Relevance of the Non-Aligned Movement in Southeast Asia: Security, Solidarity and Symbolism

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"A talent for following the ways of yesterday is not sufficient to improve the world of today."

"Those who use the old to define the new do not achieve change."

King Wuling of Zhao, North-eastern China, 307 B.C.

BACKGROUND, QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTS

The ancient Chinese quotes above are most apt for framing our consideration of how relevant the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is for Southeast Asia. As today’s political, economic and military challenges/concerns in the region have become increasingly complex, improvements related to solidarity and peace will depend (in part) on our ability to understand how the nature of security has been changing, especially for developing countries, including those in Southeast Asia.

In our formulation, the relevance of NAM starts from the assertion that it represents a structure of social relationships and material capabilities, as well as an intelligible set of ideas and symbols which NAM members have formulated with certain principles, objectives and viewpoints about international issues in mind. The main focus of these social relationships and agreed-upon set of ideas and symbols is: changing the concept of international security. Such changes in definition, especially since 1992, could signify the starting point for a future where interactions among states are transformed. Whether members of NAM trying to act together or more powerful states [acting unilaterally] would change the definition of international security and transform international interactions [since the end of the Cold War] is a major issue that stimulates our research for this paper.

A pronounced dichotomy has emerged when scholars and analysts assess the role of NAM in international relations. On one side there is the view that NAM is of limited relevance. One recent research work puzzled over data that showed how continued cohesion of NAM as an institution and in terms of bloc voting in the United Nations General Assembly from 1965 to 2005 became stronger after the Cold War ended (Davis, 2011). NAM has persisted even as membership more than doubled during this period and became even more diverse. In its analysis, Stratfor Global Intelligence (2014) observed that the very diversity and often competing interests of member states almost universally impedes the effectiveness of multinational blocs such as NAM. Despite its stated purpose and name, most NAM members have leaned, if not aligned with one or the other side during the Cold War; some members have gone to war with one another; issues with little practical benefit are taken up; and ability to influence global trends or enforce NAM resolutions has been limited. With little attention to how NAM has built its consensus and what that consists of, this view sees NAM as a possible counter-hegemonic response to larger powers or as a source of possible regional allies when a larger power does not want to be seen as acting unilaterally. The nature of NAM’s socially-constructed solidarity and the significance of its political symbolism are generally missing on this side of the dichotomy (Sanz, 2012). As a result, the puzzle is dismissed since NAM’s relevance
is only a possibility. Moreover, multilateral approaches are inconsistent with standard forms of realist theories about states’ ideology, policies and actions.

The other side of the dichotomy generally sees NAM in terms of a struggle by weak third world states in a stratified international system to find an active role in the interest of peace and freedom. Non-alignment is seen mostly in symbolic terms, according to one scholar, with some efforts to operationalize the “solidarity of the less powerful in global affairs” (Frangonikolopoulos, 1995: 62-63). When considering NAM, Morphet (2004) observed that as one institution of the “global South”, its place in world politics and global governance had been incompletely covered in the existing literature. She attributes this gap to questions about: where exactly on the geopolitical compass is the South; what are its physical and ideological boundaries; how do academics and practitioners understand multilateral diplomacy in the post-colonial era; how and to what extent has the United Nations influenced the development of “Southern” foreign policy and cooperation among developing countries; and how has the end of the Cold War redefined the purposes and practices of states in the global South? Although her review did not answer all of these questions, Morphet argued that NAM should be taken seriously as a substantive grouping that aims to maximize its influence and coordinate in order to have an impact in the United Nations.

Along these same lines, Strydom (2007: 2) says that NAM remains an important voice in international relations to the extent that it redefined itself in the 1990s and took a more significant role in shaping the major debates of the time. Strydom (2007: 44) does analyze a wide range of issue areas that NAM members identified as important since the 1990s derived from several basic commonalities among members. Much like Morphet, he sees NAM’s influence as somewhat limited to maintaining multilateralism involved with reform of the United Nations. However, Strydom (2007: 45) points to a serious inconsistency between what NAM members want at the international level and what many of them have been unable to provide at the national level. While this seems to be an inconsistency, a much deeper analysis is needed. The focus should be on how NAM members have socially constructed their principles, objectives and consensus views in the context of a major changes in the international order since the end of the Cold War. This would involve their vision and plans for the future as well as how they analyze and interpret subsequent, unforeseen changes and crises in the international political order.

Our line of inquiry/discussion/analysis seeks to overcome the dichotomy of the debate about relevance by starting with an observation by Bruce Gilley (2015). He argues that the “Third World”, known more recently as the “global South”, has shifted to a pragmatic creative agenda that includes economic issues through G-77 and political issues through NAM. In particular, he highlights the Tenth NAM Summit held at Jakarta in 1992. Gilley (2015: 7) cites the Jakarta Statement as calling for a new relationship with the West that is no longer cast in terms of “demands” from developing countries or misperceived as “charity” from the advanced countries. Instead, a more creative approach should be conducted on the basis of genuine cooperation.
interdependence, mutuality of interest, shared responsibility, and mutual benefit, clearly and coherently presented and rationally discussed and negotiated. We need to discern the extent to which NAM has developed a more creative approach and its relevance for the issues confronting Southeast Asia.

Two starting points are identified that underscore the significance of the Jakarta Summit and the Jakarta Statement by NAM members that go beyond just creating a new relationship with the West, however. First, we submit that NAM has taken on some distinctive relevance for Southeast Asia, because all ten ASEAN member states attended as well as Papua New Guinea. By 1993, all of these Southeast Asian countries had become members of NAM. Second, members agreed that new ideas about security, which would evolve into the NAM concept of international security, were needed:

...security can no longer be defined solely in military terms. The vast array of non-military threats in such forms as underdevelopment and sharply curtailed prospects for economic growth, impending resource depletion, food scarcity, population pressures and severe environmental degradation ... are the determining components of a stable and peaceful world. Interdependence also calls for a recognition of the mutuality of interests among nations in each other's stability and security. Genuine and lasting security must therefore be universal and comprehensive, operating on an equal basis for all States and encompassing all spheres of international relations.

