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India's Non-Alignment

An Attempt at Conceptual Reconstruction

Rajen Harshe

India's non-alignment as an instrument of foreign policy evolved through continuous interaction with domestic circumstances and the external environment. This evolution was marked by staying power, a capacity to encounter volatile configurations of power and flexibility to incorporate changes demanded by circumstances.

A combination of circumstances such as the urge to follow an independent foreign policy, the pragmatic choice of befriending a powerful socialist state like the USSR and commitment to promote peace shaped the concept as well as the praxis of non-alignment. In the process of its evolution, non-alignment inspired smaller Afro-Asian states striving to carve out their identities in a world torn between stereotype social systems. The eventual merger of these states within the mainstream of the non-aligned movement transformed the movement's principal concerns from east-west tensions to north-south issues and the new international economic order.

INTRODUCTION

INDIA's non-alignment in particular, and the non-aligned movement (NAM) in general, have received considerable scholarly attention during the past few decades. Thus any exercise attempting to contribute something original to this growing body of literature might give an impression of chasing a mirage or chimera, for the volatile character of international politics and the capacity of what is termed 'non-alignment' to survive and flourish in the midst of ever-growing challenges have prompted scholars to define and redefine 'non-alignment' in the changing international context. This enterprise has attributed several nuances to the very connotation of the term. However, the proliferating literature on the area, pregnant with recurrent definitions of non-alignment, has done very little to clarify a persistently evolving concept of non-alignment in the context of global politics.

In order to get a grip on the concept of non-alignment it would be essential to dissipate the haziness that surrounds it. A critical scrutiny of significant turns and twists in the evolution of India's non-alignment might make this task partially feasible. Partly because as a pioneer and influential state within the NAM, India contributed, substantially, in shaping the content of non-alignment. This paper attempts a conceptual reconstruction of non-alignment on the basis of its recent past. By keeping the essential elements that have constituted India's non-alignment in sight, it tries to situate India, contextually, in the dynamics of world politics. In the process, it appraises the capability of India's non-alignment in relating itself to the changing contours and configurations of power in international politics.

The logical sequence of our attempt at reconstruction can be stated thus. We shall first try to discern the essence of India's non-alignment by taking cognisance of a few foundational principles which have sustained the policy of non-alignment. In substance, the entire policy revolved around the defence and promotion of peace. Hence a concep-

tual reconstruction of non-alignment is plausible with reference to its gravitational centre i.e. peace. In political terms, this notion of peace has broadly presupposed the absence of war, in general, and avoidance of war with neighbours in particular. Peace has also been perceived as an essential precondition for India's material progress. The promotion of peace through non-alignment has subsumed endeavours by India to further economic advancement. Keeping this bi-dimensional notion of peace as a backdrop, we propose to examine two distinct phases in India's non-alignment. During the first phase, which began immediately after India's independence and lasted till the early seventies, the political aspects played a dominant role in shaping India's non-alignment. In the second and ongoing phase, which began after the early seventies, the economic factors dominated. In view of these phases, we will initially evaluate the capability of non-alignment to restore peace in the Indian sub-continent. In the process it would examine, though not intensively, the configuration of powers during the Sino-Indian border dispute of 1962 and the Indo-Pak war of 1971. This is followed by an analysis of the shifting emphasis in India's non-alignment and reflect upon the repercussions of economic dimensions on India's non-alignment. To capture clearer glimpses of economic dimensions, it would try to place India in the context of the NAM.

ESSENCE OF INDIA'S NON-ALIGNMENT

Non-alignment, for India, was a policy and a strategy to survive and negotiate with a world that was getting dragged into the politics of cold war.¹ To a considerable extent, non-alignment represented an unconventional approach to power politics. After assessing the then dominant forces and especially the trend towards a division of the world into two mutually hostile camps led by the superpowers, India was gradually carving out space for an uncommitted world.

India's urge to steer clear of power politics stemmed from a combination of factors.

Firstly, after freeing itself from British imperialism, India, like a typical newly liberated state, wanted to protect its hard-won freedom and sovereignty. It was also determined to rally round all anti-imperialist and anti-racist crusades against western domination. India's support to freedom struggles in Afro-Asia and staunch opposition to racism and apartheid practised in South Africa can be understood in this light. By championing the right of self-determination of the colonies and dependencies, India's non-alignment chose to unleash the process of eastern westphalia.² This process led towards the birth of sovereign independent states which could actively participate in shaping the world order.

Secondly, geographic proximity with two socialist states, the Soviet Union and China, deterred India from joining the US-led camp. Moreover, Nehru was an ardent admirer of the process of socialist reconstruction in Soviet Russia. The very fact that a backward, pre-industrial and huge Euro-Asian state like Soviet Russia could achieve spectacular successes in development objectives attracted Nehru's attention. Furthermore, India was the second Asian country to offer *de jure* recognition to the People's Republic of China. Such a recognition symbolised an acceptance of the legitimacy of revolutionary movement under Mao Zedong. The growth of Indo-Soviet friendship during the past few decades and India's urge to normalise relations with China have highlighted India's disposition towards its socialist neighbours.

