

Robert Niebuhr
Arizona State University, Tempe, USA

THE CULT OF FOREIGN POLICY: IDEOLOGICAL BATTLES AS CONTESTED SPACES IN THE EARLY COLD WAR¹

Drawing inspiration from Drago Roksandić's ideas on the Triplex Confinium, this paper seeks to conceptualize the idea of a borderland in the early years of Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia. There were two borderlands; first, the ideological frontier between Soviet Communism and the emerging Yugoslav variant following the Tito–Stalin split. Second, the decolonizing space in Asia and the search there for a governing system made it a place of intersections. With archival data of Vladimir Dedijer's 1948 trip to India this article suggests that the early Cold War gave Yugoslavia a unique opportunity to expand a proactive foreign policy.

Key words: Vladimir Dedijer, Asian Communism, Rangoon Conference of Asian Socialists, Cult of Foreign Policy

Drago Roksandić has written persuasively as part of the *Triplex Confinium* project over the role that the frontier has played in building national histories. As a contested and marginalized space, the frontier has been a place that has remained on the periphery. The space itself, as defined by the *Triplex Confinium* was the junction of three states in the early modern period as the intersection of the Republic of Venice, the Ottoman Empire, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire in what is now Bosnia-Herzegovina. The idea that the border was a meeting place of cultures and civilizations was clear from contemporary writers in the early modern period. Writers of the day recalled the former glory of the Dalmatia coast, for example, but lamented how it was inhabited by “barbarians.”² The traveler Alberto Fortis did much to both map out this frontier region for his Venetian audience but also romanticized this notion of the so-called barbarians who lived in the region. His translations of poems, such as the *Hasanaginica*, revealed a complexity and allure to the region; after all, it was the enigmatic “timid shamefacedness” that compelled the wife of the “stern” Asan Aga to stay away and therefore earn his punishment. By the end of the poem she collapsed “shivering and dying” while clutching her babe.³ Of course, understanding the people such as Asan Aga grew beyond the sort of cultural

¹ This piece represents aspects of a collaborative project with scholars Zvonimir Stopić and David Pickus on Yugoslav interactions with China during the Cold War.

² See: Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment*, Stanford 2003, 1.

³ For example see: Timothy Baycroft – David Hopkin (ed.), *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe during the Long Nineteenth Century*, Leiden 2012. The work of a tireless colleague, Thomas Butler, also tried to grasp at the meaning of this poem. See: Thomas Butler, *Monumenta Serbocroatica. A Bilingual Anthology of Serbian and Croatian Texts from the 12th to the 19th Century*, Ann Arbor 1980.

folk-based ideas into broader imperial projects and inspired others to dream of what the Balkans meant. When the American adventurer Arthur D. Howden Smith ventured in 1908 to join Macedonian rebels in their fight against the Ottoman Empire he noted that the struggle was “interesting” because of its “quaint setting”, and how Macedonia stood in the “shadow of the Orient” with its “passions, hatreds, loves, and shoutings” of the East and the “old-time West.”⁴ From the romanticized imaginations of the Enlightenment came the nation-building projects of the late 19th and 20th centuries, where this contested space on the frontier intersected with new ideas of the nation.⁵

If we fast-forward to 1945 we see the emergence of the second Yugoslav state inhabiting the space of the *Triplex Confinium*, this time under the control of Josip Broz Tito’s Communist Party. As that party matured in power it became a key point to build strength in order to foster an independence that could avoid foreign control that had historically plagued the region.⁶ Literature on foreign influence over Yugoslavia has recognized how the battles over control established real problems that divided the peoples across that country along cultural, economic, and political lines. All this made the creation of a post-1945 Yugoslav state all the more challenging and thereby paved the way for the Yugoslav Communists to boast of grandiose actions to gain domestic legitimacy.⁷

Tito’s state sought territorial expansion – as seen by the early fights over Carinthia and Trieste, for example – but as a result of the Tito–Stalin split spatial growth became impossible. Instead, the Yugoslav communists found in newly decolonizing Asia comrades who sought to build new societies in the wake of imperialism’s collapse. Therefore, in a largely unexpected way, the Yugoslav communists stumbled onto a borderland in Asia where they could hope to influence emerging political elites and convince them of a Yugoslav socio-economic, political solution. The Yugoslav path thereby competed with the Soviet, Chinese, and Western models in the new *Triplex Confinium* – places such as India, Burma, and Indonesia.

