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NAM: ITS RELEVANCE IN NEW GLOBAL ORDER An essay for contemporary world

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There has constantly existed a debate about the relevance of NAM. This started when cold war was at its peak, US foreign secretary John Foster Dulles made critical remarks about it. In the similar fashion it was suggested by Condoleezza Rice, the former US Secretary of State in 2007 that NAM had lost its relevance and time had come that India should move away from this group. In the years after the Dulles' statements NAM emerged a successful platform for the newly decolonized countries who succeeded in obtaining the economic benefits from both of the power blocs, many including India succeeded effectively in maintaining the independence in the management of its external affairs in global politics. Those which aligned with any of the power bloc failed on this count. The classical example is of Pakistan in developing country and UK in developed world. UK a formidable force failed in maintaining the independence of its foreign policy. It not only lost its empire in post world war age but also proved a committed follower of USA losing its independent status in world politics. Pakistan could not assimilate the true fundamentals of NAM and lost its independence in world politics to USA and China. On the other hand the Nehruvian approach to external affairs provided an independent base to India in world politics by adopting the policy platform of Non Alignment.

The relevance of NAM has been questioned in the post cold war phase when bipolarity has declined and unilateralism has come to stay. The initial understanding about NAM after the dissolution of USSR was that it had lost its sheen as a policy tool and platform of the developing countries. This understanding in current phase is under constant modification due to changed global environment which differ from classical cold war milieu but has every potential to affect the developing countries in a lethal manner. After two decades since the end of cold war, new patterns and configurations have emerged in the global politics which emphatically attest the need of this movement.
The present global order is beset with many problems. There are many non political issues as climate change, global warming, unresolved issues in International trade, reform of the International institutions as UNO, World Bank, IMF, need of the New International Economic Order [NIEO], implementation of South – South and North – South dialogue in effective manner, management of the Internet and natural resources etc. These issues require fresh thinking by the nation states. There is need of a balanced and constructive approach by all stakeholders with due consideration to the developing countries. NAM may play a crucial role in these spheres because it is the largest grouping of developing nations.

It is true that establishment of NAM was a response to political complexities of the post world war age. Its intrinsic nature is therefore political. It was conditioned by political conditions prevailing during the cold war. Its relevance therefore need to be analyzed within the global political framework.

During cold war the global order was characterized with two important features, bipolarism and continuous process of decolonization. At one side was the free play of power politics and on the other side majority of the newly independent states were struggling to maintain their independence, national value system and were devoted to nation building. They were also keen to ensure their economic growth and development. These necessities influenced all of them to chart out a new path in which they could keep themselves out of the power politics. This understanding led to evolve the philosophical edifice on which this movement erected its moral structure. The core principles of the movement were pragmatic. These included at primary level not to involve in the power politics of the cold war, thus to have an equidistant from both of the blocks, simultaneously maintaining their independence in decision making in global affairs, secondarily to refrain from associating with any of the organizational structure which was militaristic in nature as it could bring threats like war to their doorstep and could destroy their newly found independence. This could also limit their independence in decision making at individual level in real manner. The establishment of NATO, CENTO, Warsaw Pact, SEATO, ANZUS were major alliance structures of the cold war politics.

Thirdly, NAM movement did not accept the hierarchical power system in the world politics. It also rejected the balance of power like concepts, instead believed in the International institutions as UNO and accepted right of every nation state to exist at equal level. The spirit of NAM
echoed the voices of Panchsheel, Bandung conference. The philosophy of this movement was based upon moral considerations and helped to ensure these developing nations to secure their national interests as security, independence, national values and economic development, national building etc. with peace-non militaristic efforts.

It is true that global politics has changed a lot since the days of the establishment of NAM but last two decades have brought into open the new conflict in world politics. No doubt classical bipolarity has been over but traces of new form of bipolar structure and multipolarism are on ascendant in the International politics. The stand of Russia and China on Iran and Syria issue suggest that unilateralism of USA is diluting with the passage of the time. As the China grow in strength, particularly in the military strength, it is quite likely a new world order may take shape.

