The Role of the Neutrals and Non-Aligned in the Global Cold War, 1949-1989

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The East-West confrontation from the establishment of the People's Republic of China to the fall of the Berlin Wall had profound implications throughout the world. In many Third World countries, the process of decolonization led to political tensions and wars that were exacerbated by the interventions of the United States of America, the Soviet Union and their respective allies. Thus, the Third World was a privileged field of confrontation throughout the Cold War. In addition to the countries of the two blocs and the European neutrals – Switzerland, Austria, Sweden, Finland and Ireland – the newly independent countries of the global South emerged as new actors. At the Asian-African conference in Bandung in 1955, many Third World leaders gave voice to their commitment to self-determination and to abstain from the bloc politics of the Cold War. But it was at the meeting in Belgrade in 1961 that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was officially founded as a collective actor, taking up some of the principles elaborated in Bandung.

As JANICK MARINA SCHAUEFELBUEHL and SANDRA BOTT (both Lausanne) noted in their introductory remarks, the overarching questions of this conference consisted in depicting the roots of the NAM, the advantages that resulted for the countries involved in this active force of world politics, and in understanding the policies of the neutrals and their coherency. The conference at the University of Lausanne reunited a great variety of speakers – PhD candidates, mid-career and world-renowned scholars – of 28 universities on four continents.

In his opening key note, JUSSI M. HANHIMÄKI (Geneva) emphasized the necessity of establishing a distinction between the neutral European countries and the NAM member-states. Even though both proclaimed to stand outside the blocs, there are some crucial differences. Although the neutrals preexisted and outlasted the Cold War[1], Hanhimäki stressed their role as a stabilizing buffer in the East-West confrontation. The NAM, however, even though its emergence is also rooted in long-term historical processes (decolonization), is clearly a Cold War phenomenon, hence the explicit reference to nonalignment. While the neutrals tended to side with the Western bloc, the NAM states defined themselves in opposition to the blocs as such. Furthermore, Hanhimäki insisted on the fact that the NAM was a movement that integrated a variety of objectives (political, economic and social) while the neutrals tended to conceive themselves within the prevailing balance of powers. These differences therefore make it necessary to further analyse the role played by neutral and non-aligned states during the Cold War.

Third World countries were already affected by superpower pressures before the emergence of the NAM. This raises the question of neutralism before the actual NAM, which was addressed in panel 1. The presentations focused on the role of propaganda and ideology in the emergence of independent Third World postures in the Cold War, as well as on domestic political rationales. ERIC PULLIN (Kenosha) opened the session, pointing out how the Eisenhower administration sought to influence the Bandung conference of 1955, which was considered a serious threat to Western interests. Propaganda was a tool for the ideological Cold War and complemented direct diplomatic efforts. RITA PAOLINI (Milan) highlighted the crucial role of the Indian historian turned diplomat under Nehru, K.M. Panikkar, in establishing links to other Third World countries in the early Cold War, particularly to China. Presenting internal dynamics for foreign policy orientation, ROHAM ALVANDI (London) showed how, in the case of Iran in the late 1950s, the

[1] As Hanhimäki noted, Austrian and Finish neutrality were the sole exceptions. Their neutrality was a consequence of the allied occupation after the Second World War and a condition for the retreat of Soviet troops.

shah's desire to assure his reign resulted in a „flirt" with a more neutral stance and a non-aggression treaty with the USSR. This drive was, however, abandoned after intense pressure from the US and UK.

The second panel focused on the emergence of the NAM itself. In this process, Yugoslavia played a crucial role, as SVETOZAR RAJAK (London) showed in his presentation. In the three years preceding the founding conference in Belgrade, Tito undertook extensive travels to mobilize Third World leaders for this project. LORENZ LÜTHI (Montreal) defined the most significant period of the NAM as falling into its first decade of existence from 1961 to 1973. He highlighted the elements already present during this period that would ultimately lead to the movement's failure as an institution that is „programmatic deficiencies, the increasing lack of charismatic leadership, and struggles against rivaling institutions". JEFFREY JAMES BYRNE (Vancouver) sought to grasp the character of the NAM in its formative years (1955-61) and in its early period (1961-65). Byrne and Lüthi both agreed on the importance of the divisions among Third World States and the presence of a rival Afro-Asian movement in explaining the difficulties the NAM faced in establishing itself as a consistent „third force".

The first speakers of panel 3 focused on economic issues when discussing alternative perspectives on neutralism. GUY LARON (Jerusalem) presented the role of Egypt in the Third World between 1955 and 1965. He characterized Nasserite Egypt as a semi-peripheral economy, seeking hegemony in the Arab world and in parts of Africa. Disunity amongst the semi-periphery and competition from the industrial core ultimately led to a failure of this attempt of an independent economic integration of Third World countries. JÜRGEN DINKEL (Giessen) insisted that the institutionalization of the NAM was neither a result of the Cold War, nor a consequence of the decolonization process, but rather a result of the emerging North-South conflict. This suggestion conflicted with the analysis of the speakers of panel 2 and created some debate.

