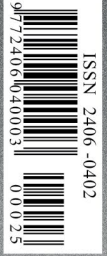


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THE AGE OF MINILATERALISM



*Navigating a
Fragmented World*



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NAM 2.0

THE CENTRALITY OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH IN A NEW COLD WAR

Mikhail Byng

NEIL Ferguson's continued references to Cold War 2.0 have not only proven resonant in the current geopolitical climate but have created space for similar analogous concepts, enter the Non-Aligned Movement 2.0. The Non-Aligned Movement finds its roots as an anti-imperialist movement of the twentieth century, rooted in the unique experiences of countries of the Global South pursuing their own identities in a contentious geopolitical environment. Twentieth century strategist and former Indian government Minister V.K. Krishna Menon argued that the term 'non-aligned' was likely used in 1953 or 1954 specifically with the purpose of establishing a distinct concept from that of traditional neutrality. Out of this concept, the movement which came to be known as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), provided its membership with an active participatory voice in international affairs. In the words of

the leaders themselves, NAM was not a passive arrangement, but one of active engagement. It was an active geopolitical strategy, a representation of, in Yugoslav President Tito's words, "the consciousness of mankind." As articulated in a combined press release by Yugoslav leader Tito and then Indian Prime Minister Nehru on September 4th, 1954, "the policy of non-alignment adopted and pursued by their respective countries is not 'neutrality' or 'neutrality' and therefore passivity, as sometimes alleged, but is a positive, active and constructive policy seeking to lead to collective peace, on which alone collective security can rest."

The context of the twentieth-century Cold War was one of intense ideological, military, political, and economic competition, in that order. Cold War 2.0 is shaping up to be almost in the inverse: economic, political, military, and ideological in nature. The economic

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Photo: Guliver Image

Leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement gather in Kampala, Uganda on January 19, 2024

contest between the United States and China is no longer one of hushed speech but outright bold antagonism—a Washington anti-China consensus is now on full display in a town where such is hard to come by. On the other hand, Beijing recognizes now the limitations of Deng Xiaoping's admonishment of "observe calmly, secure our position, cope with affairs calmly, hide our capacities and bide our time, be good at maintaining a low profile, and never claim leadership." China is now a global leader, for better or worse, and the economic competition with the United States is now a focal point and apparent. Secondly, the political tension is evident. Different political systems are no longer rooted in ideological conviction but arguably in pragmatic concerns of efficiency and regime security—at least for China. The United States, on the other hand,

is presented with its own challenges as populist leaders appear intent on actively receding democratic norms and challenging long-established conventions. Challenges to the American system exist almost in direct proportion to its geopolitical decline with such extreme political polarity unseen since the nineteenth century. Thirdly, militarily, a China-U.S. nuclear standoff, whilst concerning in the long-term, does not appear an immediate threat as was the case in Soviet-U.S. relations. China's military development is some distance away from that of the United States, while its nuclear weapon capacity is comparatively minuscule.

And finally, ideologically, the acknowledgement of a profit motive as essential to human productivity, innovation as a source of progress and the

competition of ideas as its engine room is certainly not as distant as the Soviet conception of these ideas were to that of United States in the twentieth century. The autocracy-democracy dichotomy is political, not ideological—one with pragmatic considerations as the primary force, as opposed to a core philosophical difference. The Chinese argument of its political system's superiority is primarily based on pragmatic efficiency, an argument which resonates in the short term compared to democracy's creative chaos.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, this Cold War 2.0's hierarchy of tension so to speak, of the economic, political, military and ideological spheres, is unlikely to remain static. Shifting priorities, leadership changes, domestic instability and unforeseen events are just a few of the oscillating variables which can affect the direction of the current U.S.-China Cold War. A middle way is necessary in avoiding a strategic gridlock common to Cold Wars, which may otherwise result in prolonged proxy conflicts, dangerous standoffs, and unproductive resource allocation to military buildups.

So where does NAM 2.0 fit in this new Cold War? The NAM of the twentieth century provided a middle way sought by many developing states, not as an aversion from having a perspective but as a means of amplifying otherwise silenced

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perspectives. As Serbian historian and political scientist Jovan Čavoški describes, non-alignment was as “a political doctrine, a practical foreign policy orientation and an international movement, one fully tailored to suit the interests of small and lesser powers in world affairs [...]” particularly in a Cold War context. Furthermore, avoiding great power entanglements was a priority. Scholar Lorenz M. Lüthi notes that it was as early as the mid-1940s

that Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru indicated his unwillingness to engage India in the contentions of other states. Fundamentally, NAM's core *raison d'être* and rationale stays the same, but emphasis, organization, and aspirations will require changes.

