

NON-ALIGNMENT IN THE CURRENT WORLD ORDER: THE IMPACT OF THE RISE OF CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the Non-Aligned Movement has been in question since the end of Cold War bipolarity. In the post-Cold War order, whether interpreted as cosmopolitan, unipolar, multipolar or globalised in nature, there are still challenges to the main purpose of the Non-Aligned Movement, which can be defined as the pursuit of self-determination and development for so-called Third World states. The rise of China is impacting on the current world order, possibly returning it to a kind of bipolarity, which the Non-Aligned Movement members can exploit. In addition, the 'Beijing Consensus' may provide new terms on which developing countries can be integrated into the global economy in a way that would accommodate and encourage their development.

1. INTRODUCTION

For some observers the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) had lost its relevance when the Cold War ended. They argue that it was the bipolar configuration of world order in the post-Second World War period which made an organisation of such diversity possible. In the bipolar world of the Cold War, states had to be 'aligned' to the East or West and the ideologies and superpowers that constituted the core of these blocs. Conventional explanations hold that NAM was formed precisely because decolonised states did not want to be forced into

either of these camps, but wanted to decide their alignment or neutrality independently often on a case-by-case basis. Some observers even suggest that NAM states played off these blocs against each other.¹⁾ With the implosion of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) bipolarity dissolved, and so too the possibility to coerce alignment or play off the East and the West. For observers who attributed NAM's relevance to bipolarity, the rise of a replacement for the USSR to balance the remaining superpower (the United States — US) and the power bloc it belonged to, could mean the revitalisation of NAM.

The rise of China could easily be perceived in these terms, that is, that it returns the world configuration to bipolarity. The growth of China's economy as a proportion of the world economy has been nothing short of spectacular, second only to US growth at the end of the 19th century.²⁾ This has prompted a fair amount of paranoia in US policy circles about the possibility that China may unseat the US as the world's next hegemonic power.³⁾ How to respond to the rise of China has unleashed a debate between 'engagement' and 'containment' camps in US policy-making and scholarly circles reminiscent of the US response to the USSR.⁴⁾ The West's approach to 'Third World' countries (especially in Africa) is increasingly juxtaposed with the Chinese approach, sometimes to highlight the prescriptive nature of Western programmes and sometimes to highlight the possibility of Chinese colonialism.⁵⁾ As 'the other' to the US (and the former Western bloc in general) China's rise could return to relevance an organisation (NAM) that functioned on the basis of a triadic relationship with two dominant powers (or blocs).

Although this account of the implications of China's rise for NAM is valid and will be explored in this article, it is limited in scope and negates the evolution of thought (and discourse) on which NAM's agenda has been built over its lifespan. This article will thus also aim to add another perspective to the discussion, which rests on the notion that bipolarity after the Second World War merely aggravated the conditions that necessitated a movement centred on non-alignment, but was itself not a sufficient condition to prompt the creation of NAM.

Returning to the original meaning that Jawaharlal Nehru and the other founding fathers (Sukarno, Tito, Nkrumah and Nasser) of NAM intended for the concept 'non-alignment', NAM was formed to

ensure equality for militarily and economically weak countries in line with the United Nations (UN) Charter. The Cold War enhanced the need for a collective bargaining position for weaker states. However, it also masked, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, a greater division in international politics that came to dominate NAM's agenda in the 1970s, a division that did not disappear when the Cold War ended, namely the gap between the interests of richer and poorer countries.⁶⁾ When the impact of the rise of China on NAM is viewed through this lens China is not simply a possible opposite pole for the US and the West, but seemingly provides a powerful model for non-alignment. This model has been dubbed the 'Beijing Consensus' by Joshua Cooper Ramo, a *Times Magazine* journalist.⁷⁾ A critical investigation of the relevance of the Beijing Consensus for NAM requires a return to the meaning of non-alignment and how it has changed or stayed consistent amidst evolving global discourses since its inception as a foreign policy orientation.

2. NON-ALIGNMENT: THE PURSUIT OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND DEVELOPMENT

NAM's priorities may have changed as global discourses, such as those characterising the Cold War era, evolved, but its purpose has largely stayed the same. This purpose is traced back to the Bandung Conference, which seeded the spirit of non-alignment among African, Asian and Middle Eastern countries and, subsequently, other 'Third World' countries more generally that grappled with fitting into world affairs whilst maintaining autonomy. The concept 'Third World' is important to form an understanding of what is meant by the 'spirit of Bandung' or non-alignment, which informed the Belgrade Conference in 1961 where NAM was formed. The concept 'Third World' has both a materialistic and an ideational/cultural meaning. In materialistic terms, Marc argues that "if the affluent industrial countries of the modern world are grouped into those of the 'West' and those of the 'East', ... then the poor countries constitute a 'Third World' whose small command over resources distinguishes them from both".⁸⁾

The ideational/cultural meaning of the term "stressed the importance of the formation of a Third World consciousness, formed

by common ideas, and an awareness of a common history, in relation to the West. Thus, in some accounts the Third World has existed because it provided an identity that was important to those both inside and outside its borders".⁹⁾ Richard Wright, a black American novelist, who attended the Bandung Conference described it as "vibrant, vital, a coalition of the dispossessed".¹⁰⁾ The two meanings are best illustrated in the 1952 article by the French demographer, Alfred Sauvy, in which he coined the term 'Third World'. Sauvy wrote: "The Third World has, like the Third Estate, been ignored and despised and it too wants to be something".¹¹⁾ Just like the Third Estate during the French Revolution, he saw the decolonised states as "ignored, exploited, scorned", but eager to carve out an independent role for themselves.¹²⁾

