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Radoslav Stojanovic

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

The Emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement: A View From Belgrade

*by Radoslav Stojanovic**

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the non-aligned movement in the international arena has attracted a myriad of critical commentaries. The constraints of space and time are not conducive to a thorough analysis of the various schools of thought which have developed. Therefore, this article will present the theory of non-alignment espoused by the Yugoslav school. What follows is a view of non-alignment's emergence animated by Yugoslavia's intimate involvement with the movement.

Non-alignment is a modern political phenomenon with roots in the post-World War II bipolar world. It is a protean movement; assuming as many forms as there are countries adhering to its principles, and evolving in response to the constant flux of the modern, international order. Attempts to define and to analyze the movement are handicapped by the biases of contemporary scholars writing without the benefit of reflection, and with the difficulty of encapsulating a dynamic movement evolving as it reacts to events in a dynamic world.

The task is Herculean but not impossible, and certainly not without its rewards. Several coherent themes emerge from careful study of non-alignment's effect on international relations. More importantly, this novel phenomenon promises to cultivate optimism as the volatile bipolar system yields, albeit grudgingly, to a new international pluralism.

II. DISCUSSION

The definitional problem derives primarily from the historic equation of non-alignment with neutrality. The fires of this misconception were fueled by the neutral posture assumed by several non-aligned nations after World War II and the use of such terms as "positive neutrality" and "active neutrality" by non-aligned leaders in describing their countries.

* Professor, International Relations, Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

However, non-alignment and neutrality are two separate and distinct concepts.

Neutrality is a legally defined phenomenon which presupposes the existence of an international agreement between nations. Non-alignment, on the other hand, springs from the unilateral act of a state declaring itself independent of the predominating spheres of international influence. Both movements are characterized by certain aspects of non-participation in conflicts between other states. However, unlike their neutral counterparts, non-aligned nations do not eschew third-party conflicts. On the contrary, they align themselves against the enemies of peaceful relations in the world community. Non-alignment embraces the collective security system of the United Nations and supports the U.N.'s peace-keeping efforts.¹ Thus, non-aligned nations are "neutral" only in the sense that they avoid alliance with either the Soviet or Western political blocs in peacetime.

This firm stance of independence from the two competing political-military alliances is the essential element of non-alignment. Commentators have identified several additional explanations for the movement's development including: racial tension, resistance to 19th century colonial empires, and an attempt to elicit aid from the two blocs through flirtatious behavior. The popular press seems to have adopted this last rationale, thus engendering a general distrust and intolerance of the non-aligned nations from the Soviet and Western blocs has been insignificant. Serious observers agree that political independence, the most valued and valuable possession of states, is the *sine qua non* of non-alignment.

The roots of non-alignment are many and varied. There is general agreement that the following factors played a significant interactive role in the development of the non-aligned movement: decolonization, the economic underdevelopment of newly formed states, polarized international relations, and the U.N. international security system. The unraveling of colonial empires produced a plethora of new political units, each eager to exercise its independence. The colonial powers attempted to maintain their hegemony through armed intervention. Their efforts in countries such as Indonesia, Burma, Algeria, the Congo, Angola, and Mozambique proved futile. The former colonies resited with a strengthened resolve to liberate themselves from the oppression of the imperialist powers and the political system which created colonialism.

This same scenario was played out around the globe in countries as varied as Cuba, Egypt, and India. Recognizing an identity of interests,

¹ For example, non-aligned nations have taken active roles in U.N. interventions in the Congo, Egypt, and Lebanon. Such actions have served to silence critics who charge that non-alignment is immoral and utopian and constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

the new states sought closer relations, took joint action in the international order, and, ultimately, drafted a document concerning the joint international action of non-aligned countries. This document was signed by Nasser, Nehru, and Tito in 1956. Five years later the world witnessed the first conference of non-aligned nations in Belgrade with 25 states in attendance.²

Decolonization is insufficient to explain completely non-alignment. Several prominent non-aligned nations, specifically Ethiopia, some Latin American countries, and Yugoslavia, were not controlled by colonial regimes. Yugoslavia, for example, opted for non-alignment in the wake of World War II as the Soviet and Western blocs polarized, thus jeopardizing Yugoslavia's independence.³

