

**RICHARD Mason**

Institute of Occidental Studies  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

## **THE MANILA CONFERENCE, 1954 VERSUS THE BANDUNG CONFERENCE, 1955: THE UNITED STATES, THE COLD WAR AND THE CHALLENGE OF NON-ALIGNMENT**

*This paper discusses the convening of the Manila Conference of 1954 and the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in 1955, two iconic Cold War conferences relating to newly emerged regions in the post-war world. The Manila Conference created SEATO, a Western-sponsored military pact of Western and Asian powers which sought to contain communism in Southeast Asia in the wake of French military defeat in Vietnam. The Bandung Conference of 1955 aimed at fostering closer relations between the newly independent Third World nations. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, impressed with Chinese moderation at the Geneva, attempted to use the Bandung Conference to lay firmer foundation for the PRC's relations with its Asian neighbours and to affect a rapprochement between China and the United States. Drawing upon the United States' foreign relations papers, this essay analyses the United States' estimates of Asians' reactions to the establishment of SEATO and discusses the American anxieties over the convening of the Bandung Conference. American officials, it seemed, have little faith that Afro-Asian leaders could hold their own vis-à-vis the communist at Bandung. They also feared that Bandung would eventuate in the formation of an anti-American and anti-white bloc within the UN. The paper concludes that Washington's anxieties over Bandung proved largely unfounded.*

**Keywords:** *United States, Cold War, Containment, Non-alignment, Manila Conference, Bandung Conference*

### **Introduction**

The Manila Conference of 1954 and the Bandung Conference of 1955 were two iconic conferences during the early Cold War. The Manila Conference, sponsored by the Western Powers, endorsed the Manila Treaty which established the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a military pact that aimed to contain the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. The Bandung Conference was undertaken at the initiative of the newly-independent Republic of Indonesia. It was to some extent a counter-SEATO move. Cutting across ideological lines, it had mainly aimed at fostering close ties between newly-independent Asian and African countries and serve as a rally point for those countries still struggling against colonialism. Additionally, in contrast to the belligerent strategies of SEATO, the Bandung Conference suggested pacific settlement of disputes as the path to avoid a Third World War. To contain the Soviet-American conflict itself, India and Indonesia, two of the conference's sponsoring states, promoted neutralism and

non-alignment in the Cold War. The Manila Conference thus emphasized the East-West dichotomy while the Bandung Conference suggested North-South dialogues.

Both conferences had limited successes. The Manila Treaty was never invoked in the 'hot' wars of the Cold War in Southeast Asia. The Bandung conference, for all the attention its' convening had attracted, had rather limited effects. The 'spirit' of Bandung was largely a myth. It was not until the 1960s, when the numbers of independent states dramatically increased, that neutralism and non-alignment in the Cold War actually began to really raise its head. This paper revisits the convening of both the Manila and the Bandung conferences. Drawing mainly from the foreign relations papers of the US Department of State, this essay analyzes American perceptions of the two conferences, particularly the American estimates of Asian reactions to the establishment of SEATO and of the American anxiety about the convening of the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung in 1955. As most scholarly writings dealing with non-alignment tended to focus on India, this essay focus on Indonesia. The central theme of the essay is the American policy of containment and the challenges from the policy of non-alignment.

### **The Context**

The context in which the two conferences had been convened was the epochal retreat of the Western Imperial powers in the face of militant Third World nationalism, which coincided with the onset of the Cold War following the end of the Second World War. Within a decade of the end of the Second World War, new and independent nations emerged across the southern half of the globe, areas generally known as Third World. Many of these Third World countries have been struggling against colonial subjugation since the First World War or even before, but it was not until the end of the Second World War that Third World nationalism became irrepressible. Burgeoning Third World nationalism, particularly Asian nationalism, was given significant boost during the Pacific War. Building upon Russia's defeat at the hand of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the speed with which the Japanese had ousted the colonialists from Southeast Asia at the outbreak of the Pacific War served to shatter the myth of the invincibility of the West and of the White race. Additionally, in some of the areas they occupied, the Japanese gave nationalism further stimulus by granting the native population a larger degree of self-rule than they had ever experienced under Western colonial masters. It is no surprise that many former colonies had been unwilling to accept the re-imposition of colonial rule after Japan's defeat; and where the colonial powers proved recalcitrant, Third World nationalism assumed revolutionary character.

