

Formation of Non-Alignment (Nam) with Special Emphasis on the Role of India and its Relevance in Today's Context

Prakhar Prabhat Srivastav*

Department of Law, National Law University and Judicial Academy, Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

The concept of Non-Alignment propounded by the developing nations during the reign of cold war, who decided not to align with either of the power blocs in order to safeguard their national and economic interest and to protect their national sovereignty and freedom as most of them had recently gained freedom from the shackles of imperialism or colonialism. Throughout the course of this article, I have tried to examine the origin of NAM with special emphasis on the role of India because non-alignment is often considered as the brainchild of India's first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and have also tried to examine the relevance of NAM after 60 years of its formal announcement at the Belgrade Conference of 1961.

Keywords: Non alignment; Cold war; Power blocs; Globalization; Terrorism; Third world countries

INTRODUCTION

The word Non-Alignment means "unbiased or impartial" according to Cambridge dictionary but it is widely interpreted by various scholars across the globe in context of International Relations. Many western philosophers try to equate non alignment with neutrality or neutralism wherein neutrality is often interpreted as "the concept of aloofness in war." According to Peter Lyon, the concept of neutrality apart from war "has a general diplomatic or political connotation and it means that in case of conflict between two parties a third party decides to support none." And it resembles something close to the concept of non-alignment that we are going to deal with in greater detail throughout the course of this work [1,2].

Towards the end of World War II, the sense of trust and harmony that flourished between the USA, USSR and Britain started deteriorating that lead to the division of these nation into two power blocs the west block who propounded the capitalist system and the Soviet Block who strongly adhered to the idea of the communist system, and it ultimately led to the origin of a new sort of war tactic that "waged on political, economic, and propaganda fronts and had only limited recourse to weapons" and is termed as cold war [3]. The creation of power blocs led to the division of world into two blocs and while the "USSR drew into orbit most of the states of Eastern Europe as

communist governments came to power in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Czechoslovakia, North Korea and East Germany and it gained further strength with the victory of communists in long-drawn-out civil war. On the other hand, USA managed Japan as her ally, worked with Britain and with 14 other European Countries as well as Turkey" that helped them to build up an anti-communist bloc with vast economic aid [4].

Despite the division of world into two blocs, there were multiple nation states across the globe that were unwilling to join either of the blocs and decided to remain neutral during the period of cold war as reiterated by Algerian leader Ben Bella "we are aligned with nobody." This led to creation of a new movement i.e., non-alignment movement "that was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions of the world at the height of the Cold War" and which according to Egyptian President Nasser was created to ensure that "our voice in the international forum is not counted as an automatic one, attached to a particular bloc." These countries were not committed towards a particular bloc and had the liberty to take their foreign policy decision on their own independently without any influence from outside powers [5-8].

Correspondence to: Prakhar Prabhat Srivastav, Department of Law, National Law University and Judicial Academy, Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh, India, Tel: 918176807702; E-mail: prakharprabhat113@gmail.com

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Even though the basic concept of the movement originated in 1955 during the discussion that took place at the Asia-Africa Bandung Conference held in Indonesia, wherein the attendees decided to “abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers” and it was formally launched when its “first summit was held in September 1961 at Belgrade.” The seeds for the same were sown by the Jawahar Lal Nehru long ago when he “in a note as early as 1927 reported to the All-India Congress Committee, after attending the Brussels Conference against imperialism, that in a future war, India should be neutral. She had no shared interests with Britain.” press conference as Vice-President of the Interim Government and Member in charge of External Affairs, on September 27, 1946, said: “India will follow an independent policy keeping away from the power politics of groups aligned one against another” and who further reaffirmed his stand in the Constituent Assembly in 1947, by stating that “India has made it clear that it does not belong to any of the power blocs” which was further taken forward by multiple Asian-African countries [9-12].

Certain principal factors in combination that constituted the essence of India’s Non-Alignment are as follows: -

- The need to safeguard hard won freedom and sovereignty after freeing itself from the shackles of British Imperialism. Its resolution to rally round all anti-imperialist and anti-racist crusades against western domination further paved the way for non-alignment.
- The other reason being its geographic proximity with the two socialist states China and Soviet Union accompanied by ardent admiration of Socialist structure of Soviet Union by Indian Prime Minister deterred it from joining the western camp lead by the United States.
- The political and socio-economic structure representing a curious mélange between a partially planned economy and co-existence between the ever expanding public and private sector had cumulatively set in motion the process of development in India and its complex democratic setup had made it almost impossible for India to accept or reject either of the two stereotypes represented by two super powers [13].
- India’s aspiration for peace and tranquility has been the core of its foreign policy because according to Indian foreign policy makers peace was a pre-requisite condition for economic development and these were the reasons that made India to not align with either of the power blocs during the period of cold war [14].