The bipolarity of the cold war was based upon two major components, military strength and the ideological dissimilarities. The same situation is obtained today, leaving aside the Russia, China is continuously strengthening its military power. USA has also accepted that Chinese army is in continuous process of up gradation and acquiring the strength in every sphere of modern warfare. Chinese plans are well systematic and focused towards larger goal. It is well evidenced conclusion in International politics that military strength provides a status of overwhelming power to its possessor. Military power supports the diplomatic leverage. Diplomatic power of any country is appendage to its military strength. Economic power stands second to politico-military power, Norway, Australia stands at first and second position in the HDI but in global politics, their role is quite limited.

USA and China have different ideological framework for operational existence. Chinese political power system can go for any extent to preserve its ideological structure. The political elite of China differs from the the then USSR power elite which on many occasions have appeared a little reformative, but same is not the case with China where communist party is reformative only in economic matters, not in the political matter. Hence any effort for the displacement of communism in China will meet with strong response.USA knows it well hence democratization of China is a remote policy option in the US foreign policy establishment.

These factors are crucial to understand the current flow of global politics which is gradually taking form of cold war age. It is likely that it may eventually shift to the multipolarism. Russia
and India are other member of this power centric polar system but the role of USA and China will decide the final shape of global politics. With this understanding the conflict prone nature of Sino-US relations can be looked with another perspective. It is true that Chinese communism is not expansionistic but China has different mechanisms to extend its control over other countries in which border disputes are major instruments. Its disputes with India, Russia, Japan, Phillippines, Taiwan etc. are its major illustration. The aggressive behaviour of China can never be discounted. USA will not remain silent to muscle show of China. The US policy to South China sea is clear pointer in this direction. NAM offers a stable platform to developing nations where they can collaborate to deal with such emerging issues and problems. If conflict based bipolar order arrives, will definitely prove harmful to interests of developing nations. In that case these countries will have to search for new diplomacy of survival. They may not be asked to be a part of a particular ideological grouping like the previous bipolar age but pressure on their national interests will increase. NAM in this emerging background may play a crucial role. Its objectives are well defined and in case of new needs it can offer a historically proved independent platform to the affected countries.

In contemporary age new concepts have come into existence due to fluid nature of world politics. In this respect the 'right of self decision on core national interest' by a nation state has assumed global importance. One such issue is related to the development of the nuclear weapons by several countries. Many countries in past have acquired these weapons. The USA is of the opinion that nuclear proliferation needs to be stopped. It is a noble thought but many nations find it hard to assimilate. They view prevalence of discriminatory nuclear world order as a consequence of politics of global powers. In such background every non nuclear weapon state likes to increase its power. Iran is case in point. From many aspects it appears that acquisition of nuclear weapon status by Iran will disturb balance of nuclear power in the region and world as a whole but equally true is that Iran's programme can not be prevented on moral ground and principle of self decision. It can be stopped only with the development of shared understanding and negotiation or use of preventive power by opposite group led by USA, Israel which are governed by their national interests. This is a horrific state of affairs in the global politics. NAM in such critical issues can play an important role, at least it can help to evolve a mechanism by which US and Iran can be brought closer on negotiating tables. NAM has always taken note of the concerns of developing countries, the issues like of Iran are highly complex and even the
international institutions like UNO have limited leverage in this matter. The role of NAM is crucial, being a body of developing nations and Iran itself being an important member, it can help to resolve such issues which defy the usual methods. All the efforts of USA and its allies have proved quite useless in this matter. NAM has accepted Iranian stand which western countries may dislike. In this background NAM can be used by USA to open a negotiating channel with Iran. NAM thus maintains its utility in complex and suddenly emerging issues but USA has never explored this potential of NAM.