I want this article to present the idea that ideology was the new contested space, or borderland, for Yugoslav leaders in the earliest years of the Titoist period, in part based on the excerpts from Vladimir Dedijer’s trip to India in 1948 and official Yugoslav interactions with Asians into the mid-1950s. We can see that the notions of non-interference, dogmatism, and outside control weighed heavily on Dedijer’s experience there and shaped an emerging sense of an independent Yugoslavia. The goal then of this piece is to build on what Dr. Roksanđić noted with respect to the new complexity of a new century of Croatian history – that is, the idea that the concept of “borders and region” will be “anything but easy.”⁸ In other words, the idea of this paper is to suggest that the communist period

⁴ See: Robert Niebuhr, *When East Met West: World History Through Travelers’ Perspectives*, Reading, MA 2010, 19.

⁵ See, for instance: Ingrid Merchiers, *Cultural Nationalism in the South Slav Habsburg Lands in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Scholarly Network of Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844)*, Munich 2007; Norman Naimark – Holly Case (ed.), *Yugoslavia and Its Historian: Understanding the Balkan Wars of 1990s*, Stanford 2003.

⁶ See: Tvrtko Jakovina, *Treća strana Hladnog rata*, Zagreb 2011, 31.

⁷ See: Niebuhr, *The Search for a Cold War Legitimacy: Foreign Policy and Tito’s Yugoslavia*, Leiden 2018.

⁸ Drago Roksanđić, *Triplex Confinium ili o granicama i regijama hrvatske povijesti 1500–1800*, Zagreb 2003, 11.

saw Yugoslavia as part of a different sort of battle over borders when it competed over ideological space in the newly independent or emerging states of Asia. Second, I want to suggest that this evidence points to an outward reach that represented what I want to call a cult of foreign; this cult was a means for Titoist Yugoslavia to navigate its own survival and ideological space. Once Dedijer returned from India and the Tito–Stalin split was solidified, the Titoist elites needed to find a way to survive. Especially since the country was weak or at best a regional power, Yugoslav leaders drifted towards a reliance on foreign policy as a useful tool to overcome a host of problems. The idea of a cult of foreign policy as the determining factor in development takes inspiration from the notion that a cult of the offensive caused World War I. Jack Snyder declared almost two decades ago that “strategic policymaking”, in 1914 was “skewed by a pathological pattern of civil-military relations that allowed or encouraged the military to use wartime operational strategy to solve its institutional problems.” When that strategy went awry, Snyder explained that it was “because a penchant for offense helped the military organization to preserve its autonomy, prestige, and traditions, to simplify its institutional routines, or to resolve a dispute within the organization.”⁹ Similarly, Stevan Van Evera argued at the same time that the “cult of the offensive”, which had been brewing for decades, was a “principal cause of the First World War.”¹⁰ I make this brief comparison to suggest simply that this contest over ideology in the Third World met the dictates that Snyder argued regarding World War I; that is, it was the pathological pattern of the Yugoslav state that encouraged the use of foreign policy to solve its institutional problems.

1. A *Triplex Confinium* in Asia

When the Soviet Union increased its campaign against Tito’s leadership of Yugoslavia in early 1948 the Yugoslavs were caught off guard.¹¹ While they neither predicted nor planned for a split with the Soviet Union the actions taken to survive inspired a policy framework that would form the foundation of Yugoslav foreign affairs. Milovan Djilas argued in 1951 that “had the peoples of Yugoslavia not won their national freedom by their own exertions, they would not have been able to defend it” after 1948.¹² This very argument is a key considering when we think of how the Yugoslavs had been imagining communism’s struggle in Asia before the split. Press organs in Yugoslavia described Mao

⁹ See: Jack Snyder, “Civil-Military Relations and the Cult of the Offensive, 1914 and 1984”, *International Security*, 9/1, 1984, 108.

¹⁰ Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War”, *International Security*, 9/1, 1984, 5. Additional literature has supplied more detailed evidence to this idea, including how domestic policy is in fact an extension of foreign policy. See: Jack Levy, “Domestic Politics and War”, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18/4, 1988, 655-656; Cornelius Torp, *Die Herausforderung der Globalisierung: Wirtschaft und Politik in Deutschland 1860–1914*, Göttingen 2005.

¹¹ This was mentioned among other places in the Vladimir Dedijer Papers; Dedijer spoke of conversations with Djilas and Tito, both of whom had no idea what was going on and were surprised by the recent coolness in relations. See: University of Michigan, Bentley Historical Library [Bentley], Vladimir Dedijer Papers [VDPI], Notes, “Journey to India, February–March 1948”, Box 1. For more on the split, see: Leonid Gibianskii, “The Soviet-Yugoslav Split and the Cominform”, in: *The Establishment of the Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944–49*, ed. Naimark – Gibianskii, Boulder 1997.

