependence on the West and to carve out for himself an equidistant position from both blocs. Tito admitted this causality in his 7 March 1955 report to the

43. Ibid.

44. For more on the Yugoslav-Soviet secret correspondence in 1954 and 1955, which led to Khrushchev's historic trip to Belgrade in May 1955, see Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War*; and Svetozar Rajak, "The Tito-Khrushchev Correspondence, 1954," *CWIHP Bulletin*, No. 12-13 (Fall-Winter 2001), pp. 315-324.

45. Record of the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Committee (ex-Politburo) of the LCY, 3 November 1954, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/III/63. For more on the Yugoslav-Soviet normalization, see Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union In the Early Cold War*.

Yugoslav parliament on Yugoslav foreign policy and on his first trip to Asia: "The principles of active co-existence became particularly clearly manifested in our foreign policy only with the creation of objective conditions that made such a policy possible."⁴⁶ The truly unanticipated and astounding normalization with Moscow coincided with the apex in Belgrade's relations with the West. During the summer and early autumn of 1954, Yugoslavia fulfilled its primary strategic goals that were conditional upon Western support. On 9 August 1954, after eighteen months of negotiations, the Balkan Pact between Greece, Turkey, and Yugoslavia was signed. The pact provided Yugoslavia with Western security guarantees against a Soviet attack without formal NATO membership. At the same time, the long-standing dispute with Italy over Trieste was resolved to Yugoslavia's satisfaction. On 5 October, Italy and Yugoslavia signed in London a final agreement on Trieste with three Western powers as co-guarantors. Thus, Tito's trip to Asia in December 1954 came after the long-standing Soviet threat had finally been defused and at a time when Yugoslavia had achieved a highly favorable strategic position vis-à-vis both superpowers.

Conceptualization: Active Peaceful Coexistence and the Like-Minded

In the early summer of 1954, Tito was still pondering a trip to Burma, his first intended journey to the Third World. Burma was chosen because Yugoslav leaders saw it as a fulcrum of the nascent socialist movement in Asia. As such, it appealed to the Yugoslavs' still limited and ideologically tainted understanding of the Third World. The Burmese Socialist party of Ba Swe was the most prominent political force in the country and played a leading role in the creation of the Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon in January 1953. Moreover, during the Rangoon Conference Djilas received a formal invitation for Tito to visit Burma. In September 1953, Burmese Prime Minister U Nu renewed the invitation in a conversation with the Yugoslav ambassador in Burma. Belgrade accepted the invitation but replied in a rather ambiguous, noncommittal manner that the visit "could not be scheduled earlier than the end of 1955."⁴⁷ By mid-1954, with no plans for a visit to India, the political

46. Speech by the President of the Republic in the Federal People's Assembly, 7 March 1955, in AJ, 837, II-5-b-1.

47. Memorandum on the visit by President Tito to India and other countries in Asia, 16 August 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2; Telegrams to the Yugoslav Embassies in New Delhi and Rangoon, 19 August

value of a trip to Asia that would have Burma as the only destination was still apparently under debate within the Yugoslav leadership.

The reduction of tensions with Moscow and the signing of the Balkan Pact and the Trieste Agreement allowed Tito to go to Asia. However, the exact itinerary and the agenda were influenced by two additional developments in the summer of 1954. The first was a dramatic change in India's attitude toward Yugoslavia, which opened the door for a visit to India. The Indian shift was probably spurred by recent developments on the subcontinent. In February 1954, India's archrival Pakistan had strengthened its military ties with the West by signing the Pact of Mutual Cooperation with Turkey, a precursor to the Baghdad Pact. This, and the fact that Nehru was aware of Tito's possible visit to Rangoon, could explain the timing of the first Indian fact-finding mission to Yugoslavia, which took place in the summer of 1954 and was headed by Nehru's sister, Virjaya Lakshmi Pandit. During her visit, Pandit traveled extensively through Yugoslavia and engaged in comprehensive exchanges with Tito and other Yugoslav officials. Her reports provided Nehru with perhaps his first detailed insight into Yugoslavia's domestic political system and, more importantly, its foreign policy aspirations. The report apparently allayed his remaining suspicions about Yugoslavia's independence from both blocs. At the end of her visit, Pandit officially invited Tito to visit India "before or after his visit to Burma."⁴⁸ A few weeks later, in a conversation with Gojko Nikoliš, the Yugoslav ambassador in New Delhi, Nehru reiterated the invitation, emphasizing that India "is a huge country" and that the length and itinerary of the visit would be at Tito's convenience.⁴⁹ In October, a month before Tito departed for Asia and as a follow-up to Pandit's visit, the first Indian ambassador to Yugoslavia arrived in Belgrade.