Political decolonization of the Third World coincided with the onset of the Cold War. The intensifying East-West conflict offered both perils and opportunities to Third World nationalist leaders as the Cold War belligerents competed for the allegiance of Third World countries. In post-war Southeast Asia, for example, Indonesian nationalists astutely played the anti-communist card to gain United States' support against the Dutch in their war of independence against the Netherland. For its part, Washington became convinced that the position of the Dutch in Indonesia was no longer tenable and that continued support for the Dutch would not only alienate Indonesian nationalism but would also provide openings for the communists to exploit and hijack the nationalist

revolution. In the Vietnamese war of independence, conversely, the United States supported the French colonialist against the communist-dominated Vietnamese nationalist movement, indeed replacing the French to fight the Vietnamese after the French was ousted from Indochina. Indeed, the Cold War also permitted the Third World countries to receive aids from both sides and had also allowed savvy Third World nationalist leaders to play off the big powers against each other. Playing both sides of the East-West divide, however, risked compromising the country's political independence.

A concept that has been closely associated with the Bandung Conference was 'non-alignment.' Many scholars confuse non-alignment with 'neutralism,' often mistaking that the two are inter-changeable. Neutralism as foreign policy is passive and is often associated with non-involvement. Non-alignment, on the other hand, implies not taking sides between the belligerents. At the Bandung Conference in 1955, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru attempted to promote non-alignment, in contradistinction to neutralism. Mohammad Hatta, Deputy President of the Republic of Indonesia, gave a clear picture of what non-alignment implied in an article on Indonesia's foreign policy in the April 1953 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "Indonesia plays no favourites between the opposed blocs and follow its own path through the various international problems....Her independent policy keeps her from enmity with either party, preserves her from damage to her own interests that would follow from taking sides, and permit her to be friend with all nations on the basis of mutual respect." Indonesia was prepared to receive intellectual, material and moral assistance from any country, "provided there is no lessening of, or threat to, her independence and sovereignty." Hatta further explained that a non-aligned foreign policy would also cater to domestic requirements: In the immediate years after gaining independence, "internal consolidation [was] the primary task... A foreign policy that aligned the country with either of the Great Powers would render this internal task infinitely more difficult."<sup>1</sup>

Western powers, especially the United States, on the other hand, regarded neutralism and non-alignment as naive, self-deceptive and even dangerous. President Dwight Eisenhower's remarks on the occasion of the lighting of the national Christmas tree in December 1954 characterized rather well the administration's attitude toward the non-aligned countries when he declared: "There are some who believed it possible to hold themselves aloof from today's world-wide struggle between those who uphold human freedom and dignity, and those who consider man merely a pawn of the state. The times are so critical and the differences between the two world systems so vital and vast that grave doubt is cast upon the validity of neutralist arguments."<sup>2</sup> Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was more forthright in his condemnation of the 'uncommitted' nations. Neutralism, he declared in a speech in Iowa in mid-1956, was both "obsolete" and "immoral."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Hatta, "Indonesia's Foreign Policy" *Foreign Affairs* (April 1935). The citation here are from the reprint in Mohammad Hatta, *Portrait of a Patriot: Selected Writings of Mohammad Hatta* (Singapore: Gunung Agung, 1981) pp.550-551,555.

<sup>2</sup>*Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 31 (27 December 1954) p. 980.

<sup>2</sup>*Department of State Bulletin*, vol. 31 (27 December 1954) p. 980.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 34 (18 June 1956) pp. 999-1000.