India’s approach was widely discussed and appreciated at the Bandung conference of Afro-Asian countries which gave impetus to the policy of non-alignment and “its acceptance by strategically important states like Egypt and Indonesia crystallized the strength of uncommitted states in the world.” Thus, India’s stand and role during the period of Cold War can be easily inferred from the lines of Road not taken by Robert Frost that are:

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference

As India unlike the most countries during the cold war decided not to align with either of the power blocs that saved India from the adverse economic impacts of the cold war and it further motivated multiple African Asian countries to stand impartial during the tenure and made the difference justifying the lines of Road not taken [15,16].

Even though the idea of non-Alignment was propounded by Jawahar Lal Nehru long before the beginning of cold war, India’s stand during it ultimately paved the way towards the non-alignment movement [17] that was accepted as an ideal stand by multiple African-Asian countries during the Bandung conference but the “formal announcement of the NAM was made at Belgrade conference of 1961, orchestrated by three key figures: Josip Broz Tito, the president of Yugoslavia; Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt; and Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India” and a fivefold criterion was laid down in order to invite the countries to the Belgrade summit, that were:

- The country should have adapted an independent policy based on the co-existence of states with different political and social systems on non-alignment or should have been showing a trend in favor of such a policy [18].
- The country concerned should have consistently supported the movements for national independence.
- The country should not have been the member of multilateral military alliance concluded in the contexts of great power conflicts [19].
- If a country has a bilateral military agreement with great power, or is a member of regional defense pact, the agreement or pact should not be one deliberately concluded in the contexts of Great Power conflicts.
- If it has not conceded military bases to a foreign power, the concession should not have been made in the context of great power conflicts [20-24].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on these criterion 25 countries who were clearly non-aligned attended the summit in the background of “French nuclear tests in the Sahara and the resumption of Soviet tests, the crisis in the Bay of Pigs, Congo crisis, Franco-Tunisian clashes and the emerging conflict between India and China (Figure 1).” The countries that joined the Belgrade conference due to the outbreak of various events in geopolitics can be identified from the world map attached hereafter:



Figure 1: Non-Aligned Movement Conference Attendees.

In furtherance of the first summit, regular summits are held having the general theme of world peace, anti-colonialism and the foundational concept of non-alignment is reiterated in each and every summit of NAM [25,26]. The Non-Alignment movement has gained immense acceptance across the globe and has around “120 members states and 17 observer states” and the last summit was held on “May 4, 2020 which was presided over by the President of Republic of Azerbaijan HE Ilham Aliyev and with the objective to promote international solidarity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and to mobilize efforts of States and international organizations to address the pandemic.”

The end of Cold War between two power blocs and the disintegration of USSR in 1990s left us all baffled with the question of the need of a third world or relevance of NAM thereafter [27-30]. The question whether the existence of NAM in the present day is making any difference to the world order is something difficult to answer but let's tries to examine the relevance of NAM in today's context [31].

The jaded question of time with respect to NAM is that with the dissolution of Soviet Union, world is no longer [32] divided between two blocks, then with who should the countries non-align? And to this the most probable answer could be “to non-align with the hegemony of great powers.” And the other question should be to why should they align? And the most probable answer to this question could be “to be a logical vehicle to pursue a resolution of the issues swirling around the turbulence of the region [33].”

