

## From Regional Role to Global Undertakings: Yugoslavia in the Early Cold War

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### INTRODUCTION

In 1945, Yugoslavia constituted itself as a socialist state. Its legitimacy derived from the most successful anti-Nazi resistance movement, under its charismatic leader, Josip Broz Tito, and the autochthonous social revolution carried out during the war of liberation. In the new reality of the world following a second global conflict, with the emerging ideological confrontation between two social systems, socialist and liberal capitalist, Yugoslavia firmly allied itself with its ideological paragon, Stalin's Soviet Union. Within three years, however, Tito and the Yugoslav leadership had rebelled against Moscow's tutelage, setting the stage for the first paradigm shift of the Cold War. The 1948 Soviet–Yugoslav break-up blurred, and eventually challenged, the fault lines of the Cold War. This chapter provides insight into how the policies of Yugoslavia and its leader, Tito, during the nascent Cold War contributed to paradigm shifts affecting the dynamics and structure of the Cold War system. It will focus on geo-strategic implications, namely the 1948 Yugoslav–Soviet break-up, the Yugoslav military realignment that followed the split and the creation of

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the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which aspired to challenge the Cold War bipolarity. In exercising disproportionate activism in the international system, Yugoslavia was the only country of the region that harboured the ambition to play a global role. Its leadership saw it as the means to safeguard the country's independence and security.

### THE 1948 YUGOSLAV-SOVIET CONFRONTATION

According to Tito's biographer, Vladimir Dedijer, during the second half of 1947, the Yugoslav leader received confidential warnings about the 'preparations for Stalin's all-out attack against Yugoslavia and him personally'. The sources were trusted friends from his pre-Second World War Comintern days, whose names Tito never divulged. In early February 1948, the uncharacteristically worried and tired Tito confided in Dedijer that he had received information about the removal of his portraits across Rumania.<sup>1</sup> To the Yugoslav leader, who had witnessed Stalin's purges in Moscow in 1938, these signs were ominous enough to convince him to avoid attending the 10 February meeting in Moscow, to which he and the Bulgarian leader Georgi Dimitrov had suddenly been summoned by Stalin. Instead, Tito dispatched his second-in-command, Edvard Kardelj. During the meeting at the Kremlin, Stalin attacked the Bulgarians and Yugoslavs for neglecting to consult Moscow on foreign policy issues. He singled out the questions of the Balkan federation, the alleged deployment of two Yugoslav Army divisions in Albania, and Sofia and Belgrade's continuing assistance to the Greek Communists. The following night, Kardelj was unceremoniously awoken at 2 a.m. to be driven to Molotov's office to sign a formal agreement compelling Yugoslavs to consult Moscow on all foreign-policy issues.<sup>2</sup>

On 22 February, a few days after Kardelj's return, Moscow informed Belgrade of the indefinite postponement of the Yugoslav-Soviet trade negotiations in Moscow that had already been stalled for more than a month. On 18 and 19 March, Tito received two *démarches* from Moscow announcing the withdrawal of all Soviet military and civil advisers from Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> He immediately dispatched a letter to Molotov arguing that the cited reason for the withdrawal, the lack of Yugoslav cooperation, was nothing but a malicious fabrication.<sup>4</sup> Moscow's response came in a letter dated 27 March, signed by Stalin and Molotov. The speed of the response suggested that it had been prepared in advance. The letter accused the Yugoslav leadership, among other things, of initiating slan-

derous remarks against the USSR and of repudiating Marxism-Leninism by abandoning the principles of the class struggle and the commanding role of the Party.<sup>5</sup> On 8 April, a resolution of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Party backed Moscow's accusations. This confirmed to Tito that Stalin had unleashed a campaign against him and the Yugoslav Communist Party.<sup>6</sup>

On 12 April, a closed session of the Yugoslav Communist Party Central Committee supported a response drafted by Tito, which began with the statement that 'no matter how much one loved the first country of Socialism, the USSR, one must not love less his own country'. It further qualified the Soviet accusations as 'monstrous and false' and accused the Soviet intelligence agencies of recruiting Yugoslav officials, a practice that the Yugoslav leadership found incongruent with 'socialist fraternal relations'.<sup>7</sup> During the next two months and in absolute secrecy, Moscow and Belgrade exchanged accusations, counter-accusations, and denials. As anticipated, during April, all Eastern European Communist parties sent letters to Belgrade endorsing Stalin's accusations.

