



From Non Alignment to Multi Alignment

This editorial is based on [“Decoding India’s new multi-alignment plan”](#) which was published in Hindustan Times on 02/08/2022. It talks about the India’s shift from non-alignment to multi alignment and International North-South Transport Corridor.

For Prelims: Non Alignment Movement, India’s Foreign Policy, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Bandung Conference 1955, International North-South Transport Corridor, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Neighbourhood First Policy

For Mains: History of Non-Alignment in India, India’s Current Foreign Policy, Contemporary Challenges for India’s Foreign Policy

While the [Cold War \(US-USSR\)](#) was raging and shaking **international politics**, in the initial two decades following India’s independence, [India’s foreign policy](#) was heavily determined by the policy of **non-alignment**, which later became a full-fledged movement and forum of discussion in 1961 ([Non Alignment Movement](#)).

But today, **India skillfully maneuvers** between China-led or Russia-led groupings such as the [BRICS](#) and the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#), along with its involvement in US-led groupings such as the [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue](#) (Quad), in which **Japan** and Australia are also members.

In order to understand the practicality of multi-alignment, we need to flip back a few pages of history to understand the non-alignment approach first.

What is the History of Non-Alignment in India?

- The **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** was created and founded during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of the peoples of **Africa, Asia, Latin America** and other regions of the world and at the height of the Cold War.
- In 1960, it was at the fifteenth ordinary session of the [United Nations General Assembly](#) that the **Movement of Non-Aligned Countries** was created, resulting in the **admission of 17 new African and Asian members**.
 - **The then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru** also promoted the concept of ‘**non-alignment**’, or equidistance of the ‘**third world**’ from the two superpowers of the Cold War. These concepts found their way to the [Bandung Conference of 1955](#).
 - The primary objectives of the non-aligned countries focused on the **support of self-determination, national independence and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, non-adherence to multilateral military pacts**.
- **By the end of the 1980s**, the **Movement was facing the great challenge brought about by the collapse of the socialist block**. The end of the clash between the two antagonistic blocks

that was the reason for its existence, name and essence was seen by some as the **beginning of the end for the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.**

What is India's New Multi-Alignment Approach?

- **Multi-Alignment:** It is a **series of parallel relationships** that strengthen **multilateral partnerships** and seek a **common approach among the grouping towards security, economic equity and the elimination of existential dangers like terrorism.** Below are a few forums where India's Multi-Alignment Approach is clearly evident:
 - **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** A 7,200-kilometer multi-modal transport corridor that combines road, rail and maritime routes, connecting Saint Petersburg (Russia) to Mumbai.
 - **International North-South Transport Corridor** offers a platform for India to **collaborate with Russia, Iran, and the Central Asian Republics** towards fostering a Eurasian Free Trade Area.
 - Once fully operational, INSTC is **expected to reduce freight costs by 30%** and the journey time by 40% compared to the deep-sea route via the **Suez Canal.**
 - **BRICS:** BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa,** seeks for **economic, political and security cooperation including people-to-people exchange** through a well-planned mechanism.
 - India was instrumental in co-founding the **New Development Bank (NDB),** a new multilateral initiative **expected to rival the World Bank.**
 - **Shanghai Cooperation Organization: SCO** is a **Eurasian political, economic and military organization** aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region.
 - **Membership:** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.
 - **Iran and Belarus** are likely to be the two newest additions.
 - From SCO, **China and Russia are looking to counter the West,** especially the **expansion of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization).**
 - **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: QUAD** is the informal strategic dialogue between **India, USA, Japan and Australia** with a shared objective to ensure and support a **“free, open and prosperous” Indo-Pacific region and counter China.**

What is India's Current Foreign Policy ?

- **Sammaan:** Respect for every nation's sovereignty
- **Samvaad:** Greater engagement with all countries.
- **Suraksha:** Security; India is a responsible power-neither aggression nor adventurism exists in its DNA
- **Samridhhi:** Shared prosperity
- **Sanskriti and Sabhyata:** The persuasive reach of cultural values anchored in a philosophy which believes that the world is a family.

What are the Contemporary Challenges for India's Foreign Policy?

- **Growing Russia-China Axis:** Russia has become increasingly interested in its periphery's affairs. Furthermore, **sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea have pushed it towards a closer relationship with China** that can certainly deflect its interest in India.
- **Self-Imposed Isolation of India:** Currently, India remains isolated from supranational bodies like **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).** Moreover, India has **opted out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).**
 - Self-imposed isolation does not fit with India's ambition to become a global power.
- **Weakening Ties with Neighbors:** A more worrying concern for Indian foreign policy is weakening ties with the neighbors. This can be seen from instances like **China's Cheque Book Diplomacy** vis-a-vis **Sri Lanka and Pakistan, strain in relation with Bangladesh on National**

[Register of Citizens \(NRC\) issue](#) and a [border dispute with Nepal](#).

- Thus instead of looking towards development of the country, **India is forced to invest heavily in security.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Strengthening Ties with Neighbors:** India should make valiant efforts to improve relations with some of its neighbors such as **Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.**
 - In this context, India can look forward to extending more diplomatic policies like "[vaccine diplomacy](#)" **under its [Neighbourhood First Policy](#)** with neighbors, which supplied vaccines for free or at affordable prices in 2021.
- **Thinking Beyond Geo-Political:** It is imperative to expand the focus of India's foreign policy agenda beyond the traditional thinking of geopolitical boundaries to address issues such as regulatory oversight of **trans-boundary digital giants, big data management, trade issues and disaster relief.**
- **G20 in 2023: India's presidency of [G20 in 2023](#)** will give it the chance to **weave geoeconomic themes with geopolitical interests.** Until now, India has played the role of an emerging power trying to become a global power. The G20 summit of 2023 will allow India to articulate and be proactive on issues that matter to the world.

Conclusion

- Therefore, a **multi-alignment approach preserving certain prominent values of non-alignment** is good for India's interests and advancing towards "**Vasudeva Kutumbakam**".

Drishti Mains Question

"India's foreign policy is shifting from non-alignment to multi alignment approach". Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q.1 Among the following Presidents of India, who was also the Secretary General of Non-Aligned Movement for some period? (2009)

- (a) Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan
- (b) Varahagiri Venkatagiri
- (c) Giani Zail Singh
- (d) Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma

Ans: (c)

Q.2 Consider the following statements: (2016)

1. New Development Bank has been set up by APEC.
2. The headquarters of New Development Bank is in Shanghai.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

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