Third, political and socio-economic structures in India have represented a curious *melange*. Seemingly contradictory organisational structures like a parliamentary democracy, a partially planned economy and co-existence between the ever-expanding public sector and private sector had cumulatively set in motion the process of development in India. After probing these structures, one is struck by the untypical nature of India's state and the process of development. Characterising the nature of the post-colonial state in India has posed

persistent problems to Marxist and non-Marxist scholars. It is not our intention to go into the controversies that have stimulated theoretical debates on the nature of Indian state. But it might be essential to spell out some significantly odd features of the Indian state as well as its development process.³ The development process in India has witnessed the rise of large private monopoly houses and the growth of national bourgeoisie as a class increasingly staking its claims towards greater control of state apparatus. The landowning classes have, at varying levels, struck an alliance with the bourgeoisie.⁴ In addition, the so-called intelligentsia—intellectuals, managers, military officials, bureaucrats and other professionals—have also constituted a significant component in the developmental process. Very few third world countries can boast of a substantially well-developed middle class that bloomed under the auspices of state as in India. However, it might be facile to attribute the control of the Indian state entirely to these dominant classes. For 'state' has not merely enjoyed a measure of autonomy but has stepped out to perform welfare functions to incorporate the hitherto downtrodden sections in the process of development. Persistent efforts by the state to accommodate the interests of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is a case in point. Political democracy in India has functioned with a measure of consensus although such consensus has largely operated in favour of the dominant classes.

The above mentioned pattern of domestic development in India has shaped its foreign policy.⁵ India's non-alignment mirrored this process of development. Considering its domestic set up, India could not have categorically rejected or accepted either of the stereotypes represented by the two superpowers. The superpowers in turn could not categorically accept India's development pattern. While India appealed to the US at the largest democracy, the Soviets were attracted to India's partially planned economy and emphasis on the development of state sector.

Finally, promoting peace has been central to India's foreign policy stance, considering peace as a pre-requisite for economic development. India's concept of peace broadly had three dimensions. In the Indian sub-continent India's immediate concern has been Pakistan. By promoting the *status quo* in Kashmir, India aspired to live in peace with Pakistan. Within the wider sphere of Asia, India has always shown awareness of the potential power of revolutionary China.

The Nehru government extended its hand of friendship towards China via the Panchsheel Agreement (1954). At the global level, India kept itself outside the contest waged by the superpowers. However, when Pakistan sought US military assistance in the mid-fifties, India condemned the US for bringing the cold war to the sub-continent.

These four principal factors in combination constituted the essence of India's non-

alignment. It would be easy to examine the two wars the sub-continent has witnessed, keeping this essence in mind.

SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE

Non-Aligned Status Questioned

The border dispute that erupted between China and India led to the Sino-Indian war of 1962. During the course of the war, India had to seek US military assistance which prompted critics of Nehru's government to question India's status as a non-aligned state. Furthermore, the government faced severe criticism for its inability to protect India's security concerns and vital national interests. However, it can also be argued that non-alignment as an instrument of foreign policy successfully encountered the challenge posed by the Sino-Indian war due to the configuration of powers.

Configuration of Powers after Mid-Fifties

The configuration of powers began to change from the mid-fifties. Such a change was becoming manifest through three significant developments. First, India's non-alignment had won a measure of acceptability in both the camps. On the one hand, non-alignment was a logical extension of India's nationalism, and on the other it was an effective weapon to exercise freedom of action in international politics. With newly-won political independence and sovereignty India used non-alignment to redefine its relationship with the erstwhile imperial powers.⁶ As far as trade, commerce and capital investments are concerned, India was structurally linked to Great Britain, a former metropolitan power, during the colonial times. Although such linkages were not easy to snap, political independence and sovereignty had opened wider options for India to choose partners in furthering its domestic developmental process. India was determined to exercise these options by being a member of the British Commonwealth. As India was in search of redefining its economic equations, it was demonstrating a measure of autonomy while judging political issues, as can be seen in India's independent stances during the Korean war (1950) and the Indo-Chinese crisis (1954). The context of cold war permitted India, due to its non-aligned stance, to play a disproportionately larger role than its actual capabilities. Moreover, India's non-alignment, simultaneously, handled critics from both the blocs.

The Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian states during 1955 added to India's stature and gave impetus to the policy of non-alignment. The willingness of important states like Indonesia and Egypt to be committed to non-alignment only crystallised the strength of uncommitted states in the world. Uncommitted states began to reject the bipolar interpretation of the world which was being thrust on newly-independent states. By the late fifties, India could not be perceived merely as an uncommitted state ploughing

a lonely furrow of non-alignment. The growing number of non-aligned states added strength to India's non-alignment and vice versa. This interdependence between non-aligned states showed that non-alignment as a doctrine carried within itself a device to protect the security and independence of newly born states because it was based on *realpolitik*. It was receptive and responsive to the nuances of power politics among the major powers. As a broad apparatus to conduct foreign policy, non-alignment offered ample room for individual states to define their long-term as well as short-term interests by remaining within the stream of non-aligned states.