One context for change is NAM's main principles and objectives of (1) freedom from domination by safeguarding independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and (2) a world free from fear, want and intolerance by achieving disarmament, ending racial discrimination, establishing peaceful coexistence, and democratizing inter-state relations. International security should be seen beyond purely political and economic terms. It should be seen in ideological and symbolic terms as well, because the possibility for change in the international social and ideational structure reveals the relevance of NAM, especially for Southeast Asia.

QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTS

Our inquiry and analysis in this paper focuses on two questions: First, are there any relevant security issues that might lead Southeast Asian countries toward stronger
multilateralism that links the international and regional level? Second, could Southeast Asian countries stand together as part of NAM solidarity to withstand new and complex gravitational pulls of major power interests and competition in the region?

The framework for analysis blends a constructivist approach and a neo-classical realist (NCR) approach to guide the answers to these two questions. Both approaches focus on how ideas, understandings and perceptions are socially constructed in order to understand the structure of international relations in ways that go beyond just considering how material capabilities (and related interests) are distributed (Foulon, 2015: 639).

Alexander Wendt’s (1987: 338) constructivism provides the analytical frame for considering how agents, namely states, shape, transform and reproduce the international structure within which they operate. As noted by Wendt (1995: 72), social structures are defined, in part, by shared understandings, expectations or knowledge; all of which constitute actors/states in a situation and the nature of their relationships. With a focus on the ideational structure (and its symbolic meaning), we contend that the structure does not inevitably constrain states. While neoclassical realism would accept this point, they also argue that some version of the geopolitical structure is external and binds itself to the state (Foulon, 2015: 636). Foulon adds that perceptions and ideas at the level of policy-makers affects how the structure is operationalized. This leaves open the extent to which binding of states to the international political structure serves as a constraint, and we can thus consider the possibility that states would try to change the structure, which NAM members were trying to do at the end of the Cold War.

This shifts attention to how and when changes in understandings occur, because even the neorealist incentive structure could be open to fundamental rethinking and renegotiation (Foulon, 2015: 639). This is what makes the NAM 1992 Jakarta Summit significant, because once the Cold War as a structure of shared knowledge stopped being a basis for great as well as small power relations and capabilities; it was “over” (Wendt, 1995: 74). The question of what comes next can be considered in both the constructivist framework and Foulon’s neoclassical realism while keeping in mind some critical differences between them.

One critical difference is how the neoclassical realist considers struggle, competition and threat perception (economic and/or military) by presuming that only great powers, their priorities and their grand strategies need to be understood (Foulon, 2015: 652). This contrasts with Wendt’s (1995) constructivism where the basic structures of international politics are social (not strictly material or behavioral) and consist of shared knowledge, material resources, and practices, which affect

4In 1995, Wendt saw relationships as either cooperative or conflictual. The emphasis for NAM is collaborative relationships under certain circumstances and shared ideas and understandings.

5Foulon (636-639) includes policy-makers in order to link the sub-national level, especially domestic economic forces, to the international level. He calls neo classical realism a theory of foreign policy using multi-level analysis, but this is limited to threat assessment, power capabilities and uncertainty. Our focus, however, does not include the domestic influence, but focuses on government officials; namely, the executive branch (prime ministers and presidents), ministries of foreign affairs and ministries of defense where appropriate.
identities, interests and ideas. This presumes the involvement of all states, although the strength of their influence, individually or in groups, will vary.

In order to answer our two research questions, the roles that multilateralism, solidarity and symbolism play for Southeast Asian members of NAM will be analyzed in terms of a cognitive factor and a temporal factor. Social constructivism accepts a dynamic process where actions emerge from the interaction of (1) ideas about the international structure, a state’s identity and interests with (2) the meaning of material capabilities (Wendt, 1995: 75). While the greater emphasis appears to be on the cognitive factor, constructivism refers to the temporal factor by mentioning social change—of structures, practices and ideas (Wendt, 1995: 74). Neo-classical realism accepts the importance of ideas (coming from foreign policy-makers), but focuses on how ideas and matter/material resources intermingle in a temporal sense of past, present, and future (Foulon, 2015: 639).

With reference to how a region such as Southeast Asia might face political issues as well as be formed or transformed, Acharya (2012) asserts a number of crucial points. Using a social constructivist approach to explore the nexus between the international and the regional, he considers ideas and norms together, observing that the ideational can mean a whole range of things, such as values, principles ideology, culture and identity among others. (Acharya, 2012: 183) Constructivism can consider the sources of tension between the geographic and the perceptual, the fixed and the dynamic and the rational and the discursive as relevant to understanding responses to change (Acharya, 2012: 187).

Since ideas are a major part of what makes regions and shapes regional membership on a permanent or transient basis (Acharya, 2012: 189); our study can consider how the NAM views the region of SEA. That is, how relevant is a geographical designation in light of elements of regional order, including institutional constructs, such as ASEAN. This helps us include, but go beyond just material factors such as economic interdependence or distribution of power (Acharya, 2012: 189).

In a constructivist framework, as noted by Acharya (2012: 190), ideas and norms can spread without the backing of powerful actors. This is exactly where the potential relevance of NAM membership and the symbolism of its ideas and processes arises for less powerful, developing countries in Southeast Asia. Ideas and norms are viewed as the main influence when states adapt and transform their interactions. However, non-ideational factors related to state power and capabilities also influence regional orders, even if they do not shape them, according to Acharya (2012: 209).

