

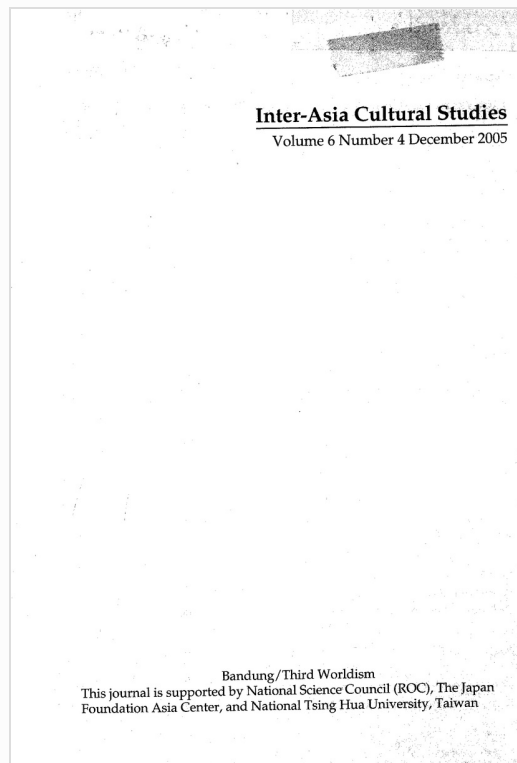


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Page count: 14
Word count: 6,912
Character count: 38,827
Submission date: 18-Jan-2018 09:54 AM (UTC+0700)
Submission ID: 903818023



Global Solidarity Against Unilaterlism

by Fx. Baskara T. Wardaya

Submission date: 18-Jan-2018 09:54AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 903818023

File name: Inter-Asia_Cultural_Stttifies.pdf (3.22M)

Word count: 6912

Character count: 38827

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Inter-Asia Cultural Studies

Volume 6 Number 4 December 2005

Bandung/Third Worldism

This journal is supported by National Science Council (ROC), The Japan Foundation Asia Center, and National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan

Special Issue Editor

Heeyeon CHO and Kuan-Hsing CHEN

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Cover Picture by Simryn Gill, Fast-food worker in a city shopping mall wearing a necklace made from Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, Heinemann, London, 1961.

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Global solidarity against unilateralism

Baskara T. WARDAYA, SJ

ABSTRACT The 1955 Bandung Conference was a crucial moment in the history of the former colonial states of Asia and Africa. The Bandung Spirit that came out of it was a strategic foundation for building solidarity and cooperation among nations. The Cold War period and its aftermath, however, indicate that the Bandung spirit was in decline. Meanwhile, the United States, which had intended to unilaterally disrupt the Bandung Conference, continues to conduct unilateral actions in pursuit of its hegemonic interests. Along this line, the United Nations has often been bypassed by the US and other powerful nations in their unilateral initiatives. In response to this situation, it is important to rekindle the Bandung Spirit and to struggle for the democratization of international relations. In today's context the struggle should be focused on three areas, namely the democratization of world politics, world economy, and the United Nations.

KEYWORDS: Global solidarity, unilateralism, the Cold War, the United Nations

Perhaps now more than at any other moment in the history of the world, society, government and statesmanship need to be based upon the highest code of morality and ethics. And in political terms, what is the highest code of morality? It is the subordination of everything to the well-being of mankind. But today we are faced with a situation where the well-being of mankind is not always the primary consideration. Many who are in places of high power think, rather, of controlling the world.

President Sukarno, Opening Speech of the Bandung Conference, 1955

The Bandung Conference and its background

When President Sukarno delivered the above words at the beginning of the Bandung Conference in 1955, many newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa were very optimistic in being able to 'build the world anew', where colonialism would soon be a thing of the past, and independence a new path to the future. Centuries of colonialism made them realize that

subjugation by powerful (western) nations had caused poverty, suffering and backwardness, and that in order to be effective in fighting against legacy of colonialism they should unite in a common struggle. Based on this realization they wish to hold a conference that would help combine their power into a united front against the long-term impact of colonialism. They also wanted to start a new course of building a future free from any form of foreign domination. Indonesia, as one of the newly independent countries, was appointed to host the conference. The Indonesian government, in turn, decided to pick Bandung, a cool city in West Java, as the site of this historic postcolonial gathering. It was in that city that the historic conference took place and became an international inspiration for years afterward.