NAM 1.0 VS NAM 2.0

NAM 1.0 was a product of top-down charismatic twentieth-century leadership. As brilliant and impressive as those leaders were, the evidence of the twentieth century shows

that the institutions they so brilliantly crafted were in many instances unable to outlive them. NAM founders, such as Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito, India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, Indonesia's Sukarno, and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah were brilliantly strategic in their own ways. A case study on each would produce examples of tours de force in strategic thinking and individual brilliance. However, these characteristics of individual brilliance did present its limitations. By their very nature, top-down initiatives are usually short lived. Institutions and organizations heavily dependent on the charisma of one man or woman usually take the form of the individual themselves, reflecting an accommodation to their strengths and almost in equal proportion their weaknesses. In Max Weber's “Economy and Society,” he provides a stratification of “pure types of authority,” speaking to charismatic authority and its hold on followers and by extension the institutions they form. Evidence indicates that these institutions usually die with the leader or slowly extinguish as the leader changes priorities or emphasis—or even loses their influence in affecting world affairs. Arguably, this model is likely to be ineffective in the twenty-first century. In the context of democratized media and robust information flow, the potential for bottom-up organization and loose leadership structures is evident. While such movements may be vulnerable to coop-

tation and misdirection, they find their strength in an open format where public engagement and participation is more flexible, transparency is emphasized and deliberations more public.

In addition, the geopolitical context, while similar to the twentieth century, possesses some stark differences. The developing world now includes a number of rising great powers and economic centers, many of which are influencing the direction of international norms and some of which aspire toward their own great power status. A NAM 2.0 would look starkly different, especially once the idealism so prevalent in the Global South clashes with the realpolitik of great power contest and aspiration.

NAM AS A GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY... AN UNDYING ART

Each of NAM's founders had some degree of regional and even international sway prior to the creation of the movement. Particularly, the leaders of countries such as Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Ghana, maintained relatively leading positions in the developing world as statesmen prior to NAM's establishment. However, evidence indicates that the creation of NAM invariably contributed to increasing the stature of its founders on the international stage. Historian Frank Gertis argues that Pan-Africanism and non-alignment actually bolstered Africa's interests and proved to

be intertwined during the Cold War, providing Ghanaian Premier Francis Kwame Nkrumah with the opportunity to challenge the existing communist and capitalist approaches. In fact, non-alignment was a critical part of the foreign policy of Nkrumah, likely shaping his decisionmaking and improving the leader's stature in the African region and around the world.

For Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, it appears that NAM also functioned as part of a broader geopolitical strategy which further cemented his policy of neutrality for the purpose of fending off the Soviet Union, and fortifying the country's independent position after the break from Stalin-led USSR. In the aftermath of Tito's separation from Stalin's Soviet Union, particularly from as early as 1948, Yugoslavia's NAM-centered foreign policy sought to fill this gap. The 1961 Belgrade Conference provided Tito with a unique opportunity to establish his presence on the global stage so much so that Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev sought to usurp Tito's spotlight by announcing a resumption of nuclear tests on the day of the Conference.

The rest of NAM's founding leaders were clearly not to be left out. Egypt's Nasser, already well

respected for his strategic acumen increased his status as the 'go-to' leader of the Arab world after the founding of NAM. So did Sukarno of Indonesia and Nehru of India in their respective environments. In fact, early on, the Indian elite considered the spread of non-alignment as a foreign policy success of its own, with some scholars highlighting India's critical and pioneering role in advancing the non-aligned approach in international relations, largely by virtue of its size and population.

NAM's historical roots are widely dispersed in a combination of the aforementioned, with increasing focus on geopolitical dynamics at the onset of the Cold War. The Bandung Conference was the first postcolonial conference of a truly international nature. The Movement addressed an existing need for defining a geopolitical direction outside of the narrowly defined East-West dynamic. This context is relevant in the twenty-first century. Short-term alignment with only the United States or China is of limited long-term benefit if countries of the Global South are to hold true to their post-colonial traditions and not become mere pawns in grand strategic machinations.

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NAM AND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

In the run-up to the conference of Bandung in 1955 a seven-point agenda was proposed for discussion. It included the following: economic cooperation, cultural cooperation, self-determination and human rights, peaceful use of nuclear energy, world peace, destructive use of nuclear weapons, and problems of dependent peoples. Notably, nuclear technology occupied two of the seven proposed agenda items, an indication of its importance to NAM's founding member statesmen, notwithstanding its centrality to third world peace. NAM's history, while grounded in anti-imperialist foundations of the early twentieth century found its footing as an institution almost simultaneously during the independent movements of nations of the Global South. Its core principles which include self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, anti-imperialism and anti-racism also focused from its inception on nuclear disarmament. As the historical record shows, a number of NAM's founding Member States either began pursuing the acquisition of a nuclear weapon, as was the case with Yugoslavia, or successfully carried out a program to the point of a successful first test, as was the case with India.