Although the term Third World has lost currency since the 1970s when other terms, such as 'underdeveloped countries', 'developing countries', and 'South' or 'Global South', became more widely used, revisiting the term conveys a sense of the conceptual foundations on which non-alignment rests. Nehru, then Prime Minister of India and a respected statesman, had also attended the Congress of Oppressed Nations in Brussels in 1927. As his brainchild, in essence non-alignment means the pursuit of equality in world affairs through pooling the diplomatic resources of Third World states in international forums. Equality should here be understood in political-economic terms. Equality for colonised or oppressed people and states translated into the right to self-determination and this dominated the agenda in the first decade of NAM's existence. NAM was, for example, a front of political solidarity by supporting liberation struggles and making abstinence from military pacts or alliances a criterion of membership.¹³⁾ Inherent in a foreign policy orientation of non-alignment was a post-colonial claim to the rights of statehood awarded to independent states in the Westphalian system, and the mutual respect embodied by multilateralism as proclaimed in the UN Charter.

But, the insistence on the self-determination of nations is not simply a pursuit for political equality; it can also be seen in economic context as portrayed by the idea of independent national development. Lenin's 'Thesis on the socialist revolution and the right to self-determination' of 1916 already explored the possibilities to increase equality (understood as a political-economic pursuit) through nation-

alism. Although the rise of nations and nationalism was at first seen to reduce the relevance of class as (universal) political agency, Lenin not only supported communist struggles for national independence, but also national bourgeoisie struggles. Despite the bourgeoisie's limited Marxist revolutionary potential, the anti-imperialist flavour of their struggles could help to liberate the working class from the metropolitan capital of colonial masters.¹⁴⁾

For most Third World states the framework of national development in the 1950s and 1960s was largely provided by modernisation theory. The latter presumed that modernised Western liberal democracy was the end-state of development. Rostow famously elaborated on the stages through which a traditional society needed to pass to become a modern economy and Lipset linked economic development to democracy and Western education.¹⁵⁾

The focus on endogenous factors to explain a world economy skewed in favour of the West came under attack during the Cairo conference in 1964, when delegates emphasised exogenous factors, for example, the structure of dependent relationships between rich and poor countries (also captured by the term neo-colonialism) that 'underdevelops' the Third World.¹⁶⁾ NAM would become, as Amin notes, "the trade union for economic claims with respect to the North" in the 1970s.¹⁷⁾ He summarises the components of this political-economy of non-alignment as follow:

- a will to develop the productive forces and to diversify production, especially through industrialization;
- a determination that the national state should have leadership and control of the process;
- a belief that technical models are 'neutral', though requiring control, and that there is no alternative but to reproduce them;
- a belief that the development process mainly requires not popular initiative but only popular support for state action;
- a belief that the process does not fundamentally clash with trade participation in the world capitalist system, even if it brings temporary conflicts with it.¹⁸⁾

NAM's efforts to bring about a New International Economic Order (NIEO) based on this ideology of development during the 1970s were especially exerted in the UN. The struggle for global equity

through independent national development was, due to the Cold War emphasis on 'high politics' (security issues), relegated to a secondary position. Nevertheless, NAM together with the Group of 77 (G77 — largely made up of NAM members) succeeded to keep Third World issues on the agenda in most UN forums and agencies due to their numerical strength. In the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), NAM and the G77 promoted the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) to rectify the perceived imbalances in information and communication flows between the North and the South.¹⁹⁾ In the UN General Assembly NAM played a significant role in transferring the permanent seat in the UNSC previously filled by the Republic of China (Taiwan) to mainland China, as well as to garner support for other national independence struggles. Wiese argues that although it was not NAM's original intention to become caught up in the Cold War, the movement soon realised that it could bring its political leverage to bear in international forums to gain more influence for developing countries.²⁰⁾

3. THE POST-COLD WAR ORDER AND CHALLENGES TO NON-ALIGNMENT

As is clear from the discussion above, although the bipolarity of the Cold War aggravated the conditions that necessitated the formation of NAM and also impacted on its agenda and *modus operandi*, NAM's *raison d'être* did not depend on bipolarity. Many scholars, nevertheless, argued that NAM had lost its relevance in a post-Cold War order, citing divergent interpretations of this new order to discredit non-alignment as a foreign policy orientation. In these interpretations the post-Cold War order is respectively portrayed as cosmopolitan, unipolar, multipolar or globalised. As will be shown in this section, rather than challenges to the relevance of NAM, these interpretations can also be seen to justify NAM's continued existence, although with adaptations to its agenda and *modus operandi*.