¹² Milovan Djilas, “Yugoslav-Soviet Affairs”, *International Affairs*, 27/2, 1951, 168.

Zedong's battle for control over China in ideological terms that simply mirrored Yugoslavia's struggle against fascism. Writer Dušan Blagojević's summed up these earliest connections between Yugoslavia and China:

The heart of the Yugoslavian people is always beating for those who are fighting for freedom. Today China is much closer to us. The victories of our liberation struggles that Yugoslavian peoples achieved under leadership of our Communist Party brought us together just as the heroism and sacrifices of our Partisans have helped every single person to evaluate the greatness and glory of the heroic struggle and victories of Chinese people.¹³

Such coverage cleverly showed to the ordinary reader that Tito's success was part of a larger global phenomenon and that struggles for sovereignty and against oppression were just. A special article to *Borba* from a Chinese author had the key issues of sovereignty and independence forefront for readers when it declared how the People's Liberation Army was "deeply upset" by the support of "American imperialists" in China for the re-colonization of China in the wake of the "imperialist Japanese defeat in 1945."¹⁴ These early observations surely served to reinforce communist rule in Yugoslavia but became enmeshed in broader policy as Yugoslav politicians increasingly peered outward from the Balkans to Asia thinking that they could influence communist parties in that space.

Just as the rift with the Soviet Union was emerging in early 1948, the writers and party leaders Vladimir Dedijer and Radovan Zogović travelled to Asia with the express intention of attending the Indian Communist Party's Second Conference. In a meeting on 14 February, the "Old Man" [Tito] told Dedijer to "voice no opinions except when they insist on hearing them and present our experiences and discuss their affairs with great caution only." More importantly, he emphasized that the pair should "point out that our experience is ours only and that every movement takes place under its specific conditions." The duo was encouraged to hurry to India also because of the potential troubles in Indonesia as that country's Communist Party sought to take power but seemed to be struggling along factional lines.¹⁵

When Dedijer and Zogović finally arrived in India on 21 February they were tired from numerous connections and small flights, including an 11-hour stretch from Rome to Basra. Landing in Calcutta, the Yugoslavs were not met by Indian comrades but had to navigate the entry and passport control themselves. They commented that it was a surprise still to see English passport agents but concluded that the country was not functioning yet as an independent entity "everywhere." Karl Marx had written that an "Asiatic system" like India would not be able to exit the "semi-barbarian" stagnation unless it was sufficiently Europeanized. British rule, in essence had caused a social revolution in India that destroyed "primitive Asiatic society" while it introduced Western ideas of science and culture, which the Yugoslavs appreciated.¹⁶ Dedijer took a walk on the night of 22

¹³ See: "Istorijske pobjede naroda Kine", *Borba* (Zagreb), 4/1/1948, 1.

¹⁴ Vu Ven Tao, "Bankrotstvo američke intervencije u Kini", *Borba* (Zagreb), 2/2/1948, 5.

¹⁵ Bentley, VPD, Box 1, Notes, "Journey to India, February–March 1948."

¹⁶ See: Ashish Kumar Roy, *Communism in Asia: A Study in Strategy and Tactics*, Calcutta 1976, 4. Milovan Djilas claimed that he was "instrumental in getting the Yugoslavs in touch" with these Third World leaders

February, as he could not sleep and like Marx he took note of the “backwardness”, “misery” and “destitution” that was all around him. He blamed the colonial system but then turned to reflect on the unfolding dilemma with the Soviet Union. He thought that conflict with the Soviet Union would “disrupt the struggle of the subjugated masses”, especially because they were “looking up at Stalin and us as messiahs, and we are quarrelling.”¹⁷ Yet, the confidence among the Yugoslav Party members was clear, and Dedijer continued to ruminate on how centuries ago the Indians had created a cradle of civilization when the people of Yugoslavia were “savages.” The time had come finally when the Yugoslavs, “with our experience” could “help the people of this country to free themselves faster from the backwardness.”¹⁸ He felt obliged to tell his Indian comrades to “transfer to them our experience” and tell them “how we escaped from the claws of imperialism!” On the eve of the battle with Stalin, well-placed Yugoslavs such as Dedijer felt the need to show others in the world that they had a message to share and it would liberate them, especially as it intersected with the brutality of colonialism and outside control.

