The Emergence of a New Non-Alignment: The Twenty-Fourth Newsletter



Sahej Rahal (India), *Juggernaut*, 2019.

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research**.

A new mood of defiance in the Global South has generated bewilderment in the capitals of the **Triad** (the United States, Europe, and Japan), where officials are struggling to answer why governments in the Global South have not **accepted** the Western view of the conflict in Ukraine or universally supported the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in its efforts to '**weaken Russia**'. Governments that had long been pliant to the Triad's wishes, such as the administrations of Narendra Modi in India and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Türkiye (despite the toxicity of their own regimes), are no longer as reliable.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, India's Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar has been vocal in defending his government's refusal to accede to Washington's pressure. In April 2022, at a joint press conference in Washington, DC with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Jaishankar was asked to explain India's continued purchase of oil from Russia. His **answer** was blunt: 'I noticed you refer to oil purchases. If you are looking at energy purchases from Russia, I would suggest that your attention should be focused on Europe… We do buy some energy which is necessary for our energy security. But I suspect, looking at the figures, probably our total purchases for the month would be less than what Europe does in an afternoon'.



Kandi Narsimlu (India), *Waiting at the Bus Stand*, 2023.

However, such comments have not deterred Washington's efforts to win India over to its agenda. On 24 May, the **US Congress's Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party** released a policy **statement** on Taiwan which asserted that '[t]he United States should strengthen the NATO Plus arrangement to include India'. This policy statement was released shortly after the G7 **summit** in Hiroshima, Japan, where India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with the various G7 leaders, including US President Joe Biden, as well as Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The Indian government's response to this 'NATO Plus' formulation echoed the sentiment of its earlier remarks about purchasing Russian oil. 'A lot of Americans still have that NATO treaty construct in their heads', Jaishankar **said** in a press conference on 9 June. 'It seems almost like that is the only template or viewpoint with which they look at the world… That is not a template that applies to India'. India, he said, is not interested in being part of NATO Plus, wishing to maintain a greater degree of geopolitical flexibility. 'One of the challenges of a changing world', Jaishankar said, 'is how do you get people to accept and adjust to those changes'.



Katsura Yuki (Japan), *An Ass in a Lion's Skin*, 1956.

There are two significant takeaways from Jaishankar's statements. First, the Indian government – which does not oppose the United States, either in terms of its programme or temperament – is uninterested in being drawn into a US-led bloc system (the 'NATO treaty construct', as Jaishankar put it). Second, like many governments in the Global South, it recognises that we live in 'changing world' and that the traditional major powers – especially the United States – need to 'adjust to those changes'.

In its *Investment Outlook 2023* report, Credit Suisse **pointed** to the 'deep and persistent fractures' that have opened up in the international order – another way of referring to what Jaishankar called the 'changing world'. Credit Suisse describes these 'fractures' accurately: 'The global West (Western developed countries and allies) has drifted away from the global East (China, Russia, and allies) in terms of core strategic interests, while the Global South (Brazil, Russia, India, and China and most developing countries) is reorganising to pursue its own interests'. These final words bear repeating: 'the Global South… is reorganising to pursue its own interests'.

In mid-April, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs released its **Diplomatic Bluebook 2023**, in which it noted that we are now at the 'end of the post-Cold War era'. After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the United States asserted its primacy over the international order and, along with its Triad vassals, established what it called the '**rules-based international order**'. This thirty-year-old US-led project is now floundering, partly due to the internal weaknesses of the Triad countries (including their weakened position in the global economy) and partly due to the rise of the '**locomotives of the South**' (led by China, but including Brazil, India, Indonesia, Mexico, and Nigeria). Our calculations, based on the **IMF datamapper**, show that for the first time in centuries, the Gross Domestic Product of the Global South countries surpassed that of the Global North countries this year. The rise of these developing countries – despite the great social inequality that exists within them – has produced a new attitude amongst their middle classes which is reflected in the increased confidence of their governments: they no longer accept the parochial views of the Triad countries as universal truths, and they have a greater wish to exert their own national and regional interests.