The confrontation between Moscow and Belgrade became manifest on 28 June 1948 with the publication of a resolution at the end of the Cominform meeting held in Bucharest. It declared the expulsion of the Yugoslav Communist Party from the organization. The resolution accused Tito and the Yugoslav leadership of implementing policies aimed against the Soviet Union and the VKP(b) and for having abandoned Marxism-Leninism. It openly called upon 'the healthy elements in the Communist Party of Yugoslavia [CPY]' to replace Tito and his closest associates with a 'new, internationalist leadership'.<sup>8</sup> In response, Tito and the Yugoslav administration mobilized the Yugoslav Communist Party by convening its Fifth Congress at the end of July, the first since 1940, which 'approved the position of the Central Committee [CC] of the CPY' and declared the Cominform accusations to be 'untrue, incorrect, and unjust'.<sup>9</sup> The fault lines of the Yugoslav-Soviet conflict were thus drawn.<sup>10</sup>

The Soviet-Yugoslav rupture and excommunication of the Yugoslav Party and its leader became a sensation on both sides of the Iron Curtain, among politicians and the public alike. Between 1945 and 1948, the Yugoslav regime was regarded as the most radical and most loyal Moscow ally in Eastern Europe. At the formative meeting of the Cominform, in September 1947, Stalin accredited Yugoslav representatives with spearheading the 'critique' against the French and Italian Communist parties, and Belgrade was selected as the seat of the new Communist organization.

True to its radical credentials, Tito's regime blindly replicated the Soviet system in Yugoslavia.

The break-up of relations between Moscow and Belgrade was total. Yugoslavia was immediately subjected to unprecedented pressure from the Soviet Union and Peoples' Democracies. Within days of the Cominform resolution, Moscow and its satellites cancelled the existing agreements with Yugoslavia on economic, military, or cultural cooperation.<sup>11</sup> By the end of 1948, the Soviet Union and Peoples' Democracies had imposed a total economic blockade on a country that suffered some of the worst destruction and loss of life in Europe during the Second World War.<sup>12</sup> To make matters worse, between 1945 and 1948, the Yugoslav leadership had made its economy fully dependent on Soviet assistance.<sup>13</sup> Moscow and its allies also unleashed a vicious propaganda war against Belgrade.<sup>14</sup> The satellite regimes initiated an unprecedented wave of purges against 'Titoists'. Between 1948 and 1955, forty high-profile trials against leading party and state officials were staged in People's Democracies. Equally, thousands of local communist party members, intellectuals and ordinary citizens were tried based on fabricated charges and, as a result, interned or executed.<sup>15</sup> By far the biggest threat to the Yugoslav leadership was the prospect of Soviet and satellite military invasion. Yugoslavia was subjected to daily military provocations and the infiltration of armed groups from the neighbouring satellite countries. Between 1948 and 1953, 7,877 such border incidents were recorded, of which 142 were characterized as 'substantive' armed clashes. They continued for two years after Stalin's death, until the Soviet-Yugoslav normalization in 1955.<sup>16</sup>

Most historians blame Tito's 'national Communism' or his foreign policy adventurism, namely the deployment of Yugoslav troops in Albania and Tito's plan to create a Balkan federation with Bulgaria for the Soviet-Yugoslav break-up. The alleged unauthorized deployment of a Yugoslav division in Albania, in fact referred to Belgrade's agreement, in principle, to consider Albania's request for military assistance against possible attack by Greek government forces. At the time of the Moscow meeting, in February 1948, the division in question was still in preparation in Yugoslav Macedonia, and Tito intended to inform Moscow before any actual deployment was ordered.<sup>17</sup> After expulsion from the Cominform, the Yugoslav leadership became convinced that Hoxha's request had been contrived in Moscow to substantiate later accusations against Tito.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the issue of the Balkan federation was an equally speculative accusation, as it never came close to implementation. At the end of their meetings in Yugoslavia,

in August 1947 and a few months later in Bulgaria, Tito and Dimitrov officially dismissed the idea as premature. Stalin's harassment of Dimitrov and Kardelj during the February 1948 meeting on this issue and accusations of insubordination can only be understood as part of constructing a case against Tito. How else could one interpret Stalin's complete position reversal, at the end of the meeting, when he insisted that the federation should be created immediately?<sup>19</sup> Last but not least, historical evidence unequivocally confirms that Tito embarked on his 'own road to Socialism' only *after* the break-up with Stalin.