## The Manila Conference and SEATO

The developments leading to the creation of SEATO is oft-told.<sup>4</sup> The pact was the Southeast Asian strand in a web of military pacts across the globe which the Eisenhower administration had set up to contain the spread of communism. More immediately, SEATO was established as a reaction to French military defeat in Vietnam and the attendant Geneva settlement of the Indochina problems in July 1954. The United States had been opposed to the French negotiating with the Communists and viewed the Geneva arrangement as a serious defeat for the West, with dangerous implications for the future. In fact, for several weeks before the Geneva Conference began, the Eisenhower administration appeared poised to intervene militarily in Vietnam but had been averted largely because Senate and House leaders refused to support an intervention resolution without British participation. Shortly after the Geneva Conference, however, Secretary Dulles successfully pushed for the establishment of SEATO.

On September 8, 1954, the United States, Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines signed the Manila Treaty. The signatories agreed that any armed attack upon any of them or against “any state or territory which the parties by unanimous agreement may hereafter designate” would endanger the “peace and safety” of each of the signatories; and that in such event, they would act to meet the common danger. After intense debate, the defensive zone of SEATO was extended to include Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam. For purposes of Congressional politics, an “understanding” was inserted in the treaty that limited the United States’ obligation only to “communist aggression.”

The architects of SEATO apparently had preferred a much wider and all-inclusive Asian regional pact. In addition to those extra-regional Western powers which had substantial interests in the region, the pact was supposed to have included all the Asian powers, including the neutral and non-aligned states. Of the Asian states, however, only Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines joined SEATO. Both British and American officials who were involved in planning the pact were sceptical that the uncommitted states would join but had nevertheless decided to sound them out. Perhaps they had been hopeful. The State Department was concerned that if the United States could not win the active support of all the Asian countries in the area, it should at the very least secure their “benevolent neutrality” toward the pact.<sup>5</sup> It was perhaps mainly out of deference to the anticipated strong Indonesian objection to Dutch participation that the Netherlands had

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<sup>4</sup>Among others, see the essay by Gary Hess, “The American Search for Stability in Southeast Asia: The SEATO Structure of Containment.” in Warren I. Cohen and Akira Iriye (eds.), *The Great Powers in East Asia, 1953-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Lloyd Gardner, *Approaching Vietnam. From World War II Through Dienbienphu, 1941-1954* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988); George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War. The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979); Evelyn Colbert, *Southeast Asia in International Politics, 1941-1956* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); Russell H. Fifield, *Americans in Southeast Asia. The Roots of Commitment* (New York: Thomas Crowell Company, 1973); George Modelski (ed.), *SEATO. Six Studies* (Canberra: F.W. Cheshire, 1962); Chatham House Study Group, *Collective Defense in Southeast Asia. The Manila Treaty and its Implications* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956). For a critical assessment, see Laszek Buszynski, *SEATO: The Failure of An Alliance Strategy* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Telegram, Secretary Dulles to Department of State, April 30, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, XI: East Asia and the Pacific* (Washington: US Government Printing Press, 1987), Pt.1 p.436.

been left out of the signatory list. The architects of SEATO certainly had little doubt that Indonesia would join but wanted to ensure that Indonesia would at least not object to the pact.<sup>6</sup>

Their scepticism that Indonesia would join SEATO proved correct. But if they had expected the Indonesian government to regard the pact with 'benevolent neutrality,' they were wrong. When Oscar Morland, the British Ambassador in Jakarta, broach the proposed defence pact with Prime Minister Ali Sastroamijoyo,<sup>7</sup> the Indonesian Premier emphatically remarked that "whether or not agreement was reached at Geneva on Indochina," the Indonesian government would not participate in the establishment of collective defence in Southeast Asia "since this would be contrary to the policy of 'active neutrality' of the Indonesian government."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Indonesia would not even send an observer to the Manila conference. Moreland later told Hugh Cumming, the American Ambassador to Indonesia, that Ali's reply left no room for a subsequent reconsideration of the Indonesian position. Personally, Moreland felt that Ali's attitude toward SEATO would not even be one of 'benevolent neutrality.'<sup>9</sup>