The role of symbolism helps give a better understanding and analysis of shared ideas about international security, a concept which is part of NAM’s efforts to change the international political-social structure. A symbol conveys meaning beyond the directly observable, immediate world by standing for something other than itself. Attitudes, impressions and ideas are evoked and become associated through time, space and logic with the symbols (Edelman, 1977: 6). In the political world, including the international level, the way symbols are formulated can lead people or groups to a constructive transformation of their interactions. As a result, the meanings are not in the symbols (that represent a political structure), but in the society and the people who create as well as reinforce those meanings (Edelman, 1977: 11). Symbols are thus socially constructed and their meaning is shared, even though some interpretations might vary.
The meaning that NAM attaches to the concept of international security can be traced to a wide-ranging definition declared by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1970. The substance and symbolism of international security comes from accepting the universal and unconditional validity of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as the basis of relations among states (UNGA, 1970: 1). The salient main principles (among others) that cover international security are: (1) refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state; (2) settle international disputes by peaceful means and not endanger international peace, security and justice; (3) refrain from intervening in matters within any state’s domestic jurisdiction; (4) accept the principle of sovereign equality of states; and (5) fulfill Charter obligations in good faith (UNGA, 1970: 2). Added to acceptance of these principles is affirmation of the belief that there is a close connection between the objectives of strengthening international security, disarmament and economic development, such that progress in one constitutes progress towards all three (UNGA, 1970: 3). Finally, international security can be strengthened by promoting international cooperation as well as regional, sub-regional and bilateral cooperation among states (UNGA, 1970: 4).

The Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security represents an effort to create an alternative to collective security where the Security Council might react or not when it might perceive a breach of the peace. The Declaration and definition could be seen as a pro-active way to counteract the Security Council or any major power from setting conditions on the principles listed above in order to intervene in less powerful states. Other observers have seen the Declaration as a somewhat idealistic effort to overcome the national security logic linked to the use of armed forces (Center for Migration Studies, 2015: 5).

By the 1992 Jakarta Summit, NAM had distilled the elements of the United Nations definition of international security into its consensus declaration, as shown in Table 1. It is clear that members of NAM saw the end of the Cold War as a critical juncture characterized by a complex array of possibilities, challenges and uncertainties. They were also realistic in seeing disputes, conflicts, ethnic strife and appeals to aggressive nationalism. To member countries, NAM symbolizes an ongoing collaboration among countries that validated and vindicated non-alignment and multilateralism.

While member countries attach such a highly positive meaning to NAM, another view points to several contradictions that might inhibit its relevance. According to Strydom (2007: 43), members of NAM might be more focused on self-preservation given their emphasis on a rhetoric of political self-determination, state sovereignty, sovereign equality and political independence. Since some of them have generally been in a weak political position as developing countries, Strydom (2007: 43) asks whether they are strong enough and united enough to collaborate in strengthening multilateralism as well as creating a new form of international security.

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6 The Declaration on the Strengthening of International Security was part of an effort to make the United Nations more effective as an instrument for maintaining international peace and security.
7 Implementation of the Declaration is reviewed and the subject of a resolution every year by the General Assembly. The NAM has a direct role in this process through its work in the First Committee (Political) of the General Assembly.
Table 1. Principles, objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement in a post-Cold War world, 1992 Jakarta Summit

**PRINCIPLES**
- Safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states
- Non-aligned and other developing countries are free to exercise self-determination and sovereignty

**APPROACH TO UPHOLD PRINCIPLES AND ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES**
- Multilateralism through commitment to principles and purposes of the United Nations
- Equitably shared responsibility
- Joint commitment to global cooperation and solidarity
- Democratization of international relations through sustained dialogue and negotiation
- Set up and make use of regional mechanisms where appropriate
- Reform and restructure the world economic system
- Strengthen United Nations’ capacity for enhancing international development and cooperation
- Reactivate constructive dialogue between developed and developing countries based on
  - Genuine interdependence
  - Mutuality of interests
  - Mutuality of benefits
  - Shared responsibility

**OBJECTIVES [FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY]**
- Achieve disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament
- Establish peaceful co-existence among states
- Democratize inter-state relations
- Establish a just and equitable world order
  - Work towards peaceful settlement of regional conflicts
  - End colonialism and all forms of subjugation
  - Eradicate racism and all forms of racial discrimination
  - All developing countries attain developmental goals
  - Protect human rights, especially their social and economic dimensions

**OBJECTIVES [FOR DEVELOPMENT]**
- Achieve development, social progress and economic growth
- Strengthen the role of the United Nations
- Promote social justice and economic cooperation

**OBJECTIVES [FOR PEACE]**
- Achieve global peace, security and stability
- Advance nuclear disarmament
- Eliminate all forms of colonialism
- End post-colonial domination
- End apartheid and all forms of racism and discrimination
- Full equality for women


We can analyze the relevance of NAM for Southeast Asia since 1992 in this socially constructed framework of international security and multilateralism. At first glance, NAM had a definite relevance since all Southeast Asian countries attended the Tenth Summit in Jakarta and two non-members joined one year later. In symbolic terms, NAM gives the host country, Indonesia, international standing as the organizer of a meeting involving delegations from over 100 countries. Preparing a consensus final document and the Jakarta Message signifies the status and reputation of Indonesia among the non-aligned countries. At the same time, the presence of all ASEAN members and their participation in the summit’s consensus outcome clearly associates their attitudes and ideas with NAM solidarity at that time.

Answering the two research questions involves a focus on two specific Southeast Asian issues—establishing a Southeast Asian nuclear weapon free zone and using a regional approach to address disputes about the South China Sea. The discussion aims to provide an understanding about how relevant NAM has been for addressing these two issues in terms of the framework NAM constructed for a new international
order involving international security and multilateralism. The discussion considers how NAM and its Southeast Asian members interpreted and responded to momentous international challenges related to these two issues since 1992.

RELEVANT SECURITY ISSUES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND NAM MULTILATERALISM

When and how relevant security issues are identified by Southeast Asian countries as a group helps to answer whether multilateralism among these countries has become stronger [at the regional and international level], which is linked, in turn, to how relevant NAM is. From a social constructivist perspective, the analysis considers how shared knowledge and practices emerge, as well as how much solidarity and/or symbolism contributes to related identities, interests and ideas.

In terms of practices, this tends to make sense, because both NAM and ASEAN take a consensus approach to their discussions, decisions and declarations. The content of their declarations is mostly impressionistic and symbolic in order that no member can fail to agree – as basis for their consensus-based solidarity. However, NAM was able to construct a framework based on established principles for its vision of a just new world order (as outlined in table 1) that clearly spelled out multilateralism through a reformed United Nations system and international security as a departure from collective security (relying on the Security Council) or national security (based on narrowly-defined nationalism).