The second major development manifested in changing Soviet attitudes towards the capitalist as well as non-communist world with the advent of Khrushchev to power. Khrushchev's address to the twentieth congress of the CPSU, which met in 1956, was historically significant in two irreversible ways.⁷ First, it embraced the idea of a peaceful and competitive co-existence with the capitalist camp and announced a formal beginning of detente between the superpowers. Second, it acknowledged the possibility of different roads to socialism. The Soviet Union by then was sensitised to the existence of anti-imperialist third world states which were following, if no socialist, at least a 'non-capitalist' path of development. Eventually, during the 81 communist and workers' parties conference held in Moscow in 1960, the term 'national democracy' was formally introduced into the theoretical vocabulary of Moscow-led international communist movement.⁸

The theory of 'national democracy' was a device to come to terms with the transitional social formations of the erstwhile colonies. Transition, obviously, implied a long-term historical journey from one mode of production to another mode of production. Sensitivity of Soviet attitudes to transitional social formations in the third world brought about an innovative improvement in the sequence of transition. Thus, the new formulation of capitalism/national democracy/socialism/communism replaced the classical stages of transition—capitalism/socialism/communism. By building theoretical bridges to reach anti-imperialist, non-capitalist and autonomous states through the concept of 'national democracy' the Soviets were keen to make new forms of praxis operative in their foreign affairs. The Soviet interests coincided with such non-capitalist states as India, Egypt, Indonesia, Ghana and Guinea because, at least verbally, they were willing to denounce all the manifestations of western imperialism.

Among the progressive, anti-imperialist and non-aligned states co-operation between the Soviet Union and India grew steadily as India launched its Second Five-Year Plan. India's faith in building 'heavy industry' as a basis of the nation's economic independence and the Soviet aid to build steel plants in India cemented the Indo-Soviet bond. The

Soviet veto in the UN on the Kashmir issue and India's reluctance to condemn the Soviet intervention in Hungary, indeed further strengthened Indo-Soviet friendship. To a large extent this growing bond between the two states was understood as a response to Pakistan's closer relations with Britain and the US.

Changing Soviet attitudes under Khrushchev obviously contributed towards the rift between China and the Soviet Union. China was reluctant to abandon the orthodox doctrine of inevitability of war with the US-led imperialism. Also, the growing Indo-Soviet friendship and the hesitation of the Soviet Union to adopt a categorically anti-India stand in the Sino-Indian border dispute further aggravated the tensions between China and the Soviet Union.

Thirdly, with the changing Soviet attitudes towards the capitalist world and the launching of *Sputnik* by the Soviets in 1957, the US adopted a more flexible stance towards the communist world. As the Sino-Soviet schism was gradually breaking the monolithic structure of the Moscow-led communist movements, US hegemony in the Atlantic alliance was also being questioned by its European partners. Factors like the advent of De Gaulle to power in France, the birth of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 and the growing economic strength of Japan had inaugurated the process of polycentrism within the capitalist world. To manage intra-bloc challenges, the superpowers attempted to improve inter-bloc relations through the Camp David agreement of 1959, by promoting an attitude of tolerance and co-existence between the superpowers. It was probably the first step taken by the superpowers towards a joint management of the international political system. Briefly, the decline of the cold war, the growing ascendancy of the forces of polycentrism, and unequivocal support to the process of detente from India, Egypt and Yugoslavia during the Belgrade summit of non-aligned states of 1961 turned a new page in the history of international politics during the sixties.

The Sino-Indian dispute needs to be reviewed in the light of the three above mentioned developments. Claims and counter claims by the contending parties over the diverse regions of the bordering areas are outside the purview of this paper. Its central concern is to examine the continuity of non-alignment and its relationship with peace.

Continuity of Non-Alignment

The Sino-Indian border dispute, exposed India's system of defence and lack of military preparedness. Foreign policy, quite often, is backed by defence policy and India's debacle in the war did signify a failure of foreign policy. But viewing the interconnection between a narrowly-conceived notion of defence and foreign policy would not explain India still following non-alignment. The

answer to its existence must be searched in the then configuration of powers, India's diplomacy and functioning of the Indian democracy.

At the time of the outbreak of the Sino-Indian border dispute the Soviet Union had abandoned the Stalinist orthodox position towards non-aligned states. Co-operating with India in its Second Five-Year Plan and supporting India's military action in Goa were concrete Soviet steps to woo India. Initially, the Soviet Union publicly supported the Chinese position on the Longju incident. However, this did not prevent the Kremlin from viewing India's stance in the border dispute sympathetically. Ultimately, instead of choosing between a communist brother and a non-capitalist friend, the Soviets adopted a neutral stance by urging conflicting powers to thrash out their differences by direct negotiations. This neutrality epitomised changing Soviet attitudes towards friendly non-aligned states. The manner in which India operated the apparatus of non-alignment also shaped the Soviet stance. That is how, without perceiving the politics in Asia in black and white, the Soviets demonstrated an urge to win over the grey area represented by states like India. Soviet neutrality towards the dispute became particularly apparent after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

The apparatus of non-alignment was flexible enough for India to seek US military assistance during the war. India asked for such large-scale military assistance for the first time. This request seemed apparently inconsistent with non-alignment. However non-alignment, in Nehru's words was a vehicle of serving India's national interest. Especially when the security interests of India were threatened, the apparatus of non-alignment provided room for seeking military assistance from either of the superpowers to repel an aggression.