The second event that influenced Belgrade's preparations for the Asian trip were the talks held with Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, who visited Yugoslavia at the end of July 1954. This was Tito's first encounter with the leader of a prominent Third World country. This visit by an absolutist monarch of a feudal state was in itself a sign of changes in Belgrade's approach in international relations, confirming that the Yugoslavs had largely discarded their ideological blinkers about the Third World. After speaking with Selassie, Tito had a much better grasp of the expectations and emerging ambitions of the growing community of independent ex-colonies in Africa and Asia. More important, the surprising scope and character of assistance requested by the

1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2; and Memorandum on the Visit by President Tito to India, Burma, and other Asian countries, 24 August 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

48. Memorandum on the Visit by President Tito (see previous footnote).

49. Memorandum of a conversation between Ambassador Nikoliš and the Indian prime minister, J. Nehru, 24 August 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

Ethiopians made Tito aware of the magnitude of inherited problems in the Third World and the enormous possibilities for cooperation. Selassie proposed comprehensive collaboration and asked for large-scale Yugoslav technical assistance in mining, forestry, agriculture, education, and military production.⁵⁰ The encounter with Selassie enabled the Yugoslavs to identify two important aspects that profoundly shaped their future approach to the Third World. First, it convinced them that economic development was a prerequisite for a Third World country to achieve true sovereignty. Second, it demonstrated that Yugoslavia's economy could greatly benefit from the provision of technical assistance and industrial exports to Third World countries. The talks with Selassie helped Tito to prepare concrete proposals for economic and military cooperation when he met the Burmese leaders in Rangoon six months later.

Tito departed on a two-and-a-half-month-long voyage to Asia on his yacht *Galeb* on 30 November 1954. He emphasized in a report to the Yugoslav parliament after his return that the main goal of the trip had been to "acquaint ourselves and to strengthen ties with the countries who, like us, strive for peace, with the aim to act jointly."⁵¹ Between his arrival in New Delhi on 17 December and his departure for Burma from Calcutta on 3 January, Tito visited fourteen Indian cities by train or car, acquainted himself with the culture and customs of India, and called on numerous factories, hospitals, military barracks, and universities. His days were filled with meetings and conversations with officials, academics, and public figures, as well as with ordinary workers and poor peasants. Tito, a passionate hunter, even went on a tiger hunt.⁵² More importantly, Tito and Nehru got to know each other personally. Besides four official rounds of talks, the two leaders spent much time in private conversation between official meetings and engagements or over private dinners. The first round of talks between the Indian and Yugoslav leaders was held on 18 December, in Nehru's New Delhi residence.⁵³ Tito and Nehru were alone, with Tito's chief of cabinet acting as the translator. At Tito's request, all further official talks were held with members of the Yugoslav delegation and Indian officials in attendance.

50. Record of talks held in Brioni, on 25 July 1954, between the President of the Republic [Tito] and the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, in AJ, 837, I-3-1/24-3.

51. Speech of the President of the Republic at the Federal People's Assembly, 7 March 1955, in AJ, 837, II-5-b-1.

52. The program and itinerary of the President's visit to India, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

53. Memorandum of the conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 18 December 1954, at 12:00 p.m., at the residence of the Indian Prime Minister, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

During this first meeting, Tito presented his views on an array of foreign policy issues, whereas Nehru limited himself to occasional remarks, mainly when China was mentioned. Tito first addressed Yugoslav-Soviet relations, confiding that he was in secret correspondence with Soviet leaders to follow up on their initiative for an improvement in bilateral relations. He claimed that Nehru was the first foreign leader to be informed of this correspondence. Tito then emphasized that Yugoslavia had gone along with Moscow's initiative only because the Soviet Union had indirectly accepted responsibility for the 1948 conflict and agreed to normalization based on non-interference in Yugoslavia's affairs. He defended his non-aligned credentials by insisting that Yugoslavia had not joined NATO when it signed the Balkan Pact; its aim was only to fend off the very real threat of Soviet aggression. Tito said that the improvement of relations with the USSR would allow Yugoslavia to give priority to economic and political rather than military, aspects of the pact. Tito then reproached his Balkan Pact ally, Turkey, for its aspirations to play the role of a regional hegemon. He added that during his recent visit to Ankara he had made a point of inquiring with his hosts whether the new Turkish-Pakistani treaty of cooperation was directed against India. The Turks, Tito reported, had assured him that the treaty was not directed against India.⁵⁴ He then provided an overview of the situation in Europe, singling out the question of Germany as the most important foreign policy issue of the moment. Nehru refrained from commenting, but toward the end of the meeting he inquired about Yugoslavia's relations with China. The Indian leader informed Tito that during Zhou Enlai's recent visit to New Delhi the Chinese premier had expressed support for the establishment of relations with Yugoslavia. Tito responded that Yugoslavia was not opposed to this.⁵⁵ He evidently wished to impress and woo Nehru. By disclosing the existence of secret contacts with Moscow, the Yugoslav leader wished to convey to his Indian host a feeling of respect and trust. Tito also tried to present himself as a friend of India and was particularly keen to reiterate his non-aligned credentials by minimizing the relevance of the Balkan Pact and its links to NATO.

Several hours after the first meeting, a second official session was held during which Nehru outlined India's foreign policy views. From the outset, he stressed that India was not a member of any military alliance, insisting that the Commonwealth could not be regarded as an alliance insofar as membership carried no legal obligations. At the same time, he stressed, Commonwealth membership helped India to acquire better international recognition

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid. Zhou visited New Delhi from 25 to 28 June 1954 on his return trip from the Geneva Conference on Indochina.