Since last two decades, certain new trends as terrorism have emerged in influential manner. The issue of terrorism has multiple dimension. One of these relate to "terrorism and respect of sovereignty of nation state". Problem of terrorism has churned the global politics in highly violent manner, no nation can afford its existence but one question is yet to be answered. What is the extent for a nation state affected by terrorism to respect the sovereignty of that nation where terrorists hideouts exist?. The question of respectability of sovereignty with respect to terrorism containment strategy has assumed new dimension in the recent time. Unfortunately no established norm exist in this matter. The killing of Osama bin Laden was a logical step by the US forces in order to defend its national interests and to contain the global terrorist movement, but equally important is question how to respect the sovereignty of the nation in question particularly when in the name of terrorism containment strategy many genuine non involved states can be targeted. It requires wide deliberations because unanswered status may develop into new form of conflict. Many of the members of the NAM are infected with the problem of terrorism. In many countries terrorists groups operate with much lethal power. India is affected by Pakistan sponsored terrorism. NAM can offer a wider platform in this respect to all those countries which face these problems, to collaborate, deal menace of terrorism in effective manner simultaneously developing a framework in which the sovereign status of the particular nation state is maintained without being threatened unduly by any powerful nation. This issue has two major connotation, first how to keep intact the sovereignty and independence of those countries which are not involved in terrorism but still can be targeted, second those counties which have proved or suspected role in these activities How to deal with these nation states require wide understanding of International politics, its dynamics and international law. Potential of NAM in this field is huge. It can not only emphasize these countries that maintenance of sovereignty is possible only on taking a hard and real stand against terrorism but can also help to
develop a cooperative operational mechanism in which the global powers working against the terrorism may join hands with those countries where such terrorist structures exist. This is a multilateral operational approach. Western powers can not ignore it because terrorism has international network. NAM is therefore a platform for its member states to collaborate on this issue in collective manner besides involving the major global powers including USA to contain it.

In contemporary politics the use of new forms of war strategies have taken place. Arab spring helped USA to dislodge some adverse authoritarian regimes to it. USA is in process to remove Assad regime from power in Syria as it did in Libya. It has developed new war strategies as 'to establish No Fly Zones' and support the rebels by air strikes without getting involved in the ground battle. The use of NATO has ensured success to its plans. This development establishes a new trend in the global politics, a powerful nation can initiate shorter form of wars for the removal of unwanted regimes. This may lead emergence of bi polar system at the regional level. The support of Russia and China to Assad regime suggest that new war strategies may propel many new nations to get involved in the regional conflict. USA is deliberating with Turkey to establish a No Fly Zone in Syria to support FSA, how the Russia and China will respond to these developments is to be seen. Their actions will decide the direction of the world politics of future. The futuristic trends will redefine the new phase of conflict but application of these war strategies have definitely shown that world is full of conflict and power politics is the core of the contemporary order. No country can deny this realistic proposition. The role of NAM becomes quite important in this matter. NAM is primarily an idealistic-normative response to the politics of realism and conflict. NAM member states can act in unison to deal with such types of newly emerging issues by providing a coherent policy and operational framework. It can help member states to recognize the dangers of new war mechanisms and negative aspects of the non democratic governance. It may also allow the developing nations to refashion their foreign policies in such a way as to accrue maximum benefits in such situations. It may also pattern the operation of diplomacy in a manner that affected nations deal complex issues more collectively and reach to level of discussion with their adversaries.

The crux of global politics is power and military strength. During the cold war age military alliances were established with the object of enhancement of collective coercive power strength.
After the end of cold war Warsaw pact was dissolved but NATO still exists. Presently it has 28 member countries which are geographically widely spread from North America to Scandavian region to East Europe and West European area. It is the main support system of the US military policies. NAM was established with a philosophical view that it was not to involve in any of the military alliances. Military alliance still exist and with more power and lethality. In changed world many member states can not secure their legitimate interests due to heavily tilted military balance to western countries led by USA. NAM members therefore have to cooperate with each other in order to find a respectful and pragmatic way in the power laden global politics by collective efforts. NAM provides them an alternate by which they can ensure their security and deal with the US-NATO structure in more cohesive manner. NAM has reposed its faith in UNO. A pragmatic alternate to deal military alliance system can be explored with the help of international bodies as UNO which have often been sidelined by USA.

Many efforts of NAM are possible when it organizes in more cohesive organizational structure. Many of its limitations are due to its diffused nature as a result it is used more often as a policy tool not as an organizational structure to take a decisive policy decision. This shortcoming has reduced its potential. Now with the changing world order where its need has become more important like the days of cold war, it needs to look this aspect with deeper diplomatic analysis.

The current phase of its existence should not exhibit itself only as a conversational club. It needs to realize its potential and emerge as a coherent group of substance. It needs to move towards more organized structure than being used only as a policy tool.