Despite the setback, Ambassador Cumming argued that Indonesia's attitude should not deter the United States from implementing the defence arrangement with those Asian countries which were willing. He wrote the States Department that Indonesia was not prepared, because of its whole 'neutralist independent' approach to foreign affairs, to take action which would be equivalent to an anti-PRC stance. In Indonesian writings and discussions of the problem, Cumming reported, Indonesians seem inclined to believe that in the last analysis Britain and the United States would never let Indonesia fall to the Chinese; that their island position plus Anglo-American air and sea power made it possible for them to enjoy a free ride and postpone taking decision on the China problem. Cumming believed that future attitude of the Indonesians would largely depend on new signs of Communist aggression: that unless the threat seem immediately directed at Indonesia, the Indonesians were not likely warm to the idea of mutual security. At the same time, Cumming pointed out, the Indonesians were also not oblivious to the possible danger of 'liberation' from within. Many non-communist leaders in the government held misgivings about the intentions of the Indonesian Communists and most opposition leaders were even more sensitive to Communist threat, both internal and external. The Ambassador suggested that the United States should keep the Indonesian government informed as the negotiation for the establishment of SEATO progressed. "In addition to

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<sup>6</sup> On Indonesian concern about Dutch participation in SEATO, see telegram from Douglas Dillon, US Ambassador to France, to Department of State, April 26, 1954, *Ibid.*, p.433.

<sup>7</sup> The British Foreign Office and the US Department of State agreed that invitation to attend the Manila Conference would be issued to the Philippines and Thailand by the United States, to the British Commonwealth states and the so-called Colombo Powers by Britain, and jointly by the United States and Britain to France. Indonesia was a member of the Colombo Powers.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, July 21, 1954, Department of State Central File, 790.5/7-2154, *Confidential US State Department Central Files: The Far East, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs, 1949-1959* (Washington: University Publication of America, 1991) reel 11. Hereafter abbreviated *Central File Far East*.

<sup>9</sup> Telegram, Cumming to Department of State, August 3, 1954, Department of State Central File, 790.5/8-354, *ibid.*

reducing Indonesian feeling that US in 'high-handed manner' and without consulting Indonesia [was] taking action which may vitally affect Indonesian interests, it would especially favorably impress those in sympathy with any action which would provide protection against Chinese Communist threat."<sup>10</sup>

Cumming, however, was missing entirely the very point of the Indonesians and that of other neutralist and non-aligned governments. To the Ali government, the problem in Southeast Asia was not so much communism or even Chinese aggression as it was the American efforts to contain communism militarily. Neutralist and non-aligned states such as India, Burma and Indonesia were convinced that far from bringing stability to Southeast Asia, SEATO would instead merely serve to heighten Cold War tension in the region. Ali later wrote in his memoirs that in view of the Geneva arrangements, SEATO had in fact been unnecessary. Indeed, he believed that SEATO would destroy the "beneficial results" of the Geneva Conference. "The SEATO military pact brought the Cold War officially to the Southeast Asian region, with all its implications and tensions." In addition, because of its particularly anti-colonialist stance, the Indonesian government was inclined to view SEATO as a vehicle for the perpetuation of Western colonialism in Asia.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Bandung Conference**

Most accounts of the Bandung Conference credit President Sukarno for its convening.<sup>12</sup> Charismatic and charming, President Sukarno certainly made his presence felt during the opening ceremony of the conference. The idea for the conference must, however, be credited to Prime Minister Ali who broached it at a meeting of the Prime Ministers of Ceylon, India, Pakistan, Burma and Indonesia at Colombo in April 1954. The Colombo meeting had been called at the initiative of Ceylonese Prime Minister Sir John Kotelawala to exert pressure in favour of a peaceful solution in Indochina at the Geneva Conference and a negotiated settlement of Asian Cold War issues in general. At this meeting, Prime Minister Ali suggested to the other four Prime Ministers that they should sponsor jointly a large and high-level conference of the independent states of Asia and Africa, with the purpose of promoting the relaxation of Cold War tensions in the two continents and to serve as a rallying point for the continuing struggle of Asians and Africans against colonialism.