3.1 Cosmopolitanism

Some scholars questioned non-alignment as a foreign policy position after the Cold War on the grounds of the 'end of history' argument

that characterised the 1990s. According to Fukuyama the end of the Cold War suggested a conclusion of humanity's ideological evolution in the form of Western liberal democracy as the final form of government.²¹⁾ Huntington's notion of increasingly bigger 'waves' of democratisation as more countries turn to liberal democracy and fewer countries reverse back to authoritarian systems assumed similar undertones.²²⁾ These arguments paved the way for democratic peace theory to make a come-back in International Relations scholarship.²³⁾ The idea that democracies do not wage war with each other and that the end of the Cold War heralded an increase in democracies, suggested the start of a Kantian perpetual peace.²⁴⁾ Major wars, Mueller argued, had become obsolete.²⁵⁾ The idealism and cosmopolitanism in Kantian terms on which the UN Charter was built could finally come to fruition. There would be no need for NAM to exist in such an era of 'one-worldedness'. However, amidst this utopian outlook NAM members recognised that there were outstanding issues, such as Palestinian self-determination and North-South inequality, which needed to be resolved. Several new issues had also arisen, such as the marginalisation of Africa and international terrorism (which was already high on NAM's agenda at the 1998 Summit in Durban).

South Africa, having experienced its own 'miracle' transition to democracy not unrelated to the end of the Cold War, arguably espoused in its foreign policy and in its NAM presidency such a utopian vision, which precisely validated NAM's role in world affairs. The 'one-world' was not going to come about by itself, and NAM's agenda came to reflect this, for example, through emphasising UN reform and its engagement with the North. It was, for example, at the Durban summit that the Group of 8 (G-8 — developed) countries, previously unfavourably disposed to NAM, participated as guests for the first time.²⁶⁾

3.2 Unipolarity

The post-Cold War relevance of NAM was, however, also questioned from a more realist perspective. Bipolarity, it was argued, had not given way to one world of equals, but to a global configuration dominated by one power and its allies "and now every country has to deal with the remaining sole centre of power in the international system".²⁷⁾ Instead of liquidating the North Atlantic Treaty Organ-

isation (NATO) in line with the Warsaw Pact's dissolution, NATO expanded. With only one power bloc to be aligned to, NAM members would have no choice but to engage with the West, thus rendering the idea of non-alignment nonsensical. But, unipolarity or US hegemony has played itself out in increasingly stark terms through US unilateralism, continued US military build-up, the Bush Administration's response to the 11 September 2001 attacks (the so-called 'global war on terror' accompanied by coercive rhetoric) and the 2003 'pre-emptive' war against Iraq. The Russian government has not taken kindly to US unilateralism and has responded with increasing diplomatic and even military brinkmanship, most recently through suspending participation in the *Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty*, a key arms control measure between Russia and the West.²⁸⁾ US unilateralism in issues from the environment to security matters has generally been seen as a challenge to multilateralism and world peace, two of the main enduring objectives of NAM.

3.3 Multipolarity

For those who interpreted the end of the Cold War as a shift from a bipolar to a multipolar international configuration, "relationships between alliances ... evolving into more complicated alternative geopolitical patterns of relationships between nations" would similarly make non-alignment an untenable foreign policy position.²⁹⁾ There would thus be no place for aligning to a non-aligned policy orientation. This view is especially prevalent in the Indian media, where analysts regard non-alignment as standing in the way of India's great power pursuits and its relations with the US. The following quote from an Indian newspaper is typical of this view: "India today is very different from the India of the Cold War days. We are now recognised as an emerging economic power, no longer dependent on the charity of others for our economic progress. In these circumstances, does it make sense to cling to old shibboleths and slogans such as 'non-aligned solidarity' in a vastly transformed world order?"³⁰⁾

The assertion that non-aligned solidarity does not make sense in a multipolar world seems also to have played out in the contradictory way NAM members in the UN Security Council (UNSC) recently voted with regard to Iran. The permanent members plus Germany (P5+1) sponsored resolution imposes additional restric-

tions on Iran in an effort to curb its suspected nuclear weapons programme. Despite rhetoric against US imposed meddling in the domestic affairs of Iran and that country's right to peaceful nuclear technology during the last NAM summit in Cuba, all but Indonesia voted for the resolution. Although NAM members' behaviour during the Cold War reflected similar contradictions, in the post-Cold War environment one of the main challenges to NAM's success will be to redefine the role of members like India, who still share the collective memory of colonialism, but no longer the Third World consciousness.

3.4 Globalisation

The economic correlate of the end of history and 'one-worldedness' discourse also challenged non-alignment and was captured and promoted through the term globalisation. In fact, Tomlinson notes that globalisation was in some sense the antonym for the term 'Third World'. The collapse of the USSR was construed as validation that communism is not a viable alternative to capitalism. Globalisation was to be understood as the 'retreat of the state' — as espoused by Susan Strange — due to the increasing role of the transnational corporation, connectedness made possible by new technologies, the ease of travel, the end of East/West ideological boundaries, and the proliferation of non-state actors acting globally that these developments allow.³¹⁾ In effect, the neo-liberalism of minimal state intervention in the economy was a particular product of the Reagan and Thatcher period and ignored the neo-Keynesian models of capitalism that preceded the 1980s. The seeming inevitability of neo-liberalism couched in globalisation discourse contributed to the elaboration of the Washington Consensus as a development model imposed by the international financial institutions (especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — IMF) on poor countries.