It's relevance in the modern context was rightly pointed out by Cuba's deputy Foreign Minister Abelardo Moreno who in 2003 reiterated that “the fact that we are living in a unipolar world and the increasing unilateralism being shown by certain countries in world affairs should make NAM countries more united and it makes the existence of NAM more relevant than it was couple of decades ago.” The relevance of NAM was also emphasized by Late Pranab Mukherjee during the 15th NAM ministerial conference on June 29, 2008 where-in he stated that “when the world is undergoing rapid transformation, the role of the Non-Aligned Movement is as vital as it was in the decades

that followed its founding in 1961 because with 118 members, the Movement represents more than half the world's population and almost two-thirds of the UN membership. It also provides an independent point of view on international issues, and functions as a platform from which its members can collectively address key issues of common concern.” The then Secretary General of United Nations Bon Ki-Moon in 2009 during NAM's 15th summit highlighted the fact that “no country—regardless of the size or resources can solve problems alone. That raises the stakes and the space for the non-alignment movement to shape a better world”. And again, its relevance was pointed out by the then Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh who stated that “Our shared objectives of working together to preserve our strategic space, ensure social and economic development and strive for more just and equitable world order, remain as true and relevant today as they were in the past”.

DISCUSSION

Relevance of NAM can be traced in the modern world through following points:

- Non-Alignment movement as of now have around 120 member countries and 17 observer nation states and they are members of UNO as well, thus NAM can have an influential impact on the functioning of the United Nations and can play a vital role in the decision-making process of the UNO.
- Fundamental principles of NAM are still relevant as a stringent measure to avoid colonization and imperialism of small and developing countries and can act as a unifying force against the traditional foreign policy of great powers and strictly restrict imperialism, nationalism and universalism.
- It can serve as a forum of political coordination of the developing countries to promote and defend their common interests in International Relations and also promote unity, solidarity and cooperation based on shared values and priorities agreed upon by consensus.
- Members of NAM can collectively work as a defender of international peace and security and can settle the international disputes and can encourage relations of friendship and cooperation between all the nations in accordance with the principles of UN charter and international law.
- Even though we have witnessed a steep decline in the political relevance of NAM after the end of the cold war, yet it still continues to be a powerful instrument for seeking economic justice hence, unless the demand for a new worldly economic order is not conceded the movement is likely to remain relevant as the mouthpiece of the economic grievances.
- NAM can try and coordinate with the G-77 countries in order to stress upon the South-South cooperation and can also “work closely with the G-77 on issues such as overcoming challenges in pursuing sustainable development”.
- NAM with its considerable influence over the United Nations due to a large number of its members can also “emphasize upon the reorganization of and democratization of UNO” order to ensure greater participation of small and developing countries across the globe.

- After the disintegration of USSR and the end of cold war, we are left in a unipolar world because the power is mainly concentrated within the hands of a single country that has ultimately led to the problems for small countries by endangering their right to self-determination due to their excess dependence on super power for their economic, strategic and military requirements. Thus, in order to safeguard the interest of such small countries an organizational structure like NAM is the need of the hour.
- The most significant issue of mankind in today's context is the impending threat of environmental changes and its devastating impacts on the very survival of human race. The thoughtless destruction of forest cover for petty human needs on the name of industrialization and development has led to massive land degradation and ultimately food crisis. This issue has been further aggravated by the developed economies that are dumping their industrial waste in developing or the underdeveloped countries making the situation even worse for them. "NAM in this regard can contribute by ensuring proper enforcement of Montreal protocol in order to protect the environment."

CONCLUSION

NAM as an influential movement in the interest of the human race will have to urge international community to endorse a quick initiative of far-reaching importance to the future of mankind against the terrorism. "Significant territorial gains in Iraq in addition to its territory in Syria by the extremist militant group Islamic State in Iraq" or the "takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban" highlights the need to revamp and prepare itself to fight against the terrorist organizations in order to maintain peace and tranquility across the globe.

The expansion of Chinese influence across the South East Asian region as well as its increasing dominance across the South China Sea has posed a threat in front of the entire human race. It's continued pace of growth can lead to another cold war between the communist and capitalist ideology and the division of world in two blocs, one being in support of the communist ideology propounded by the Chinese republic and the other being the western forces under the leadership of USA who believe in the capitalist approach accompanied by the concept of liberal democracy. Thus, we can say that existence of NAM is relevant in order to safeguard economic and national interest of the non-aligned countries.

Ongoing pandemic has made us realize the need to strengthen the economic and health infrastructure of countries across the globe, especially the developing or the under developed countries and the existence of a world recognized structure like NAM should help the countries to revamp their infrastructure through solidarity and mutual cooperation.

From the discussions above, it's clearly evident that despite the end of the cold war, the existing structure of NAM is relevant and has the potential to restructure the world order and ensure its conversion from a unipolar world to a multipolar world. It can promote the growth of developing and poor countries by ensuring economic and social justice.

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