But the Bandung Conference was, of course, the result of a long process. Prior to the conference, initiatives for uniting Asian nations in dealing with postcolonial issues had been held before. In 1946, for instance, the government of India hosted the Conference of Inter-Asian Relations in New Delhi.

2 The same government was responsible for the Conference of Southeast Asian Youth in Calcutta, also in 1946. The following year, in 1947, representatives from Burma, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam met in Bangkok and founded the South East Asia League aimed at promoting decolonization of Southeast Asia. In 1954, five Asian nations met in Sri Lanka to hold what was known as the Colombo Conference, which was intended to build closer ties among the formerly colonized nations of Asia. It was during this conference that the so-called 'Colombo Powers' – comprising India, Pakistan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Burma and Indonesia – agreed to ask Indonesia to host the Bandung Conference the following year. The conference was aimed at enhancing solidarity among the newly-independent nations not only of Asia but also of Africa. The idea was widely accepted and was endorsed by other Asian and African countries, including the People's Republic of China. Later that year those who supported the idea held a conference in the city of Bogor, Indonesia. As a final step for preparing the Bandung Conference, the Bogor Conference re-emphasized the need for building closer ties among Asian and African nations. Moreover, Bogor expressed a desire to seek these nations' role in building a more just and peaceful postcolonial world.

Internationally respected heads of states were invited and planned to attend the Bandung Conference. Among them were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Prince Norodom Shianouk of Cambodia, Pham Van Dong of Vietnam, U Nu of Burma, Mohammad Ali Jinnah of Pakistan, Carlos Romulo of the Philippines, Zhou En-lai of the People's Republic of China, and of course Sukarno, the President of the host country Indonesia. As stated in the 29 December 1954 communiqué of the preparation committee, the Bandung Conference was intended 'to promote goodwill and cooperation among the nations of Asia and Africa; to explore and advance their mutual as well as common interests; and to establish and further friendliness and neighborly relations' (White House Office

1 1955a). In the context of the Cold War tension involving the United States on one side and the Soviet Union on the other, the conference was also intended as a global expression of Asian and African nations' aspiration in charting their own future, free from any pressure to ally with either side of the tension, and even to actively participate in easing the tension by promoting the principle of peaceful coexistence.

The Bandung Conference and the United States

Looking from a different perspective, however, the United States – the self-proclaimed leader of the 'Free World' – saw the Bandung Conference with suspicion and regarded it as a source of deep concerns. Washington feared that the Bandung Conference would be exploited by the USSR and China to spread their communist influence among Afro-Asian nations. In Washington's view, China and the Soviet Union possessed better training and organizational skills such that it would be easy for them to influence Asian-African countries that had just recently gained independence. So great were Washington's concerns that it contemplated unilateral moves to disrupt the conference.

In anticipation of the conference, Washington policymakers set up a special Coordinating Board aimed at implementing plans to frustrate the conference and influence its outcome. Members of the board planned to work through 'proper channels,' namely delegations from countries thought to be friendly to the US, such as the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, and Turkey (White House Office 1955b). Through these countries the administration hoped to monitor the dynamics of the conference and 'influence actions at the conference in line with U.S. policies and objectives' (White House Office 1955c). On 15 January 1955, the board stated that it planned 'to foster in advance of and during the Bandung Conference and maintain thereafter Free World awareness of the facts of Soviet-Chinese aggression and imperialism in the Far East'. Moreover, it intended to put the communist representatives to the

¹ conference 'psychologically on the defensive' (White House Office 1955c)

Working through the friendly nations, the Coordinating Board's main goals include:

to create a moral and psychological tone unfavorable to the Communists by: (1) exposing the moral depravity of the Chinese Communist regime; (2) exposing the Soviet colonial-imperial pattern which uses Communist China as its executive agent in Asia; (3) discrediting the motives of [the People's Republic of China's Foreign Minister] Chou En-lai's five principles of: mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and, peaceful co-existence.