Nelson Makamo (South Africa), *The Announcement*, 2016.

It is this re-assertion of national and regional interests within the Global South that has revived a set of regional processes, including the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (**CELAC**) and the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) process. On 1 June, the BRICS foreign ministers met in Cape Town (South Africa) ahead of the summit between their heads of states that is set to take place this August in Johannesburg. The joint statement they issued is instructive: twice, they warned about the negative impact of 'unilateral economic coercive measures, such as sanctions, boycotts, embargoes, and blockades' which have 'produced negative effects, notably in the developing world'. The language in this statement represents a feeling that is shared across the entirety of the Global South. From Bolivia to Sri Lanka, these countries, which make up the majority of the world, are fed up with the **IMF-driven debt-austerity cycle** and the Triad's bullying. They are beginning to assert their own sovereign agendas.

Interestingly, this revival of sovereign politics is not being driven by inward-looking nationalism, but by a non-aligned internationalism. The BRICS ministers' statement focuses on 'strengthening multilateralism and upholding international law, including the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as its indispensable cornerstone' (incidentally, both China and Russia are part of the twenty-member **Group of Friends in Defence of the UN Charter**). The implicit argument being made here is that the US-

led Triad states have unilaterally imposed their narrow worldview, based on the interests of their elites, on the countries of the South under the guise of the 'rules-based international order'. Now, the states of the Global South argue, it is time to return to the source – the UN Charter – and build a genuinely democratic international order.



Leaders of the Third World at the first conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade, 1961. Credit: Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.

The word 'non-aligned' has increasingly been used to refer to this new trend in international politics. The term has its origins in the Non-Aligned Conference held in Belgrade (Yugoslavia) in 1961, which was built upon the foundations laid at the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955. In those days, non-alignment referred to countries led by movements rooted in the deeply anti-colonial Third World Project, which sought to establish the sovereignty of the new states and the dignity of their people. That moment of non-alignment was killed off by the debt crisis of the 1980s, which began with Mexico's default in 1982. What we have now is not a return of the old non-alignment, but the emergence of a new political atmosphere and a new political constellation that requires careful study. For now, we can say that this new non-alignment is being demanded by the larger states of the Global South that are uninterested in being subordinated by the Triad's agenda, but which have not yet established a project of their own – a Global South Project, for instance.



As part of our efforts to understand this emerging dynamic, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research will be joining with the **No Cold War** campaign, **ALBA Movimientos**, **Pan-Africanism Today**, the **International Strategy Center** (South Korea), and the **International Peoples' Assembly** to host the webinar **'The New Non-Alignment and the New Cold War'** on 17 June. Speakers will include Ronnie Kasrils (former minister of intelligence, South Africa), Sevim Dağdelen (deputy party leader for Die Linke in the German Bundestag), Stephanie Weatherbee (International Peoples' Assembly), and Srujana Bodapati (Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research).



In 1931, the Jamaican poet and journalist Una Marson (1905–1965) **wrote** 'There Will Come a Time', a poem of hopefulness for a future 'where love and brotherhood should have full sway'. People in the colonised world, she wrote, would have to pursue a sustained battle to attain their freedom. We are nowhere near the end of that fight, yet we are not in the position of almost total subordination that we were in during the height of the Triad's primacy, which ran from 1991 to now. It is worthwhile to go back to Marson, who knew with certainty that a more just world would come, even if she would not be alive to witness it:

> What matter that we be as cagèd birds
> Who beat their breasts against the iron bars

Till blood-drops fall, and in heartbreaking songs
Our souls pass out to God? These very words,
In anguish sung, will mightily prevail.
We will not be among the happy heirs
Of this grand heritage – but unto us
Will come their gratitude and praise,
And children yet unborn will reap in joy
What we have sown in tears.

Warmly,

Vijay