The Washington Consensus, a term coined by John Williams, is a set of market-oriented prescriptions that "focused specifically upon the linked objectives of fiscal discipline, altered public expenditure priorities, tax reform, financial liberalization, exchange rate adjustment, trade liberalization, privatization, deregulation and support for property right".³²⁾ Both the World Bank and the IMF veered from their neo-Keynesian roles of large-scale infrastructural loans and

short-term stabilisation of troubled economies respectively, to enforce so-called structural adjustment programmes (of which the most controversial 'adjustment' was the scrapping of public enterprises and the creation of market institutions).³³⁾ As the Washington Consensus and structural adjustment became discredited as a development model, the blame was not put on the inappropriateness of this model. Rather, in addition to economic prescription to rectify the market imperfections in poor countries, the Bretton Woods institutions also intervened in social and political policy to build up so-called social capital and ensure good governance, which became conditionalities for loans and projects.³⁴⁾

As was noted above, NAM's insistence on national self-determination cannot be viewed separately from its pursuit of development. The Washington Consensus presented a challenge to the political-economy of non-alignment by relegating state intervention in the economy to an outdated, failed, communist model. It is in these conditions that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was formed in 1995, institutionalising the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). In subsequent trade rounds it was clear that historical difficulties of unindustrialised countries to compete on equal terms with the North were being ignored, not least when the EU and the US continued to subsidise sectors in which poor countries could have a competitive advantage, for example, agriculture.

The challenges for non-alignment implied by the different interpretations of the post-Cold War order can be summarised as follow:

- To engage with powerful states to democratise the global world order first and foremost through reform of the UN, but also through levelling the playing field between North and South states in the WTO.
- To counter unilateralism and promote multilateralism amidst US hegemony in a pursuit for self-determination and peace.
- To fend off coercion to participate in the 'global war on terror' on US terms.
- Internally, to prevent the disengagement of prestigious NAM members (such as India) in search of great power status, and rather to harness their clout for non-aligned goals.

- To find an alternative development model to the Washington Consensus to integrate poor economies into the world economy in an era of globalisation.

With these challenges in mind, attention now turns to one of the major factors impacting on the nature of the current world order, namely the rise of China and its implications for non-alignment.

4. THE RISE OF CHINA

The 'rise of China' is shorthand for the phenomenal economic growth rates that the country has managed to sustain over the past two decades (10 per cent over the past 15 years), accompanied by decreasing poverty — the World Bank estimates that 400 million Chinese have been lifted out of poverty since 1978.³⁵⁾ In 2003, despite being hard hit by the SARS crisis, China reached the US\$1 000 *per capita* income mark, a critical goal for the Chinese government.³⁶⁾ But, it is not only the country's economic growth rate that awes. The 'rise of China' is also about the model that China employs to activate and sustain this development and the way the country is dealing with the resultant impact on its perceived power in world politics.

The turning point in China's fate is traced to the policies instituted by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Deng, exiled during the Cultural Revolution by Mao for being a 'capitalist roader', returned to prominence after Mao's death. He wasted little time to introduce reforms aimed at the so-called four modernisations, namely modernisation of agriculture, industry, defence and science and technology.³⁷⁾ These reforms included:

- an open door policy to other states, who wished to trade with or invest in China;
- changing the economic structure of the Chinese economy to accommodate non-state owned economic activities (in addition to state-owned enterprises); and
- a transition to a so-called socialist market economy (rejecting the idea that socialism and capitalism are dichotomous).³⁸⁾

Fernandez Jilberto argues that China was in effect implementing structural adjustment of the order expected of Third World states in the 1980s, except that it was doing this by "combining state-led economic organization and regulation with a gradual, controlled neo-liberalization in which foreign transnational companies (TNCs) played a central role. China thus developed a successful model of mixing public and private roles and investment in order to achieve growth through economic integration in the world market".³⁹⁾ As the process of globalisation accelerated, so too did China's economic liberalisation, which reached a benchmark when China was finally admitted to the WTO in 2001. Since then China's image as workshop of the world is slowly being transformed to that of growth engine of the world. The country has become a destination for exports (fuels, minerals, metals, food as well as manufactured goods) and is now a prominent outward investor (fifth largest in the world).⁴⁰⁾ As a result, China is credited for a so-called 'super cycle' in the global economy, while it allows especially US consumers to continue borrowing by buying up bad US debt.⁴¹⁾ It is also largely responsible for Japan's economic recovery.⁴²⁾

China's rise has a definite political dimension. The end of the Cold War has opened up political space for China (during the Cold War at variance with both superpowers), to exploit on account of being an increasingly important player in the world economy. China already portrays characteristics of a great power, such as a large population and a permanent seat on the UNSC. However, rather than a USSR or US look-a-like, China has taken a cautious approach.⁴³⁾ Economic pragmatism has tempered ideology, as advised by Deng Xiaoping's notion that China should 'hide its brightness'.⁴⁴⁾ It has refused to be drawn into an arms race with the US and has emphasised non-interference in its domestic affairs, a principle that applies in its relations with other states too. This does not mean that China does not have a sense of its place in the world or that it has not 'risen' in the politico-military sense, simply that its approach has been framed as a 'Peaceful Rise'.

