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Non-alignment Movement (NAM): A Quest For World Peace

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Abstract: After having independence in 1947, India had started thinking about how to formulate its own foreign policy which will secure its national interest (both in national and International arena). The Second World War had ended in 1945. The Cold War had started with ideological differences (Western Capitalist Democratic Bloc and Eastern Socialist Soviet Bloc). The concept or idea of non-alignment is actually India's contribution to the International Relations.¹ It was to keep away from bloc politics and maintaining friendship relations with both, no military alliance with them. According to Professor M. S. Rajan, 'non-alignment stands for abstention from power politics, for peaceful co-existence and for active international cooperation among all states- aligned and non- aligned'.²

Key Words: Non-alignment, India, Cold War, USA, USSR, World Peace etc.

Introduction: India was one of the major architects of the policy of non-alignment.³ Its objective was promotion of national Interest, which included not only protection of India's sovereignty and territorial integrity, but also socio-economic development of the Third world in general and India in particular and international peace and security.⁴ According to Professor V. P. Dutt, 'Non-alignment become the logical framework of India's foreign policy. An independent foreign policy responded to the conscious and sub-conscious urges of the people, imported a sense of pride and belonging and helped cement the unity of the country----'.⁵ The question is that would non-alignment be helpful in the maintenance of the nation's territorial integrity? Would non-alignment provide, or increase the security of the nation from external invasion? ⁶ According to Jawaharlal Nehru, non-alignment would help in the furtherance of world peace.⁷ First non-alignment summit was held with 25 members at Belgrade in 1961.⁸

Reasons for Non-alignment: India had adopted non-alignment policy. India wanted to have the freedom of decision-making, because the primary concern of India after 1947 was economic development. M. S. Rajan had mentioned many reasons for adopting this policy.

Firstly, India's engagement with the USA or the USSR bloc would increase international tension, rather that promote international peace. The Indian Government felt that India had a positive role to play in reducing international tension, promoting peace and serving as a bridge between the two camps.

Secondly, India has the potentiality to be a great power. Non-alignment suited India's present needs to keep our national identity, not to compromise India's future role of an acknowledged Great Power.

Thirdly, India could not join either of the power blocs because of emotional and ideological reasons. India could not join in the Western bloc because of colonial powers or ex-colonial powers. India also could not join in the Eastern bloc because communism was completely alien to Indian thinking and way of life.

Fourthly, India had taken the economic development plans after independence. So, India needed foreign economic assistance or aid. It was both desirable politically not to depend upon aid from one bloc only, and profitable to be able to get it from more than one source.

Fifthly, India is a sovereign powerful state. India wanted to retain and exercise independence of decision-making. It meant that India wanted to have the freedom to decide every issue on its merit.

Actually Nehru and his Government adopted the policy of non-alignment because the people of India supported the policy.⁹

Criteria for Joining NAM: The five criteria for joining NAM were-

1. The country followed independent foreign policy based on non-alignment and peaceful co-existence.
2. It should not have had a bilateral treaty with any of the super powers.
3. The country was opposed to colonialism and imperialism.
4. It should not have been a member of a Cold War related military bloc.
5. NAM should not have allowed any foreign military base on its territory or within its boundary. ¹⁰

Non-alignment is not neutrality. Neutrality is the concept of aloofness in a war. Neutralization is different both from neutrality and non-alignment. A neutral state is not a party to a war on day, but may become belligerent the next day. That state then ceases to be neutral. Neutralization is a permanent status both in times of peace and war. According to Peter Lyon, neutrality may also have a general diplomatic or political connotation in modern international relations.¹¹ Non-alignment is a cold war related concept. A non-aligned country is not permanently aligned with any of the power blocs in the context of the Cold War. India adopted non-alignment as a policy as soon as it became independent foreign policy decisions.

Non-alignment is different from isolationism also. Isolation means total aloofness from problems of other countries. The United States was known for its isolationism before the First World War. Non-aligned countries do not remain unconcerned with international relations. They actively participate in the politics among nations. The only thing they do not do is that they are not permanently tied down with any of the Super Powers. They do not give up their freedom of decision making. According to M. S. Rajan, non-alignment is anything but isolationism. It means and demands an active, dynamic and positive role in world affairs.¹²

India's policy of non-alignment was against the status quo situation in international relations. That meant opposition of colonialism, imperialism, racial discrimination and now of neo-colonialism. India wants a world free from these evils. Non-alignment rejects the concept of superiority of Super Powers. It advocates sovereign equality of all states. Non-alignment encourages friendly relations among countries. It is opposed to the alliances that divide the world into groups of states or power blocs. It advocates peaceful settlement of international disputes and rejects the use of force. It favors complete destruction of nuclear weapons and comprehensive disarmament. ¹³