Further to the available evidence, this author is of the opinion that the Yugoslav-Soviet break-up was part of Stalin's plan to create a monolithic Communist 'camp'. The case against Tito and the list of accusations in Stalin and Molotov's letter of 27 March 1948 were drafted in a memorandum by the Foreign Policy Department of the Soviet Central Committee and submitted to the Soviet leadership on 18 March. On 5 April, the very same department had submitted a similar memorandum of accusations against the Polish Workers Party and its leader, Władysław Gomułka. Both memorandums had 'evidently been prepared on Soviet leadership's orders'.<sup>20</sup> Not by accident, the attack against Tito coincided with the February 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia. All seemed part of Stalin's strategy, pursued after autumn 1947, to consolidate his grip on Eastern Europe.<sup>21</sup> The attack on Tito, as the 'enemy within', legitimized purges throughout Eastern Europe, which secured Stalin's control over the local parties and leaderships, much as the purges in 1938 made it possible for him to consolidate his absolute authority within the Soviet Union. At the July 1955 Plenum of the Soviet Party Central Committee, the President of the Soviet Council of Ministers, Nikolai Bulganin, echoed by the Soviet Party leader, Nikita Khrushchev, confirmed that Stalin fabricated the 'sins' of which Tito was accused.<sup>22</sup>

The Yugoslav-Soviet rupture in 1948 and the ensuing 'Yugoslav road to Socialism' destroyed the ideological uniformity of Stalinism. They challenged Stalin's authority and created the first schism in the post-October 1917 history of the international Communist movement. However, the 1948 split did help Stalin fulfill his goal. The process of the 'Sovietization' of Moscow's satellites and the imposition of the Kremlin's unchallenged hegemony was indeed achieved more easily following the break-up with Yugoslavia and Tito's excommunication. In the long run, however, the 1948 Soviet-Yugoslav confrontation had a corrosive impact on the Soviet bloc and weakened the international communist movement. Its impact on

the dynamics of the early Cold War were mainly negative for the Soviet Union.

### YUGOSLAVIA'S MILITARY REALIGNMENT

A strategic consequence of the 1948 split was Yugoslavia's military realignment with the West. There can be little doubt that the ideologically formatted Yugoslav leadership had to undergo serious soul-searching over a period of time before they could contemplate and brave the leap from a rigid ideological mindset into a pragmatist mould. What helped this transformation were mounting threats representing a clear and present danger to the very existence of the Yugoslav regime. The first warning was the Soviet Note of August 1949, which threatened the use of 'other means' against Belgrade. This was followed by a campaign of high-profile trials in the People's Democracies bordering Yugoslavia against top-ranking leaders, namely the short trials and executions on 15 October of László Rajk, the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and on 17 December of Traicho Kostov, President of the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. Following the Soviet Note in August, the Yugoslav government immediately began preparations for partisan warfare against possible Soviet invasion. Secret bases and underground ammunition bunkers were built, and industrial plants in the interior of the country underwent transformation to war production. By 1950, 22 per cent of the Yugoslav GDP was being allocated for defence purposes, a staggering sacrifice for an economy that had already been brought to its knees after the imposition of the Soviet blockade.<sup>23</sup>

What truly alarmed the Yugoslav leaders was when, on 25 October 1950, Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River into Korea and Mao launched an open war against the US. Tito and his comrades understood this as a decoy for Stalin's attack on Yugoslavia, in particular when it was soon followed by the second Cominform resolution on 29 November, ominously entitled 'The Yugoslav Communist Party in the hands of murderers and spies', which openly called on the Yugoslav people to 'liquidate' Tito and his 'fascist clique'.<sup>24</sup> Within a week, the Yugoslav leadership decided to do the unthinkable—seek military assistance from the US.<sup>25</sup> Tito's confidant and wartime Partisan commander-turned-diplomat, Vladimir Velebit, was entrusted in December 1950 to initiate secret talks in Washington regarding the procurement of US military aid.<sup>26</sup> The US administration's positive response led to the Yugoslav Chief of Staff, General Koča Popović's offi-

cial visit to Washington within six months, in June 1951.<sup>27</sup> The formal Yugoslav-US military assistance agreement was signed on 14 November 1951, in Belgrade. Under article V of the agreement, Yugoslavia accepted a number of US military personnel.<sup>28</sup> In the next few years, the number of US military advisers attached to the Yugoslav Army, from the General Staff to individual units, would reach several thousand. In a complete break from the ideological legacy, political commissars in the Yugoslav Army units were abolished.<sup>29</sup> Between 1950 and 1955, Yugoslavia received approximately US\$1.5 billion of Western aid, half of which was military assistance.<sup>30</sup> Although the US supplied the bulk of military equipment, some also came from the UK and France. As a result, a tripartite committee (US, Britain, France) was established, which met regularly with the Yugoslav Army General Staff to discuss weapons requirements and deliveries, and coordinate Yugoslav defence planning with that of NATO. Yugoslavia, once the staunchest of Stalin's allies, became an important component of NATO's south-east European defence system.