Our documentary research clearly shows that the membership of ten Southeast Asian countries makes ASEAN the dominant regional identity. Moreover, shared knowledge and understandings within NAM about Southeast Asia indicate that the ASEAN approach to security issues predominates. At the same time, declarations from two ASEAN Summits (Fourth ASEAN Summit at Singapore in January 1992 and Fifth ASEAN Summit at Bangkok in December 1995) refer directly to the NAM vision of a new international order: the central role of a democratized, more effective United Nations in promoting a more equitable international political and economic order and maintaining international peace and security (ASEAN, 1992: 2) (ASEAN, 1995: 4).

During the early and mid-1990s, the most relevant Southeast Asian security issues we discuss in this section, which also come under NAM’s international security concept, were nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament

At the Tenth NAM Summit at Jakarta in 1992, the member states organized the agenda to cover international security and disarmament in the post-cold war era as one issue area. Member states observed that the disarmament agenda was still unfinished. The vision of NAM has always been a nuclear-weapons-free world, and this was seen as the collective responsibility of all nations. Action on related priority issues was urged, particularly prohibiting all weapons of mass destruction (NAM, 1992: 7, 33). NAM members further suggested that security problems which are region-specific are best addressed within the appropriate regional context (NAM, 1992: 34).

At the Eleventh NAM Summit in October 1995 held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, NAM members spelled out the meaning of international security as directly related to disarmament.
Matters related to disarmament, arms limitation and control and international security have acquired a totally new dimension with the disappearance of the East-West confrontation. ... [T]here is no justification whatsoever ... to maintain nuclear arsenals and much less to add new ones ... The time has come for the entire stockpiles of these deadly weapons of mass destruction to be destroyed... [NAM] called for a renunciation of strategic doctrines based upon the use of nuclear weapons and called for the adoption of an action plan ... within a time-bound framework. [NAM believed] ... that general and complete disarmament under effective international control remains the ultimate objective to be achieved for which a comprehensive, nondiscriminatory and balanced approach towards international security should be adopted. (NAM, 1995: 16)

This general call was more symbolic and idealistic than practical, since their call was aimed at the nuclear weapons states.8 However, the NAM members recommended a somewhat less compelling alternative to universal disarmament in the form of region-based non-proliferation. NAM members thought regional non-proliferation underscored the seriousness and importance of eliminating weapons of mass destruction and recommended the establishment of nuclear-weapon free zones as a necessary first step. They urged states to conclude agreements with a view to create nuclear weapon free zones in regions where they did not exist in 1995. Answering the call to create nuclear-weapon free zones among developing countries would show solidarity and signal a multilateral approach aimed at controlling their own fates concerning nuclear weapons.

By December 1995, ASEAN seemed to have rather quickly answered the NAM call to regional action when they signed the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (the Bangkok Treaty). The relevance of NAM in this issue area, as well as the strength of ASEAN solidarity is noteworthy. It is important to recognize that the ASEAN member countries consistently pronounced that up to the mid-1990s, the context for their cooperation was principally economic and socio-cultural. In their regional context, ASEAN tried to sidestep most political and security issues, although the five original members of ASEAN declared a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in 1971 (Tarling, 2009: 1-12).9 The ZOPFAN Declaration had words and phrases similar to NAM formulations and even mentioned regional nuclear weapon free zones elsewhere in the world. However, the impact of the Cold War, avoidance of certain issues and an inability to resolve major differences among the five ASEAN members resulted in a declaration of contradictory ideas rather than any treaty involving shared responsibility or joint action.

The 1995 Bangkok Treaty conveyed a shared understanding among all ten ASEAN members on several points of regional solidarity and the relevance of NAM. First, they were convinced that establishing a Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone was an essential component of the ZOPFAN, which would contribute to (1)

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8 Nuclear weapons states (NWS) under the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are: United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China. India, Pakistan and the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea are NWS, but not party to NPT. Israel is also considered a NWS. South Africa developed nuclear weapons, but dismantled them before joining NPT in 1991. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine transferred nuclear weapons or missiles to Russia, which dismantled them. All but Ukraine acceded to NPT.
9 Tarling analyzes Malaysia’s leadership role since 1968 in trying to neutralize and strengthen security in the region while the United States was preparing to withdraw from Vietnam and the United Kingdom was also removing its imperial security supports. Malaysia envisioned that the major powers, including China, would guarantee neutrality. This led to complex debates, avoidance of critical issues and vague compromises with the other ASEAN members (Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand).
strengthening the security of states in the zone and (2) enhancing international peace and security as a whole. Second, they reaffirmed the importance of NPT in preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons and contributing to international peace and security, especially since NPT recognized the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties aimed at assuring the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories. Third, the Bangkok Treaty also referred to the principles and objectives for nonproliferation and disarmament, adopted at the United Nations 1995 Review Conference of Parties to the NPT, particularly, the principle that this treaty and its relevant protocols could attain maximum effectiveness through cooperation of all nuclear-weapon states, including their respect and support for the relevant protocols (United Nations, 1995: 1).

Each ASEAN member accepted a set of responsibilities concerning no production, testing, use or disposal of nuclear weapons, although the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes related to economic development and social progress was asserted. These points were entirely consistent with the commitments called for at the Eleventh NAM Summit (NAM, 1995: 19). At the international level, the Bangkok Treaty required each ASEAN state to become members and apply the full scope of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. As shown in Table 2, by 2014, all ten ASEAN states were IAEA members, although Brunei, Cambodia and Lao PDR were not members in 1995. At the regional level, ASEAN set up a Commission for the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone along with an Executive Committee to oversee implementation and ensure compliance, including verification through a control system. However, submitting any reports about significant events or exchanging information would be up to each state (United Nations, 1995: 3).