Ali's proposal was at first received with some scepticism by the other Colombo powers but it was later endorsed by the Indian Premier Jawaharal Nehru who saw in it an opportunity to end China's isolation. Nehru was especially concerned about the

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<sup>10</sup> Telegram, Cumming to the Department of State, July 14, 1954, Department of State Central File, 790.5/7-2354, *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Ali Sastroamijoyo, *Milestones in My Journey: Memoirs of Ali Sastroamijoyo, Indonesian Patriot and Political Leader*, edited by C.L.M. Penders (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979) p. 280.

<sup>12</sup> See for instance Jason C. Parker, "Small Victory, Missed Chance: The Eisenhower Administration, the Bandung Conference, and the Turning of the Cold War" in Kathryn C Statler and Andrew L. Jones (eds), *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers Inc, 2006) pp. 153-174.

increasingly dangerous tension developing between the United States and China over Indochina and especially over the Chinese off-shore islands. After the visit of Zhou Enlai to New Delhi in June 1954, during which Sino-Indian difference over Tibet were reconciled, and impressed by China's restrained posture at the Geneva Conference, Nehru hoped to use the projected conference to lay a firmer foundation for China's peaceful relation not only with the West but perhaps more especially between China and her Asian neighbours. Thus when Ali visited New Delhi in September Nehru agreed to the Asian-African Conference project, provided that China was invited to attend. Ali's original proposal had been for a conference of UN members only, but he agreed to the change. Both Ali and Nehru hoped that the conference would succeed in drawing China into closer association with its fellow Asian nations and thus loosen its ties with the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

At the preliminary meeting of the five sponsoring states at Bogor in Indonesia in late December, it was agreed that an Afro-Asian Conference be held at Bandung for a week in mid-April 1955. Invitations were sent out to thirty Asian and African governments, including those of China and North and South Vietnam. The two Koreas, Outer Mongolia, Israel and South Africa were not invited, while the white-governed Central African Federation declined the invitation. It was agreed that the agenda would be determined at the time of the conference itself. The stated purpose of the conference was to promote goodwill, co-operation and mutual interests; to consider economic, social and cultural problems; to consider problems of special interest to Asia and Africa such as racism, colonialism and independence; and to consider the contribution of Asia and Africa in the promotion of world peace and co-operation.

The Eisenhower administration was apprehensive that the projected Asian-African conference would be inimical to the United States. In particular, American officials expected Nehru to promote the formation of a third force between East and West. Secretary Dulles feared that there was "a very real danger" that the conference "might establish firmly in Asia a tendency to follow an anti-Western and anti-white course, the consequence of which for the future could be incalculably dangerous." A loose Asian-African association with meeting from time to time could become a very effective forum. Dulles worried that if the nations invited to Bandung "acquired the habit of meeting from time to time without Western participation, India and China [would] very certainly dominate the scene and that one by-product will be a very solid block of anti-Western votes in the United Nations."<sup>14</sup>

Immediately more problematical was the participation of Communist China. This flew in the face of established American policy of not recognising the PRC. American officials especially dreaded that the conference might pass a resolution endorsing the admission of the PRC to the UN. Furthermore, as Assistant Secretary Walter Robertson

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<sup>13</sup> See especially George McTurnan Kahin, *The Asian-African Conference. Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1955); David Kimche, *The Afro-Asian Movement. Ideology and Foreign Policy of the Third World* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1973).