Peace and Legitimisation of Non-Alignment

US willingness to provide prompt military assistance to India strengthened India's position vis-a-vis China. The US sought to tilt India's non-alignment towards the west through military assistance and, thereby, worked towards establishing order and stability in the sub-continent. Michael Brecher has tried to establish a connection between the possible strength of the US backing to India and the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire by China with an intention to withdraw its forces behind the MacMahon line.⁹ An intensification of war by China could have led to a massive US air intervention in the sub-continent. This would have increased India's dependence on the US and restrained India's autonomy in international affairs. Apart from avoiding the risk of confronting the US, the Chinese were receptive to the overtures of peace launched through mediatory efforts of Colombo powers. In substance, China humiliated India but could not destroy non-alignment.

China's withdrawal, paradoxically, contributed towards a continued legitimisation of non-alignment.¹⁰

Vigilant public opinion helped mould India's foreign policy. Public pressure on the Nehru government to ease out an alleged crypto-communist like Krishna Menon from the central cabinet influenced the US foreign policy. Participation of the general public in framing the guidelines of defence and foreign affairs on such a scale was almost unknown to any third world state at the time. The people also reacted sharply against the possibility of US military bases in India. The liberal democratic polity of India seemed strong enough to resist any impingement on its sovereign rights.

Briefly by invoking categorical support from at least one of the superpowers India was able to restore peace in the sub-continent. Notwithstanding the defeat in war, this process was completed without sacrificing the core of non-alignment.¹¹ In the aftermath of Sino-Indian war, India was continuously forced to strengthen its defences by diverting its precious resources towards armaments.

INDO-PAK WAR OF 1971

Changing Configuration of Powers and Non-Alignment

India's non-alignment faced another major crisis in the Indo-Pak war which eventually led to the birth of Bangladesh. The birth of Bangladesh can be viewed in perspective by highlighting the changing configuration of powers at the regional and global levels.

The 1962 debacle weakened India's ability to project itself in foreign affairs. Indian foreign policy became devoid of lofty idealism and missionary visions after Nehru's death. India's inward-looking posture gave its adversaries an opportunity to mobilise forces. After 1962, the sub-continent witnessed a steady growth of Sino-Pakistan friendship. Unsolved border disputes between India and its immediate neighbours had brought China and Pakistan closer. In terms of power, the two states got together to undermine India's dominance in the sub-continent. This was also a period that accelerated the Sino-Soviet rift. The two socialist states continued to interpret and clothe a clash of their interests in ideological terms. The Sino-Soviet border war during the late sixties was an obvious manifestation of this rift. Considering the Soviet friendship with India, China found it worthwhile to strengthen its bond of affinity with Pakistan.

Irrespective of growing differences with the Soviet Union, China had started projecting its power more aggressively in the international arena. Entry into the exclusive group of nuclear states (1964) had added to China's power potential. Also, after India's defeat, China began to project its model of development more persistently in the Afro-Asian world. By supporting the Vietnamese

struggle against the US imperialism, it had already attracted sympathy from third world states. Furthermore, China offered concrete material support to Tanzania to build the Tanzam railway earning applause from newly-emerging African states.¹² An anti-imperialist stance and its support to progressive anti-*status quo* movements had bolstered China's revolutionary credentials.

Apart from cultivating third world states, China continued to launch a tirade against the joint hegemony of superpowers in global politics. This struck a sympathetic chord with the middle-range powers like France which were challenging US hegemony in the western alliance.¹³ Thus, within the multipolar world, China was gradually opening up to forge its ties with a variety of states.

The Soviet Union was hardly silent during this period. In fact, the Sino-Indian war and the Sino-Soviet schism heralded a new chapter in Indo-Soviet relations. The Soviet union has started providing India with military and defence-related equipment.¹⁴ It was also keen to ward off Chinese influence in the sub-continent. Countering US influence in the sub-continent continued to be a perennial *problematique* of Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet Union's mediatory role (the Tashkent summit of 1966) after the Indo-Pak war of 1965 needs to be viewed in this context. The Soviet Union attempted to spread its wings over the sub-continent as an effective mediator. Peace, restored through the Tashkent summit, offered indications of growing Soviet power in the region.

The US also continued to consolidate its position in the sub-continent. Having thrown its weight behind India during the 1962 war it chose to protect the largest democracy in Asia. This option was exercised by the US without being unduly sensitive to the sensibilities of its traditional ally, Pakistan. The US continued to offer aid to India during the food crisis (1966) without losing Pakistan's goodwill.

More than the politics of the sub-continent, the Vietnam war arrested the attention of the state department and successive US presidents. The burgeoning Sino-Soviet rift helped provide a key towards the solution. Without negotiating with China, the resolution of the Vietnam crisis was difficult, if not impossible. The genesis and evolution of Sino-US detente can be viewed in this context. By the late sixties and early seventies Pakistan, China and the US, due to a perception of common interests, were almost synchronising their foreign policies in the sub-continent.