Table 2. Southeast Asian nations' participation in United Nations regime to control weapons of mass destruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IAEA</th>
<th>NPT</th>
<th>BWC</th>
<th>CWC</th>
<th>CTBT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>2 Dec 1992</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>2 Dec 1972</td>
<td>28 May 1975</td>
<td>10 Dec 2002</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>5 May 2003</td>
<td>5 May 2003</td>
<td>7 May 2003</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
NPT: Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
BWC: Biological Weapons Convention (Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction)
CWC: Chemical Weapons Convention
CTBT: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Notes: S = Signatory only; N = Not a Signatory or Member State
Timor Leste and Papua New Guinea are in Southeast Asia, but are not members of ASEAN.
Source: James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), Middlebury Institute for International Studies.
www.miis.edu/nam/memberships.html
A close analysis of the Bangkok Treaty and the scope of obligations covering the Southeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) by Goldblatt (2004: 65) found several gaps that weakened or obscured obligations. In addition, the area subject to denuclearization has built-in potential for disagreement, if not dispute. That is, continental shelves and exclusive economic zones (EEZ) are considered as part of their territories, even though some overlap with each other or are subject to claims by China or were considered international waters by other states that might have nuclear weapons aboard naval vessels and aircraft (Goldblatt, 2004: 66-67).10

The most significant limit to the effectiveness of the treaty and this regional NWFZ was the lack of security assurances from the nuclear weapons states. The Bangkok Treaty included a protocol to be signed by the five main nuclear weapon states,11 where they agree not to contribute to any act that would violate the treaty, nor use or threaten to use nuclear weapons within the Southeast Asia NWFZ. Up to 2016, none of these five states have signed the Protocol to the Bangkok Treaty (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 2016).

This lack of security assurances from nuclear weapon states helps undermine the relevance of regional NWFZs as an approach advocated by NAM. On the other hand, the Bangkok Treaty shows that the international security aim of non-proliferation and the regional trust and confidence that neighbors do not possess and will not acquire nuclear weapons are components in the solidarity of the ten ASEAN states. Goldblatt (2004: 74) observes that procedures to verify compliance with non-proliferation obligations are stricter than those set forth in the United Nations Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Bangkok Treaty makes the ten ASEAN members the only set of countries to set up a Commission to convene if the protocol is breached (Goldblatt, 2004: 66). However, as noted, such a commission is unlikely to take action, given the lack legally binding security assurances from the nuclear weapon states since none have signed the protocol. Moreover, they cannot be sure whether nuclear weapons are passing through the coastal or maritime areas of Southeast Asia. And even if one state is informed, it has the discretion to allow passage or even stationing of naval vessels or aircraft.

While ASEAN states agreed among themselves to the idea that the continental shelves and EEZ are covered under the Bangkok Treaty, the context of issues related to the South China Sea was making such solidarity and shared ideas problematic, especially in the view of outside powers who were also nuclear weapon states. With considerable uncertainty about the scope and protocol obligations of the Bangkok Treaty, it was unavoidable that attention would shift to the South China Sea and the full set of issues that it engendered.

The Twelfth NAM Summit held in 1998 at Durban, South Africa expressed general symbolic support for regional nuclear weapon free zones. However, specific attention focused on the failure of nuclear weapon states to show a genuine commitment to disarmament or to give binding security assurances to non-nuclear states (NAM, 10 According to Goldblatt (2004: 66), the Bangkok Treaty prohibited stationing nuclear weapons in any ASEAN member country, but they could decide individually upon being notified whether any foreign ships or aircraft could visit, transit or navigate through or over a territorial sea or archipelagic waters. However, it is unlikely that foreign ships or aircraft would even notify about the presence of nuclear weapons.
11 The five NWS are China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States.
1998: 27). At the same time, NAM members recognized various efforts by ASEAN to enhance cooperation as well as maintain peace and stability in Southeast Asia, especially through the entry into force of the Bangkok Treaty. They aimed words of encouragement at the nuclear weapon states to accede to the Protocol of the Bangkok Treaty (NAM, 1998: 50).12

By 1999, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers convened the first meeting of Commission on Southeast Asia NWFZ and said they would try to have consultations with nuclear weapon states to persuade them to eventually accede to the Protocol (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016). Since 2000, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers have considered and discussed progress on implementing the Bangkok Treaty under the auspices of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), designed as an Asia-Pacific consultative mechanism for open dialogue on political and security cooperation (ASEAN, 2016).13 A chronology of the various meetings indicates that nuclear weapon states have not been persuaded to accede to the Protocol of the Bangkok Treaty.

In 2007, the ASEAN Foreign Ministers conducted their mandated ten-year review of treaty implementation and presented a Plan of Action 2007-2012 with measures for fulfilling treaty commitments. This included accession to IAEA safeguards, developing a legal framework for nuclear safety standards, and other measures concerning nuclear safety. Their plan also included pursuing consultations on ratifying the treaty protocol with five nuclear weapon states (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016).

However, it was not until 2011, after the Fukushima nuclear incident, that the five nuclear weapon states sent representatives to meet with ASEAN officials and directly, but informally, discuss ratifying the protocol. The United States and China suggested they were almost ready, and everyone expected that the five states would sign the protocol at the Twentieth ASEAN Summit at Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Instead, their reservations about the protocol persisted (Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2016). As a result, the ten ASEAN members had to highlight creation of an ASEAN Community in a Global Community of Nations while briefly mentioning a need for more solidarity and regional cooperation in peace, security and nuclear non-proliferation (ASEAN, 2012: 2). Such a return to more abstract symbols and words of general solidarity accentuates the on-going difficulty in working to achieve an important substantive result in nuclear non-proliferation.

It does not appear that NAM has been very relevant to Southeast Asia in the matter of nuclear non-proliferation and the creation of the Southeast Asian NWFZ since its twelfth summit in 1998 and from the start of the twenty-first century in particular. Of course, there were much larger challenges to NAM’s vision of a post-Cold War international order and to the NAM concept of international security.