and to retain influence in global politics. According to Nehru, on more than a few occasions India's views had prompted Great Britain to change its position in the UN.⁵⁶ Nehru barely mentioned Pakistan apart from making a passing comment that Karachi's policies were not helping to diminish the existing frictions between the two countries. He admitted that Kashmir remained the biggest and perhaps the only problem between them. Nehru mentioned Europe only in passing, justifying India's passivity toward European issues by stating that India had "no wish to impose itself on European problems."⁵⁷ Most of the prime minister's presentation during the second meeting, however, was reserved for China. He informed Tito that during Zhou's recent visit to New Delhi the two countries had pledged to cooperate despite differences in their political systems. Tito interrupted Nehru, asking whether the Chinese could be trusted and whether Moscow was not behind Zhou's visit. Nehru disagreed and reiterated his belief that Beijing had its "own feeling for Asia." Furthermore, he was convinced that Moscow was not "too happy" with the Chinese foreign policy initiatives and revealed that Soviet officials had approached him with a proposal for a joint declaration supporting the "'Five principles,' as if they wished to diminish the importance of Zhou and [Nehru's] joint statement in which [they] pledged their adherence to these principles."⁵⁸ Nehru then focused on India's relations with China, emphasizing that the two countries shared a border stretching more than 2,000 miles, including Tibet. He was confident there was no danger of Chinese aggression, pointing to the geography of their shared border, which stretched across the world's highest mountains. Nehru was also confident that China did not want war, and he emphasized that Chinese sovereignty over Tibet was never in question. He accused the British of creating "certain privileged positions in Tibet that were then inherited by India but which India, from the very beginning, was aware it was not in a position to maintain." However, Nehru said that when he recently spoke with Zhou Enlai and others in Beijing, he had "encouraged the Chinese to recognize Tibetan individuality by allowing a certain kind of autonomy for Tibet." Returning to Tito's earlier question about the sincerity of Chinese foreign policy, Nehru disclosed that both he and

56. Memorandum of a conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 18 December 1954, at 18:00, in AJBT, KPR, I-2 / 4-2.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.* In a joint statement issued at the end of Zhou's June visit to New Delhi, the Indian and Chinese prime ministers reaffirmed the "Five Principles" that should guide relations between their two countries, as well as their relations with other countries. The principles, first laid down in the Agreement on Tibet signed by both countries on 29 April 1954, were (1) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) non-aggression; (3) non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence. See *Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 1952-1954*, Vol. 9, 3-10 July 1954 (Bristol, UK: Keesing's Publications), p. 13,661.

U Nu had expressed strong anxieties to Zhou about Beijing's support of Communist parties throughout Asia.⁵⁹ Nehru's accentuated conciliatory attitude toward China suggested his satisfaction with the results of his meeting with Zhou. His insistence on talking only about Asian affairs indicates his predominantly regional focus.

Most of the third official meeting between Tito and Nehru, held on 20 December, was again dedicated to China.⁶⁰ Nehru blamed the UN for its stance on recent trials in China and the sentencing of U.S. prisoners of war (POWs) on charges of espionage. He said it was wrong to condemn China without hearing its side of the story. He disclosed that he had recently mediated between the UN Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, and the Chinese and had advised Beijing to accept Hammarskjöld's offer to visit China. Tito disagreed with Nehru, suggesting that it was inappropriate for the Chinese to declare POWs spies. Tito harbored strong suspicions about the "Chinese trials," reminding Nehru that "[the Yugoslavs] have had experience with these sorts of show trials, for example the trial against Laszlo Rajk [in Hungary]." Tito also feared that the Chinese action might be used by "aggressive elements in the West" to provoke tensions in the region. In this context, he stressed India's crucial role in preventing and easing such adverse developments. Referring to possible cracks in the Sino-Soviet relations, Tito observed that

it looks sometimes as if the Soviets are against the Chinese entry into the UN. There is certainly some kind of change in the Soviet policy [toward China]. One should look back into previous experiences. The [Yugoslav] conflict with Cominform had its roots in, among other things, East European [socialist] countries' tendencies for closer relations with Yugoslavia that were becoming increasingly apparent at the time. It was precisely [Tito's visit to Romania in December 1947] and the outpourings of overwhelming public sympathies for the Yugoslavs that signaled the beginning of the Soviet campaign [against Yugoslavia].⁶¹

With little first-hand knowledge of China, Tito was still convinced that Beijing and Moscow did not constitute a united front in Asia and that China's regional policies were more independent than was actually the case. Nehru's tone when speaking about China revealed the positive impact on China's neighbors of Beijing's peace offensive and Zhou's constructive diplomacy.

59. Memorandum of a conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 18 December 1954, at 18:00, in AJBT, KPR, I-2 / 4-2.

60. Memorandum of a conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 20 December 1954, at 17:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

61. Ibid.

Tito, on the other hand, was probably eager to hear about the first Chinese foreign policy foray outside the Soviet shadow, not so much because he believed that China would welcome non-commitment to blocs, but because it could help him understand better the motives behind the most recent Soviet initiative to normalize relations with Yugoslavia.

