

## Relevance of NAM

NAM has been the vehicle for developing countries to assert their independence from the competing claims of the two super powers. The concept of 'Non-Alignment' was first introduced by the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru in 1954 as part of his five principles of restraint which formed the basic tenets of India's foreign policy. Nehru's principles gathered momentum at the Bandung conference in 1955, where 29 governments discussed the role of the Third World in the Cold War era and strengthened cooperation towards peace, development and decolonization. NAM is a group of states which are not formally against any major block. As of 2012, the movement has 120 members and 17 observer countries.

The purpose of the organization has been to ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neocolonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference as well as against great power bloc and bloc politics.

### How has NAM been beneficial to India?

India per se has derived a great advantageous position as part of the non-aligned movement. By merit of it, India has been able to maintain complete independence over foreign policy. There was no US or UK to prevent India from maintaining a good relation with USSR. In fact, USSR turned out to be one of the best partners in the international fora India had. USSR was the largest supplier of military equipments, the restrictions on the use and providing of the technology were way less compared to the rest of the world. All the same, the US and UK came to India's rescue in the China war of 1962. India pursued a friendly relation with China and then supported their inclusion to the UNSC.

### Relevance of NAM Today

With the end of the Cold War, there are no longer two rival blocks to be non-aligned between and so many have questioned the relevance of a movement whose very name signifies the negation of a choice that is no longer on the world's geopolitical table. However with the passing of the binary superpower led world, NAM has redefined itself as a movement for countries that are not aligned with any major power.

Its very important to realize that NAM did not originate as an ideological camp. It was a revolt against bloc divisions and dominance of the international system by few powers. A non-aligned country wanted a measure of freedom for itself and at the same time to acquire some leverage through this bigger association in the international system. In that sense, NAM provided the developing countries a certain amount of psychological security; The chief thrust of the movement had been towards independence, against colonialism, neocolonialism, racialism and for the maintenance of world peace, democratization of the international political structure and the establishment of a more equitable economic order.

With the end of Cold War, there might be visible domination of inter-state warfare. But with the rise of ethnic and religious nationalism, socio-economic equalities, collapse of state structures, withdrawal of super power support, the changes and frequency of intra-state and regional conflicts have increased. So far as UN's role in the achievement of peace is concerned, it is increasingly becoming a rubber stamping body, legitimizing and endorsing decisions of the oligarchic political executive. UN seems to be becoming a tool of intervention in the hands of the unipolar oligarchy leading to the erosion of the sovereignty of the Third World and developing states.

## **NAM Needed much more than before**

NAM, in the above mentioned grim scenario, is needed much more than before. It has to set its priorities carefully. NAM can be the carrier of south-south collaboration. It has a role to play in the WTO negotiations to advance and protect the trading rights and opportunities of developing countries and in muscling up their negotiating positions and skills. NAM can stand up to arbitrary economic sanctions against developing nations, to the unfair cutting down of trade quotas with a view to protect the economy of the developed north. The European community with a market of 300 million people and the North American Free Trade Zone area covering 500 million people pose a great challenge to the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. To compete with them will be a mammoth task for the developing countries unless they form an organization for collective economic development. NAM can be an initiator for that. NAM can make the protests of developing nations against arbitrary application of western concepts of human rights. NAM also has a potentially effective role to play in bringing about meaningful nuclear arms control and disarmament by the nuclear powers.

The fact remains that NAM has not lost its validity, since most of the problems faced by the developing nations during the cold war continue to persist. NAM therefore has to think about its rejuvenation rather than talking of becoming redundant. The time is ripe to evaluate the past and formulate the future policies of the non-aligned countries to change the existing international order and establish a new international order based on friendship, cooperation, justice and fair play to improve the lot of third world and to restore human rights, democracy and world peace.