India's non-alignment had to constantly respond to this configuration of powers. As noted earlier, India had become an inward-looking state. Resolving domestic economic problems and building a stable political system now acquired priority on the agenda of ruling regimes in India.

In the midst of sorting out its domestic problems, Indira Gandhi's regime was

rocked by the liberation struggle in East Pakistan. In search of statehood for its nationality, East Pakistan had severely shaken the fragile foundations of the Pakistani state. Genocide in East Pakistan and the consequent overflow of millions of refugees across the border dragged India into the crisis. Repatriation of refugees was ruled out without the independence of Bangladesh. India's non-alignment and its capacity to manipulate the configuration of powers was put to a difficult test.

The US and China had restrained from formally condemning the brutal deeds of the Pakistani army. Both of them were obviously concerned about the frightful consequences of the disintegration of Pakistan for their respective interests in the region.

Under the circumstances India utilised the instrument of non-alignment with a diplomacy of extreme caution. By allowing the flow of refugees inside its borders India consistently appealed to the humanitarian sentiments of the world community. By then, a number of influential European intellectuals had started expressing their disapproval of the policy of military dictatorship in Pakistan in no uncertain terms. Taking advantage of this brewing discontent, Mrs. Gandhi, on a marathon tour of Europe, enlightened the European states about India's position.

Indo-Soviet Treaty

In view of the US-China-Pak axis, India chose to sign a twenty-year treaty of friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union (1971). The treaty had two noteworthy features. First, it could not be strictly described as a military alliance since there were no provisions which explicitly provided for automatic assistance by one party to another in case of aggression by a third country. Second, the USSR upheld India's policy of non-alignment and reaffirmed that such a policy constituted an important factor in maintaining universal peace and international security.¹⁵ To a considerable extent, the treaty proved to be a sufficient guarantee to ward off threats to India's security emanating from the US 7th fleet. It thus pitted India in a straight contest against Pakistan. By supporting the *de jure* existence of Bangladesh India was able to reshape the map and the power balance in the sub-continent.

The validity of India's non-alignment was once again questioned after the Indo-Soviet treaty. However, such questioning was coloured by static perceptions of non-alignment. In the democratic polity of India, non-alignment had continuously evolved while handling the growing complexities of international politics. In fact, non-alignment was nurtured by a stable political system, a partially planned economy, and a steady development of the defence system in India for almost 25 years. Non-alignment, thus, had become an instrument of a relatively

powerful state that was in search of altering the balance of forces in the changed context. Also, non-alignment due to its inherent dynamism, had proved flexible enough to incorporate the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union within its mould. For, such a treaty did not forbid India from entertaining cordial ties with other states. India opted to respond to the acute great-power contest that was transforming the politics of the region.¹⁶ A powerful state of India's size could not have remained a passive observer in the contest. Its active role not merely restored peace in the region but paved the way for India's dominant status in the sub-continent.

An Assessment of Indo-Soviet Ties

India's position in the sub-continent as the undisputed regional power was reinforced by the Indo-Soviet treaty.¹⁷ It was the complementarity of national interests between India and the Soviet Union that acted as a bastion against the possibilities of growing Sino-US intrusions in the politics of the sub-continent. The treaty was, obviously, signed between two unequal partners. But this inequality in power relations did not pave the way towards conventional 'dominant-dependent' syndrome that is common in the relationships between advanced industrialised states and developing countries of the third world. A large-sized Indian state, unlike most small Afro-Asian states, always had a potential to exercise a measure of autonomy in foreign affairs. Prior to the Indo-Soviet treaty, India had refrained from signing the so-called Brezhnev doctrine of collective security for Asia which was, primarily, aimed at minimising the Chinese presence in the region. A few revealing facts after the post-treaty years can highlight India's gains as well as strength of bargaining leverage. First, during Indo-Pak war the Soviets vetoed all the resolutions which called for immediate ceasefire at the security council of the United Nations. In essence, the treaty succeeded in cutting Pakistan into two halves. Second, the partition of Pakistan reduced India's military dependence on the Soviet Union. Third, the treaty facilitated the economic intercourse between the two countries. In 1973 India signed a 15-year economic accord with the Soviets. In addition to supporting five-year plans in India, the Soviets put two scientific space satellites in orbit for India. As India was resolving its food crisis the Soviet Union came to India's rescue by offering two million tons of wheat.¹⁸ When the oil prices began to soar after 1973, the Soviets proposed a barter deal on conditions favourable to India in 1976. During the same year they advanced credit worth 450 million dollars to India to expand the latter's steel-making capacity in the public sector.¹⁹ All these facts did underscore a measure of Soviet influence in India in economic and scientific domain. In the bargain, however, the Soviet Union failed to acquire facilities for its Indian Ocean flotilla at Vishakapatnam.

For, it was difficult for the Soviet Union to erode India's autonomy in external relations beyond a point. The break up of Pakistan and the Sino-US rapprochement of the seventies gave India sufficient bargaining power. Also, through its friendship with the Soviet Union India could play the role of a guardian of peace in the region.

SHIFTING EMPHASIS IN INDIA'S NON ALIGNMENT

The capability and reasonably effective handling of the apparatus of non-alignment had won peace for India, at varying costs, during the major wars fought in the sub-continent. In political terms, India's non-alignment could straddle through and intersect criss-cross power configurations from a bi-polar to a multi-polar world. By the seventies India had become powerful enough to shape the content of peace in the sub-continent.