(Craig 1955)

By using these tactics Washington hoped to create an environment within the conference that would provoke the participating delegates to question the motives behind the seemingly appealing anti-colonial rhetoric of the communist participants. The US wanted to 'take advantage of the groundwork laid by Communist propaganda and turn it against them' (White House Office 1955a). In general, the US government intended to make any efforts possible to prevent the conference from being manipulated by Moscow and Beijing to support policies of the communist bloc or to condemn the international practices of the United States and its Cold War allies (White House Office 1955d).

A more specific initiative dealing with the perceived threat of the Bandung Conference was offered by officials of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Instead of just planning to interfere in the conference peacefully, these officials were proposing a bolder move: an assassination plan to sabotage the conference itself. For a long time, however, the plan had been kept secret until it was revealed in 1975 before the Church Committee, a US Senate committee chaired by Senator Frank Church to investigate the

CIA's covert activities. In a hearing of that year the committee required testimony regarding the activities of CIA officers stationed in East Asian countries, including their activities during the 1950s. According to that testimony CIA officials had proposed to assassinate an 'East Asian leader' in order to disrupt the Bandung Conference, which they considered a 'Communist Conference' (quoted in Blum 1995: 99).¹

It was during this hearing that the Church Committee learned that CIA officials had targeted the President of Indonesia, Sukarno. The committee also learned that the officials had moved to the point of identifying an agent who would carry out the assassination plan. The report stated,

In addition to the [other] plots discussed in the body of this report, the Committee received some evidence of CIA involvement in plans to assassinate President Sukarno of Indonesia ... Former [CIA] Deputy Director for Plans Richard Bissell testified that the assassination of Sukarno had been 'contemplated' by the CIA, but that planning had proceeded no farther than identifying an 'asset' [who] it was believed might be recruited to kill Sukarno. Arms were supplied to dissident groups in Indonesia but, according to Bissell, those arms were not intended for the assassination.

(Bloom 1995: 100)²

Fortunately for the participants of the Bandung Conference, the assassination plan was never carried out. The reason was in part because after some further deliberations 'cooler heads prevailed at CIA headquarters' (Blum 1995: 99). The conference continued without any major disruption.

Despite the withdrawal of the assassination plan, the overall initiatives contemplated and taken by Washington specifically intended to disrupt the Afro-Asian conference only demonstrate US willingness to take any unilateral action it considered necessary to remove any obstacle to its hegemonic ambition. As widely known, during the Cold War, the US government was keen on conducting similar unilateral

initiatives in international affairs aimed at advancing its own global interests – usually at the expense of other nations.

The outcome of the conference

Despite the US government's malicious attempts to interfere and to disrupt, the Bandung conference went as planned. Delegates from the five sponsoring nations (Burma, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India and Pakistan) along with representatives of the guest-nations convened and discussed issues that were important with regard to relations and cooperation among Asian and African nations. Held on 18–24 April 1955, the conference succeeded in formulating a common platform for the formerly colonized nations. They discussed ways and means to gain closer cooperation on economic, cultural and political matters. The conference also discussed issues pertaining to human rights, self-determination, and peoples who still lived under the yoke of colonialism. Moreover, the conference officially declared the desire of Asian and African nations, in cooperation with the United Nations, to be more active in promoting world peace, justice, solidarity and cooperation.

As part of the desire to promote better international relations, delegates to the conference proposed the well-known Ten Principles – known in Indonesia as the 'Dasasila Bandung' – that they suggested should be the basis for cooperation among nations. The principles proposed were:

- (1) Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
2. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
3. Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small.
4. Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.
5. Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in

conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

6. (a) Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers; (b) Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.
7. Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.
8. Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of parties' own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.
9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.
10. Respect for justice and international obligation.

(US Government Printing Office 1957: 2344–2352)

Participants of the conference were convinced that building cooperation among nations based on these principles would greatly enhance international peace and security. They were equally convinced that using the conference's declaration on economic, cultural and political cooperation would increase the common prosperity and well-being of the participating countries.