## **Tehran Summit of NAM**

The just concluded 16th Summit of the 120 nations NAM in Tehran on 26 August 2012 has clearly sent a message - the movement that was founded more than fifty years ago at the height of the Cold War era is still relevant, despite the changes in the global scenario. The strongly worded Tehran declaration adopted at the end of the summit can be seen as a document of anti-West rhetoric, but it has also sent positive signal for the smaller and less powerful nations categorized as the "Third World" countries. The document recognized the right of all these countries to develop their own strategy including the right of having nuclear power for the sake of their socio economic development.

## **The Unfolding of Events at the Summit**

The summit generated a lot of attention despite critics of the movement charging that it had lost its relevance, most notably for the choice of venue. This was because, in their view, the summit would seem to confer a larger diplomatic acceptance of Iran even as it faces increased international pressure on account of its nuclear programme.

The summit no doubt provided a large international audience for the Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, to put forward his views in person— an opportunity not available to him normally as in large forums mostly Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad represents Iran and not the Supreme Leader. On his part Khamenei, while Opening the Summit, dwelt upon the illogical, unjust and completely undemocratic structure and mechanism of the UN Security Council, asserted that the nuclear weapons are both a threat to security and political power, criticized the US and its allies for arming the Zionist regime with nuclear weapon and insisted that Iran has never been after nuclear weapons and that it will never give up its right of its people to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Despite US and Israeli criticism of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's participation in the Summit, the Secretary General used the summit as an important opportunity to remind Tehran of the need to fulfill its international obligations regarding its nuclear programmes as well as to quit the urge of making inflammatory

statements. On the nuclear issue, Ban emphatically stated that NAM leadership provides an opportunity to Iran to build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme, fully comply with the UNSC resolutions, thoroughly cooperate with the IAEA and engage constructively with the P5+1.

A galaxy of world leaders attended the summit. The Bangladesh Prime Minister put forward a number of proposals at the gathering and made a strong plea for making the NAM more cohesive and relevant to the changing world scenario. Among other leaders, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Egyptian President Mohammad Morsi were the centre of attraction since their countries have been among the founding members of the NAM. Mr Morsi, the first elected leader of Egypt, rebuffed Iran as he supported the rebels against Bashar Al-Assad regime in Syria, which is a close ally of Tehran. Morsi declared it an ethical duty to support Syrian people against the oppressive regime of Assad. He also mentioned about Palestinians at the same breath when he cited the Syrians. He said that the Palestinian people just like the Syrians are currently struggling with impressive valiance in calling for freedom, justice and human dignity. The utterance suddenly placed Egypt as the leader of the potentially free and democratic Arab and Muslim world - dismantling the old cliché of the US as the self-designated leader of the free world. Egypt has emerged as a moral voice from the heart of its revolution.

The Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, on the sidelines of the NAM summit, made undeterred efforts towards warming up the economic ties with Iran. On the strategic plane, the two sides explored the possibilities of working closely on Afghanistan in view of the withdrawal of international -combat troops by 2014. The meeting of Mr Singh with the supreme leader of Iran Ayatollah Khamenei also spoke volumes about the intention of the two countries for engaging in a deeper bilateral cooperation. Talking about Syria, Dr Singh clearly stated that India supports the popular Syrian aspirations for a democratic and pluralistic order while at the same time, he cautioned against external intervention.

## **Conclusion**

The recently concluded NAM summit was a turning point not only for Iran, but for all the Third World nations struggling to achieve greater justice, equality and fairness on the world stage. The Tehran Summit, thus, plainly delegitimized Western claims that Iran lacks global support for its nuclear ambitions while indirectly censuring US attempts to alienate and punish the Islamic Republic. The Summit showcased well Iran's diplomatic acceptability.

What has also emerged from the summit is the fact that NAM per se is quite relevant to its members notwithstanding the fact that Cold War era is no more and the world has gone through myriad changes. Taking the essence of non-alignment as the assertion of independence in foreign affairs, non alignment cannot become irrelevant at any time. This can be further elucidated by what Pandit Nehru stated in his address to the United Nations - "where freedom is menaced or justice threatened or where aggression takes place, we cannot and shall not be neutral."