The Belgrade meeting between the tripartite military delegation, headed by US General Thomas T. Handy and the Yugoslav General Staff on 16–20 November 1952 proved momentous. During the meeting, Yugoslavia insisted on receiving from General Handy reassurances about US security guarantees. Significantly, this was triggered by General Handy's remark, at the beginning of the talks of acceptability of a 'localized' war in Europe in case of Soviet attack.<sup>31</sup> The prospect of becoming another Korea was anathema to the Yugoslavs. One of the key premises of Yugoslav military cooperation with the West was their conviction that it was the joint US and Western deterrent that had so far prevented Stalin from invading Yugoslavia. In addition, it appears that for some time the Yugoslav intelligence had been receiving information about rapid rearmament and manifold increases in troop levels in neighbouring Soviet satellite countries, coupled with an increased frequency of military manoeuvres on Yugoslavia's borders.<sup>32</sup>

To Belgrade's dismay, the November meeting with the tripartite delegation ended inconclusively, prompting an immediate and dramatic Yugoslav reappraisal of their defence strategy. For almost a year prior to the meeting, Yugoslavs had remained deaf to Greek initiatives for the improvement of relations and joint security arrangements. However, only a day after General Handy left Belgrade, Yugoslav Defence Ministry officials informed the Greek Military Attaché in Belgrade that the 'stage [was] set for substantial developments'.<sup>33</sup> A Turkish military delegation

that visited Belgrade on 20 December found Yugoslavs eager to discuss a tripartite Greek–Turkish–Yugoslav military alliance. A few days later, a high-level Yugoslav Army delegation visited Greece making the same proposal.<sup>34</sup> What followed was an unprecedented Yugoslav diplomatic offensive. Within a fortnight, at the end of January 1953, the Turkish and Greek Foreign Ministers, Fuad Köprülü and Stephanos Stephanopoulos, were invited to Belgrade for extensive talks with Tito.<sup>35</sup> Two weeks later, between 17 and 20 February, Greek, Turkish and Yugoslav defence officials met in Ankara. Throughout, Yugoslavia did not spare efforts to accelerate the creation of a Balkan military alliance.<sup>36</sup> On the same day the defence experts' meeting concluded in Ankara, on 26 February, the Foreign Ministers of the three countries met in Athens and initialled the draft of the Treaty of Friendship and Assistance. Two days later, in Ankara, it was formally signed.<sup>37</sup> The agreement was, in essence, a declaration of intent and was to be followed by further negotiations leading to the signing of an official military pact.

However, the follow-up talks between the three sides stalled in the summer and early autumn of the same year. On the one hand, the US was reluctant to accept the indirect extension of NATO's article V to Yugoslavia, a member of a future Balkan pact with two NATO members, Turkey and Greece. The article stipulated the organization's obligation to provide aid in case of attack on any of its members—in fact, a US security guarantee through indirect association with NATO, while staying outside formal membership of the alliance, was precisely what lay behind the sudden Yugoslav enthusiasm for the Balkan pact.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, as the result of the Italian–Yugoslav crisis over Trieste, which exploded in early October, Italy exercised strong pressure on the US for the pact not to be signed until the resolution of the Trieste question. The negotiations over Trieste between the British and Americans on the one side, with indirect Italian presence, and the Yugoslavs on the other side, began in earnest in December 1953. By early summer of the following year, substantive progress had been made to warrant the lifting of the Italian, as well as the US objections to the signing of the Balkan military alliance. The ambiguousness of the application of article V was simply sidetracked. Consequently, the Balkan Pact between Turkey, Greece and Yugoslavia was formally signed in Bled, Yugoslavia, on 9 August 1954.

The Pact represented a truly unique occurrence in the history of the Cold War. It was a military alliance between three countries of opposed ideological affiliation—between a communist Yugoslavia and two NATO

members, Greece and Turkey, sponsored by the leader of the anti-communist global alliance, the US. Ironically, through the entanglement of the Balkan Pact and NATO, the US indirectly agreed to extend security guarantees to the Yugoslav communist regime under threat of a possible attack by the USSR. Although never officially terminated, the Balkan Pact proved short-lived. For a number of reasons, by the end of 1955, it had practically faded into obscurity. The Soviet–Yugoslav normalization, which gathered pace in 1955, eliminated the security concerns that had prompted Yugoslavia to seek military alliance with Greece and Turkey, and NATO indirectly. Furthermore, Yugoslavia's new foreign policy orientation of non-alignment became incompatible with its membership of a military alliance that was associated with NATO. Lastly, the pogrom of the Greek minority in Istanbul on 6–7 September 1955 pushed Greco-Turkish relations to a nadir from which, thanks to the recurring Cyprus problem, they never truly recovered.