The Soviet bloc also experienced some inner-bloc conflicts during the Cold War. ELIDOR MËHILI (New York) showed this in his case study of Albania and North Korea, who both refused being subordinated to an „international socialist division of labor" and postulated self-reliance. Partially attained on political grounds, economic autarchy would, however, have proven unsustainable.

Panel 4 focused on the neutrals in the Cold War and their relations with Third World countries. While NIKOLAS GLOVER (Uppsala) centered his presentation on the contradictory link between Swedish foreign economic aid and its trade policy, LUC VAN DONGEN (Fribourg) showed how Switzerland became an important ideological base for the education of anti-communist elites in the Third World during the Cold War. Both of them introduced private actors into their narratives; organized business interests in the Swedish, educational institutions and private foundations in the Swiss case. The third presentation of this panel, given by KEVIN O'SULLIVAN (Galway), was mainly concerned with how the „like-minded" group, a loose organization of neutral and peripheral European states, sought to interact on a global scale and particularly with countries of the global South from the mid-1970s onwards.

As the neutral and non-aligned countries vowed to stay away from bloc divisions, they were in a privileged position to mediate between the superpowers, as the speakers of panel five noted. ROBERT B. RAKOVE (Stanford) underlined that the commitment to foster peace in the world was an intrinsic part of the NAM from its beginning, but by the 1970s mediation attempts had disappeared from its agenda due to the growing tensions between the US and the NAM. The other two presentations focused on neutral mediation. WOLFGANG MUELLER and MAXIMILIAN GRAF (both Vienna) showed how Austria and VIRGINIE FRACHEBOUD (Lausanne) how Switzerland proposed their good offices during the Cold War in order to raise their prestige and overcome their isolation in the international world. However, these attempts were not always met with enthusiasm by the superpowers.

With the sixth panel, the geographical focus moved to sub-Saharan Africa. The panelists analyzed the Congo crisis in the early 1960s, one of the most devastating African

conflicts during the Cold War. ALANNA O'MALLEY (Leiden) highlighted the crucial role that Ghana and India played both in the UN peacekeeping force and in the General Assembly, promoting new internationalist norms that transformed the traditional ideals of empire. In the second presentation, CATHERINE LEE PORTER (Cambridge) argued that the particular conception of Irish neutrality that had emerged from independence and the partition of Ireland led to the inclusion of its military in the UN peacekeeping mission and influenced the role of the Irish peacekeepers in the Congo. MATHIEU HUMBERT (Lausanne) analyzed Switzerland's economic relations with Ghana and the Congo, showing how its neutrality and the absence of a colonial past placed the country in a privileged position at the moment of decolonization.

In his key note speech, ODD ARNE WESTAD (London) underlined the dynamic growth of the new, more critical approach to the history of the Cold War with its focus on the Third World and especially the Non-Aligned Movement. He went on to analyze the impact and the significance of the Bandung Conference in 1955. Westad criticized its indiscriminating celebration and argued that this overshadowed the importance of the „Bandung moment": the taking of responsibility for the international system by a new group of countries, the anticolonial aspect of NAM and the South-South solidarity that this implied.

A recurrent theme in Panel 7 was the agency of African actors. Both FRANK GERITS (Florence) and CHRISTINE HATZKY (Hanover) criticized the tendency of many historians to focus almost exclusively on the role of the external actors in African Cold War conflicts. They insisted that African leaders were independent actors and that their possibilities and foreign policy choices should be taken into account. While Gerits highlighted the originality of Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah's conception of non-alignment that focused on the idea of African unity, Hatzky underlined the independent and self-confident attitude of the Angolan leaders in her analysis of Cuban-Angolan civil cooperation. CHRIS SAUNDERS (Cape Town) argued that the very existence of the neutrals and NAM helped to overcome the Cold War dichotomy by presenting the Namibian liberation movement, South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), with alternatives to bloc politics and by lessening its dependence on the Soviet Union through humanitarian and military aid.

The last panel regrouped papers that focused on transnational networks and actors. SUE ONSLOW (London) analyzed the role of the Commonwealth during the Cold War, an international organization with 48 very heterogeneous members, some of which, as members of NATO, took a clear stand in the global East-West confrontation, while others, members of NAM, distanced themselves from bloc politics. While AVIVA GUTTMANN (Bern) focused on the challenges neutral Switzerland faced when dealing with international terrorism committed by non-state actors, JAYITA SARKAR (Geneva) examined India's proliferation drift in the latter half of the 1960s and the country's role during the negotiations for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

Thanks to the quality of the papers presented and the lively and stimulating discussions, all participants agreed that the conference was a great success. Notwithstanding the efforts made by several participants of introducing hitherto neglected actors of the global South into the larger story of the Cold War, it must still be deplored that not more scholars from the Third World were present at the conference. Hanhimäki stated in his concluding remarks that despite the apparent „chaos and complexity" of the issue of the Cold War in the Third World, it offers a great set of opportunities for further research, be it by producing further case studies, or by developing the analysis of the broader picture of the Cold War in the Third World. Through the decentering of the history of the Cold War, moving away from the sole superpower confrontation and towards the global South and the neutral states, our understanding of the diversity and extent of this conflict can further be deepened. Most participants agreed that the introduction of other factors such as race, state-building, economic issues, etc., into the research on the history of the Cold War

in the Third World could be particularly interesting. This conference was therefore proof that the history of the Global Cold War offers many opportunities for further research and academic discussion.