Peace continued to be an essential prerequisite of economic development which Indian policy makers had visualised through the planning process. India began to stress on economic development within the broader perspective of the New International Economic Order (NIEO).²⁰

A few major developments in the international politics of the seventies have to be underlined to perceive the changing perspective of India's non-alignment with clarity.

First, the cold war was on the wane and detente was warming relations. Scholars of international politics have often displayed a tendency to label some of the dominant phases of global politics as 'cold war', 'detente' or 'new cold war'. It is not our intention to question the validity of such labels. However, a significant inference can be drawn through such characterisations as follows. The superpowers have been always busy in arranging and rearranging their complex interrelationships in several domains, e.g. political, economic, scientific, technological, commercial and cultural. In addition to purely bilateral forms of transactions this phenomenon, thanks to their superpower status, has spatially encompassed practically all the major areas of the world. In the process, the superpowers have found ways of perpetuating rivalry—intense or restrained—and modes of co-existence. Briefly then, with the phase of detente unleashed during the late sixties the international politics witnessed gradual stabilisation of political and military situations.

The second major development could be seen in the consolidation of formal political independence in many states of Afro-Asia.²¹ The formal political independence offered Afro-Asian states a *locus standi* to shape the order in the world of sovereign states. However, there was a growing realisation on the part of Afro-Asian states that formal political independence was meaningless if it was accompanied by weak economic base. It was the old economic order that stood in the way of making their

economic independence more meaningful. The United Nations Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD) with its group of 77, raised the flag of NIEO. Apparently, the group of 77 was encouraged by the success of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in raising oil prices. Moreover, the demand for the establishment of NIEO was upheld in the declaration of the general assembly of the United Nations at its sixth special session held in 1974. It was also endorsed by the Brandt Commission report.²²

The developing countries, in general, considered NIEO as an essential tool to translate their aspirations of economic progress into reality. Since most of these countries were part of the NAM, successive NAM summits during the past decade have offered a platform to raise the banner of the NIEO.²³ The so-called NIEO has broadly envisaged a planned transfer of capital and technology from the developed countries, and a controlled international price system for primary commodities favourable to the countries that produce them.²⁴ Put simply, the champions of the NIEO have overtly recognised their inability to subvert powerful structures of the world capitalist economy as well as the obvious inequality in terms of power between developed industrialised states of the north and backward, agrarian economies of the south. Such recognition has prompted them to collectively plead for the reduction of the existing structural imbalances in the world economy in a manner that can promote the

interests of developing countries.

The third major development, and as a corollary to the second development, could be witnessed in the relative decline of the role of politics and political factors in the international system. As roughly hundred states belonging to the NAM gradually opted to give a distinct emphasis on economic development, the political calculations of the cold war phase receded into background. Of course, the emergence of multipolar world and the spirit of detente set the tone for economic factors to capture the place in the foreground of international system. The distinctions between aligned and non-aligned states were getting blurred. Ultimately, states with such diverse social systems and foreign policy orientations such as Cuba, Pakistan and Philippines began to define themselves as non-aligned. In this changing scenario, support to Palestine Liberation Organisation's quest to find a homeland in Palestine, self-determination of Namibia and Western Sahara, and a possible end of the policy of apartheid in South Africa reinforced the political unity among majority of the NAM states. To a considerable extent these issues represented residual legacies of western imperialism. Yet NAM also was forced to encounter two sets of political problems. The first set of problems emanated essentially within and among the third world states themselves. Their complexities were partially compounded interference of the major powers. Problems such as the Iran-Iraq war and Vietnam-Kampuchean dispute

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fall in this category, while the second set of problems offered the glimpses of an odd dialectic between the superpowers and third world states. The Soviet intervention, in Afghanistan and American efforts to topple the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua broadly fall in this category. Notwithstanding such varying political problems, the political issues in general have been subordinated to economic issues during the past two decades. The NAM's role in bringing about this steady transformation can hardly be underestimated. India's non-alignment needs an appraisal in the light of these major developments.

India's non-alignment continued to be very much in tune with the changing emphasis of the NAM. Partly because emphasis on economic advancement suited India's interests. Among NAM states, India enjoyed the historical advantage of attaining political independence before most of the states within the NAM. Furthermore, factors like large geographical size, strategic location, well established army including nuclear potential, substantial trained manpower, industrial and technological advancement and a stable political system gave India an edge over most other NAM states. In fact, after consolidating its independence India was well poised to implement the possible schemes of regional co-operation in south Asia or bolster the notion of south-south co-operation through concrete measures.