This trip in 1948 convinced top leaders at the time like Dedijer that Asia was ripe for revolution and they only had to deliver the aid to help ensure that it would happen. Meeting with the Australian Communist Party representative, Lance Sharkey, Dedijer spoke at length about the position of other Asian parties.¹⁹ Sharkey asked Dedijer and Zogović for “important advice.” It was in Singapore that Sharkey spoke with comrades who had completed the preparations for an uprising but were unsure whether they should launch it or not. This followed a report by Sharkey on the tenuous nature of the communist rebellion in Indonesia and how little he was able to help personally. The Australian asked Dedijer, “What do you think?”²⁰ Following Tito’s pre-departure advice he reportedly replied that “The comrades in Malaya should alone decide on that.” No one else should advise them.²¹ The next day the two Yugoslavs obtained the theses of the Indian Communist Party and as they read through them they concluded that “dogma is destroying this party.”

As it would be clearer later, the Yugoslavs felt that they were especially aware of the ills of dogma and were the example that others should follow. Upon another tour of the city prior to the opening of the conference, Dedijer again summed up the attitude of the Yugoslav Party and the role that it could play in the unfolding history. “We are a bridge between Europe and Asia”, he wrote in his journal, “not only a geographic one, but also an ideological one. We were the slaves of imperialism like Asia”, but fortunately “we are close to the progressive Europe, that Europe which can and must expedite the progress of the world.”²²

Dedijer met with emissaries from Ho Chi Minh’s party too and argued over how Ho had been organizing the party. These meetings with comrades on 26 February, including

and he saw the Yugoslavs as the driving force, since as Djilas noted, he “would not take” these “so-called uncommitted people too seriously.” See: Central Intelligence Agency Memo, “Some Recent Opinions of Milovan Djilas”, 7/9/1961.

¹⁷ Bentley, VPD, Box 1, Notes, “Journey to India, February–March 1948.”

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ For more on Sharkey, see: Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*, Sydney 1998.

²⁰ Bentley, VPD, Box 1, Notes, “Journey to India, February–March 1948.”

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

with Sharkey, solidified the Yugoslav position of advocating for a “popular front.” Tito gave the “example to follow” and while it was “impossible to transfer the [Yugoslav] model” they did provide a general line, demonstrating that the Yugoslav CZommunists were the “leading force of the front.”²³ The next day, 27 February, they greeted members of the Burmese party, who arrived from Rangoon by boat. The Secretary General, Thakin Than Tun was there with two other people, including a young man representing that country’s youth organization.²⁴ Dedijer noted that after listening to Thakin Than Tun he determined that it was a “long time since I have heard anything so dogmatic.”²⁵ Dedijer spoke to the participants at the Indian Communist Party Congress the next day, on 29 February, and was “surprised” that Tito’s name was greeted with “ovations, greater even than when the USSR was mentioned.”²⁶ That day he had another discussion with Thakin Than Tun and told the Burmese leader that the Yugoslav revolution was only successful “when it did not adhere to the dogma.” Marxism was to provide “general guidance” and that “every country had its own forms of development.”²⁷ This was in line with Tito’s directives to Dedijer to emphasize that the Yugoslavs were not to lecture anyone about how to go about revolution but also fit a line that would emerge in the coming years as a Yugoslav foreign policy matured and something that even Yugoslav leaders argued was implicit within their criticism of others, including the Chinese.²⁸

When Dedijer and Zogović landed back in Belgrade Dedijer first went to meet Djilas, after which they went together to see Tito. Djilas mentioned how the problem with the Russians was getting worse but when he gave his report on India to Tito it was clear that “everybody was satisfied with the prestige we enjoyed in the world.”²⁹ This was similar to how a year earlier in 1947 during Chinese Communist Liu Ningyi’s visit to Yugoslavia when Tito reportedly declared to Ningyi that “once we have our mission there [in China], then the reactionary press will be compelled to write something about Yugoslavia.”³⁰ More broadly, foreign press coverage was critical for Tito, as seen by the notes of Dedijer’s

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. Contact between Burma and Yugoslavia was something that was surprisingly regular for two disconnected and small countries and was an important piece of Yugoslavia’s influence abroad in these early years. For more see: Jovan Čavoški, “Arming Nonalignment: Yugoslavia’s Relations with Burma and the Cold War in Asia, 1950–1955”, Washington 2010, 11. He notes that in July 1947 a “delegation consisting of two high ranking Burmese officials including U Kyaw Nyein, then Minister of Internal and Judicial Affairs” visited Belgrade with the aim of becoming acquainted with the “general features of Yugoslavia’s socialist system.”

²⁶ Bentley, VPD, Box 1, Notes, “Journey to India, February–March 1948.”