On 21 December, on the eve of a fourth meeting with Nehru, Tito addressed the Indian Parliament. He used the occasion to deliver a program speech that would define and promulgate Yugoslavia's new foreign policy orientation. The speech revealed a surprisingly developed Yugoslav conceptualization of non-engagement and active peaceful coexistence. As the four main threats to peace, Tito identified inequality among states and nations, the interference of the big powers in the affairs of other states and peoples, the division of the world into spheres of interest and blocs, and colonialism. The Yugoslav leader insisted that non-committed countries needed a global rather than regional approach to activism. He stressed that non-engagement meant maintaining equidistance from the two blocs, arguing against the tendency of the newly liberated ex-colonies to regard the USSR as the lesser of two evils. Tito also stressed that trade and economic cooperation between non-engaged countries was a good way to achieve rapid industrialization and emancipation from old colonial masters.⁶² The Yugoslav leader used the speech to inject activism into the concept of non-engagement borne out of traditional Asian neutralism. He promoted "active coexistence" based on functional cooperation, involvement in the peaceful settlement of international crises, and the removal of obstacles to cooperation between states. That same evening, after a private dinner in the Indian prime minister's residence, the two discussed the draft of the joint statement, and Tito suggested that the word "active" be added in describing India and Yugoslavia's "positive and constructive policy of non-alignment."⁶³ Although hesitant at first, Nehru accepted the insertion the next morning.⁶⁴

The joint statement, signed on 22 December, articulated the aspirations of the new and emerging force in the international system—the non-engaged countries.⁶⁵ In the statement, the two leaders declared their intention to "de-

62. The speech by President J. B. Tito to the Indian Parliament, 21 December 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-1, 876–880.

63. Memorandum of a conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 21 December 1954 (following dinner at Nehru's residence), in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

64. Memorandum of the meeting held at the Indian Foreign Ministry, 22 December 1954, at 10:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

65. The Joint Statement by the President of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia and the Prime Minister of India, New Delhi, 22 December 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2. In a number of Yugoslav documents, as well as in the final communiqué signed at the end of Nehru's official visit to Belgrade six months later, 30 June–7 July 1955, this statement is described as a declaration.

vote their energies . . . toward the advancement of peace through negotiations, and reconciliation as the means for the resolution of international conflicts.” Tito and Nehru also clarified that “the policy of non-alignment with blocs, which they pursue, does not represent ‘neutrality’ or ‘neutrality’; neither does it represent passivity as is sometimes alleged. It represents the positive, active and constructive policy that, as its goal, has collective peace as the foundation of collective security.” The statement then spelled out the principles of interstate relations that India and Yugoslavia were determined to promote—the recognition of individual sovereignty, independence and integrity, non-aggression, equality, respect, non-interference in the affairs of other states, and peaceful coexistence. The document denounced allegations in the Western media that countries seeking to be non-committed to the blocs would themselves form a “third bloc.” Finally, in one of the most important declarations of the statement, Tito and Nehru expressed hope that the “principles of relations between countries that they have proclaimed would acquire a wider, universal implementation.”⁶⁶ By including this passage, they were signaling their intention not only to work actively toward the implementation of the principles they had just endorsed but also to encourage a wider following. This aspect and the timing of the joint statement were of particular importance. Published ahead of the April 1955 Bandung conference of the Asian and African countries, the document acquired additional significance and meaning because it articulated the rationale behind the forthcoming gathering and helped to define the aspirations of the non-committed countries.

The second leg of Tito’s trip to Asia took him to Burma. Tito held four rounds of official talks with the Burmese prime minister, U Nu, and other officials. During their second meeting, on 13 January, U Nu informed Tito about his trip to Hanoi, emphasizing that “the people of North Vietnam are fiercely loyal to their Communist leaders and in particular to Ho Chi Minh,” and that “the American intervention in South Vietnam will end in disaster and for a very simple reason: Despite American weapons, despite American dollars and despite American military assistance, no one in South Vietnam is willing to die for the Americans.”⁶⁷

U Nu spoke at length about China and the talks he had held with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai during his recent visit to Beijing. He expressed fasci-

66. Ibid.

67. Transcript of talks held between the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal J. B. Tito, and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship *Mindon*, 13 January 1955, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2. All official talks were held on the *Mindon*. Whether this was for a particular reason is unclear. The U.S. presence in South Vietnam at the time was very limited; only a small number of military advisers were stationed there.

nation with the changes that had occurred in China since he was last there, before the Second World War. According to U Nu, “before liberation, the Chinese people walked with their backs bent and with fear in their eyes whenever they would meet a foreigner. Now, they walk upright, like men.”⁶⁸ He then stressed that, contrary to the opinion of many of his own people, he had become convinced that the Chinese Communist Party was strong and enjoyed the support of the Chinese people. The Burmese leader justified the violence used by the Communists: “It is true that the Communists killed a lot of people and mistreated others when they took over power. However, the people they treated this way were not good people but black marketeers, spies, profiteers, and the like. For this reason the Chinese masses did not hate the new Government. On the contrary, they started supporting it.”⁶⁹ He concluded by noting that Mao and Zhou had assured him that, “because of the huge program of domestic development, they do not want to go to war with anyone.” U Nu’s explanation of the current state of affairs between China and Burma caused Tito to express reservations and provoked an interesting exchange:

U Nu: Until recently, the Burmese Government was of the opinion that the Chinese were aiding and assisting the rebels here. . . . When Zhou Enlai visited Rangoon last year, I told him that we do not like what they were doing and if they wish to have good relations with us it had to stop. Zhou responded that he had no idea about any of this and that the Chinese Government is not interested in internal affairs of Burma. I have decided to accept his explanation.

Tito (interrupting): As if the left hand doesn’t know what the right one is doing.

U Nu: When I visited China, I addressed this question again with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. I explained to the Chinese that Burma is not an American tool and is following a foreign policy which is completely independent from America. The Chinese had to admit this was true. I have also told them that Burma does not allow the Americans to build bases on its territory, and the Chinese admitted it was true. I have also told them that . . . Burma had given active support to China, namely with regard to the admission of China to the UN. The Chinese have admitted this as well and have said that having all that in mind, it would not be correct for them to keep supporting the insurgents in Burma. After this, I returned to Burma with the belief that the Chinese will not interfere any more in our affairs.