NON-ALIGNMENT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF A REGIONAL POWER

In the south Asian context, peace that was established after Simla agreement with Pakistan in 1972 paved the way for India's undisputed supremacy in the sub-continent. By 1974, India became the second Asian state to explode a nuclear device. India formed the core of the south Asian region while the rest of the states including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan constituted its periphery.²⁵ South Asia increasingly became an Indo-centric region. In terms of economic, political, socio-cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic bonds India shared several things in common with its neighbours. That is why any movement towards regional co-operation in south Asia has been inconceivable without an active participation of India. The south Asian states have already launched a movement for regional co-operation to promote co-operation in agriculture, rural development, telecommunications meteorology and health and population control.²⁶ To a certain extent, political problems between these states and India's overwhelming power *vis-a-vis* its neighbours have impeded its progress. India has demonstrated a capacity to act as a *gendarme* to protect the stability of the Sri Lankan polity through the IPKF and flexed its muscle to put the Nepalese economy in disarray after the expiry of the trade and transit treaty between the two countries.

India's non-alignment, in the wider con-

text of Afro-Asia, has been supported by its growing economic strength. Particularly, since the mid-seventies, India has been able to maintain an unequal relationship with the relatively less developed states of Afro-Asia. A few obvious indicators of India's relatively strong position *vis-a-vis* majority of the Afro-Asian states can substantiate this proposition. For example, the role of manufactured goods in India's exports to African states has become noteworthy since the mid-seventies.²⁷ Furthermore, the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme, that had a humble beginning in 1964, has spread its network in a wide variety of Afro-Asian states.²⁸ In turn, India has been importing a variety of primary products from Afro-Asian states. India, during the late eighties, certainly has attained the status of a middle-range power in global politics. Locating middle-range powers like India, Brazil or South Africa, with a measure of precision, in contemporary international relations is by no means an easy task. These states appear developed among developing states and developing with reference to developed states. The scholarly writings in international relations have yet to explore, sufficiently, the relatively new area of middle-range powers. However, despite the paucity of literature in this area, some of the findings in Srikant Dutt's analysis of India's relations with the third world are worth mentioning.²⁹ He has attempted to explain a relatively successful ex-

pansionist streak of state capitalism in India in the context of the third world. India, by now, is among the first ten industrial powers of the world. India's industrialisation, according to Dutt, occurred irrespective of and, in fact, at the expense of the majority of the population.³⁰ Partly, the weak purchasing power of the domestic population drove the capitalist class of India to seek markets elsewhere. The outward expansion also became an imperative for the Indian state that grew under the aegis of state capitalism.³¹ After examining India's relations with other third world states in certain major areas, e.g., economic co-operation, civil and military aid, investments including transfer of technology, banking and insurance and significance of overseas Indians in economic sphere Dutt has, tentatively characterised India as proto-second-tier imperial power.³² Partly, this conclusion is drawn on insufficient data. Should such trends, over the years, get validated in a substantial measure the scholarly search on India's external policies might acquire a new direction.

In fact, India's non-alignment continuously utilised peace as a prerequisite to promote economic development, particularly, after mid-seventies. Such development, of course, has had internal as well as external dimensions. Internally, the fruits of such development failed to evenly penetrate the poverty-ridden domestic India. As in-

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qualities between regions grew, striking a harmonious chord between growth and equity continued to be an elusive dream. Cosmetic treatment to social justice eroded the capability of citizens to exercise their civil rights. At the same time, organised ruling classes which wielded the state apparatus were the net beneficiaries of the developmental process. Externally, the middle-range capitalism in India continued to function in the world capitalist economy relatively smoothly. Partly this became possible due to the absence of antagonistic relations between advanced capitalist countries and India. Ironically, the Indian state continued to maintain its communion with the Soviet Union by expanding the state sector and widening the areas of Indo-Soviet co-operation. In turn, successive Soviet regimes continued to certify the progressive credentials of India's non-alignment.

CONCLUSION

India's non-alignment as an instrument of foreign policy evolved through its continuous interactions with the domestic conditions and external environment. This evolution was marked by commendable staying power, a capacity to encounter volatile configurations of power and flexibility to incorporate necessary changes demanded by the circumstances. A combination of factors such as an urge to follow an independent foreign policy, the pragmatic choice of befriending a powerful socialist state like the USSR and commitment to promote peace have shaped the praxis as well as the concept of India's non-alignment. Over the years, after absorbing infinite complexities in the process of multilayered interactions with in the dynamics of world politics, India's non-alignment has become an instrument of a middle-range power. During the process of its evolution, India's non-alignment relentlessly inspired smaller Afro-Asian states which were grappling to carve out their self-identity in a world torn between stereotype social systems. Their eventual merger within the mainstream of the NAM transformed the principal concerns of NAM from east-west tensions to north-south dialogue and the NIEO. India's non-alignment, thanks to its economic strength, has, inevitably, an important role to play in this scenario.