Economic underdevelopment, which realistically precluded alliance with either political bloc, served as impetus toward the formation of the non-aligned movement. For example, if a former French colony in Africa sought economic development aid from the Western bloc, which counted France as one of its members, the new state would soon discover that its political independence was but an empty form. Not only would the state be tied economically to its former master, but to all the other members of the Western bloc as well. The alternative of alliance with the Soviet bloc offered little consolation. Although the nation could avoid the humiliation of ties to its former master, the economic autarchy of the Soviet bloc imposed too many suffocating restrictions on the fledgling economy. The emerging states adopted the pragmatic solution of exclusive economic alliance with neither bloc.

The postwar global polarization, with its emphasis on maintaining the balance of power, also contributed to the development of the non-aligned movement. The power blocs coveted the new nations as they emerged from their colonial cocoons, lest the delicate power balance shift in favor of their opponent. The developing countries, independent national units, found themselves mere objects in a political tug of war. Stretched, ripped, and ravaged by the competing blocs, they understandably repudiated the bipolar *status quo*, opting for the more assertive role in international affairs which non-alignment offered.

The fourth factor contributing to the birth of non-aligned nations was the creation of the United Nations as the champion of world peace. Extending its influence over various issues critical to international peace and security, including decolonization, the United Nations doused the

² The most recent conference was held in Havana in 1980 with 131 states participating—92 non-aligned nations, one country with "special status," 20 observing states, and 18 guest nations.

³ Yugoslavia reacted to Stalin's equation of Soviet interests with socialism by emphasizing socialism's independence from the power politics pursued in its name.

fires of several major peace-threatening crises. It fostered the emergence of non-alignment in the following additional ways: U.N. membership signified acceptance of the new states by the international community, presence at the United Nations allowed the new nations to maintain direct contact with each other thereby advancing their *rapprochement*, the United Nations provided the new nations with a forum to air their grievances in a global context further contributing to their acceptance by the international community, U.N. membership also insulated the new states from the chill of superpower attempts to isolate individual nations, and the United Nations became a forum for promoting the peace and international security crucial to the success of non-alignment.

In addition to these generally accepted factors, the Yugoslav school has identified two determinants, as yet untested empirically, which further the emergence of non-alignment. First, the developing nations do not share the cultural traditions and values of their developed counterparts. European civilization, with its Judaeo-Christian roots, embraced concepts such as power politics, balance-of-power and autarchic economics. The developing nations, particularly those immersed in the Moslem universalist concept, do not and will not adopt those Western values.

Second, the evolution of socialism beyond the Soviet bloc's conception of Marxist ideology has contributed to the growth of non-alignment. Many developing nations adopt socialist regimes to aid their economic development. However, they quickly reject attempts to equate their socialism with alliance to the Soviet's bloc's political doctrine which runs counter to the spirit of non-alignment. Thus, evolving socialism, divorced from Soviet ideology, joins the factors contributing to the developing international pluralism designated as non-alignment.

The above discussion of non-alignment suggests, in fact compels, the conclusion that non-alignment is a profound movement which transcends mere foreign policy. It cannot be denied that the concept of non-alignment underlies foreign policy decisions. Nor is it disputed that pragmatism pervades foreign relations generally. However, it should not be assumed that non-alignment is simply an application of pragmatism in foreign relations. Rather it embraces a broader set of behaviors.

Critics argue that non-alignment is not a cohesive movement because the nations are heterogeneous and unhindered by the ties of any recognized doctrine. Granted, the non-aligned countries are diverse historically, culturally, politically, and economically. However, non-alignment presumes and derives strength from the diversity of its global society members. It avoids the tragic flaw of monolithic movements—*hubris*—inspired hegemony by its most powerful members. In striking contrast to its monolithic counterparts, the non-aligned movement tends to coalesce on issues such as: seeking to change the *status quo*, bipolar world order, with which it is dissatisfied; decisions on joint

international action; and the creation of and reliance on organized mechanisms for taking such action.