Tito: How could [the Chinese leaders] say that they will not give further support [to insurgents] and yet Zhou Enlai had said that he knew nothing about it?

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

U Nu: Well, they did not say it explicitly, but I had acquired such an impression. They continued to say they did not give assistance to rebels, and I have come to believe that they would not give it in future.

Tito: I am not convinced they will not meddle in your affairs in the future. It is in the logic of a big power.⁷⁰

During their fourth meeting, on 14 January, Tito discarded as an illusion U Nu's earlier suggestion that the Soviet Union and China were better or more moral than the West. According to Tito, both blocs were driven by self-interest and pure greed. He shared, however, U Nu's opinion that the United States intended to establish itself firmly in Asia. Tito warned that U.S. motives were not only ideological but imperialist and noted that

[U.S.] imperialism is not classic imperialism manifesting itself in the armies marching in, conquest without particular reason, etc. but through a completely different method of penetration and conquest. American imperialism is not as dangerous to Europe as it is for Asia because the Asian countries are much more underdeveloped than Europe. [The Americans] achieve their goals through economic measures, through aid.⁷¹

U Nu's later observations about the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) provoked a sarcastic response from Tito:

U Nu: SEATO is a strange organization. All hitherto military alliances, including NATO, had pledged to defend themselves only. However, SEATO is determined to defend other states, as well, including those that have not joined it. Burma is also in the sphere of their guarantees.

Tito: Indeed, the wolf is keen to embrace the lamb to "protect" it.⁷²

Struck by what he saw as U Nu's naïveté, Tito insisted that the division of the world into blocs was, by its very nature, a danger for smaller countries and that the competition between the two blocs threatened their very existence:

Between themselves, [the Soviet Union and the United States] have undertaken to divide the world. From the American side, this is done under the pretext and slogans of the fight against the spread of communism; from the other side, it is done in the name of the struggle for the Revolution, for social change in which, of course, the Soviet Union has to play the leading role. Both are equally dangerous. I do not know which is in fact more dangerous for the small nations.⁷³

70. Ibid.

71. Transcript of talks held between the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal J. B. Tito, and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship *Mindon*, 14 January 1955, at 15:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

The Yugoslav also warned of China's emerging role. He argued that, as a big country, China inevitably had its own interests that it wished to pursue and attain.

I have already voiced some reservations while Mr. Nu was speaking about China, namely whether China has its own aspirations here, in Burma. I believe that it may not have them today—although I do not trust a single big country because every one of them harbors imperialistic appetites, Western countries as well as the Soviet Union. However, it is very possible that in the future, when it becomes industrialized and more developed, China will appear in the same light [as the other two global superpowers]. History is full of such examples.⁷⁴

Two further meetings between the Burmese and the Yugoslav leaders focused on military and economic cooperation and demonstrated Tito's intent to promote activism over traditional concepts of neutralism. Earlier, on 11 January, after a military parade held in his honor, Tito asked to spend some time in conversation with the present Burmese army officers.⁷⁵ He offered advice on aspects of military organization, from the size of infantry divisions to the type of weapons best suited to the Burmese army and Burmese terrain. Tito argued that small, non-engaged countries like Burma and Yugoslavia should build up their military capabilities in order to discourage the superpowers' attempts to dominate them. The Yugoslav leader further claimed that non-engaged countries should buy weapons from both blocs while developing their own production of light weaponry. In this context, he suggested closer cooperation and, in response to a direct question from one of the Burmese officers, confirmed Yugoslavia's willingness to supply light weapons, train Burmese officers, and send advisers to Burma.⁷⁶ During the follow-up meeting on the morning of 14 January, Tito again maintained that "Burma, like any other small country, has better chances to secure its independence if it has resources to defend it." He reminded his hosts that Yugoslavia was able to resist the Soviet threat only because it possessed a strong army, adding that "no improvement of international relations or various initiatives for disarmament could lull me; I believe that it is still better to be armed and have a strong army than wait for others to disarm."⁷⁷ A so-called special statement, issued together with a joint statement at the end of Tito's visit, announced that the Yugoslav president had offered, "as a gift," to arm a brigade of the

74. *Ibid.*

75. Memorandum of a conversation between President Tito and the representatives of the Burmese Army, 11 January 1955, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Transcript of the talks held between the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal J. B. Tito, and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship "Mindon," 14 January 1955, at 15:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

Burmese army and that in “accepting this generous offer with gratitude” the Burmese government had decided “to offer in return, as a gift, rice for the people of Yugoslavia.”⁷⁸ This arrangement also inaugurated barter as a mechanism to facilitate Yugoslav-Burmese trade and served as a template for future South-South cooperation, helping the non-aligned countries overcome the perennial obstacle to economic cooperation between them: their inability to finance mutual trade. The talks with the Burmese on economic and military cooperation reflected Tito’s conviction that mutual reliance and cooperation among Third World countries was the only way for them to defend their sovereignty and independence.