Why such an apparently blatant contradiction? Furthermore, states that would later become NAM members

pursued similar policies, which, when juxtaposed to their membership in NAM appear contradictory. In the case of Pakistan for example, membership of NAM in 1979 did not prove incompatible with a nuclear program which would result in a first successful test in 1998, heavily construed as a point of prestige. Libya, Iran, and North Korea, three NAM Member States also offer interesting case studies into the interplay of variables in their respective motivations to the pursuit of nuclear weapons, with the latter engaging in its first successful test in 2006. Given what may on the surface appear to be an increasingly dismal record for NAM, is the movement an outdated Cold War relic, as some have argued, in line with the farewell non-alignment hypothesis? Or is it of twenty-first century relevance? As a platform for dialogue, an argument can be made that few other organizations can match the legitimacy of NAM given its origins as an institution rooted in the Global South. In fact, the organization may even provide extensive room for shaping international norms on security matters particularly amongst its membership in areas of critical importance like nuclear non-proliferation.

Important research has already been carried out concerning the social construction of weapons proliferation and the place of norms in understanding the spread of nuclear weapons. Questions surrounding the pursuit of nuclear

weapons, particularly in the context of increasingly likely horizontal proliferation and amongst states of the Global South make the study of this area an even greater necessity. In this era of increasing horizontal proliferation, or what Brzezinski phrased as the “ominously mushrooming prospect that relatively impoverished countries might acquire nuclear weapons for use in political conflicts with their immediate neighbors,” understanding the proliferation puzzle would likely have direct implications for the avoidance of a worst-case scenario.

The assumption that nuclear proliferation is negative is intrinsic in the writings and statements of the scientists whose work and advocacy prompted the creation of the first nuclear weapon. The early insistence on international control of nuclear technology as a means to prevent a nuclear arms race was an early articulation of proliferation pessimism even before the Cold War commenced in earnest. The notion that the spread of nuclear weapons is intrinsically a negative development rests on a number of assumptions, some of which focus on inadvertent escalation, while others emphasize more systemic effects and an increased likelihood for

war if proliferation were to take place. Nuclear optimists have provided strong counter arguments which challenge this conventional thinking. Kenneth Waltz’s seminal work, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better”

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(1981) is arguably the first forceful argument in favor of proliferation. A similar perspective is shared by John Mearsheimer, another realist scholar, who relied on similar thinking to argue in favor of a Ukrainian nuclear deterrent after the dissolution of the Soviet Union—an ominously

relevant warning in the context of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is important to note however that nuclear optimists are not advocates of unrestricted proliferation, with Waltz insisting on a measured spread of nuclear weapons, and Mearsheimer making his support conditional by stating that “nuclear proliferation sometimes promotes peace”—emphasis on “sometimes.”

Two broad theoretical camps exist that speak to the causes of nuclear proliferation: (1) the realist camp, and (2) the idealist camp. In assessing the causes for the proliferation of nuclear weapons, realists view the unit of the state as key to their analysis, while emphasizing the desire of states to protect

their interests within an anarchical or competitive international system. Such assumptions lay the foundation for states to be incentivized to pursue a nuclear weapon, particularly in cases where the external security circumstances demand it. Simply put, under the assumptions laid out by realists, if a state can pursue a nuclear weapon, then it will. Even in the instances that states may pursue the option of reliance on an ally/alliance for extended deterrence, realist logic dictates that such is an unsustainable option in the long-term, given the possibility that even an ally may become an enemy under changed circumstances. Additionally, realist assumptions also carry an array of diverse implications contingent on the nature of the international system, whether unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar. Waltz’s core argument which stand as pillars within the realist camp are predicated on two core foundations: (1) the structure of the international political system and (2) past events and patterns, from which expectations can be inferred. Both of these foundations during the twentieth-century Cold War rested on a bipolar international system and more than three decades worth of evidence of “the effects that nuclear weapons had in promoting cautious super power behavior” as Nicholas J. Wheeler accurately notices in his 2009 article “Beyond Waltz’s Nuclear World: More Trust May be Better.” One can argue however that these assessments place too little

emphasis on the miscalculations which have historically resulted in wars, and the intrinsic high risk of ensuring safety with regard to nuclear weapons—both of which carry extensive possibility for negative outcomes—a reality which nuclear pessimists emphasize and certainly a risk that any sensible policymaker would hesitate to take.