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Edvard Kardelj would articulate the more mature version of this about a decade later his treatise, *Socialism and War*. In it, he said, “Therefore, when we criticize certain aspects of Chinese policy, particularly those connected with Chinese attacks on socialist Yugoslavia, we have no intention of offering the communists of China our ideological views in exchange for theirs, but merely with to prevent the imposing of alien patterns on ourselves.” See: Edvard Kardelj, *Socialism and War: A Survey of Chinese Criticism of the Policy of Coexistence*, transl. Alec Brown, New York 1960, 9.

²⁹ Bentley, VPD, Box 1, Notes, “Journey to India, February–March 1948.”

³⁰ Čavoški, “Overstepping the Balkan Boundaries: The lesser known history of Yugoslavia’s early relations with Asian countries (new evidence from Yugoslav/Serbian archives)”, *Cold War History*, 11/4, 2011, 564.

trip to India. He submitted them to the Cominform editors, who “edited it heavily” and “were laughing at my criticisms of the Indian CP.” After all, from the Yugoslav perspective during the split with Stalin, a common critique would be to label Moscow as dogmatic. He thought perhaps that it was “an excuse to see our attitude regarding the Indian affairs”, but at any rate they will “not like the prestige Tito enjoys in India.”³¹

The scant literature available on the 1948 trip to India has suggested that the pair of Yugoslav representatives played an “exceedingly active part” in the Communist Party congress.³² Indian leaders later wrote about how they respected the work of Edvard Kardelj, whom Ajoy Gosh regarded as the “most significant Communist thinker outside of Russia.”³³ In the early 1950s, the Yugoslavs sent a special mission to India, headed by Rodoljub Čolaković in order to “strengthen world peace”, which prompted an Indian representative to stress how “India can learn a lot from the Yugoslav example.” Čolaković declared that “for years we have led in our country the struggle for freedom and sovereignty”; likewise, a similar fight has occurred in “India for decades” according to the same principles. Moreover, he continued, “we believe that world peace requires a practical application of these principles” and we are pleased that India has the same goals to “maintain and strengthen world peace.”³⁴

On 11 May 1951, Richard Sherwood, a Sheldon Travelling Fellow from Harvard University, underwent a multi-country tour of places undergoing “profound political, economic and social changes.” Having already gone to England, India, Ceylon, Israel, and Turkey, Sherwood was bound to arrive in Belgrade for a two-week sojourn to learn about the “decentralization” program “in both government and industry.” Sherwood asked Vladimir Dedijer to assist in developing a program whereby he could learn about the current programs in Yugoslavia.³⁵ Overall, socialists throughout the 1950s were split as to how to organize society; ideas of integration across Western Europe, for example, were not received universally with open arms. The notion of “collaboration between Socialist and non-Socialist governments” put at risk the potential for socialism’s success as noted by the Burmese during Dedijer’s trip to India.³⁶ Dedijer’s papers that go beyond his India diary display an earnest belief in socialism and his understanding that the ideal system could be attained. Until 1954 he influenced Yugoslav government policy as part of his role as a Central Committee member but even after that he wrote for international journals like the *New Statesman* and took the opportunity to lecture and research at British and American universities. His letters with various professors and leaders in Great Britain on topics such as Guild Socialism, including R. E. Dowse at Edinburgh University, displayed a confidence that socialism would triumph but that it was a “slow and complex [process] and follows a zigzag course.”³⁷ Such was the case for Yugoslavia as it emerged from Stalin’s Cominform challenge in June 1948.

³¹ Bentley, VPD, Box 1, Notes, “Journey to India, February–March 1948.”

³² Gene Overstreet – Marshall Windmiller, *Communism in India*, Berkeley 1959, 271-272.

³³ *Ibid.*, 268.

³⁴ See: “Naše zemlje imaju jedan isti cilj da se održi i ojača svetski mir”, *Borba* (Zagreb), 13/1/1953, 3. Other articles continued this coverage and mentioned how India was still trying to overcome the remnants of colonialism. See: “Madras – kulturno-politički centar indijskog juga”, *Borba* (Zagreb), 13/1/1953, 5.

³⁵ Bentley, VPD, Box 3, Memos, “Topical Files, Guild Socialism and G. D. H. Cole, 1951–1960, undated.”