Conclusion

Yugoslavia’s non-commitment to the Cold War alliances was borne out of its international isolation and life-and-death struggle for survival following its expulsion from the Cominform. Tito’s independent foreign policies and ideological heresy did not predate 1948. On the contrary, they were a result of the Yugoslav-Soviet rupture. To survive, Yugoslavia had to master the art of playing one bloc off against the other. Within a year of being exiled “into the cold,” Yugoslav leaders began contemplating a position between the two blocs as a permanent strategic option. The conceptualization of this new orientation, which occurred much earlier than the prevailing historical interpretations suggest, was at first confined to Tito’s most trusted circle. The very real danger of Soviet aggression did not allow Yugoslavia to risk losing the only deterrent it possessed—U.S. military and economic support. However, the maneuvering space that was suddenly created following an astonishing and unforeseen Soviet initiative in the summer of 1954 for the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia enabled Tito and his aides to embark on the implementation of their strategy of maintaining an equidistance from the two blocs. Yugoslavia did not rush to the West in the face of Soviet aggression only to perform an ungrateful *volte-face* once the threat had subsided. The refusal to submit to foreign domination was as much behind Tito’s non-commitment to both blocs after the normalization with Moscow as it was behind his decision to oppose subjugation by his ideological mentor, Stalin, and to fight for survival following expulsion from the Cominform. As a U.S. intelligence assessment at the time predicted, “[Tito] will continue to regard his

78. Special Statement (Annex to the Joint Statement) by the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal, J. B. Tito, and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, 17 January 1955, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

interests to be best served from a flexible position in which Yugoslavia can achieve benefits from both power blocs with a minimum of commitments to either.”⁷⁹

The removal of the Soviet threat was the *sine qua non* of Yugoslavia’s new foreign policy strategy. But Tito realized that the only way to ensure that the strategy could be preserved indefinitely was by enlisting international support. Accordingly, he set sail for India and Burma in December 1954 in search of allies. His goal was to identify and establish cooperation with like-minded leaders with whom he could work to promote peaceful coexistence and reduce tensions in the international system. The Yugoslavs understood well that both were essential for their survival. Moreover, as they had learned the hard way, a voice in debates on global issues and increased presence in international politics that would lead to increased prestige were crucial if the country was to resist outside pressure and overcome the isolation in which it found itself after 1948. Tito was particularly eager to recruit Nehru as an ally. Collaboration with a country as big and influential as India made it easier for Yugoslavia to pursue the new foreign policy. During an informal conversation with his aides and Yugoslav journalists on a train from Calcutta, he admitted: “What would small Yugoslavia be able to do alone in this [struggle to secure an independent position outside the Blocs] unless some big country would join in? That is why we are looking for allies. That was the goal of this trip. Why else would we go on such a long trip? Certainly not for me to see tigers.”⁸⁰

The amity toward India was reinforced by perceived ideological proximity. At the end of their final round of talks, Tito asked Nehru to elaborate on his vision of India’s social and political strategy. The Indian leader responded that “[India’s] philosophy is the development toward Socialism in accordance with India’s specific conditions; this development has to be carried out peacefully.”⁸¹ Tito was convinced that the creation of a common front with other non-committed countries would best serve Yugoslavia’s new strategy. He believed in the strength of such a gathering to resist superpower domination once the movement acquired the ability to influence global issues. This conviction subsequently became the driving force behind Tito’s lengthy tours of

79. National Intelligence Estimate 31/2-55, “Yugoslavia’s International Position,” 17 September 1955, in CIA-ERR.

80. Memorandum of a conversation between the President and the Yugoslav journalists who were accompanying him on a train journey from Calcutta to [unclear, handwritten name of town], 2 January 1955, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

81. Memorandum of a conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 21 December 1954, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

Africa and Asia, during which he tirelessly lobbied for the creation of the NAM. During his first trip to India and Burma, he discerned the power of the Third World. As he admitted to U Nu,

We salute and praise the tendency of those countries, namely India, Burma, and Indonesia, to remain outside the blocs and to be interconnected as much as possible. . . . [They] feel the need to associate with each other in order to be stronger in their resistance to domination by others. For this reason, [Yugoslavia] is doing its best to cooperate with those countries in Asia.⁸²

The first visit to India and Burma helped Tito to identify in the newly decolonized countries of Asia an emerging force in the international system that was able and determined to pursue policies independent of either bloc. The first venture into the Third World had a profound imprint on Tito's perceptions and shaped his future political engagement.

This article has introduced terms and phrases such as "non-commitment," "active peaceful coexistence," "non-interference in the affairs of others," and "struggle for global peace" as the main concepts that became the building blocks of "non-alignment." Tito's speech before the Indian Parliament on 21 December 1954 suggests that he had arrived in New Delhi with surprisingly developed ideas about "peaceful co-existence" and "non-engagement." His first trip to Asia and the discussions he had with Nehru facilitated a further, comprehensive conceptualization of these ideals. As Tito and Nehru confirmed seven months later in a communiqué signed at the end of Nehru's reciprocating visit to Belgrade, in early July 1955, the New Delhi joint statement provided the first platform for the mobilization of non-engaged countries around the policy of "active peaceful coexistence" and "non-commitment" to the two main Cold War alignments.⁸³ The platform offered a common identity and purpose to Third World countries. Of particular significance, the document appeared on the eve of Nehru's trip to the Bandung conference preparatory meeting in Djakarta. The joint statement invited African and Asian countries to join Tito and Nehru in the implementation of the principles they had promulgated as the norms in international relations.