At the twelfth NAM Summit held at Durban, South Africa in 1998, the member countries expressed concern that nuclear weapon states did not have a genuine commitment to complete nuclear disarmament. Their view of the situation in

12 This was the first NAM Summit ever attended by Russia, United Kingdom and United States as guests. As with previous summits, China attended as an observer.
13 ASEAN Foreign Ministers proposed creation of ARF in 1993 and its first meeting was in 1994. Participants include: Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Russia, Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, United States and ten ASEAN member countries.
Southeast Asia gave appropriate recognition to ASEAN’s role in maintaining peace, stability and prosperity, the objective of a NWFZ was subject to continuing efforts and the complex sovereignty and jurisdictional disputes about the South China still need to be resolved (NAM, 1998: 27, 50).

After a five-year break, there was a potential for stronger solidarity and greater symbolism when the Thirteenth NAM Summit was held at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2003. However, the number of issues considered by NAM had increased and become more complex and contentious. Despite NAM’s continued calls for multilateralism, the summit had to address the unilateralism leading up to the impending invasion of Iraq; the changed international context related to terrorism as constructed by the United States; the implications of a new, competing definition of international security; and the issue of revitalizing NAM while asserting it had not lost its relevance (New Straits Times, 2 February 2003) (China Daily, 27 February 2003).

Members of NAM gave routine attention to the Southeast Asia NWFZ by just “welcoming the on-going consultations between ASEAN and the Nuclear Weapon States on the Protocol…” (NAM, 2003: 23). They recognized the important role of ASEAN in promoting peace, stability and prosperity, as well as the role of ARF in promoting political security dialogue (NAM, 2003: 50). Regional and international principles were cited to support NAM’s call to solve disputes in the South China Sea by peaceful means without the threat or the use of force (NAM, 2003: 50).

The Thirteenth NAM Summit ended with the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalization of the Non-aligned Movement when 63 heads of state or government reaffirmed their commitment to unity, solidarity and multilateralism. (NAM, 2003) They recognized that NAM would only remain relevant by adapting to global changes. However, their idea of NAM leadership based on multilateralism was being challenged.

One challenge was the United States’ unilateralism. Without mentioning the United States by name, however, NAM members expressed their rejection of unilateralism, which eroded and violated international law, contributed to the use and threat of use of force and pressured and coerced certain countries (NAM, 2003: 7).14

A second challenge was an alternative concept of international security, which directly contradicted the NAM concept. At the Thirteenth Summit in 2003, NAM members stated that they were deeply concerned at strategic defense doctrines that set out rationales for the use of nuclear weapons, specifically, the “Alliance Strategic Concept” (sic) adopted by NATO in 1999.15 NAM members asserted that such doctrines maintain unjustifiable concepts of international security based on promoting and developing military alliances and policies of nuclear deterrence, and includes new elements aimed at giving more scope for possible use or threat of use of force by NATO (NAM, 2003: 20).

In 2006, at the Fourteenth NAM Summit at Havana, Cuba, NAM members expressed the same deep concern. They identified the strategic defense doctrines of nuclear weapon states and the “NATO Alliance Strategic Concept” as maintaining unjustifiable concepts of international security based on promoting and developing

14China attended this summit as an observer. Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom and United States, among others, attended as guests.
15Refers to “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept” approved by heads of state and government at meeting of the North Atlantic Council at Washington, D.C. in April 1999 (NATO, 1999).
military alliances and nuclear deterrence policies (NAM, 2006: 28). The same formulation was used at the Fifteenth NAM Summit in 2009 at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt with an emphasis on “remained” (NAM, 2009: 40). While there was solidarity around this concern, there was no further statement on what NAM’s reaction could be.

By the time of the Sixteenth NAM Summit in 2012, NAM-members ideas and interests about nuclear non-proliferation, the challenge of unilateralism and the relevance of multilateralism through the United Nations were superseded by the confrontation over Iran’s nuclear program. The confrontation began in 2003 and raised issues about how to reconcile rights to peaceful uses of nuclear technology with activities that were seen as nuclear proliferation and weapon development.

It was no coincidence that the 2012 NAM Summit met at Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, although the standard agenda was followed and established set of issues were discussed. As NAM members reaffirmed the founding principles, they observed that rich and powerful countries exercised an inordinate influence in determining the nature and direction of international relations (NAM, 2012: 5).

Multilateralism was under threat by unilateralism of certain states, the use of double standards, as well as a tendency to avoid fulfilling commitments and obligations. As developing countries were becoming more vulnerable in this context, NAM was viewed as even more relevant. The same formulation from previous summits was used to call the NATO concept of international security unjustifiable (NAM, 2012: 57).

The view towards Southeast Asia was positive and welcomed a great number of developments. However, most of these developments were not directly related to political security or the regional approach to international security (NAM, 2012: 98-99). NAM members welcomed the possibility of ASEAN concluding negotiations with nuclear weapon states on the protocol to the Bangkok Treaty. There was no mention of these negotiations taking almost ten years or that nuclear weapon states held the advantage in determining whether Southeast Asia would be a nuclear weapon free zone. Disputes related to the South China Sea remained to be solved, but NAM members were hopeful that all parties would act in ways that upheld peace, stability, trust and confidence (NAM, 2012: 99) The positive contribution of dialogues, informal workshops and ARF were emphasized.

In conclusion, it is possible to see how shared knowledge and practices have emerged at the international and regional levels on issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and international security. Keeping solidarity strong, upholding NAM principles and objectives along with maintaining NAM’s relevance and transforming ideas into meaningful practices has not been easy for Southeast Asian countries. In the case of non-proliferation by a NWFZ, the framework provided by ASEAN has problem than the need for cooperation and good will from countries outside the region. As time went on, it became clear that several major issues in Southeast Asia are cross-cutting, such as the South China Sea with territorial and jurisdiction disputes that reduce the effectiveness of a regional nuclear weapon free zone. The importance of solidarity has been consistently reaffirmed in words, if not in specific actions. NAM’s ideas of international security and disarmament through multilateralism links the regional level with the international level. However, an international society in flux since the end of the Cold War presents numerous challenges.
When we ask whether Southeast Asian countries could stand together as part of NAM solidarity in order to withstand gravitational pulls of major powers in the region, part of the answer refers back to how some state actors (not just academics) apply a social constructivist framework and other state actors think in terms of Foulon’s neoclassical realist framework, particularly with respect to a regional approach to a contentious issue such as the South China Sea. As noted earlier, the main focus of a neoclassical realist is on priorities and strategies of great powers in terms of struggle and competition for pre-eminence as well as threat perception (economic and/or military) (Foulon, 2015: 652). However, the ideas behind great power priorities and strategies are equally significant, especially when they try to pull lesser powers or groups of smaller countries to accept or even acquiesce to their views and actions.