The Yugoslav–Soviet confrontation in 1948 had important geostrategic implications. The Soviet invasion of Yugoslavia, a possibility until 1955, would almost certainly have escalated into a confrontation between the two military alliances. Tito rightly calculated that Stalin would not contemplate attacking Yugoslavia if convinced that it could trigger a war with the West. Between 1950 and 1955, Yugoslavia became effectively incorporated into NATO's defence system through planning coordination, massive US arms deliveries and other military assistance. Belgrade's military realignment allowed for a modification of NATO's defence strategy regarding its south-eastern flank. Tito, however, consistently rebuffed Western attempts to formally join NATO. On the one hand, he was afraid that it would destroy the chance of normalizing relations with the USSR and the pursuit of independence from either bloc. On the other hand, Tito feared the presence of NATO troops within the country that could enable the West to topple his regime.

#### CHALLENGE TO COLD WAR BIPOLARITY

Arguably, one of the most important long-term consequences of the Soviet–Yugoslav split in 1948 was the role that Yugoslavia played in the creation of a Third World movement that would challenge the bipolarity of the Cold War—the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Together with Jawaharlal Nehru of India and Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Tito was instrumental in transforming the idea of passive neutralism into a universal

movement of Third World countries with an ambition to play an active role on the global stage. Thirteen years after the 1948 event, Belgrade hosted the first meeting of the twenty-five heads of state or governments of 'un-committed' Asian, African and Latin American countries.<sup>39</sup>

The international isolation imposed by the Soviet Union and its allies after the 1948 Cominform resolution constituted one of the biggest threats to Yugoslavia's independence.<sup>40</sup> In the first years of the Cold War, it was accepted as an inescapable truth that a country that had lost the protection of its ideological 'camp' would inevitably fall prey to the other side. For a year after the 1948 split, Tito was reluctant to seek Western support, hoping for reconciliation with Stalin. Yugoslavia continued to support the Soviet Union internationally, making itself more vulnerable to Moscow's pressure. Intimidated by the threatening Soviet Note of August 1949 and the trial and execution of Laszlo Rajk in September, Belgrade finally abandoned this self-destructive position. On 12 November, at the Fourth UN General Assembly, Yugoslavia publicly accused the Soviet Union and its allies of amassing troops on the Yugoslav borders.<sup>41</sup> This represented a point of no return for Tito. At the same time, the Yugoslav leadership was convinced that the West would never reconcile itself with their socialist regime, and that the current friendly relations were a temporary marriage of convenience. Having risked so much after refuting the hegemony within their own ideological bloc, the Yugoslavs were determined to avoid the same from the other side. Tito learnt a lesson never again to rely exclusively on one bloc. In December 1949, the Party Central Committee accepted that, in future, Yugoslavia should '[be taking] advantage of the existing rivalry in the World, in order to secure its survival and further consolidation'.<sup>42</sup> The following year, Yugoslavia successfully sought election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Speaking on that occasion at the Fifth UN General Assembly, Edvard Kardelj for the first time promulgated Belgrade's un-commitment to the blocs: '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.'<sup>43</sup>

Tito and his aides understood that they would need allies to remain un-committed to the blocs. Rebuffed by Western European social democrats who were firmly committed to the North Atlantic alliance, the Yugoslavs turned to the newly independent Asian countries, in particular India and Burma. At the time, as Tito later admitted, Yugoslavs had 'very limited knowledge about these countries'.<sup>44</sup> What initially attracted Yugoslavs to

Asia was ideological proximity. Belgrade noted that the Socialist parties played a prominent role in the political life of a number of Asian countries, namely Burma, India and Indonesia. In January 1953, a high-profile Yugoslav fact-finding mission was dispatched to Asia. It attended the Asian Socialist Conference in Rangoon, Burma, and on its return, visited India. In 1950, Yugoslavia started posting its best diplomats to Asia. Their insights and information proved invaluable. As Tito acknowledged in an interview upon his return from India and Burma, in early 1955, '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?'<sup>45</sup>