Nehru and Tito were often accused of moralizing and of grandiloquence for tirelessly promoting non-commitment, activism, and peaceful coexistence. However, these concepts were a product of a judicious rationalization of the existing international system and the adverse environment within which

82. Transcript of talks held between the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal J. B. Tito and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship *Mindon*, 14 January 1955, at 15:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

83. Joint Statement by the Prime Minister of India and the President of FPRY [Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia], Brioni, Yugoslavia, 6 July 1955, in AJ, 837, I-3-a/38-9.

Third World countries were striving to safeguard their independence. Nehru and Tito used these terms to articulate real political aims and goals. From their first meeting, the two leaders promoted activism and the need for non-engaged countries to have a say on all international issues. The only way to ensure that the voice of Third World countries would be loud enough was by joining together in a common position on global issues. The two leaders believed that only then would their countries, as well as the Third World as a whole, be able to maintain independence from superpower pressure—pressure that would otherwise result in the loss of sovereignty.⁸⁴ In a similar fashion, Tito placed enormous emphasis on economic and military cooperation, giving these issues a prominent place in all his talks and in the documents and statements signed during his Asian and subsequent trips. As he ceaselessly pointed out, underdevelopment meant perpetuation of dependence on colonial masters and superpowers. Mutual economic cooperation and trade was for Third World non-engaged countries the only tool they had at their disposal to overcome this dependency. To fend off superpower pressure and meddling in their internal affairs, the Third World countries also had to boost their defense capabilities. Military collaboration and self-reliance minimized dependence on arms procurement from the superpowers, further limiting their influence. Ultimately, development, modernization, and mutual cooperation were conduits to independence.

The struggle for peace was another concept that Tito and Nehru repeatedly and prominently championed, and it became a central part of their initiative. Contrary to cynical interpretations, it was not used as a merely as a rhetorical justification for their policies. Rather, it was of practical significance, with profound political implications. Peace was also one of the precepts of their initiative that most clearly demanded “active” engagement. They were convinced that weak Third World countries would become the first victims of a superpower confrontation, whether directly or through proxy, as the Korean War had just demonstrated. Tito warned U Nu: “We believe that the division of the World into Blocs will, in not too distant future, lead to a conflict. Although in the end it would be a catastrophe for the whole World, this conflict would, first and foremost, swallow and destroy small countries.”⁸⁵ A crucial justification for placing the pursuit of peace at the center of the new political philosophy was the simple fact that a nuclear war would result in catastrophic destruction for everyone. The Third World

84. Speech by the President of the Republic in the Federal People’s Assembly, 7 March 1955, in AJ, 837, II-5-b-1.

85. Transcript of talks held between the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal J. B. Tito, and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship *Mindon*, 14 January 1955, at 15:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

countries, representing half the world's population, had thus declared that the future of the world, its destiny, and the right to life were not a privilege of the superpowers alone but a fundamental right of all.

By overcoming his own ideological prejudices, Tito gave true meaning to the concept of coexistence between countries with different ideological affiliations and political systems. His trip to India and Burma and particularly his conversations with Nehru helped Tito to form a new outlook on the Third World countries and to overcome the ideologically colored preconceptions he previously held. This was also the reason he was so eager to counter allegations in the Western media that he would use the trip to India and Burma to promote Soviet penetration in the region. As evidenced by the Yugoslav records of the conversations with Nehru and U Nu, Tito did precisely the opposite. On more than one occasion, he warned his hosts that the Soviet Union, and China in the future, aimed to dominate other countries as much as the traditional colonial powers and the United States did. Tito understood that his hosts, recently liberated from the colonial yoke, regarded the Soviet Union and China as benign powers. Departing further from his own ideological constraints, Tito did not hesitate to condemn the obstructive role played by the domestic Communist parties, particularly the Communist-led insurgency in Burma. The Yugoslav became convinced that both India and Burma were on the road to create better societies in accordance with their traditions and specific conditions. He also recognized rudimentary socialist elements within the economic and political systems these countries were trying to build.⁸⁶ Consequently, Tito urged Khrushchev during the latter's visit to Yugoslavia in May and June 1955 to reconsider existing Soviet policies toward countries such as India and Burma. He insisted that these countries represented a "reservoir of socialism," explaining that there were clear elements of socialism with individual characteristics in both India and Burma. Tito asked Khrushchev to stop aiding the Communist parties there. He contended that these parties were small and obscure and, as was the case in Burma, were fighting a guerrilla war against the existing government with little or no popular support.⁸⁷ When U Nu visited Belgrade barely a week after Khrushchev left, Tito could inform him of the advice he had given to Soviet leaders. He reiterated his belief that the local Communist parties in India and Burma were not only "distanced from their own people and are engaged in destructive activities" but have "practically joined forces with the most reactionary

86. Speech by the President of the Republic in the Federal People's Assembly, 7 March 1955, in AJ, 837, II-5-b-1.

87. Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 27–28 May, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 507/IX; and Transcript of Yugoslav-Soviet talks in Belgrade, 2 June 1955, in AJ, ACK SKJ, 119/I-56.

circles” in their countries.⁸⁸ Tito’s ability to transcend his own ideological affiliation made him a trusted interlocutor of the Third World leaders and a mediator in their disputes.