In addition to economic pragmatism, the notion of Peaceful Rise is deliberate in two respects. Great power status is not just achieved through meeting a set of objective criteria or willingness to take up such a position. Rather, the international society has to confer great power status, a process that involves the élite club of great

powers allowing the aspiring great power to join their ranks, as well as being recognised as a great power by the global populace. In this respect, Suzuki notes that aspiring great powers will play recognition games, which in the post-Cold War environment has required proof of being "a 'good citizen' that is willing to protect and propagate the rules of the society".⁴⁵⁾ China is no exception. Recently it facilitated the six-party talks with regards to North Korea's nuclear weapons programme; called for democracy in Myanmar; persuaded Sudan to allow a hybrid UN/African Union (AU) peacekeeping force in Darfur to which China even contributed troops; and supported the Western-sponsored UNSC resolutions towards curbing Iran's suspected nuclear weapons pursuits. These effort attempted to reflect "a 'legitimate great power' fulfilling its 'responsibilities' of strengthening core norms of international society, thus countering the 'China Threat' theses and the negative image which results from them".⁴⁶⁾

However, this statist approach to good global citizenship belies China's own human rights approach, which includes its policy towards ethnic minorities, such as Tibetans. Beijing believes that stability is essential to obtain China's rise and justifies the strong-armed response to pro-democracy and pro-Tibet demonstrations on these grounds.⁴⁷⁾ Ramo quotes a Chinese high official as saying: "We are often chastised about human rights or democracy, but frankly, if we pull 1.3 billion people out of poverty, that will be one of the greatest accomplishments in the history of mankind".⁴⁸⁾ Individual Chinese are expected to put this goal above their human rights. The problem is, however, that China may become a 'pressure cooker' as the country's integration into the global capitalist economy increases inequality and environmental degradation and channels to vent increasing frustration are suppressed.⁴⁹⁾ In addition, what Kleine-Ahlbrandt calls China's 'dictator diplomacy', that is China's leverage to influence problem governments, is still not sufficient to legitimise its great power status among large sections of the global populace given its own human rights deficit.⁵⁰⁾ Activist groups have, for example, labelled the Beijing Olympics as the Genocide Olympics (referring to China's economic ties to the Sudanese government) and are using the Olympic torch's international legs for pro-Tibet and pro-democracy demonstrations.

Peaceful Rise is also a way for China to set itself apart from the hegemonic practices usually associated with great powers and

lately with the US, again to counter the China Threat theses. Abjuration of hegemony has a long rhetoric history in China. Zhou Enlai's last calligraphy before he died quoted Mao as saying: "Dig tunnels deep, store grain everywhere, and never seek hegemony".⁵¹⁾ China has been at pains to emphasise multipolarity and respect for self-determination. It is in this respect that the kind of bipolarity that may result from China's rise differs from Cold War bipolarity and will thus have different implications for non-alignment than Cold War bipolarity, one of the themes that will be explored in the next section.

5. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE RISE OF CHINA FOR NAM

According to Ramo: "China is marking a path for other nations around the world who are trying to figure out not simply how to develop their countries, but also how to fit into the international order in a way that allows them to be truly independent, to protect their way of life and political choices in a world with a single massively powerful centre of gravity. I call this new physics of power and development the Beijing Consensus".⁵²⁾ The 'theorems' of the Beijing Consensus can be summarised as follow:

- An emphasis on innovation that would produce technologies and initiatives not only to activate and sustain development, but to "create change faster than the problems change creates",⁵³⁾
- looking beyond *per capita* income as a measure of development to quality of life, sustainability and equality, a notion captured by the term 'balanced development';⁵⁴⁾ and
- employing a theory of "self-determination, one that stresses using leverage to move big, hegemonic powers" who may be tempted to impose their will on other countries.⁵⁵⁾

The Beijing Consensus could give momentum to non-alignment in two respects. Firstly, it could return the world configuration to bipolarity, pacific bipolarity to be precise. This would offer NAM members the advantages of being in a triadic relationship with two major poles, without the pressure of coercive alignment from both these poles that characterised the militarily tense bipolarity of the Cold War. Sec-

only, it could also propose alternative developmental terms to those of "the widely discredited Washington Consensus, an economic theory made famous ... for its prescriptive, Washington-knows-best approach to telling other nations how to run themselves".⁵⁶⁾

5.1 Return of bipolarity

The rise of China suggests a real or perceived return to bipolarity, which would result in a new triadic relationship of the Third World (NAM members) with the US (and the West) on the one hand, and China on the other. Investigating the relationships (China-West; China-NAM and NAM-West) that this triad implies, gives a sense of the implications of this new bipolarity for NAM's agenda.