Tito became particularly keen to enhance contacts with India and establish a relationship with Nehru. On a number of occasions, during 1950 and 1951, Yugoslavia and India adopted similar positions in UN discussions. The Yugoslav Foreign Ministry report on India's foreign policy, written ahead of Tito's first visit to New Delhi, pointed to several aspects that were particularly appealing to the Yugoslavs, namely that, due to its huge population, geostrategic position and rich cultural and historic heritage, India was poised to play a major role in the world, particularly in Asia.<sup>46</sup> In a confidential conversation during his first trip to India, Tito 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.'<sup>47</sup> The report also pointed out that India's foreign policy engagement and international prestige 'far exceeded its current economic and military strength'.<sup>48</sup> This supported two critical premises behind Yugoslavia's new foreign policy strategy—that a small country could play a role in global affairs beyond the limitations imposed by its economic and military resources and capabilities; and that international prominence could safeguard it from falling prey to either superpower.

However, Belgrade was in no position to pursue un-commitment and relinquish the West's protective shield, as long as the threat of a Soviet military invasion remained.<sup>49</sup> All of this changed in autumn 1954 when Khrushchev's secret initiative to normalize relations with Belgrade was confirmed as genuine.<sup>50</sup> Together with the earlier signing of the Balkan Pact and the conclusion of the long-standing feud with Italy over Trieste in October, the normalization with the Soviet Union created a favourable and stable security environment for Yugoslavia, for the first time since 1945. This allowed the Yugoslav leader, in December 1954, to embark on a long trip to Asia, in search of allies. The most important of these would

be India's Nehru and Egypt's Nasser with whom Tito established sincere friendship, trust and common political *Weltanschauung*. In the next seven years Tito and Yugoslav diplomacy would make a critical contribution to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement. Crucial to these efforts were several of Tito's long voyages to Asia and Africa, during which he would help formulate and promote the governing principles of un-commitment to blocs, as well as to befriend and mobilize a number of Third World leaders behind the idea.

On 30 November 1954, on board his yacht *Galeb*, Tito departed on a two-and-a-half-month voyage to India and Burma, his first encounter with the Third World. On his return from India, during the passage through the Suez Canal, Tito for the first time met Nasser. By far the most important achievement of the trip was the series of talks between Tito and Nehru that lasted almost a fortnight. On 21 December, Tito delivered a speech before the Indian Parliament, in which he elaborated Yugoslavia's concept of non-engagement. He identified four major threats to global stability, namely 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. Tito also underlined the need for a global rather than regional approach to the activism of non-committed countries; that non-engagement meant maintaining equidistance from either bloc; and that rapid industrialization and emancipation from old colonial masters were possible through trade and economic cooperation between the non-engaged countries.<sup>51</sup> The Joint Statement signed on 22 December, at the end of Tito and Nehru's official talks, stipulated that 'the policy of non-alignment with Blocs ... does not represent "neutrality" or "neutralism" nor passivity as is sometimes implied. It represents the positive, active and constructive policy.' The two leaders dismissed as absurd the allegation that they were intent on forming a 'Third bloc'. Most importantly, Tito and Nehru expressed hope that the 'principles of relations between countries that they have proclaimed would acquire a wider, universal implementation'.<sup>52</sup> A far-reaching result of Tito's first trip to India was the rapport and firm bond established with Nehru. Six months later, Nehru visited Yugoslavia.

During this first trip undertaken to Asia, Tito realized that the newly liberated countries of Asia possessed huge political potential. The friendship and common political outlook with Nehru helped him achieve his strategic goal of aligning Yugoslavia with a country of immense footprint in Asia and of global prestige. During the trip, Tito made a critical contribution

to the conceptualization of non-engagement by injecting activism into the concept of neutralism borne out of traditional Asian pacifism. Last but not least, his first visit to Asia was conducted barely four months before the Bandung meeting of Afro-Asian countries. It certainly helped Tito to inject Yugoslavia, a European country, into the Afro-Asian initiative and the group's aspirations to enter the global political stage. Upon his return from Asia, the CIA made an accurate projection of Yugoslavia's long-term foreign policy strategy: '[Tito] will continue to regard his 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'.<sup>53</sup>

Emboldened by the success of his first trip and realizing the importance of personal encounters, Tito undertook to meet as many Third World leaders as possible, whether during his intercontinental travels or at home. In December 1955, he visited Ethiopia and Egypt. The trip enabled Yugoslavs to acquaint themselves with Africa and the Arab world. The visit to Egypt, in particular, cemented the bond between Tito and Nasser. It was, however, the two-day meeting in July 1956 between Tito, Nehru and Nasser, on the Yugoslav island of Brioni that proved to be a milestone on the road to non-alignment. This tripartite meeting unequivocally denounced 'the division of [the] world into military blocs'. More importantly, the three leaders declared their readiness to set an example and provide leadership for the new Third World initiative. They pledged to maintain continuous contacts and 'exchange of opinion' and invited other countries to join them.<sup>54</sup> The Brioni declaration articulated, for the first time, the proactive un-commitment to two blocs.