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Dedijer and other Yugoslav leaders had recognized that the transformation from one social order to another was going on across the world in “most different forms.” This inherent realization that multiple paths to socialism existed came out of a need to justify survival outside of the Soviet bloc but also benefitted from these interactions with Asian comrades. The latter helped them understand that socialism was “universal” yet must reflect a “synthesis of many local trends. Socialist Weltanschauung means a general human approach, a synthesis of the experience of all facts of life, of all trends.”³⁸ When Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit met with Aleš Bebler in 1954 it was clear that the Yugoslavs were doing something right. Pandit stated that she understood Yugoslavia’s politics considering the aid from the United States and close connections with its neighbors (i. e., the Balkan Pact). It was because of the troubles with Pakistan that India probably would follow Yugoslavia’s example to forge greater connections with Burma and Indonesia.³⁹ The Yugoslav opinions and actions in this early era would become the hallmarks of the Yugoslav ideology as early as the 1950s when the official regime advocated for equality, non-intervention, and principles that would together form the basis for socialist self-management and nonalignment.

2. Self-Management in Asia: Tito’s Union with Asian Ideas

Having survived the Tito–Stalin split meant that criticism of the Soviet system as centralist and domineering became a talking point for the Belgrade regime that was not simply a rhetorical device. Arguing against dogma and centralization of power by parties were understood as paths towards totalitarianism.⁴⁰ Therefore, the emerging Yugoslav answer sought to resist the harmful aspects of central rule and thereafter tinkered with an ideological premise for socialism in action. The newly renamed League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) in 1953 ostensibly did “not have a ready-made formula for socialism.” Instead, leaders needed to “constantly revise, correct, improve, and construct that socialist formula.”⁴¹ Yugoslavs therefore also stood out as a particular example and believed that exploits in the world could inform their own population through press coverage but perhaps also win allies as new states emerged from colonial control. The global conversation of how to take advantage of the results of World War II and enact socialism saw Yugoslavia squarely in the middle.

Beyond any self-reflection or modest conversations between a handful of comrades, a real global socialism was developing in Asia. In early January 1953, the Asian Socialist Conference met in Rangoon, Burma, to discuss the issues facing Asians as they emerged from colonial control. This also served as another opportunity to connect Yugoslavia with these Asian socialists, thanks to the small cohort of observers, which included Milovan Djilas, Aleš Bebler, and Anđelko Blažović. At the same time the Yugoslavs had unveiled the first iteration of socialist self-management and therefore had an opportunity to dis-

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Belgrade, Arhiv Jugoslavije [AJ], “Notes on the talk of state under-secretary Dr. Aleš Bebler on 22 June 1954,” 26/6/1954, 837 1-3-a/38-3.

⁴⁰ *Cultural Freedom in Asia: The Proceedings of a Conference Held at Rangoon, Burma*, Tokyo 1955.

⁴¹ Branko Horvat, *An Essay on Yugoslav Society*, transl. Henry F. Mins, Belgrade 1967, 210. For more on socialist self-management, see: Susan Woodward, *Socialism Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945–1990*, Princeton 1995.

close the changes in Yugoslavia to a captive audience in part because the delegates from Belgrade had more to offer than simply survival outside of Soviet control.⁴² Edvard Kardelj had explained for *Borba's* readers what this meant and likely paralleled what the Asian colleagues in Rangoon heard beyond the official speeches. Kardelj claimed that following the Soviet Constitution of 1936 had "allowed the working people of Yugoslavia" to make great progress but precisely because of that progress the changes made in 1953 "occupied an honorable place" and helped define Yugoslavia's special path.⁴³

Another January 1953 article in *Borba* explained to Yugoslav readers a story familiar since they began covering Mao's struggle in the mid-1940s. They told that the Indonesian Socialists were planning to meet in February in Bandung to work on the plan for transforming the country. Naturally, they argued that "emancipation is possible only through socialism", and not via capitalism and "even less through cominformism." The article then spoke about the liberation struggle against the Japanese led by Sutan Sjahrir, the first prime minister from 1945 to 1947 and founder of the Indonesian Socialist Party. With the government's instability in 1947 and into 1948 the creation of a left-wing federation, created by "socialists and other left-wing groups", was shown to be the "toy in the hands of Moscow's agents."⁴⁴ Therefore, it was imperative for the Indonesia to navigate the correct victory of socialism, which relied on a balanced view free of outside control. Sutan Sjahrir argued in 1948 that the real danger moving forward was how "mass parties with uneducated followings led by leaders who themselves decide all party policy" present an "imminent and great danger and may well lead to fascism or some other type of totalitarian organization." Sjahrir, like Dedijer, understood at the time that the dangers of "totalitarian" – or, dogmatism in Dedijer's terminology – could be overcome through cooperation and a middle-ground approach without interference.⁴⁵ Aleš Bebler said as much when he was Yugoslavia's delegate to the United Nations. He argued in that body that "first of all it is necessary to consider the problem of peace", and that the need was clear to develop a dialogue between all major parties to foster it, which included the United States, Soviet Union, and China.⁴⁶ The connections and pronouncements continued and included Yugoslavia at the center; in March 1953, the Asian Socialist Conference wanted to learn more about alternative examples of how communism was growing and therefore sent a delegation to the World Council of Socialist International and subsequently scheduled members to attend a meeting of the League of Communists in Yugoslavia.⁴⁷

