



What is in a NAM and India's alignment

Context:

- In the wake of the current stand-off with China, there have been calls for India's foreign policy to shed its inhibitions and make a decisive shift towards the United States, as the only viable option to counter China.



What has been the government's calls to such call?

- The government has been more nuanced in its approach.
- The External Affairs Minister clarified that a rejection of non-alignment does not mean a rush to alignment: India will not join an alliance system.

What was non-alignment foreign policy?

- Non-alignment was a policy fashioned during the Cold War, to retain an autonomy of policy (not equidistance) between two politico-military blocs.
- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) provided a platform for newly independent developing nations to join together to protect this autonomy.
- It was a disparate group from many continents, with varying degrees of proximity to, and dependence on, one or the other bloc.
- NAM's flagship campaigns were de-colonisation, universal nuclear disarmament and against apartheid.

How did NAM's relevance decline post 1991?

- One of the blocs (USSR) was disbanded at the end of the Cold War.
- De-colonisation was largely complete by then, the apartheid regime in South Africa was being dismantled and the campaign for universal nuclear disarmament was going nowhere.



- **Freed from the shackles of the Cold War**, the NAM countries were able to diversify their network of relationships across the erstwhile east-west divide. Non-alignment lost its relevance, and NAM its original raison d'être.

Has India completely abandoned Non-Alignment Policy?

- For a few years now, non-alignment has not been projected by our policymakers as a tenet of India's foreign policy.
- However, India has not yet found a universally accepted successor as a signature tune for our foreign policy.
- Successive formulations have been coined and rejected.
- **Strategic autonomy** was one, which soon acquired a connotation similar to non-alignment, with an anti-U.S. tint.
- **Multi-alignment** has not found universal favour, since it may convey the impression of opportunism, whereas we seek strategic convergences.
- **Seeking issue-based partnerships** or coalitions is a description that has not stuck.

Has the rise of China revived the concept of alliance?

- The fact is that 'alliance' is as much a Cold War concept as non-alignment.
- During the Cold War, the glue that held countries of an alliance together was composed (in varying proportions) of ideological convergence and an existential military threat.
- With the disintegration of USSR and the Warsaw Pact, this glue dissolved and the international options of alliance partners widened, just like those of NAM countries.
- As a result, in today's times the strategic interests of Nations are no longer fully congruent. This is evident in the recent rifts between US & Europe (NATO).
- Alliances in the Asia-Pacific face a bigger definitional dilemma. The threat to the alliance partners today is from an assertive China, which they are reluctant to define as a strategic adversary, because of their economic engagement with it and the huge military asymmetry.

10.09.2020

Thursday



<http://www.sriramsias.com>

- In the immediate-term, Indian and U.S. perspectives are less convergent in India's continental neighbourhood (like Afghanistan & Central Asia).

Conclusion:

- Former National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon has described today's world order as militarily unipolar, economically multipolar and politically confused.
- COVID-19 may scramble the economics and deepen the confusion further.
- India will acquire a larger global profile next year, when it commences a two-year term on the UN Security Council. The strategic choices that it makes in its bilateral partnerships (like US, Russia, Iran) will be closely watched.