5.1.1 China and the West

It is difficult to generalise about the relationship between China and the West. Europe and the US for example, have not perceived the rise of China in the same way. Whereas there is often talk of the 'China Threat' (sometimes moderated as the 'China challenge')⁵⁷⁾ in the US, the European Union (EU) rhetoric and practice tell a different story. The EU is, for example, keen to lift an arms embargo on China, which it instituted following the US example after the Tiananmen Square incident. This is a sign of relative trust that China's rise is peaceful and these weapons will not be used against Europe or its allies in the future. Recognising the difference in the EU's and China's political orientations and value systems, Scott nevertheless argues that "(t)he EU/China relationship has matured over the last two decades to involve significant economic matters and visions of a wider 'strategic partnership', bringing with it a challenge to American unipolar unilateralism".⁵⁸⁾ But it may be too early to say that the EU-China relationship will take precedence over the EU-US relationship as the ability of the US to dissuade the EU from lifting the arms embargo on China illustrates.⁵⁹⁾ In addition, the EU, like the US, is battling a huge trade deficit with China, especially in the textile sector, which former French president, Jacques Chirac, has called a "brutal and unacceptable invasion".⁶⁰⁾

It is difficult to generalise about the US-China relationship. The Bush Administration has referred to China as a strategic competitor,

but American transnational capitalists and pro-globalisation lobbyists contrast the protectionist and unilateral policies gaining ground in the US with Chinese openness and 'good global citizenship'.⁶¹⁾ The US perception of Chinese competition has as much to do with resources as with China's military capability. The 'ravenous dragon', as a recent *Economist* special report refers to China, is in accordance with the Chinese government's 'Go Out' policy, securing supply channels of natural resources (including food) at a rate that has benefited mining, oil, gas, mineral and agricultural producing countries around the globe.⁶²⁾ But, there is sense that the 'Go Out' policy and the competition it induces with the West and even with India will amount to another scramble for (neo-)colonies. For the moment, the matter seems to be exaggerated as the *Economist* article concedes: "For all the hue and cry, China is still just one of many countries looking for raw materials around the world. It has won most influence in countries where Western governments were conspicuous by their absence, and where few important interests are at stake".⁶³⁾ Where the US and China are juxtaposed regarding competition for resources it is rather in their approach to attract developing countries — a topic addressed in the next sections.

China's military challenge to the US (especially in places where the US has historically provided security guarantees against China, such as Japan and Taiwan), is rather as an asymmetrical superpower.⁶⁴⁾ Asymmetry in the first instance involves the notion that China (for now) will be unable to win a war with the US on symmetrical terms and is therefore developing military strategies and tools that would exploit US vulnerabilities. In the second instance asymmetry points towards the notion of a 'people's war under globalisation conditions' where China would use its economic and political leverage to win the battle before it is fought. Ramo asserts: "For Beijing the benefits of a truly globalized, multilateral world include far more robust security guarantees".⁶⁵⁾ Chinese officials understand that 'picking a fight' with the US could lead to economic (and possibly political collapse) given US-Chinese economic ties. Similarly, Chinese financial speculators and computer scientists could also bring an adversary's economy down on Beijing's orders. War is thus foremost deterred not through nuclear weapons as between the US and USSR during the Cold War, but through the economic interdependence of these two economies.

Although 'good neighbourliness' is part of China's peaceful rise, aspects in its domestic policy, such as anti-Japanese sentiments and an anti-secession law against Taiwan, have raised suspicions of Chinese nationalism.⁶⁶⁾ Analysts like Francis Fukuyama have warned against sounding the alarm and argues that in the worst case scenario a belligerent China can be balanced by Russia, the US, Japan and India. But even Fukuyama's best case scenario does not explore a situation where China and the US share a co-operative hegemonic position in world affairs. At best, he still presumes competition between the two powers where China will use its soft power to enlarge its influence sphere and wear the US out using a strategy of attrition. This would need a counter-strategy akin to USSR containment in some ways, but in others, rather a soft war, a quiet competition for power and influence across the globe where the US should be "working quietly and carefully, also adopting a calibrated and nuanced policy for the long run".⁶⁷⁾

There seems enough evidence to suggest that the relationship between the US and China reflects that of two competing powers and China's economic and increasingly political leverage is starting to balance US dominance. Due to China's pragmatism and asymmetrical strategy to counter US hegemony, the nature of this bipolarity is still largely pacific. NAM can exploit this situation, especially China's emphasis on multilateralism and self-determination, to escape coercive US policies. The nervousness in the West regarding China's resource needs can also be used to extract greater trade and development concessions from the US and the West. There is already a sense among poor countries that China's rise is enabling them to choose their trading partners, rather than taking what they are offered.⁶⁸⁾ At the Lisbon EU-Africa Summit in 2007, for example, Senegal, South Africa and Namibia refused to sign the free trade agreements with the EU (see below).⁶⁹⁾

5.1.2 China and NAM

China's historical links with the Third World date back to the Bandung Conference where its cause was championed and to some extent China presented itself as the leader of the Third World. It supported independence struggles throughout the Cold War, although its choice of liberation movements to oppose Soviet influence, espe-

cially in Africa, sometimes bordered the bizarre (for example the US-backed UNITA in Angola). China was one of the biggest aid donors to developing countries and contributed to infrastructure development in Africa, such as the TANZAM railway. China's economic reforms in the 1970s saw a shift from ideology to economic pragmatism in its relations with developing countries though, manifesting in trade and economic co-operation replacing the interest-free loans and grants of the early Cold War.⁷⁰⁾