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of a Meeting, Secretary's Office, January 7, 1955, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957. Volume XXI: East Asian Security; Cambodia; Laos* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1990) pp. 1-4; Memorandum of conversation, April 9, 1955, *Ibid.*, pp. 82-84.

worried, the Bandung meeting would provide Zhou Enlai with “an excellent forum to broadcast Communist ideology to naive audience in the guise of anti-colonialism.” Recalling Zhou’s skilful diplomatic machinations at Geneva, Robertson believed that Bandung would be a rigged conference. “The Communist will introduce one or more anti-colonial resolutions which no Asian leader would dare oppose, and will very probably ensnare the relatively inexperienced diplomats into supporting resolutions seemingly in favor of goodness, beauty and truth.” Although Communist countries would constitute only a small minority at the conference, American officials nevertheless expected the Chinese Communist to exert disproportionate influence and would make every effort to use the conference to enhance their own prestige and discredit the United States and its allies in the eyes of the Asian and African nations. State Department officials, it appeared, just did not have any confidence that the leaders of the newly emerged nations would be capable in exercising independent state of mind. Indeed, they agreed that none of the leading personalities in the ‘free’ Asian and African nations had the stature to rebut Communist propaganda effectively on behalf of the free world.<sup>15</sup>

In the months before the conference began the State Department manoeuvred for position. Initially, it was inclined toward influencing American allies and other friendly countries which have been invited to the conference not to attend. After due deliberation and after consultation with the British government,<sup>16</sup> however, the Eisenhower administration became persuaded that it would be a mistake to oppose the holding of the conference. The conference was going to be held in any event; under that circumstance, it was important to ensure that competent representatives from friendly countries attend it. Evidently, the State Department now hoped to “knock down or take over” the conference by providing counter-resolutions to these representatives.<sup>17</sup> Since only two of the thirty participating countries were Communist, American objectives at Bandung were chiefly concerned with the “impact on uncommitted elements in neutralist countries and in countries aligned with the United States.” These objectives were “successful rebuttal of Communist charges, and encouragement of an affirmative attitude by the conference toward the Free World and US achievements and goals.”<sup>18</sup> At Secretary Dulles’ suggestion, the SEATO Council which met in Bangkok in February 1955 sent its greetings to Bandung, expressing the hope that the Indonesian conference would further the goal of ensuring that “free nations would remain free.” “I believe that our message of greeting to the Afro-Asian conference,” the Secretary cabled Eisenhower, “is a good

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*; Minutes of a Meeting, Secretary’s Office, January 18, 1955, *Ibid.*, pp. 11-16.

<sup>16</sup> For discussion of British reaction to the convening of the Bandung Conference, see Nicholas Tarling, “‘Ah-Ah’: Britain and the Bandung Conference of 1955.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 23, 1 (March 1992), pp.74-111.

<sup>17</sup> Memorandum of conversation, January 10, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, XXI, p. 5; Minutes of a Meeting, January 18, 1955, *Ibid.*, pp. 11-14; Circular Telegram from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions, January 25, 1955, *Ibid.*, p. 23; Memorandum of conversation, January 27, 1955, Department of State Central Files, 670.901/1-2755, *Central File Far East*, reel 11.

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum from the Acting Chief of the Afro-Asian Working Group to the Secretary of State, February 8, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957*, XXI, pp. 29-30.



touch which, if properly played, can have an excellent propaganda value, and to some extent put the conference on the spot.”<sup>19</sup>

As it developed, Washington’s preconceived anxiety about the conference proved unfounded. Zhou Enlai did emerge as an effective participant in the conference, radiating moderation and calling for direct talks with the United States to reduce tension in the Far East and the avoidance of armed conflict in the Taiwan Straits. Otherwise, no Afro-Asian ideology emerged from the conference. The diverse group of states represented were not of one mind on a number of important international issues causing divergence which were papered over only with the greatest difficulty in the final communiqué. The communiqué dealt in broad terms with questions of economic and cultural co-operation. It denounced colonialism in all its manifestations to be evil and announced that the signatories were in favour of peace.