Similarly, the argument that the movement lacks a unifying doctrine is ill-conceived. Non-aligned countries agree that political independence and resistance to foreign domination are the critical elements of the movement's doctrine. Admittedly, these fundamental components are expressed by the various member states in a variety of ways as they interact in the international arena. While Yugoslavia insists on active participation in international events to promote peace and cooperation.

Furthermore, the tenor of the international situation affects the variety of non-aligned responses. As international tensions relax, as in 1964 during the second non-aligned conference in Cairo, the movement reaffirms its commitment to transforming the world order through principles of peaceful co-existence and active cooperation. Although the non-aligned reaction to global events does not always appear united, it is internally consistent in its adherence to a fundamental belief in political independence and active resistance to foreign domination. The non-aligned movement is doctrinal without being doctrinaire.

A thorough empirical study of the non-aligned doctrine's role in the international sphere is beyond the scope of this comment. However, an analysis of non-alignment's effect on the current balance of power and the U.N.'s collective security system is feasible and may advance continuing dialogue on the non-aligned nations movement.

The postwar world witnessed the massive concentration of power in the ideologically opposed nations of the United States and the Soviet Union. This polarized balance of power is recognized as a most unstable international configuration since it tends ultimately to foster confrontation between powers capable of global destruction. The only safe alternative, a widening of the balance's scope known as a *loose bipolar system*, occurs when new nations emerge which the polar states are unable to draw within their orbits. When new states do not become polar satellites, potential conflict between the blocs yields unpredictability and thereby inhibits strictly bipolar aggression.

Whether the emerging non-aligned nations play or can play a tempering role in the strict bipolar configuration is precisely the issue. The new nations find themselves cast in two roles. They are still the objects of the covetous superpowers; yet they are emerging as active agents in world affairs. Their principle task is to inhibit and ultimately to prohibit any movement toward absolute polarization. The contemporary interdependence of states in regard to natural resources and geostrategic positions increases the risk of polarization as both blocs mortally fear losing access to scarce essential resources and geostrategic positions. The inordinate value the superpowers place on these two factors, as witnessed by their resolve to protect their interests at all costs, augurs, with some certainty,

armed conflict.

Arguably, the non-aligned nations may prove powerless to influence the balance of power because of their economic and military inferiority *vis à vis* the power blocs. However, the emerging nations hold several trump cards in the form of essential energy resources and geostrategic positions.⁴

Focusing strictly on geography, it is clear that the Soviet bloc maintains the superior position along the Moscow-Paris-Washington axis. The Warsaw Pact controls both the Czechoslovakian "fortress" and the Polish-German lowlands stretching to the Atlantic Ocean. Nonetheless, the Pact is vulnerable along the coast of the Eurasian land mass, where the Western bloc alliance reaches from Scandinavia to the Balkans, through the Middle East, the Indian Ocean and Japan with a powerful naval force. The balance of power in this setting appears to be at equilibrium.

A significant number of the Eurasian coastal nations are non-aligned, thus providing a buffer zone between the respective blocs. Any active shift in the allegiance of these nations toward either bloc would skew the delicate balance of power and likely prompt armed intervention by the other bloc. Thus, the geostrategic value of the non-aligned nations is significant and active maintenance of non-aligned status is critical to the existing balance of power, world peace and security.

Recent events suggest that the Soviet bloc has turned its attention to non-aligned countries again. The Moscow-Paris-Washington line of conflict has been extended full circle from Beijing-Moscow-Paris-Washington-Beijing, thus weakening the Warsaw Pact's hegemony over the Eurasian land mass. This development poses a serious threat to non-aligned nations as the Soviet bloc is faced with a choice between allowing the balance to shift in favor of the Western bloc or restoring the balance by seeking control over a free state. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1980, may indicate the course the Soviet Union has chosen. Non-aligned countries holding similar positions of geostrategic importance may well be the targets of future military force.

