



Mains Practice Question

Q. In shedding “hesitations of history”, India’s foreign policy seems to be moving away from “non-alignment.” Comment. (250 words)

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Approach

- Briefly describe policy of Non alignment and its context.
- Talk about the historical stand India has taken over the years.
- Mention what led to the recent shift in the policy.
- Give examples showing change not country specific - having broad contours.
- Conclude by giving India’s balanced approach.

Introduction

Non Alignment -its context

- Policy of Non-alignment had its genesis in the backdrop of cold war, where U.S. and USSR signified 2 power blocs of the era.
- India’s Non alignment was about not joining any of the bloc and taking a balanced approach.
- Term coined by V.K. Menon in 1953 and was popularized by Jawaharlal Nehru.
- It was to enable the domestic transformation of India from a poor and backward society and steer it away from any major global crisis.

Body

The term ‘hesitancy of history’ was used by ex-US president Barack Obama in 2015 when India moved towards US overlooking its traditional partner Russia.

- India has always had closer ties with USSR sharing a time tested friendship.
- Principles of social justice, equality and human dignity were borrowed from socialist model of USSR. Early nationalist leaders related more to soviet ideology.
- India also shared close diplomatic strategic and trade ties with USSR.
- Treaty of friendship with USSR in 1971, country’s largest arm supplier.

However scenario has significantly changed since the disintegration of USSR in 1991 and emergence of multiple power dynamics.

- Economic needs of the fast developing India had to be supported by opening of its economy and getting more foreign assistance.
- World that emerged post soviet era saw the rise of US as both an economic and strategic power. It was difficult to pursue India’s growth trajectory without engaging with US.
- India signed a nuclear deal with US in 2008.
- India today is a signatory to 3 of 4 US foundational agreements that it signs with its strategic defence partners that is LEMOA, COMACASA and GSOMIA.
- US recently changed the name of its Pacific command to Indo-Pacific command.

- Globalization, growing interdependence, and the emergence of transnational challenges have pushed India to engage with multiple global partners.
- Emergence of economic powerhouse in form of China has also posed a new challenge in front of India.

Departure of stance not only limited to US.

- India today has vibrant relations with Israel which were earlier marred with Palestinian considerations.
- India's traditional stance has always been of recognition of Arab rights of Palestine and limited relations with Israel.
- India is a member of QUAD which partners Japan, US, Australia and India. It looks to further Indian interest in pacific region creating a major power bloc in the region.
- India is also member of major groupings such as BRICS, ASEAN and BIMSTEC etc. emphasizing Indian engagement in multiple global fronts.

Conclusion

- It would not be right to call it departure from india's policy of Non alignment.
 - Indo-US trade dispute in WTO, India's largest arms deal with Russia (S-400), Indian purchase of oil from Iran even when US has imposed CAATSA on both of these nations.
- Indian considerations in foreign relations are driven by their own strategic autonomy.
- Indian foreign policy is evolving to encompass the growing needs of its national security and prosperity.
- However Non alignment being India's own brainchild it is unlikely that it will not be a part of India's near future foreign policy.

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