To maintain the impetus created by the Brioni meeting, Tito continued to play host to scores of Third World leaders and, in December 1958, embarked on his most ambitious trip to date. During a three-month voyage, he visited seven Asian and African countries, namely Burma, Ceylon, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Sudan and the United Arab Republic (UAR). By this time, Tito's image as champion of the weak and underdeveloped was such that he received a rapturous welcome in every country he visited and was greeted as a true friend and a role model by their leaders.<sup>55</sup> During this trip, the Yugoslav leader intended to, and largely succeeded in, transforming the like-minded Third World leaders into a grouping with a common identity and a sense of kinship that would, in turn, enable them to play a more prominent role in international affairs. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was eager to encourage the transformation of the Afro-Asian Bandung identity into a global initiative in which, as a European

country, it could play a pre-eminent role. At the time Tito undertook this trip, the Soviet bloc and China had launched a new, vicious anti-Yugoslav campaign, aimed at isolating the country internationally and in particular in the Third World. Belgrade understood that strengthening its international standing through activism in the Third World would safeguard its un-commitment and successfully rebuff renewed efforts from the East to isolate it.

The official talks with his hosts and communiqués issued at the end of his visits reaffirmed the common commitment to basic principles binding the un-committed states—respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in other nations' internal affairs, non-aggression and the equality of all nations and races. Tito was particularly eager to reaffirm peaceful coexistence, which he deemed crucial for the building of trust among the un-committed states and their stronger bonding. With the leaders he met, Tito worked hard to achieve a shared outlook on international affairs and, thus promote common un-committed countries' positions on global issues. He also successfully argued that un-commitment was not passive neutralism, but active participation in the resolution of global crises. Crucially, Tito successfully impressed upon his hosts that true un-commitment encompassed a distance from both blocs and that the Soviets and the Chinese were as prone to political domination and economic exploitation of small countries, as were the Western powers. As one British diplomat commented at the time,

we feel that [the Yugoslav influence] can be particularly useful in so far as it is directed towards making clear to their Asian friends the true nature of Russian Communism ... Ideas of this kind are much more likely to make an impression on the Asian mind if they are put forward by the Yugoslavs than if they come from Westerners.<sup>56</sup>

Tito's Afro-Asian tour in 1958–9 enhanced his image as a world figure and contributed towards the new awareness among the Third World countries of the role they could play in international affairs.

The new activism of the un-committed countries received recognition during the September 1960 fifteenth UN General Assembly. The Big Four Paris summit's collapse in May and the deepening Congo crisis had dangerously escalated Cold War tensions. This threatened the extraor-

dinary momentum of the African de-colonization and independence movements. Seventeen African ex-colonies were admitted to the UN during this General Assembly and almost without exception, they declared un-commitment to the major power blocs. An African leader, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, emerged as a prominent champion of the cause. The un-committed alliance declared their intent to strengthen the role of the UN General Assembly vis-à-vis the Security Council where the big powers had the power of veto, and to advance their presence in the international arena. The Tito–Nehru–Nasser axis, with the help of Sukarno and Nkrumah, rallied the Third World leaders behind them. This mobilization introduced a new force inside the UN.

The Third World leaders' dynamism and sense of common purpose demonstrated at the fifteenth UN General Assembly laid the ground for the organization of the first gathering of the heads of states and governments of the twenty-five non-engaged countries at the Belgrade Conference in September 1961. The Conference adopted several documents: A Declaration by the Heads of State or Government of Non-engaged Countries; a Statement Concerning the Danger of War; and an Appeal for Peace. The leaders also sent identical letters to President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev. The Conference discussed all of the pertinent issues in the world and, despite some expressed differences among the participants, managed to garner agreement on the adopted documents. Although largely ignored by both blocs, each accusing the Conference of bias against them, the Belgrade gathering established the non-engaged states as a significant force in international affairs and paved the way for their future closer association.