In the face of this imminent threat to independence, the non-aligned countries remain firm in their resolve to uphold their movement's doctrine—to maintain independence and to resist foreign domination. Their dedication to non-alignment principles is evidenced by their stands regarding the recent armed interventions of Kampuchea and Afghanistan. The pragmatic result is that the non-aligned nations support whichever bloc poses the lesser threat to their independence at any given moment.

The non-aligned countries have utilized the United Nations and its collective security system as tools through which they can actively partici-

⁴ The positioning of energy and other natural resources is beyond the scope of this analysis.

pate in global affairs. When the bipolar protagonists perceive the developing countries as pawns in their power game, the United Nations provides a forum in which non-aligned countries can cast off the role thrust upon them and operate as active, independent agents. During the Cold War era, balance-of-power politics dominated the United Nations. The advent of the first non-aligned members—India, Indonesia, Burma, and Yugoslavia—portended a change in the U.N.'s emphasis and approach to world issues as epitomized by U.N. intervention in the Korean War. The presence and action of the new U.N. member-states aided in defusing a potentially catastrophic conflict between the Soviet and Western blocs.

The dramatic expansion of the non-aligned presence in the United Nations perhaps foreshadows the displacement of balance-of-power politics by the U.N.'s collective security system. For, even when non-aligned nations were a small minority in the United Nations, they successfully dealt with several important international issues facing that body, most notably decolonization. Although it could be argued that the balance-of-power mentality motivated the superpowers' acceptance of the U.N. solution, it is clear that the impetus for decolonization and the plan for its implementation was hatched and nurtured within the U.N.'s collective security scheme. However, the non-aligned movement's recent domination of the General Assembly may prove ironic. The superpowers, unable to get their way through institutional channels, may bypass the United Nations and resort to self help measures, to the detriment of the world peace which the United Nations is designed to protect.

In addition to advocating peaceful solutions to international conflicts, the non-aligned members of the United Nations have championed efforts to increase international economic cooperation. The concept of economic development through international cooperation is prominently embodied in the U.N. Charter. Yet, the economic disparity between industrialized and developing countries threatens to paralyze international cooperation on all fronts. The non-aligned movement has consistently advocated the harmonized development of third world countries through U.N. activities.

In 1949, India proposed the establishment of an organization to finance development projects in the third world. Advocating the creation of a special U.N. fund to assist developing nations, the non-aligned movement has incorporated this proposal into all its policy statements since its formal inception in 1956.⁵ Also, the non-aligned nations played a decisive role in the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Although its efforts have achieved some success in the economic de-

⁵ Although the proposed Special United Nations Fund for Economic Development has never been adopted in full, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), established in 1966, is a welcome though inadequate substitute.

velopment area, the non-aligned movement has failed to alter fundamentally the international economic order. The task is formidable, if not insurmountable, yet the non-aligned nations persist. At the 1980 International Law Association conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavs recommended that work begin on a codification of legal principles governing a new international economic order. The effort to integrate economic cooperation goals with international law indicates that the non-aligned movement, although political in nature, recognizes that it must evolve beyond political rhetoric and establish a firm legal basis in the international arena if its goals are to become realities.

III. CONCLUSION

The health and well-being of non-alignment is not without its threats, both from outside forces and from within. Balance-of-power politics menace the movement even within the seemingly safe U.N. harbor. Continued expansion and strengthening of the non-aligned role in the United Nations is critical, though care must be exercised so as not to drive the superpowers toward self help. Moreover, the systematic erosion of the bipolar blocs' ability to exploit the United Nations for their own purposes will enhance the institution's prestige and facilitate the advancement of international peace and cooperation.

Outside the security of the United Nations, tensions are increasing in such geostrategic positions as the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia. Some non-aligned countries are succumbing to polarization, either through rhetoric or armed force. Others fight among themselves over disputed borders; their war efforts largely supported by the covetous superpowers.⁶ Although these incidents impede the movement, they appear to be aberrations. The vast majority of non-aligned nations persevere in their pursuit of the movement's fundamental principles—political independence and resistance to foreign domination.

⁶ The recent conflicts between non-aligned nations require special study beyond the scope of this analysis.