Notes

- 1 See Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches*, September 1946-April 1961 (Publication Divisions, Government of India, New Delhi, 1983), pp 24-29.
- 2 Rana A R 'Nehru: The Eastern Westphalia and the Greening of the International Anarchy' in Chopra V D (ed), *NAM Summit: New Delhi to Harare* (Patriot Publishers, New Delhi, 1986), p 130.
- 3 For a refreshing analysis of the Indian state and process of development see Rudolph

- Lloyd I and Rudolph Susanne H, *In Pursuit of Lakshmi, The Political Economy of the Indian State* (Orient Longman New Delhi, 1987).
- 4 Such alliance, of course, has not been free of tensions which recurrently surfaced, during last two decades in Indian politics. To get new insights into the Indian political process see a comprehensive article by Sathyamurthy T V, 'Impact of Centre-State Relations on Indian Politics: An Interpretative Reckoning, 1947-87', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 23, 1989, pp 2133-47.
- 5 To explore the link between domestic conditions and foreign policy refer to a systematic study by Appadorai A, *The Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy 1947-72* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1981).
- 6 Read Nehru's lucid analysis of the process of readjustment of relations between Europe and Asia in Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India's Foreign Policy*, No 1, p 22.
- 7 Khrushchev N S, 'Secret Speech' to Party Congress XX (1956) in Jacobs Dan N (ed), *From Marx to Mao and Marchais, Documents on the Development of Communist Variations* (Longman, New York, 1979), pp 160-230.
- 8 Declaration of the Second Conference of 81 Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow (1960) in Lowenthal, 'National Democracy and Post-Colonial State in London', Kurt (ed), *New Nations in a Divided World* (Praeger, New York, 1963).
- 9 Brecher Michael, 'The Superpowers and the India-China: Non-Alignment at the Brink' in Rajan M S and Ganguly Shivaji (eds), *Great Power Relations, World Order and the Third World* (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981), pp 123-24.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 The praxis of non-alignment during the Nehru era and the essential criteria which was being formulated by the preparatory meeting of the conference of the uncommitted states held in Cairo from June 5-12, 1961 have been discussed by Appadorai A, 'Non-Alignment: Some Important Issues' in K P Misra (ed), *Non-Alignment: Frontiers and Dynamics* (Vikas, New Delhi, 1982), pp 3-12.
- 12 The experiment of Tanzanian socialism, to some extent, was inspired by the Chinese model of development. Via Tanzam railway project, the Chinese got closer to the anti-apartheid forces in Southern Africa.
- 13 See Kolodziej Edward A, *French International Policy under de Gaulle and Pompidou* (London, 1974).
- 14 The Indo-Soviet agreement on Mig-21 became operative after 1964. Ever since, the Indo-Soviet co-operation has gone a long way in bolstering India's defences.
- 15 Consult the document of the treaty in Appadorai A, *Select Documents on India's Foreign Policy and Relations, 1947-72*, VI (Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1985), pp 136-40.
- 16 Gupta Sisir, 'Indo-Soviet Treaty: Global and Regional Context' in *India and the International System*, selections from the major

- writings of Sisir Gupta edited by Rajan M S and Ganguly Shivaji (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1981), pp 370-76.
- 17 For a detailed analysis of Indo-Soviet relations see Mansingh Surjit, *India's Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy* (Sage Publishers, New Delhi 1984), pp 129-88.
- 18 Rubinstein Alvin Z, *Soviet Foreign Policy since World War II: Imperial and Global* (Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge Massachusettes, 1981), pp 222-23.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Sauvart Karl P, 'From Economic to Socio-Cultural Emancipation: The Historical Context of the NIEO and New International Socio-Cultural Order', *Third World Quarterly*, vol 3, No 1 January-March 1981, pp 48-61.
- 21 Portuguese colonies, namely, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau were still struggling to achieve independence while the people of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) were also engaged in fierce battle against the white minority regime of Ian Smith.
- 22 See Willy Brandt's thoughtful introduction on the report of the commission in *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (Pan Books Ltd, London, 1980), pp 7-20.
- 23 The role of the NAM in the context of world politics has been analysed, quite incisively in Bandopadhyaya J, 'The Non-Alignment Movement and International Relations', *India Quarterly* Vol XXXIII, No 2, April-June 1977, pp 137-64.
- 24 Das Gupta A K, 'Non-Alignment and the International Economic Order' in K P Misra (ed) *Non-Alignment: Frontiers and Dynamics*, No 11, p 137.
- 25 The core-periphery framework was applied to the regional sub-systems by Cantori Louis J and Spiegel Steven L, *The International Politics of the Regions: A Comparative Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, N J, Prentice-Hall, 1970). Also see Kumar Satish, 'Trends in Regional Development in South Asia' in Rajan M S and Ganguly Shivaji, No 9, pp 271-80.
- 26 Rao R V R Chandrasekhara, 'Regional Co-operation In South Asia', *The Round Table*, No 293, 1985, pp 53-65.
- 27 Ramchandrani, R R, 'Rationalising India-Africa Economic Relations', *India Quarterly*, Vols X and XI, No 3, July-September 1986, pp 247-73.
- 28 Sharma Kamalesh, 'India as Partner in Technical Co-operation' in Chopra V D, *NAM Summit: New Delhi to Harare*, No 2, pp 309-19.
- 29 Dutt Srikant, *India and the Third World: Altruism or Hegemony* (Zed Press, London, 1984).
- 30 Ibid, p 9.
- 31 Ibid, see pp 15-36. According to Dutt, state capitalism in India is led by bureaucratic elite, even though the regime includes several other elements to form the ruling coalition, i.e., the national bourgeoisie, the army, kulaks, small traders and moneylenders.
- 32 The concept of proto-second-tier imperialism has not been fully tested and it is still at the level of hypothesis. See *ibid*, 159.