Although the Belgrade Conference represented a true milestone for the future institutionalization of the un-committed countries, the fate of the Non-Aligned Movement was by no means secure. The Sino-Soviet split and the Cuban Missile Crisis represented a serious test for the nascent movement. Furthermore, China's radical challenge to the two superpowers' dominance and efforts to impose itself as the leader of the Third World threatened to sabotage the continuity of the gatherings of the non-engaged states. The road to the second Conference in Cairo, in 1964, was fraught with difficulties and, until the very last moment, was uncertain to take place. The next Conference was held in Lusaka, in 1970, a full six years after Cairo. Nehru died in 1964 and after the debacle of the Six-Day War in 1967, Nasser's prestige and standing in the Arab world



and among the non-aligned countries was but a shadow of what it used to be. By the end of the 1960s, the triumvirate of the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement had ceased to exist. It was left to Tito to carry the baton during the further challenges that the Movement faced throughout the 1970s, not least the 1973 oil crisis and the superpowers' (in particular the Soviet Union's) renewed attempts to draw the movement into its orbit. Several prominent members of the Movement, particularly Cuba, Vietnam and, for a limited period, Algeria were only too keen to do Moscow's bidding. This coincided with the efforts within the Movement to create bodies that would enhance its cohesion and effectiveness. At the Fourth Conference in Algiers in 1973, the Coordination Bureau was established with the task of coordinating the Movement's activities between the conferences, which were now occurring at regular three-year intervals.

During the 1970s, Tito, the only surviving founding father of the Movement, was often forced to use his authority to stave off attempts to align it with the Soviet bloc. Despite being an octogenarian and frail, Tito attended the fifth Conference in Colombo, in 1976, and the sixth in Havana, in September 1979, only eight months before his death. Havana was the stage for Tito's last but critical contribution to the Movement. Using all his authority, he managed to mobilize the vast majority of the attending representatives to repel Castro's attempts to draw the Movement closer to Moscow. In his last appearance among the non-aligned, Tito managed to preserve the true spirit of the Movement. During the two decades after the Belgrade Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, which officially adopted this name only at the Conference in Colombo in 1976, grew to 91 member states, the most numerous grouping of countries outside the UN. During its heyday, until the mid-1980s, the Movement consistently and persuasively fought for the democratization of international relations and representation of the small and the underdeveloped Third World countries. The Movement managed to put on the international agenda a number of issues of vital concern to the world's 'silent' majority, namely decolonization, threats to peace, disarmament, the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the promotion of the New International Economic Order, the creation of the New World Information and Communication Order, and South-South Cooperation.

## CONCLUSION

Although arguably understated in historiography, Yugoslavia exerted a disproportional influence on the dynamics of the early Cold War for a number of reasons. The decision of the Yugoslav leadership to resist subjugation by Moscow in 1948 destroyed the accepted truth at the time that the Soviet bloc was an implacable monolith. Resistance to Moscow's relentless economic, political and propaganda pressure and the constant threat of invasion became a life and death struggle for Tito's regime pushing it to seek economic and, in particular, military assistance from the West. Given the ideological incompatibility between Yugoslavia and the West, this unnatural association represented a paradigm shift in the nascent Cold War. Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Soviet fold forced its leadership to seek new premises to underpin their socialist identity and legitimacy. Tito and his comrades introduced a socialist model that was not only incompatible with but also challenged the existing Stalinist model. The so-called 'Yugoslav road to socialism' despite the Communist Party's political monopoly, did offer a more democratic socialism, based on social rather than state ownership and the participation of workers through a Yugoslav theoretical innovation—the system of self-management. In the long run, the Yugoslav alternative would prove corrosive for the Soviet ideological hegemony, first and foremost in Eastern Europe but also within the global communist movement. Moreover, the Yugoslav example proved attractive to many Third World countries seeking a model of rapid industrialization and socialist economy without the Soviet tutelage.

Expulsion from one bloc made Yugoslavs deeply averse to the idea of tying their fate with another. Within a few years after 1948 and, as soon as the danger of Soviet attack diminished, Yugoslavia embarked on the creation of what, at the time, was a unique position of un-commitment to either bloc. Aware that such a position, in the long run, would be untenable if Yugoslavia remained alone, Tito and his governing administration actively searched for allies. In this quest, he established a unique rapport and congruence of views on global affairs with India's Nehru and Egypt's Nasser. Later joined by Indonesia's Sukarno and Ghana's Nkrumah, the three leaders became the founding fathers of the Non-Aligned Movement, a wide gathering of Third World countries seeking a voice in international affairs. Tito's personal activism and diplomacy contributed critically to this goal. The Movement created a lasting challenge to the rigid Cold War bipolarity. Following the split with Moscow in 1948, through its interna-