⁴² *First Asian Socialist Conference*, Rangoon 1953. In particular, see Bebler's speech, in which he strongly condemned Moscow by asking the attendees to consider Yugoslavia's recent experience of 1948 to understand the necessity to avoid control by any group (73).

⁴³ See: "Ekspoze Edvarda Kardelja", *Borba* (Zagreb), 13/1/1953, 1.

⁴⁴ B. T., "Iz međunarodnog radničkog pokreta Socijalisti u Indoneziji", *Borba* (Zagreb), 4/1/1953, 4.

⁴⁵ See: Sutan Sjahrir, *Our Struggle*, transl. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, Ithaca 1968, IV. Alvin Rubinstein also noted in his contemporary report on the Rangoon meeting of Asian Socialists in 1953 that they had a "resolution condemning the Soviet type of totalitarian communism", and that the Yugoslavs "provided a counter-force to the undercurrent of attraction felt for the Soviet Union." See: Alvin Rubinstein, "The State of Socialism in Asia – The Rangoon Conference", *Pacific Affairs*, 26/2, 1953, 134.

⁴⁶ See: "Jugoslovenska delegacija smatra da bi intervencija OUN protiv narodnooslobodilačkog pokreta u Kini značila mešanje u unutrašnje poslove Kine", *Borba* (Zagreb), 2/10/1949, 1.

⁴⁷ "Programme of Asian Socialists: Decisions by New Bureau", *Manchester Guardian* (London), 17/1/1953, 5.

The beginnings of a program of Yugoslav decentralization were noticed shortly thereafter when Asian Socialists met again in Rangoon in 1955. That conference's General Secretary, Prabhakar Padhye, mused how the Yugoslav model of self-management might actually yield a condition whereby the "workers are enfranchised in the factory and the peasants are enfranchised in the field."⁴⁸ Yugoslavia's search for its ideology combined with its struggle for freedom was also a means for Asian socialists to compare the type of communism that had developed under Mao Zedong in China and what was in place in the Soviet Union. Chang Kuo-sin, the President of Asia Press in Hong Kong, argued at the same conference that Mao was engaging in "brain-washing", and that the destruction of cultural freedom in China was not "youthful excesses" but a "settled policy of thought control."⁴⁹

As Asian leaders debated the ways to solve their problems in 1955, Minoo R. Masani of India argued that the "defence of cultural freedom is in the main the defence of free society against" the onslaught of totalitarianism. Such tyranny could not be tolerated.⁵⁰ When the delegates discussed the success of Chinese Communists, including their strength in the Korean War, the promise that Russia's revolution gave to the colonized peoples, and the need for economic growth the struggles for Asians became clearer still. They needed a way to develop independently from the outside and have a system that was aligned with their values and culture. As the conference wrapped up, the discussion circled back to Yugoslavia, whose decentralization program was mentioned as a potential solution despite the misgivings with putting power directly in the hands of the people.⁵¹

Of course, the conversations by Asian socialists that centered on the ills of colonialism and development resonated within Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union at the same time. When Khrushchev came to Yugoslavia in 1955 he and Tito discussed the global forces of national liberation and how to forge allies in the budding communist movements. They spoke at length about leaders such as Egypt's Nasser and India's Nehru. Tito expressed his desire to work with Nasser, in order to sell him manufactured goods but Khrushchev cautioned him because of Nasser's battle against communists in Egypt. Regarding Nehru, Tito and Khrushchev saw a common strategy: Khrushchev claimed that flexibility and openness, for example, were pillars in his relationship with Nehru. "Nehru was not a communist", Khrushchev admitted, but he still gave Nehru "support." The Soviets had invited him to come to Moscow in June 1955 and win over Nehru through a pledge for common peaceful global relations. Tito answered "It would not be productive to conduct foreign policy based on state or party lines; it is better to have courteous meetings and discuss openly, just like how Tito has interacted with from time to time to discuss with them."⁵²

⁴⁸ *Cultural Freedom in Asia*, 220. During that discussion at the Rangoon meetings, Eric P. W. da Costa countered that Yugoslavia's decentralization efforts have not led to freedom.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 265, 270. As a counter to this, delegates were willing to extend an earnest level of trust in people. Padhye argued that "I will say only this: if we really mean freedom, if we really mean democracy, then we must trust the people, whatever the risks."