Despite this shift, China still portrays solidarity with developing countries or a Third World consciousness. It joined the Group of 20 (G20) developing countries, which aims to promote fair trade and opening up markets, especially in WTO trade negotiations. China is also closely associated with the G77 developing countries in the UN (in fact, the group is now called 'G77 plus China'), where it supports the idea of a 'new geography of trade' through encouraging South-South trade.⁷¹⁾ It is especially China's perceived Third Worldism that informs the striking contrast with Western approaches to the developing world. Whereas President Bush emphasised the US' humanitarian programmes (for example malaria and Aids relief), China "prefers to get on and build".⁷²⁾ China's infrastructural projects criss-cross the continent, from two football stadiums for the 2008 Africa Cup in Ghana to skyscrapers in Luanda. China's trade relations with the Third World are perceived as partnerships, rather than patronage as reflected in the documents produced by the China-Africa co-operation forum, a meeting at ministerial level every three years.⁷³⁾ China is also perceived to be encouraging regional integration as a way forward for developing countries and is working with established regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa.⁷⁴⁾

China's relationship with developing countries, especially its emphasis on securing resources, has also affected intra-NAM relations. India, itself an aspiring great power, may just be inspired to re-engage with NAM. It has already followed China's example and hosted the first India-Africa summit meeting where it announced tariff concessions for some agricultural produce and raw materials from Africa. At this meeting Premier Manmohan Singh is quoted as saying: "India wishes to see the 21st century as the century of Asia and Africa, with the people of the two continents working together to promote inclusive globalisation".⁷⁵⁾ China's emphasis on South-South trade could facilitate initiatives, such as the India-Brazil-South Africa

(IBSA) initiatives and in that sense harness the clout of prestigious NAM members for NAM priorities.

But, China's relationship with NAM is not without its problems. One of the key tenets of China's policy towards developing countries is non-interference in domestic affairs (that is an absence of political conditionalities for aid and trade except for recognition of mainland China and not Taiwan). In this respect China has often been accused of keeping the company of dictators and obstructing Western efforts to spread democracy and human rights.⁷⁶⁾ The arms shipment from China to Zimbabwe amidst the election controversy in that country is a recent example. Although some NAM members appreciate this approach and see it as recognition of the many challenges that developing states face, there is an indication that others may take offence. In Africa, Konings notes, there is a human rights and democratic culture being cultivated, most notably through continental institutions and programmes, which could be derailed if some governments use China's support to continue authoritarian practices.⁷⁷⁾ In addition, since China's entry into the WTO, cheap Chinese products have negatively affected domestic and export markets for some developing countries.⁷⁸⁾

5.1.3 NAM and the West

Prescriptive Western trade and aid programmes can be juxtaposed to China's notion of strategic partnership with the Third World. Although similar analyses can be done for the World Bank and IMF projects as well as US-Africa policy (already referred to above), compare for example the EU's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) in terms of conditionalities and regionalism in Africa with the Chinese approach. The erstwhile *Lomé Agreements* (hereinafter Lomé), governing EU-ACP (Africa-Caribbean-Pacific) trade relations, allowed the 78 countries of the ACP bloc to sell primary products in the EU without reciprocally opening their own markets to EU goods. Several factors led to the renegotiation of Lomé, most notably the end of the Cold War and redirection of European aid to Eastern Europe, the emphasis on trade not aid in EU policy, and the need to conform to WTO rules.⁷⁹⁾ The *Cotonou Agreement* replaced Lomé and the EPAs being negotiated now in terms of Cotonou conforms to WTO rules that prohibit preferential trade except among small re-

gional groupings under specific conditions. This has meant that the EU needed to negotiate trade agreements with smaller groups of countries in the APC.

One interpretation of the EPAs is that the breaking up of the ACP bloc into smaller groupings will reduce the bloc's collective bargaining power. Moreover, the groupings, which the EU chose to negotiate with, do not always correlate with established regional integration initiatives in the ACP, but seem to impose the EU's perception of regional integration.⁸⁰⁾ A 2005 study by the UN Economic Commission for Africa states: "The benefits from regional integration efforts in Africa achieved so far are likely to be stymied by the EPAs since a significant portion of the trade gained by the EU will be due to trade diversion not only from the rest of the world but also from within the EPA groupings themselves that are configured around existing RECs [regional economic communities]".⁸¹⁾

More recently the EPA negotiations with Southern African Development Community (SADC) members almost led to the break-up of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) — the oldest customs union in the world. South Africa disagreed with some of the terms in the EPA and wanted a renegotiation while other members were happy to sign off on the agreement, because it gave them preferential access to the European market. South Africa was in particular concerned that the EPA would restrict its ability to extend concessions to other major countries without extending it to the EU as well. In this respect the South African Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dlamini-Zuma, is quoted as saying: "They are using them (EPAs) to regain ground they think they have lost in their quest for hegemony in Africa. The panic button was pressed by Africa's relations with China, India and South American countries".⁸²⁾ Without South Africa in on the deal, there would be conflicting tariff regimes and SACU would simply not make sense anymore.