The Eisenhower administration was satisfied with the outcome. The State Department had feared that Bandung might turn into an anti-American and anti-Western demonstration, but that did not happen. Secretary Dulles later informed a cabinet meeting that the State Department had initially assumed that the conference was going to be dominated by Zhou and Nehru but it turned out that the conference was dominated by “a group of friendly Asian nations who believed in association with the West.” Except for the mention of the Palestine question, the final communiqué of the conference was “a document which we ourselves could subscribe to.” Even the reference to colonialism were “in accord with what we feel in our hearts” but was unable to say publicly because of allied sensitivities. Nehru’s attempt to gain converts to his neutralist philosophy and to stake his claim for the leadership of Asia failed on both counts. The Secretary conceded that the Chinese Communist had made gains in disarming its neighbours, but this had been done only at the price of abandoning some of their more belligerent policies. He attributed the favourable result of the conference principally to the “friendly Asian countries” who had put on “an amazing performance with a teamwork and co-ordination of strategy which was highly gratifying” even though none of them enjoyed the personal prestige of Zhou. As a result, these nations gained a new sense of self-reliance and self-confidence which will serve the free world well in the future.<sup>20</sup>

Still, some of the issues the conference had raised remained. In fact, there were already talks of a second Afro-Asian conference. Secretary Dulles suggested a pre-emptive meeting of Britain, France and the United States to address the question of colonialism. In autumn of 1955, he broached the idea to Harold Macmillan, Britain’s Chancellor of the Exchequer. The British were initially interested but soon wised up to the Secretary’s intention of not only neutralising the neutralists but also to flush out the British and the French on the colonial question. Accordingly the British dragged their feet on the projected meeting; and when Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal in 1956, the

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<sup>19</sup>Secretary Dulles to Eisenhower, February 26, 1955 as quoted in H.W. Brands, *The Spectre of Neutralism: The United States and the Emergence of the Third World, 1947-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, April 29, 1955, *FRUS 1955-1957, XXI*, pp. 91-92; Memorandum of conversation. Washington, May 5, 1955, *Ibid.*, pp. 95-98.

counter-Bandung project was allowed to lapse.<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

The Cold War was certainly much more dynamic than merely a confrontation between East and West. In addition to Soviet-American conflict, neutralism and non-alignment was interjected as a third force in the Cold War dynamics, involving the newly emerged Third World nations. Many of these Third World nations had from the outset preferred not to take sides in the Soviet-American conflict, wanting to be friends with both the belligerents. Indeed, following a foreign policy of independence in the Cold War was a logical extension of the struggle for independence against colonial subjugation. And for many of these Third World states, neutralism and non-alignment was a domestic imperative politically. Non-alignment also permitted the newly emerged countries to receive from both belligerents, a perspective neither the Soviets nor the Americans appreciated.

Indeed to American officials, there was no room for neutralism and non-alignment in the World War for the Cold War was an uncompromisable situation. Convinced that theirs was the moralistically correct side, Washington naturally expected the newly independent countries to take their side. Beyond the Dullesian argument that neutralism was 'obsolete' and 'immoral' Washington officials had been anxious that the Bandung Conference would initiate the formation of an anti-Western and anti-white block within the United Nations, thus adding complication to the United States' Cold War conflict with the Soviet Union. Analyses of the United States' reactions to the convening of the conference also reveal that Washington officials were inclined to think that Third World national leaders were not capable of exercising an independent state of mind especially vis-a-vis the Eastern bloc. The American anxiety over the convening of the Bandung conference had been largely caused by this underestimation of Afro-Asian leaders, a mistake the Eisenhower administration was quick to admit during their post-mortem of the Bandung Conference. The extent to which this lesson was actually learned is of course another matter.

For all the attention its' convening had attracted and for all the anxiety it had caused American officials, the Bandung Conference of 1955 had limited effects. No Third World ideology emerged from the conference. The group of nation that attended the conference were very diverse and were not of one mind on many of the important issues. The final communiqué dealt in broad terms with questions of economic and cultural cooperation. It was not until the 1960s, as more and more Third World nations gained independence and adopted non-alignment as a stance in foreign policy, that the Bandung 'movement' became significant. In 1955, the achievements of the conference were not yet apparent.

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<sup>21</sup> Brands, *Spectre of Neutralism*, pp. 116-118.

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