But more important than the written statements, the conference clearly echoed what later would be known as 'the Spirit of Bandung' or 'the Bandung Spirit'. By the Bandung Spirit the conference meant the spirit of cooperation and solidarity among nations and peoples regardless of their political, economic, cultural or religious background. In light of this spirit, for instance Bandung emphasized the importance of respect for human rights and urged the use of the Universal Declaration of Human rights as a common standard in international relations. On the issue of economic cooperation, Bandung encouraged closer cooperation on the basis of

mutual interest and national sovereignty, including exchange of experts and the founding of financial and economic institutions that would benefit all parties involved. Based on the realization of Africa and Asia as being the cradles of civilization, Bandung also encouraged cultural contacts among peoples of the two continents, including exchange of knowledge and information pertaining to cultural matters. In place of global division and rivalry, Bandung promoted the spirit of peaceful-coexistence among nations of the world. It was in this spirit that Bandung countries opposed imperialism, colonialism and any form of neo-colonialism.

The Bandung Spirit was very important, especially since the newly-independent nations of Asia and Africa were now facing the continuing tension of the Cold War between the capitalist bloc under the leadership of the United States and the socialist/communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. The tension tended to pressure these new nations to ally with either side of the two blocs, and the Bandung Spirit helped them in resisting such pressure. That was the reason why, in defiance of the pressure to ally with either side of the Cold War, participants of the Bandung Conference vowed to remain neutral and promoted the idea of non-alignment in the East-West tension.

The conference and the Cold War period

In practice, however, the Bandung Spirit was not an easy ideal to implement. The spirit of cooperation and solidarity, for instance, was much easier to say than to put into action. One of the reasons for the difficulty was the fact that, in the wake of the Bandung Conference, each of the participating countries underwent rapid domestic changes. In Indonesia, for instance, the ministerial cabinet under Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo resigned shortly after the conference was over, despite its success in hosting the international gathering (Feith 1968: 402). The general elections that took place several months after the conference put the Indonesian Communist Party (the

PKI) as one of the four chief winners of the elections and created widespread concerns among anti-communist elements of the Indonesian population. The popularity of the communist party in the second half of the 1950s and the first-half of the 1960s was followed by an abrupt and bloody ending, with the Indonesian government's shift from being left-leaning to pro-Western. In 1961 the independent nations of Asia and Africa formed the Non-Aligned Movement, aimed at promoting the interests and priorities of developing countries in world politics, but the movement was not always effective in achieving its goals, including the promotion of solidarity and cooperation among the Bandung countries themselves, especially on political and military matters. Failure of Asian-African nations in preventing the Vietnam War was an example. The Philippines's willingness to accommodate American military bases was another.

Another reason for the difficulties in implementing the Bandung Spirit was the fact that the Cold War created waves of international pressures that often were too strong for Asian-African states to resist, let alone to counter. While Soviet leader Joseph Stalin detested the idea of neutralism, US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles publicly stated that 'neutralism is immoral', and both shaped their policies based on this kind of conviction. Stalin's ideological spokesperson, Andrey Zdanov, divided the world into two camps, the socialist and the imperialist camps. He declared that if a country was not a socialist country it was *ipso facto* on the side of the 'imperialist' camp. With untiring efforts the superpowers of the Cold War tried to pull as many Asian and African countries as possible to each of their sides. While the Soviet Union tried to entice countries like Indonesia to enter its sphere of influence, the United States launched similar campaigns toward Indonesia and other neutral countries. In other words, despite its failure to disrupt the Bandung Conference, the US continued to try to undermine Asian and African nations' efforts at building solidarity and cooperation.

In the 1960s, through members of South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) – which had been formed in 1954 and initiated by Washington – the United States asserted its military presence in Southeast Asia and that of its US allies, especially Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand. The military presence of such major powers, in turn, divided Southeast Asian nations into members and non-members of the military pact. While the Philippines, Pakistan and Thailand were willing to join, the rest of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, decided to distance themselves from the group. When the non-aligned nations in 1964 initiated economic cooperation among developing nations by forming UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), the United States saw it as a possible obstacle to Washington's economic interests and soon began put pressures on it. UNCTAD, which initially was intended to promote integration of developing countries into the world economy, and to reduce the flow of their natural resources to capitalist nations of the North, had to abandon many of its initiatives due to pressures from the US and its allies (Kadeer 2005: 2).