In addition, the EPAs attach conditions, such as democracy, human rights, good governance and environmental protection to aid and trade, thus "facilitating a mini 'regime change' in African countries, in accordance with EU values and standards".⁸³⁾ Not only is it questionable whether African countries at this point can conform to these conditions amidst other developmental challenges, but also whether these can be imposed from outside or should be left to internal processes.⁸⁴⁾ There is also a question why this concern with

human rights and democracy (or as some label it 'EU paternalism') is extended to EU-Africa relations, but not EU-China relations. As Minister Dlamini-Zuma's statement illustrates, China's interest in Africa has induced a new-found confidence among the weaker partners in this very asymmetrical relationship with the EU. This is not lost on EU policy makers as Portugal's efforts to hold the last Africa-EU summit, despite UK objections about Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe's, participation (a prerequisite for African countries) attest.⁸⁵⁾

5.2 The Beijing Consensus as a development model

Ramo's labelling of China's approach to development as the 'Beijing Consensus', forces a contrast with the Washington Consensus as a model for development.⁸⁶⁾ On face value the Beijing Consensus' theorems are closer to the principles of NAM as well as the political-economy of non-alignment than the prescriptions of the Washington Consensus. Payne likens the ideas coming together around the Beijing Consensus to social forces in the Gramscian sense, that have the potential to overthrow the neo-liberal and even US neo-conservative 'commonsense' on integrating Third World states into the global economy.⁸⁷⁾ Upon critical reflection, the Beijing Consensus should not be understood as the 'Chinese development model' that can be applied to Third World states; rather its usefulness for development is to provide the global terms within which developing countries' challenges can be accommodated and their development encouraged. There are many reasons that make China's development unique and defy presumptions that its model will work for poor countries. Among these are:

- ***Mao's legacy and the communist party:*** China's rise has been on the foundations of Maoism. For all its ills, Maoism provided a way to achieve equality and stability after the Confucian imperial system collapsed, violent warlordism prevailed and China was devastated by the Second World War.⁸⁸⁾ The strong one-party system that emerged as a result is still the centre holding China together amidst economic reforms and rapid change.
- ***High savings:*** A large part of China's capital input to effect its

economic rise has come from domestic savings, which is still an important source of investment despite increasing foreign investment. This was partly due to the one child policy, where having only one child to rely on for support in old age resulted in higher personal savings. Other developing countries may simply not have the savings capacity or cultural incentive to comply with this model.⁸⁹⁾

- ***Cheap goods and cheap labour:*** China has a glut of cheap labour and its development has to a significant extent been possible through exporting cheap manufactured goods to the rest of the world. The low levels of industrialisation and the inability in developing countries with industrial capability to compete with Chinese goods also inhibit copying the Chinese model.
- ***Size matters:*** China's size is beneficial in providing the human resources for infrastructural development and depressing the price of manufactured goods. It provides a continental market, in the same way the US' size does. Size also accounts for China's leverage in international forums and trade relations (as is the case with India). Small powers without the resources and clout are more likely to find solutions in patron-client relations or will have to engage more creatively with actors in the world economy to assure beneficial relations.⁹⁰⁾
- ***Democracy and human rights:*** In many Third World states, a discourse of democracy and human rights has been developing. China's treatment of its own labourers and those sourced in countries where it invests may as a result not be acceptable in these countries even to achieve reductions in poverty levels in the long-term.⁹¹⁾ China has a 'well-oiled' state propaganda and censorship machinery to mobilise individuals to accept human rights sacrifices in the name of its national development project. Third World states may not have the will or skill to do so.

The Beijing Consensus is largely a government-directed national model reflecting NAM's ideas about the role of the state and self-determination in development. However, Lenin's thesis about the role of nationalism in the liberation of workers earlier referred to seems still at bay. The Beijing Consensus leaves very little room for

dissenting voices from civil society. Localised, people-centred development and an emphasis on civil society's role in development may be short-changed despite Ramo's excitement that the Chinese government is emphasising greener and more transparent development.⁹²⁾ To the extent that the Beijing Consensus might further NAM's search for a NIEO, this article concurs with Harris: "If the Beijing Consensus is a transition point towards deeper social transformation, it will play an essential progressive role. But if it is simply a strategy to integrate Third World capitalists into the new global economic order, it will ultimately be of limited use in the struggle for a new world order".⁹³⁾

6. CONCLUSION

NAM's pursuit of self-determination and independent national development still justifies the movement's existence despite the end of the Cold War, although its agenda has been adapted according to evolving interpretations of the post-Cold War order. The movement now faces challenges to resolve issues carried over from the Cold War era, as well as new challenges most notably as a result of US hegemony and globalisation. The steady rise of China has been one of the key factors to influence global order after the Cold War. There seems to be sufficient perceived competition between the US and China over influence and resources to suggest that bipolarity is returning, although not quite in Cold War terms. China is rather playing the role of a great power rising from the Third World and championing the causes of multipolarity, self-determination, peace and equality in world affairs as an antidote to US hegemony.

China's renewed interest in the Third World for its own economic and political benefit in terms that speak of strategic partnership rather than hegemony bodes well for NAM's objectives. It has turned around the marginalisation that some NAM members faced in the 1990s and gives these states more leverage to mould highly skewed economic and power relations on more equitably terms. The South has also benefited in terms of infrastructure and trade as a result of Chinese engagement. In addition, the Beijing Consensus poses an alternative to the Washington-induced 'shock therapy' of liberalisation of poor economies as well as the plying open of these economies to unfair trade practices from the North. The Beijing Consensus

has won the 'hearts and minds' of Third World governments, not least because it does not prescribe human rights, democratic and environmental standards that may be too much to expect at this stage in their development. But, Beijing is increasingly realising that its great power status needs to be acknowledged by the non-governmental global populace as well. In this regard both NAM and those proposing the Beijing Consensus as a development model need to reconsider the role of civil society in the sustainability of national development.

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