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁵² See: AJ, Savez Komunističke Partije [SK], folder 56, "Fragmenti iz zapispnika o sastanku plenuma CK KPSS Jula 1955. godine na kome je vodjena diskusija o politici SSSR-a prema Jugoslaviji posle povratka Sovjetske Delegacije iz Beograda", IX 119/I K.2 45-90.

3. Conclusions: Yugoslavia, the Cult of Foreign Policy, and the Contest for Asia

Titoist Yugoslavia is an oft-overlooked or misunderstood political entity. Even before World War II ended, Tito's Partisan army had been on the heels of the retreating Nazi and collaborationist forces with the express purpose of enlarging Yugoslavia, in part to win over Slovenes and Croats who would see additions to their territory in the West as favorable.⁵³ Tito aspired to claim Trieste and its hinterland alongside stretches of southern Austria through active occupation and not diplomatic debate. He also sent high-level Yugoslav leaders to Tirana, Albania to join that country and its tiny communist elite headed by Enver Hoxha to Yugoslavia.⁵⁴ Ever aware of Yugoslavia's history of foreign control or occupation, Tito reacted strongly to perceived threats to his sovereignty and against the Yugoslav peoples. Tito's propagandistic messages argued in 1947 that Slovenes "must still tremble and suffer under a Gestapo terror clad in another uniform." He appealed to "our Allies" who based their foreign policies on the Atlantic Charter, whereby "all people who were enslaved will have the right themselves to determine their fate."⁵⁵

Because Yugoslavia was in essence a weaker power, especially in terms of global powers, its success in wielding foreign policy demands attention. Tito benefitted from a tremendous amount of international attention after 1948.⁵⁶ Tito, despite never adopting democracy or opening up the Yugoslav economy to free-market capitalism, continually received U. S. support, even when his policies opposed the United States. But Tito did participate in the emerging ideological battles throughout the world, even in the earliest period of existence when his state was extremely vulnerable. This essay has suggested that the Yugoslav participation in and imagination of the Asian struggle for independence resembled the former intersection of ideas and space, such as the *Triplex Confinium*. It is also interesting to consider how important these earliest foreign policy exercises – which focused on peaceful rhetoric instead of standoffish bullying – encouraged Yugoslav leaders to continue the project after the state had stabilized. Americans on the Left hinted at this importance by the end of the 1940s when Mao's victory began to raise serious questions for Washington's foreign policy. Daniel J. Dallin of *The New Leader* spoke of how Amer-

⁵³ Andrej Milivojevic has argued that in the earliest years of the Titoist period communist leaders declared that they had the support of most of the Yugoslavs who had fled during and after 1945; these same leaders discussed ways of how to win over that population. See: Andrej Milivojevic, "From 1940s 'Quislings' to 1970s 'Job Creators': Explaining the Absence of Yugoslavia's Migration Regime", conference presentation, Western Social Science Association Annual Conference, San Francisco 2017.

⁵⁴ See: Niebuhr, "Enlarging Yugoslavia: Tito's Quest for Expansion, 1945–48", *European History Quarterly*, 47/2, 2017, 297-300. Archival records show how wartime aid turned to postwar linkages, led in part by General Sreten Žujović, who worked to orchestrate in 1947 a comprehensive commercial treaty that bound Albania to a Yugoslav developmentalist project. See: AJ, SK, "Albanija", IX K.12 15.

⁵⁵ As noted in: K. R. S., "'Slovene Carinthia': The Austro-Yugoslav Frontier Question", *The World Today*, 3/9, 1947, 392.

⁵⁶ Yugoslavia received \$2.2 billion in economic and military aid between 1950 and 1965 from the United States but did not align with Washington. See: "US Policies Toward Yugoslavia", Department of State Memorandum, 15 July 1965, LBJ Library.

icans were trying to take stock in the idea that Mao's Communist movement was at its core a nationalist one and that he "is or will become the Tito of China."⁵⁷ Apparently, Yugoslavia's perceived influence in far-off Asia was greater than even Tito – or Dedijer – might have dreamed.

⁵⁷ See: David J. Dallin, "A Chinese Tito?", *The New Leader* (New York), 30/4/1949, 2.