The maturing of the Yugoslav approach to non-commitment that happened during the trip to India and Burma enabled Tito to enrich and flesh out the concept of “active peaceful coexistence.” Of particular significance was the fact that he introduced globalism and universalism to the hitherto Asia-focused concept of neutralism. He believed that, in the era when the Cold War order and superpower rivalry had become global, issues such as peace, the threat of nuclear war, colonialism, development, and independence were also global. They were of concern to all—big or small, poor or rich, developed or underdeveloped. They were also a responsibility and, more important, a universal right belonging to all. As he stressed to U Nu, “Asia is not a distant world to us, although we are geographically separated.”⁸⁹ Tito introduced universality and activism to Nehru’s regionalism and proclivity to dignified but passive neutralism. The rapport established between the two leaders helped to merge neutralism and pacifism, already inherent in traditional Indian religious and cultural identity, with European activism, nationalism, and individualism. This helped transform non-commitment from a vague concept into a global phenomenon that over time attracted a growing number of decolonized and underdeveloped countries. This was to become Tito’s and Nehru’s lasting legacy.

The visit to India enabled Tito and Nehru to create a unique rapport that proved beneficial for both sides. They developed a congruence of views based on trust and respect, admiration for each other’s political wisdom, and confidence in each other’s intellectual competence and ability to analyze and understand international issues and developments. From the outset, the two leaders felt free to talk openly and in full confidence. At their first meeting, Tito revealed to Nehru the existence of the secret correspondence with the Soviet Union.⁹⁰ Three days later, Tito disclosed something he had hitherto kept only to himself and his closest aides—the fact that Moscow had just proposed a meeting between the Yugoslav and Soviet leaders and that he intended

88. Record of talks between the President of FRPY, Marshal Josip Broz Tito, and the President of the Government of the Burmese Union, U Nu, held at the White Palace in Belgrade, 19 June 1955, in AJ, 837, I-3-a/15-5.

89. Transcript of talks held between the President of Yugoslavia, Marshal J. B. Tito, and the Prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, on board the ship *Mindon*, 14 January 1955, at 15:30, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

90. Memorandum of the conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 18 December 1954, at 12:00 p.m., at the residence of the Indian Prime Minister, in AJBT, KPR, I-2/4-2.

to accept this offer, regardless of the Western reaction.⁹¹ Tito's attentiveness, respect, and willingness to seek Nehru's advice, as manifested during their meetings, were unique. Tito's relationships with other Third World leaders in later years, even the bond he enjoyed with Gamal Abdel Nasser, could not match the partnership Tito forged with Nehru. During their meeting on 21 December, Tito confided to Nehru that the Chinese had secretly approached the Yugoslav embassy in Moscow to propose the establishment of diplomatic relations. Tito was initially determined to delay responding to the Chinese approaches, but when Nehru advised against it, Tito promised to reconsider his decision. On 2 January, while Tito was still in India, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Popović sent a response to Zhou's telegram of 14 December confirming Yugoslavia's agreement to the establishment of diplomatic relations. Yugoslav documents also confirm that Tito and Nehru held extensive discussions outside their formal meetings, before or after public functions, often on the terraces of their residences. The joint statement, unusually for such a document, stressed the informal character of their exchanges. It is truly remarkable that two statesmen of such divergent upbringing and such different cultural and ideological backgrounds could have shared so much in common. What had brought together an Indian patrician, educated at the elitist Harrow and Cambridge University and committed to parliamentary democracy, and a peasant-turned-metal-worker from remote Zagorje who was a committed Communist-internationalist? How could two such different individuals find a cause they would jointly and so determinedly endeavor to fulfill? The only possible response is also the one that best explains the appeal of their initiative to so many across the Third World: the true universality and timelessness of the goals and principles the two leaders committed themselves to defend and implement. The unique rapport between Tito and Nehru, forged during the Yugoslav leader's first visit to India, became a driving force in the creation and existence of the NAM until Nehru's death in 1964.

Finally, what can explain Tito's charisma, and why was he so well received in the Third World from the very beginning? This question is often posed with regard to Yugoslavia and its president's role in the creation of the NAM, and several explanations may be offered. First, Tito's carried with him the distinctive aura of the leader of a successful resistance and national liberation movement, something that appealed to Third World people and politicians alike. Many of them had only recently emerged from an anti-colonial struggle or war of liberation. Tito also had the ability to listen and to award his interlocutors with the attention and respect they craved as the leaders of newly lib-

91. Memorandum of the conversation between the President and the Prime Minister of India, J. Nehru, in New Delhi, 21 December 1954, in *AJBT*, KPR, I-2/4-2.

erated countries. He could articulate their desire for independence and dignity because he shared it. He was sincere, and they recognized it. Furthermore, he came from a small country that had dared to stand up to a superpower and had emerged unscathed. The myth of David and Goliath never ceases to inspire the weak and the deprived.⁹² Being independent of both superpowers, Tito could freely voice his views on any international issue. More importantly, he was seen as someone who was successfully promoting and defending his country's own interests. Within a short period of time Tito had successfully led a devastated and economically underdeveloped country toward modernization and commendable economic development and military strength. Last but not least, Tito championed the new political, cultural, and racial awareness toward the Asian and African countries. This was even more accentuated because he came from Europe, home to the traditional colonial powers. In a way, he was the first white European who did not come to subjugate and arrived instead as an equal, professing independence and mutual respect.

92. Association with this parable did not escape Alvin Z. Rubinstein when describing Tito's reception in Burma. See Rubinstein, *Yugoslavia and the Non-aligned World*, p. 58.