This is exactly where the potential for NAM solidarity might counter-balance the gravitational pull of China’s priorities and strategies in the South China Sea. While NAM as a whole was focusing on the opportunities created by the end of the Cold War since its Tenth Summit in 1992, another historical change was the rise of China since the 1990s as a new great power embarking on actions designed to make them a regional hegemon. For strategic and economic reasons, the South China Sea has been one of the clearest targets for Chinese dominance, even though the issues are more complicated in both symbolic and material terms.

The first time NAM discussed the issue was at Jakarta in 1992. Initially, the formulations were somewhat vague and general when NAM acknowledged the fact that the South China Sea has been subject to jurisdictional and territorial disputes. NAM then went on to explicitly welcome the ASEAN Declaration on the South China Sea and its principles of non-recourse to force, creation of a positive climate for peaceful resolution, while adding the proviso that the ASEAN approach would be without prejudice to the countries’ respective national positions (NAM, 1992: 53).

From 1992 onward, NAM recognized the professed role of ASEAN in maintaining peace, stability and prosperity (NAM, 1998: 50). In addition to the general formulation making ASEAN the main forum, ASEAN concepts such as a zone of peace, freedom and neutrality; ASEAN as a convening power; and dealing with China (and any other extra-regional power) as a dialogue partner prevailed in NAM discussions about the South China Sea (NAM, 2003: 51). ASEAN would appear to fit perfectly in the socially constructed multilateralism and ideas of solidarity advocated by NAM. By 2003, NAM cited the principles contained in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which entered into force in 1994 (United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, 2016).

All nations in maritime Southeast Asia, including China, have signed and ratified UNCLOS, which means that a United Nations mechanism would define the rights and responsibilities of nations with respect to the world’s oceans, establishing guidelines for the use of natural resources, the environment, and for commercial affairs. UNCLOS entered into force in 1994. The United States of America is not a signatory to the treaty, although it follows its provisions as customary international law.
At the Fourteenth NAM meeting in 2006 at Havana, Cuba, a subtle change in the NAM viewpoint affected the usual formulations, but still credited ASEAN as the legitimate, recognized forum on the South China Sea. Now they hoped that all concerned parties would refrain from any actions that might undermine peace, stability, trust and confidence in the region (NAM, 2006: 48). ASEAN and Chinese efforts at working together within various ASEAN-created fora fit into NAM’s post-Cold War ideas about multilateral approaches to regional issues. NAM welcomed a 2002 ASEAN and Chinese declaration to make every effort to create an actual code of conduct as conducive for international peace and stability in the region (NAM, 2006: 48). Such a code of conduct has yet to materialize.

The problem was that such declarations and words of commitment to good neighborliness were more symbolic and inconsequential compared to substantive legal and military actions involving China, the Philippines and Vietnam in particular. In fact, the general concern by 2007 and 2008 was that China’s growing economic and military power in the face of the West’s financial crisis would lead to actions that would undermine peace, stability, trust and confidence about South China Sea dispute resolution.

At about the same time, mid-2009 was the deadline for states to make seabed hydrocarbon claims under UNCLOS. While all involved states made claims, China opted out of UNCLOS dispute resolution mechanisms (Byrne, 2012). This could be seen as an example of showing regional hegemonic power by avoiding multilateral institutions such as the United Nations just as it was giving only rhetorical support to the ASEAN multilateral framework. It was becoming clearer that China preferred bilateral approaches, and this demonstrates how its gravitational pull would work.

At the Fifteenth NAM Summit was held at Sharm el Sheikh in July 2009, the member states expressed hope for effective implementation of the ASEAN-China Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. However, the actual code had not yet been drafted or agreed upon. While NAM avoided referring to military incidents, it declared that parties in Southeast Asia exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability. NAM identified these activities as inhabiting the presently uninhabited islands, reefs, shoals, cays, and other features. Differences should be handled in a constructive manner, but now NAM did not mention multilateral approaches. Instead, NAM suggested both bilateral and multilateral consultations. The idea of creating a spirit of cooperation and building trust and confidence was emphasized as NAM’s recommendation, pending the peaceful settlement of territorial and jurisdictional disputes (NAM, 2009: 69). They seemed to overlook how their hands-off, wait-and-see attitude opened the door to the unilateralism of great powers. This calls into question the relevance of NAM for Southeast Asia, because at the international level, NAM members identified coercive and unilateral measures by some developed countries as one fundamental impediment to a just and equitable world order that was peaceful and prosperous (NAM, 2009: 3).

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16 Among the ASEAN-created fora are the ASEAN Regional Forum set up in 1993; the ASEAN plus where individual extra-regional nations meet ASEAN members after an ASEAN summit; ASEAN Defense Ministers Plus, where extra-regional defense ministers join; and post-foreign minister meetings with dialogue partners who are extra-regional; and informal workshops.

17 At the Twentieth ASEAN Summit in 2002 held at Phnom Penh, Cambodia, a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea was signed by all ASEAN foreign ministers and the Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs.
When the United States government first declared an interest in the South China Sea dispute in 2010, it was part of the pivot to Asia and partly to uphold principles of freedom of navigation in international waters. The American secretary of state said at an ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) that it was in the United States’ national interest to see rival disputes and claims resolved through multilateral collaboration (Dosch, 2011: 10). In late 2011, the U.S. Secretary of State underscored how the future of the U.S. is intimately intertwined with the future of the Asia-Pacific and a strategic turn to the region fits logically into an overall global effort to secure and sustain America’s global leadership. She proposed a coherent regional strategy with global implications that are unspecified. The work related to what she calls a “forward-deployed” diplomacy that would have six key lines of action: stronger bilateral security alliances; deeper working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanded trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights (Clinton, 2011: 2-3). If we go by the order of listing, the gravitational pull of the U.S. would be strongly bilateral, while multilateral actually refers to multilateral institutions such as ASEAN. Economics preceded military, but a broad-based presence is noteworthy. Finally, advancing democracy and human might suggest interference in another country’s domestic affairs.

