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# Non-Alignment Movement: A Viable Option, its Relevance in Current Geopolitical Situation

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## ABSTRACT

*Non -Alignment movement or NAM is an organization which was formed during the cold war era. Cold war was a war which was not hot in nature or a direct war, it was rather an indirect war between the two emerging superpowers of that era that is North Atlantic Treaty Organization or NATO led by United States of America and Warsaw Pact led by the Soviet Union. However, NAM was a movement which emerged in 1955 during discussions that originated in the Bandung Conference held in Indonesia. Non-Alignment Movement was joined by countries that were not keen on joining either of the blocs and rather tried to maintain a neutral stand on joining either of the blocs. Initially NAM was founded and developed under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sukarno of Indonesia. Jawaharlal Nehru was considered one of the main architects of Non- Alignment Movement, at present, the movement has 120 Member states, 17 Observer Countries and 10 observer organizations. Now if we talk about NAM in the current geopolitical situation in reference to India it is quite a different scenario as compared to that of the cold war era. India being one of the fastest growing nations itself has time and often preserved its national interest by taking initiatives that protect and favor India as a nation.*

**Keywords:** *Non-Alignment Movement, National Interest, Cold War, Soviet Union, United States of America.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Non-Alignment Movement or NAM was formulated in the cold war era when an indirect war emerged between the two superpowers of that time that is North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by United States of America and Warsaw Pact led by Soviet Union. Cold War happened majorly because of ideological and political rivalry between the two nations and also because of the increasing competition between the two nations for emerging as a superpower. Non- Alignment Movement was however seen as a third option from other than joining the

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two blocs. It was rather a neutral or a safe choice or a middle path to take at that point of time just after the World War II. Non-Alignment Movement was joined by countries that just got independent from colonial rule or got over social evils like Apartheid and mostly underdeveloped countries that were trying to emerge as a nation and trying to protect their sovereignty, cultural and economic revival of their nation. The main idea behind joining NAM was that the countries that required financial, military or any kind of support got their assistance from both the superpowers.

Therefore in 1947 when India got its independence and formed its foreign policy NAM was one of the prominent highlights of India's foreign policy. But it was when in 1964 Jawaharlal Nehru died and Indira Gandhi became the Prime Minister it was said that she leaned towards the Soviet Union and India kept its distance from the United States of America. Recently India celebrated 50 years of signing of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Signing of this treaty in 1971 was considered by many as officially joining the USSR bloc that time. The signing of this treaty is considered one of the significant movements in the course of India's international presence after the independence in 1947.

But it was only after the end of cold war and disintegration of USSR which changed India's position and foreign policy. It is said that India slightly moved closer to Washington after the USSR collapse. Disintegration of the USSR led to formulation of a new world order. USA's model of a capitalist society was accepted. India's economic policy clearly contradicted its participation in the Non-Alignment Movement. Eventually the countries participating in NAM associated themselves with economically developed countries and the liberal economic order and the benefits gained from them.

## **II. NAM- IN THE CURRENT SCENARIO**

Today when we have a multipolar world in comparison to a bipolar world in that of a cold war era NAM has started to lose its relevance. India being one of the fastest growing nations has its own personal or national interest that it requires to protect and favor. India one of the biggest markets in terms of potential, population and growth does not require to be threatened to take initiatives, sign agreements or do business that favors India as a nation. Therefore, India needs to be a sovereign nation in its true sense where it is free to take any decision without any internal or external fear.

However Non-Alignment Movement is still necessary and important to maintain the world peace and order and a smooth functioning of the geopolitical order. But India has been

successful in balancing the acts in terms of maintaining its relationship with both United States of America and Russia in recent times.

In recent times India has joined agreements like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) with United States, Japan and Australia to counterbalance the growing effect of China in the South China Sea. However United States has its own national interest in providing a hindrance to China in being a superpower but the QUAD had other goals as well. QUAD had its aim in providing a vaccine chain to the South Asian region. Also, to strengthen the US-India relations there were various summits that were held- Howdy Modi being one of the prominent one. United States is one largest trading partner of India. In 2021 US- India trade reached a record high of \$157 billion.<sup>2</sup> India and United States closely relate at many multilateral organizations like United Nations, G20, Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and World Trade Organization. The United Nations also supported India joining the UN security council and also supports India in being a permanent member.

However, if we talk about India's current relations with Russia it is seen that India makes sure that it does not takes a stance against Russia in any international forum. India has successfully maintained its strategic relations with Russia while having decent relations of all times with United States as well. In current times India possesses a great example of how diplomacy for one's national interest can maintain relations and benefit a nation. India- Russia relations have been testes through some tough times but both the nations have managed to maintain consistent and mutually beneficially relations. India withstood its old friend Russia in tough times when there was a western pressure to go against Russia for its operations in Ukraine.