A major objective of NAM was also to resist the hegemonic military, political and economic strategy of the Western Powers.¹⁴ The Janata Government at the centre in 1977-79, did not alter the policy of non-alignment. Foreign Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in Moraji Desai Government, assured people of Genuine Non-alignment by correcting the unnecessary tilt towards USSR. But, even Vajpayee did not turn against the Soviet Union.¹⁵ India remained non-aligned even though Janata leaders were generally pro-west, but the Government gave no evidence of deviating from Indo-Soviet friendship.

Relevance of Non-alignment in the Post-Cold War Period: During the cold war the NAM played a major role in International Relations. The question has even been raised of the relevance of non-alignment as a strategy of the Third World states in an essentially unipolar world. Firstly, it can be a major international forum for counterhegemonic resistance against the western powers on the part of the Third World states. Secondly, it can spearhead the movement of the Third World states for the restructuring of international economic relations along with such other Third World forums such as the Group of 77 and the Group of 15. Thirdly, it can take the initiative both inside the UN General Assembly and outside. In all these ways the non-aligned movement can continue to play a major role in the restructuring

of the international system for ensuring distributive economic and political justice. The non-aligned movement should remain a long-term instrument of India's foreign policy.¹⁶

The Cold War had ended before January 1990. Professor Satish Kumar wrote in 1993, The United States has emerged as the most dominant military and economic power, although Germany and Japan have seriously challenged its economic supremacy. The countries of the south have been marginalized in world politics, and the world is repolarized along the North- South Axis instead of the East-West Axis. According to Muchkund Dubey, although the United States is militarily the only Super Power, as far as economic matters are concerned, we are living in a multipolar world.¹⁷ In this new emerging world order, serious doubts have emerged as to the relevance of India's policy of non-alignment. It has been often said that non-alignment was a specific response to a specific situation when the world was divided into two blocs. The policy of non-alignment is in effect a policy of independent foreign policy decision-making. It also opened possibilities of getting aid from different quarters for economic development. Non-alignment is aimed at international peace and peaceful settlement of disputes.

The pursuit of a non-aligned is even more relevant today than before. Non-alignment basically consists of the espousal of the rights of nations to independence and development, regardless of the bloc phenomenon. Foreign Minister I. K. Gujral, in the Deve Gowda Government (1996-97), also confirmed India's continued belief in non-alignment. There is no possibility of the policy of non-alignment becoming irrelevant in the near future. It is now generally believed that non-alignment has little relevance in political sense, because now every nation is indeed taking independent foreign policy decisions. India took very strong and independent stand on the question of signing of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). India refused to sign the CTBT despite all kinds of pressures. It remains valid as an instrument of economic development and social change, even if its relevance in the political context may be much less.

According to J. N. Dixit, a Former Foreign Secretary, Being non-aligned means retaining the freedom to take decisions related to your interests without external influence to the extent possible. ¹⁸

In the post-cold war world unity issues are not of same concern as they were till 1989. It is believed that NAM should mainly concern itself with contemporary issues by creating global consensus on areas such as global violence and terrorism, global economic inequalities, global concern for human rights and human environment. It must focus on new challenges to developing countries on transfer of technology and investments, social and educational issues, human rights, and about meeting the political implications of new strategic and power equations dominated by the great powers which affect the UN functioning, and evolving international economic arrangements.¹⁹

Criticism: India's championing of anti-colonialism and anti- racism and its campaign against apartheid in South Africa were part of this policy. So, it was India's demand for reforms not only in the United Nations Security Council but also in the international economic order, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. India's leading role in the creation of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM), the Group of 77 and BRICS represents its effort to create international institutions that are not run by Western European Powers or the United States of America.

India saw non-alignment as a way of keeping the cold war out of South Asia and of protecting itself against the perils of being drawn into clashes it sought to avoid. This would ensure or secure a stable and peaceful environment for building the country, especially its economic and military capabilities. Lacking in economic and military capability, India adopted the high moral ground in the hope of playing a greater role in world affairs and to punch above its weight. India benefited from non-alignment but things did not work out as expected. While India remained non-aligned, Pakistan joined the western camp. The Cold War was never far from India's borders. Iran and Pakistan joined the US-led Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). American and Soviet navies operated in the Indian Ocean, occasionally seeking the right to visit Indian ports.²⁰

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