The U.S. is already an ASEAN dialogue partner, but Clinton (2011: 6) suggests that the U.S. would help to change the multilateral architecture and more actively set the agenda. Economic aspects of the pivot to Asia are important, but it seems that building an American military presence is just as important, especially since she identifies protecting vital interests in stability and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea (Clinton, 2011: 6)

By 2011, however, China started more actively projecting its direct military power into the South China Sea. Other states with claims followed suit. As a result, the militarization of the South China Sea became a fact. Muscle flexing in the form of “routinized” close encounters between warships of different nations at sea, had now created an embryonic risk of armed conflict (Kaplan, 2016). The ASEAN multilateral approach to discussions, if not negotiations, and the idea of non-interference, regional peace and stability were undermined by each claimant country acting to show its territorial presence, making claims of control and increasing military activity.

Both China and the United States are exerting their respective gravitational pulls towards bilateralism and away from multilateralism. At the same time, both are militarizing the issue and possible “solutions” for the South China Sea. This calls ASEAN multilateralism into question and challenges a basic ASEAN and NAM principle of non-interference. However, this notion of non-interference related to territory that was usually assumed to be land. Applying such principles to issues of the South China Sea become much more complicated when nations are trying to extend jurisdiction over water and related resources such as fisheries, natural gas deposits, etc.

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18 UNCLOS played a part in helping motivate such projections of military capabilities. According to Dosch (2011: 5), UNCLOS guidelines said that rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no EEZ or continental shelf, and this compelled claimants to build permanent structures and occupy the rocks/islands.
With more than US$ 2 trillion\(^\text{19}\) in reported trade flows between ASEAN, China and Japan security issues are paramount for each of the nations involved (Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, 2016). TPP Trans Pacific Partnership and RCEP Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, membership also forces regional actors into parallel free trade agreements where a balancing act are performed in their involvement with China and the U.S. interest. The region has experienced exceptional growth for decades with China of leading the way. Now the region is experiencing economic turmoil, following similar experiences of many western economies. This could help explain how some of China's regional activities have aimed at capitalizing on and strengthening its regional hegemony.

As the conflict in regional waters literally heat up, everyone's attention is focused on military options since the region has the five fastest growing military budgets in the world. Each state is compelled to carry out symbolic patriot duties by providing benevolent acts of security. In some cases the internal security issues overwhelm international obligations in light of degraded societal harmony one of the most treasured oriental value that all state actors can agree on: "A talent for following the ways of yesterday." If there is agreement on this point, then it is hard to see how Southeast Asian nations can be ready for the changes that NAM hoped to make after the end of the Cold War.

Chinese preference for bilateral actions has been applied to environmental issues in the region of the Lancang/Mekong River has made China's relations with Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam highly contested (International Rivers, 2013). In fact, issues about the Mekong River are seen as forcing some ASEAN members to take unacceptable actions that would break ASEAN solidarity. Chinese construction of extensive dams on the Lancang/Mekong River has worsened drought conditions since 2010 and severely affected several downstream nations. In 2016, the issue became highly politicized when downstream nations were forced to beg their large northern neighbor to release water. China’s ability to disrupt ASEAN solidarity has strengthened as its regional hegemony in the South China Sea and subregional hegemony in the Mekong River area strengthens.

\(^{19}\)The China-ASEAN trade relationship has been especially strong. All data are 2013 figures.
CONCLUDING POINTS

When we first asked how NAM was relevant for Southeast Asia, it became clear that the answer, as well as the nature of the relationship between NAM and Southeast Asia, was not simple or straight-forward. The unique dynamic of NAM’s long history makes it less a formalized institution and more a complex set of consensus-based relationships that are socially constructed. As discussed, ideas and symbols related to solidarity and multilateralism, rather than any rationale about material capabilities, brought member countries together in 1992 at a unique historical juncture—the end of the Cold War and bipolar super-power rivalry.

The fact that ten ASEAN-member countries attended the Tenth NAM Summit in Indonesia indicates some level of support for the creative agenda about political and security issues and a vision of the future grounded in a new concept of international security within a stronger framework of multilateralism at international and regional levels.

Our two research questions about the relevance of NAM for Southeast Asia considered the issue of establishing a Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) and the issue of territorial and jurisdictional disputes in the South China Sea. The analysis showed that NAM ideas helped guide and motivate ASEAN-member countries to some extent. In addition, the symbolic force behind the notion of solidarity and action that was multilateral was consistently reaffirmed by ASEAN as a group. At the same time, the way NAM considered the international and regional context of the two issues during their summit meetings two issues in their showed a resolute deference to ASEAN as the appropriate mechanism for regional approaches and action. This deference has had a significant symbolic dimension, particularly when ASEAN faced obstacles to effective implementation. That is, NAM recognized, reaffirmed and welcomed regional efforts and called for progress; presuming that solidarity at the regional level would be enough to reach objectives.

The analysis showed that ASEAN solidarity only went so far in support of regional peace, stability and prosperity served as the basis for their aims of creating a NWFZ and peacefully resolving conflicts in the South China Sea. It was not enough to persuade extra-regional powers to accede to ASEAN approaches, exercise restraint or make a positive contribution to multilateral arrangements or agreements.

The symbolic nature of ASEAN solidarity among ten nations might have diplomatic usefulness for discussions with aspiring regional hegemons like China or a pivoting major power like the United States, but both of these powers had acted in ways that challenged or undermined NAM and ASEAN ideas of multilateralism, equitably shared responsibility or joint commitments to international security. In such a context, the relevance of NAM is easily overlooked and ASEAN unity and solidarity is at significant risk. The set of positive ideas that NAM constructed for the post-Cold War international order provided an opportunity for ASEAN members to design a framework for peace and stability in Southeast Asia. However, thus far in the early twenty-first century, great power visions of their place in the region have overshadowed NAM and ASEAN.
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