Through international trade and financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank, the United States also tried to influence the economy and politics of many developing countries. By using the so-called Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) initiated by the World Bank and the IMF; for instance, Washington was able to spread the idea of deregulation and liberalization of both state and private enterprises, which eventually would guarantee easy entrance of foreign investment to Asian-African countries. Throughout the Cold War, US moves on these matters were often done through collaboration with corrupt governments and dictators of the target countries (Kadeer 2005: 2–3). By implementing such methods not only did Washington gain support from these countries, but it also obtained access to their natural resources and other economic potentials. But as a consequence many

¹ governments of the developing countries were compelled to cut back social services for their own people, including services on education, health and eradication of poverty. With the weakening of the Asian-African solidarity these people had nowhere to turn but to themselves.

The Bandung spirit and the Post-Cold War period

By the time when, in the early 1990s, the Cold War came to an end – marked by the collapse of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – the Bandung Spirit seemed to have been weakening (Fernando 2002: 15). Greatly influenced by the dynamics of the Cold War, many Bandung countries not only failed to promote solidarity and cooperation as expected in 1955, but in some cases were even in deep antagonism toward each other. Iraq and Iran – both present at the Bandung Conference – were at war with each other in the 1980s and were still influenced by the impact of the war years after the war ended. For many years Syria, a Bandung country, interfered and dominated the politics of Lebanon, another Bandung country. India and Pakistan – both were among the hosts of the Conference – have been in bitter conflict over Kashmir. The idea of peaceful coexistence seemed to have disappeared.

Domestically, many of the Bandung countries were governed by authoritarian governments. In some cases these governments were in close cooperation with transnational corporations, at the expense of their own people and natural resources. Instead of presenting themselves as people-oriented governments, many of them were directing their economy and politics according to the fluctuation of international economic trends. Many of their development projects were not primarily based on the need of the people, but on the wish of international lending agencies. They replaced a planned-economy with a market-economy, resulting in the widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Some governments turned a blind eye on their country's ethnic and

religious conflicts. Others even secretly encouraged such conflicts in order to serve certain interests. In some of the developing countries, respect for human rights often has to give way to personal or communal interests.

Ironically, while Asian-African solidarity was in decline following the end of the Cold War, American unilateralism has been on the rise. The collapse of the socialist-communist bloc that marked the end of the Cold War has been interpreted as victory for the capitalist bloc under the leadership of the United States. The world changed from being bi-polar to uni-polar, with the US as the only surviving superpower. Enjoying this new status, the United States became even bolder in pursuing its unilateral policies. As it did in trying to disrupt the Bandung Conference, in many instances the United States continues to launch similar unilateral moves in pursuit of its hegemonic ambition.

Under the umbrella of economic globalization and using the neo-liberal ideology of liberalization and deregulation, the US has been very active in its unilateral actions to dominate the world economy and politics (Xiao 2005: 2–3). The formation of the WTO in 1992, for instance, is used by the US as a means of expanding the interests of its own trans-national corporations and the corporations of its former Cold War allies. Although initially formed as a trade organization, the WTO has been pushing its jurisdiction into non-trade issues such as intellectual property rights, plants and animal protection, traditional knowledge and biodiversity. The US – along with other members of the group of eight rich nations known as The G8 – consistently promoted the notion that economic globalization means economic growth, the increase of wealth, common prosperity, peace and freedom, although in the realities of the developing countries it often means the increasing number of people who live in poverty, the mounting security threats arising from the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the diminishing freedom of people who live under the pressure of market-oriented

governments and politics, and the massive irreversible damage to the environment.

When an economic approach meets serious obstacles, the US would not hesitate to resort to military actions. The Gulf War of 1990, the invasion and occupation of Iraq since 2003, and the so-called war on terror are just a few examples of how Washington is willing to sacrifice countless human lives – both non-US and US citizens – and inflict massive damage on properties in search of global domination. Under the pretexts of retaliating against Iraq's involvement in the bombing of New York's World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 (which has never been proven) and destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (which have never been found), the United States invaded the sovereign country of Iraq and militarily occupied it. Throughout the military operation, the US concealed the fact that the invasion of Iraq had been contemplated prior to the New York bombing, and that the major reason for the invasion was actually the desire of US oil corporations to control Iraq's oil and the flow of oil in the Middle East. A military operation as massive as the invasion of Iraq is also important for the US military-industrial complex to get rid of old weapons and to pressure the US government to dramatically increase its yearly spending on military research and production – all to the benefit of large American corporations.