Conference overview:

Sandra Bott / Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl (both Lausanne), Welcome and Introductory Remarks to the Conference

Jussi M. Hanhimäki (Geneva), Key Note: Between the Blocs: Neutrality, Non-Alignment, and the Cold War

Panel 1: Neutralism before the Non-Aligned Movement
Chair: Matthias Schulz (Geneva)

Eric Pullin (Kenosha), The Limitations of US Propaganda: Ideological Conflict and the Bandung Conference

Rita Paolini (Milan), The Making of Nehruvian Non-Alignment: K.M. Panikkar between China and the Third World

Roham Alvandi (London), Flirting with Neutrality: The Failed Bid for a Soviet-Iranian Non-Aggression Treaty in 1959

Panel 2: The Rise of the Non-Aligned Movement
Chair: Nataša Mišković (Basel)

Svetozar Rajak (London), The Road to Belgrade: The Critical Role of Yugoslavia in the Establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement

Lorenz Lüthi (Montreal), The Non-Aligned Movement, 1961-1973

Jeffrey James Byrne (Vancouver), Beyond Continents, Colours, and the Cold War: Yugoslavia, Algeria and the Struggle for Non-Alignment, 1961-73

Panel 3: Alternative Perspectives on Neutralism
Chair: Sue Onslow (London)

Guy Laron (Jerusalem), The Semi-Periphery in Action: Egypt's Adventure in the Afro-Asian World, 1955-1965

Elidor Mëhilli (New York), Self-reliance or Dependence? Comparing Albania and North Korea in the Global Cold War

Jürgen Dinkel (Giessen), „Third World Begins to Flex its Muscles" – The Non-Aligned Movement and the North-South-Conflict during the 1970s

Panel 4: The Neutrals
Chair: Sacha Zala (Berne)

Nikolas Glover (Uppsala), The politics of Swedish economic relations with the NAM countries of the Third World, ca 1955–1970

Kevin O'Sullivan (Galway), Progressive Pragmatists: Ireland, the 'Like-minded' States, and the Search for a New International Economic Order, 1974-82

Luc van Dongen (Fribourg), Former des élites non communistes pour les pays décolonisés: l'Institut universitaire de hautes études internationales (IUHEI) de Genève, les Etats-Unis et la guerre froide

Panel 5: Mediation
Chair: Brigitte Studer (Berne)

Robert B. Rakove (Stanford), The Rise and Fall of Non-Aligned Mediation, 1961-1966

Wolfgang Mueller / Maximilian Graf (both Vienna), A Neutral Mediator in the Vietnam War? The Superpowers, Austria's Good Offices, and the Global Cold War

Virginie Fracheboud (Lausanne), La representation par la Suisse des intérêts des Etats-Unis dans la Guerre froide globale

Panel 6: Cold War in the Congo
Chair: Patrick Harries (Basel)

Alanna O'Malley (Leiden), Ghana, India and the Transnational Dynamics of the Congo Crisis at the United Nations

Catherine Lee Porter (Cambridge), Irish Neutrality and its Influence in Irish Peacekeeping in the Congo, 1960-1964

Mathieu Humbert (Lausanne), Les relations économiques entre la Suisse et l'Afrique subsaharienne lors des premières années d'indépendance : les cas du Ghana et du Congo

Odd Arne Westad (London), Key Note: Bandung Mythologies: Concepts of Cohesion and the Fate of the Third World Project

Panel 7: Africa's Cold War
Chair: Gesine Krüger (Zurich)

Frank P. L. Gerits (Florence), Decolonising African Minds: Kwame Nkrumah and Pan-Africanism as an Interventionist Ideology (1957-1966)

Chris Saunders (Cape Town), The Non-Aligned Movement, the Neutral European Countries, and Namibian Independence

Christine Hatzky (Hanover), Cubans in Angola. Internationalist Solidarity, Transfers and Interactions in the Global South 1975-1991

Panel 8: Transnational Networks and Actors
Chair: Claude Hauser (Fribourg)

Sue Onslow (London), The Commonwealth and the Cold War

Aviva Guttmann (Berne), Switzerland and Palestinian Terrorism – The 1969 Kloten Airport Attack and the 1970 „Skyjack Sunday"

Jayita Sarkar (Geneva), The Nonaligned Nuclear Power: France and India's proliferation drift, 1964-1968

Jussi M. Hanhimäki (Geneva), Concluding Remarks

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