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## Review of Čavoški, J. (2022) Non-Aligned movement summits: a history

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attention paid to pro-Palestinian student activism in Francophone universities, which will add to the growing corpus of literature focusing on this dimension of the Global 1960s (e.g., Sorcha Thomson and Pelle Valentin Olsen's edited volume *Palestine in the World: International Solidarity with the Palestinian Liberation Movement*).

*Decolonizing 1968* goes far in centring colonization and decolonization as key ingredients in the myriad experiences that make up the Global 1960s, and makes a welcome addition to the fields of history, political science, and postcolonial theory.

### **Michael R. Fischbach**

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Jovan Čavoški, *Non-Aligned Movement Summits: A History*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022; xi + 298 pp.; £81.00 hbk; ISBN 9781350032095

When Indira Gandhi took the stage to deliver her keynote address at the Seventh Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in New Delhi in 1983, she reminded the delegates that

As more countries became free, the number of those who believed in peaceful co-existence and wished to keep out of military alliances increased steadily. It was natural for these non-aligned countries to come together, not to form another bloc but to raise the voices of the exploited millions through a moral and political movement.<sup>1</sup>

At first glance, this reads as the logical and fairly standard diplomatic greeting of an incoming chairperson, emphasizing the founding principles of the organization and reminding the audience of their importance. Readers of Jovan Čavoški's new *Non-Aligned Movement Summits*, however, quickly learn that every element of this statement was the product of much debate, and part of an enduring struggle for – as he calls it in chapter seven – ‘the soul of the NAM’.

*Non-Aligned Movement Summits* offers a history of the first seven major NAM summits, covering in depth the decades in which the movement's influence was at its strongest. This is a welcome book in many ways, not least because focus on it gives centre stage to the tumultuous years in which the NAM was an official institutional entity. These were also the years in which the movement was able to exert global influence, and the book deftly navigates the challenges of telling the reader just enough about the Cold War events to which the movement responded, while keeping attention firmly on the internal politics of the NAM.

In this way, the book fits a recent trend in Cold War historiography of taking the focus away from the two dominant blocs, examining instead the impact of the non-bloc and decolonizing worlds. Emphatically, that does not mean offering a history of the Cold

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1 Keynote Address by Shrimati Indira Gandhi, Report of the Seventh Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, New Delhi 7–12 March 1983. Appendix II, 143–4.

War from the margins. The point is, rather, that those so-called margins were far from marginal. Čavoški says as much when he notes that ‘rivalry between the great powers only increased the amount of influence and pragmatism exercised by small states’ (p. 15).

This is a deeply researched book which, thanks in part to its impressive documentary base, succeeds in showing not only the complicated political developments occurring within the NAM but also the pressures exerted on the organization by other international political movements – some complementary, some conflicting or even directly competing with it. Understandably, this includes a careful extrication of non-alignment from Afro-Asianism, with which it is sometimes conflated. Indeed, recent research on Afro-Asianism has amply demonstrated the priority that Afro-Asianist movements accorded to anti-imperialist and regional solidarities over the divisions of the Cold War. But given the book’s careful examination of what nonalignment is (and especially what it is not), it is surprising that Afro-Asianism is framed in this book as a monolith, centred around the wish to organize new ‘Bandungs’. As a consequence, the choice to be non-aligned or not is presented as mutually exclusive with such regionalist engagements, even though several NAM members kept the door open to other regionalist and anti-imperialist platforms. Even if the intended ‘second Bandung’ in Algiers could be framed as a direct competitor to the NAM, casting ‘the NAM and the concurrent Afro-Asian Movement as two competing organizations’ (p. 256) overstretches the latter’s coherence. The challenge posed to the NAM by the spectre of the second Afro-Asian Conference could certainly have been treated alongside the more capacious definition of political Afro-Asianism offered by recent literature on the subject.

Even so, this book is required reading for anyone who wishes to understand the NAM on its own terms. What Čavoški does extremely well is to show us a NAM that was always in flux, constantly under threat from both centrifugal and centripetal forces. Whether it is the competition between moderates and progressives, those who sought a narrow membership base versus a broad-based one, or those who wanted the NAM to become an economic pressure group advocating for the New International Economic Order (NIEO) versus those who sought to maintain it as a political organization, the book leans into these complexities rather than imposing unity where there is none. The competition between Castro and Tito, as representatives of opposing visions for the organization, is an especially good read in this regard.

It is here that *NAM Summits* succeeds in offering a history of NAM summits not as events, but as ongoing debates over the future of the organization and the world order in which it operates. It is especially impressive that it succeeds in detailing these debates, and those doing the debating, from multiple vantage points. Thanks to the multi-archival and polycentric treatment of these debates, the book lays bare the fragility of the position of leaders who are often seen as uncontested NAM stalwarts, and of countries that are often seen as determining the course of the organization. Čavoški shows that none of those positions were ‘preordained or unalterable’ (p. 53). I will certainly read the speech by Indira Gandhi, above, very differently from now on.

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