The invasion of Iraq also demonstrates that the US government had little respect for the United Nations. The plan for the invasion was not adequately consulted with members of the world body, and it was carried out basically in defiance of the wish of many UN members. The term 'coalition of the willing' in relation to the invasion was used merely as a rhetorical smoke screen to cover the American tradition of unilateralism. There is an impression that, for the US government, the UN is only good when it serves its initiatives and interests. Otherwise this world body is considered as an ignorable institution and as an obstacle to US global ambition. In spite of the attitudes, however, the US strongly defends its special privileges – and the privileges of its

allies – as a UN member, such as the veto right. Despite the fact that such right is in violation of democratic principles, the United States continues to maintain and promote it, because it is necessary to serve and advance its own interests and the interests of its allies.

Challenges ahead

In the face of an international condition that is marked by the weakening of the Bandung Spirit and the rise of American unilateralism, developing nations need to join hands in the struggle for the democratization of today's international affairs. For this, it is important to rekindle the Bandung Spirit of solidarity and cooperation – not just among Asian and African nations but also among other nations and circles that aspire to have a more just and prosperous world (Khudori 2005: 61). Only in a world that is increasingly democratic, unilateral practices could be restrained and the spirit of solidarity and cooperation could flourish. In today's context, an international struggle for democracy in global relations should focus on the democratization of at least three areas, namely world politics, world economy and the United Nations.

As we have seen, American victory over the socialist bloc of the Cold War means that the US government now possesses greater freedom in pursuing its hegemonic domination. In efforts to pursue its interests, the United States often disregards the interests and the sovereignty of other nations. As a result, despite its claim as being a champion of democracy, in world affairs the United States tends to create undemocratic international relations. In Washington's view, nations are divided into those that are rich and powerful (currently there are eight of them) and those that are poor and less powerful (there are more than 100 of them today). Under the leadership of the United States, the rich and powerful countries tend to regard other countries merely as objects of their self-serving policies. The international loan and aid mechanism that these wealthy countries promote and enforce

¹ tends to make poor countries increasingly dependent on rich nations economically and politically (Perkins 2004: xi).

Needless to say, this kind of international situation is unfair. In response to the situation the developing countries along with other countries should unite and work together to create international relations that are truly democratic. Respect for human rights should not be regarded merely as respect for the life and status of an individual person but should also include the life and status of each of the nations of the world. The Bandung Spirit is very important in this kind of endeavour, an endeavour to promote international cooperation and solidarity in political matters (Mshana 2005: 28). Bandung countries and members of the non-aligned movement along with other countries that share the same spirit should be more active in fighting against unilateralism and in promoting democracy, peace and justice in international affairs. An example of effort on this was expressed at the World Social Forum held in Mumbai on 16–21 May 2004, which deliberated on 'The Spirit of Bandung conference 1955 in the Globalized Context – Building Community of Peace for All.' At the same time, governments of Asian and African countries are urged to build systems of government that are more democratic and more people-oriented, since some of these governments are often willing to sacrifice their own people and natural resources for the sake of short-term gains by serving the interests of foreign transnational corporations.

As we have seen, international financial and trade organizations are often exploited by the United States to serve its global interests. As a result, many countries, mainly those that are already poor, become victims of international economic and trade systems that subjugate many Asian-African nations and exploit their natural wealth. In the face of such an unjust system and practices, developing countries should unite and work together in creating an international system of trade and economy that is more democratic and more sensitive to the needs and interest of as

many nations as possible. Neoliberal ideologies that are persistently promoted by these capital-oriented institutions are mainly designed to benefit the rich countries of the North, resulting in the massive poverty among the developing countries of the South. The nations of Asia and Africa should re-unite and change this unfair condition.