India imports around 60% of its defense equipment's from Russia and this supply chain has been kept unchanged since 1960s.<sup>3</sup> India has been benefitted from the military hardware provided by Russia like missiles, submarines and military technology which India does not get it from anywhere else. Therefore, Russia becomes really important for India as India requires to prepare itself for a two-front war with Pakistan and China.

In this sense United States becomes a little unreliable as recently the United States has decided to overturn its previous decision of not sharing the F16 jets programme with Pakistan as United Nations was of the opinion that Pakistan is highly involved in promoting terrorism activities. But recently the United Nations shared the F-16 programme with Pakistan which will surely broaden the horizon of United States- Pakistan bilateral relationship. This is a USD 450 million

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-india/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-india-relations-in-a-transformative-world/>

foreign military sale to Pakistan for technical improvement programme.<sup>4</sup> However, the F16 fighter jets are suited to meet the Indian Air Force therefore United States this step can pose a danger for the Indian Air Force in situations of War. As a part of strengthening the India- Russia relations we also saw the Rupee-Rouble Trade which was first seen in 1953 in Indo-Soviet Trade agreement. Recently India paid in rupees for the S-400 missiles.

On of the most important commodity in international arena- Oil is being bought by India at a discounted price and the oil imports have jumped from 1% to 6% of its needs and could further increase.<sup>5</sup>

However apart from trade and commerce India's relations with Russia have a strain to talk about. India is constantly feared and is under strain with its relation with China at the Line of Actual Control. Therefore, the growing Sino- Russian partnership can lead to a situation where Russia can prioritise China and this is where United States will play its part. India's turbulent relations with its neighbor China and United States thirst to be the only superpower reflects UN's effort to convince India to move away from neutrality.

India's neo-liberal policies are a great example of the US influence it has, also which is quite evident in increased defense imports, agreements for example Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the 2+2 military dialogue or the various military activities at the Malabar coast of India which took place in 2021 and clearly signals a message to the neighbors of India. Also, the influence of American soft power in our society is quite evident and the number of students studying and people working in America is also a great factor to look upon while studying India US relations.

### **III. WHAT'S NEXT FOR NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT?**

India has always been a nation which supports multi polar world. India in recent times has been chalking out its own path in terms of balancing out its relations. It is will not be wrong to say that India has been successful in balancing out the two superpower blocs to its advantage. NAM is a platform India can use to assert its soft power as it is one of the most active participants. It can be a platform where global concerns like climate change, terrorism can be raised out.

One of the most prominent goals of the Non Alignment Movement was that it will act as a peacekeeper but it was quite evident that what happened in the Indo-China war of 1962 and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 as well as in the Bangladesh liberation war. It was then that India was highly questioned.

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<sup>4</sup> US State Department notification to US Congress

<sup>5</sup> Indian Express June 12 2022

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Non-Alignment Movement can act as a platform for India to raise its voice and increase its engagement in the South Asian Region to counterbalance the growing effect of China and also to handle Pakistan. Earlier NAM was considered as a political movement but nowadays every country is concerned about its economic potential. It is quite true that the World is not unipolar now but there is a quite evident economic disparity among the nations. Therefore, as long as the disparity remains in the international arena NAM will remain relevant as it will provide a great assistance to underdeveloped nations. Non-Aligned Movement is still a crucial part of India's foreign policy and is also quite evident in its acts. But now India has a say in the international arena contrary to the cold war era. India in recent times has developed itself to a level that no nation or the said "superpower" can influence our decisions for our own national interest. India has maintained and balanced out its relation with both the United States as well as Russia.

Russia has been an old friend to India and has supported us at crucial points of war for example in the Indo- Pak War of 1971 when the United Nations, Britain as well as China were on Pakistan's side. In a similar way in today's time when economic growth matters the most to a nation, India's policies do have a capitalist side which has been influenced by the United Nations.

India in today's time has been sovereign in its true sense. Non-Alignment Movement can definitely be the way ahead as it favors India's interest only. Non-Alignment movement at present requires a proper leadership as it needs to compete with the modern-day organizations like the United Nations, Associations of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperations (SAARC) etc. Also, NAM needs to upgrade its goals and aspirations according to the modern day issues of poverty, terrorism, drug trafficking etc.

Therefore, on the whole Non-Aligned movement is the need of the hour to maintain world peace and order and NAM also requires revitalization to support the third world countries in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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