The idealist camp on the other hand relies heavily on developing analysis on three levels: the international, the domestic, and the individual levels. This approach relies on the concept of levels of analysis, something that Waltz and Mearsheimer both downplay. The role of norms and international regimes are of critical importance here. In *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation* (2006), Jacques E.C. Hymans maintains that it is within the idealist camp that much room exists for further exploration. It is here where the role of NAM can become critical. Hymans’s pioneering work argues in favor of the importance of individual-level analysis in determining why states pursue “the bomb.” This individual-level analysis leans on the leader’s conception of their nation’s identity, an extension which arguably reaches to the level of the state. His research argues that a state characterized as (using his term) “oppositional nationalist,” with leaders who “define their nation as being both naturally at odds with and naturally equal (if not superior) to a particular external other,” is more likely to pursue the nuclear bomb given their

natural offensive strategic posture. Such an estimation likely requires an evaluation of the nature of the state in question and the psychology of the leader in power.

The acquisition of a nuclear weapon by a neighboring state is by no means a trivial development, with the possibility for a multiplier effect or a nuclear proliferation chain—a point made by Lewis Dunn in his 1977 “Nuclear Proliferation and World Politics,” and subsequently adopted by many scholars. Historically, this lens has been the primary framework through which nuclear weapon acquisition has been viewed and arguably the more sensible one. A revitalized NAM—or NAM 2.0—has the capacity to provide a forum for dispute resolution and mediation in this regard. Possible areas of nuclear contest or escalation exist in the following relationships: Israel-Iran, Saudi Arabia-Iran, India-Pakistan, Brazil-Argentina, among others. While some of these situations appear dormant, the current geopolitical environment of increasing tensions creates the context for rapid and unforeseen escalation.

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As is evident, most of these countries are of the Global South, and either feature as core members of NAM or important Observers. NAM 2.0 provides a platform for consideration of these matters. Even in cases of active dispute, it may provide a home for Ukraine in the long term, a place for Taiwan, a discussion platform for Guyana-Venezuela, and many other disputes. Finally, an overstretched and increasingly unwilling United States would do well to prompt a revival of a force like NAM which enhances stability, thus saving their own treasure, both in blood and gold.

**NAM’S YOUTH:
THE WAY FORWARD**

The regions of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the Middle East, and Southeast Asia are arguably the planet’s primary natural resource reservoirs but increasingly its primary reservoir for the future’s human capital. In these regions birthrates are highest and the youth are increasingly the most expanding segments of the populations. Notwithstanding new innovations in

technologies like Artificial Intelligence, this segment of the world’s population will likely represent its future labor force. Whether these persons migrate or live in the countries or regions within which they were born will have an outsized influence on political and even geopolitical developments in the medium to long term. If channeled correctly, the possibilities are endless as to what can be achieved with the capacities that this youthful force possess. Nevertheless, all these possibilities will remain mute, ineffective, or even debilitating without proper institutionalization and channeling. Reaching toward the youth of NAM ought to be at the core of NAM 2.0.

A Non-Aligned Movement Youth Organization (NAMYO) is a potential force that can channel such aspirations. A bottom-up flexible institution, emphasizing free speech and open discourse is essential. Such an organization is envisioned as a youth-led franchise-like movement tied to established universities in countries not only within the Global South but further afield. Advocacy and discussion of Global

The regions of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia are arguably the planet’s primary natural resource reservoirs but increasingly its primary reservoir for the future’s human capital. Notwithstanding new innovations in technologies like Artificial Intelligence, this segment of the world’s population will likely represent its future labor force.

South issues are not limited to countries of the south, but rather where allies of the Global South exist. Universities in North America, Western and Eastern Europe are all potential allies alongside Africa, the LAC, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Southeast Europe, and the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, in practical terms, attaching such an organization to universities, the bastions of free speech, debate, intellectual discovery, and human progress is critical. Universities like Princeton, Harvard, Ottawa, and Oxford, alongside the Universities of Belgrade, the West Indies, Bandung, Ghana, Cairo Lagos, and Delhi are all essential parts of such a movement. It would allow for transparency in financial dealings, protections on free and independent discourse, and establishing a culture of intellectual curiosity ever dwindling in our times of excessive cognitive stimuli. Irrespective of the different political system each country possesses, it is an indisputable fact that human progress cannot be sustained in the long term without free speech. NAMYO will speak to this. ●