In order to change the current discriminatory international condition there should be democratization of the international trade and financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO. More and more countries should have access to such trans-national economic and financial institutions whose policies greatly affect their politics and economies. Only then will these institutions be able not only to serve the interests of the few rich and powerful nations, but also the common interests of the international community. Moreover, since, today, many trans-national corporations often profoundly influence the economy and the politics of Asian-African countries, these countries need to urge not only political leaders but also leaders of trans-national corporations to democratize their institutions so that smaller nations will also have access in the decision-making process that would affect them. The trans-national economic institutions that are sponsored by political and business leaders of the developed countries should also be called to help eradicate the poverty that now plagues many Asian and African countries. Debt cancellation and debt reduction are examples of ways of combating poverty. Meanwhile, movements critical to the capitalist globalization, as were held in Seattle, Porto Alegre, Florence, Paris-Saint Denis, Mumbai and Scotland, could be seen as a sign of the growing desire for more democratic international economic system.

US tendencies to conduct unilateral moves and its attitudes to disregard the United Nations has cost the organization its credibility as an authoritative body in supervising international relations and mediating international disputes. As a result, many nations have become less confident in the

UN when they have problems in international relations. Moreover, as if following the US example of defying UN orders, some countries would not hesitate to simply disregard UN recommendation for certain actions. The defiance of the Indonesian government to UN calls regarding issues involving atrocities done by the Indonesian military in East Timor in 1999 is an example.

Clearly the UN needs some radical reforms in its system. As a modern international organization it needs to be democratized. The retaining of special privileges such as veto rights by a few powerful countries, for instance, is against the principles of democracy and needs to be revised or modified. If this kind of practice continues, powerful nations will always achieve what they wish, while smaller and poor nations, which are mainly Asian and African, will find it difficult to pursue their interests. Veto rights should be abolished or at least modified to better reflect democratic principles. The principles of democracy require that all members of the UN have equal voting rights in the General Assembly. The reform program launched by Secretary General Kofi Annan on 21 March 2005 – called *In Larger Freedom* – is very important and could be used as a starting point in the democratization of the United Nations.

Conclusion

Looking back at the 1955 Bandung Conference, we can see that it was indeed a very important moment in the history of the ex-colonial states of Asia and Africa. The Bandung Spirit that came out of it was a crucial foundation for building solidarity and cooperation not just among Asian-African nations but also among nations of the world in general. Unfortunately, further development during the Cold War and after indicates that the spirit was not as strong as expected. Meanwhile, the United States, which had intended unilaterally to disrupt the Bandung Conference, continued to take unilateral actions in pursuit of its global, hegemonic interests. In many cases this pursuit was done at the expense of Asian-African nations

along with other developing countries. These kinds of unilateral actions become worse when they are supported by other powerful nations as well as by trans-national financial institutions, trade organizations and corporations that are based in the developed countries. Meanwhile, the United Nations as a world body has often been bypassed by the United States in executing its unilateral initiatives.

To deal with this current unfair situation, it is important for the nations of Asia and Africa to rekindle the Bandung Spirit and join hands in a common struggle for the democratization of international relations. In today's context, the struggle for democratization should be focused on three areas, namely the democratization of world politics, world economy, and the United Nations. As a basic principle, any political or economic decision that would have an international impact should be discussed with the widest possible international participation.

Although this article discusses American unilateralism at length, it does not suggest that the US is the *only* country that practices unilateralism in international affairs. Nor does it suggest that the developing countries should resist *only* unilateralism that is conducted by the United States. In today's world, unilateralism can be done by any country, and people should reject any form of unilateralism in international affairs, be it done by American, European, Asian or other countries.

When, in 1955, President Sukarno delivered his opening speech at the Bandung Conference, he might not have realized that his concerns would remain true and relevant 50 years later. Today, the well-being of humankind has not always become the primary consideration in global affairs. The common welfare of the human race still continues to be subjugated by the desire of 'controlling the world' among leaders who are in places of high military and economic power. Only the common international struggle for the democratization of international relations will help build a world where the well-being of humankind will

become the primary consideration in international affairs.

Notes

1. Blum, one of the founders and editors of the *Washington Free Press*, is a former State Department employee.
2. The report was originally published in *Interim Report: Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, The Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (US Senate), 20 November 1975. It was quoted in Blum 1995: 100. See also Kahin and Kahin (1995: 114). The parenthetical reference is to the still-classified record of Bissell's testimony before the Committee.

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