Non-Alignment and the New World Order

What is the issue?

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- With increasing diplomatic tensions in the international arena, a new cold war seems likely with the emergence 3 distinct poles - U.S., China and Russia.
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- Considering its historic role as a level headed neutral power, it is prudent for India to reinvent the principle of “Non-Alignment” to suit the current scenario.
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What are the indications of the Neo-Cold war?

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- **USA -** The U.S. in its foreign policy doctrine published in 2017 has explicitly identified both China and Russia as adversaries.
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- Notably, in the face of an assertive China and Russia, the U.S. does indeed seem desperately resorting to ultra-nationalism under President Mr. Trump.
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- The “axis of evil” (or the countires that the U.S. suspects of sponsoring terrorism) has also emerged once again under Iran’s leadership.
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- **Russian -** President Mr. Putin announced that Russia has invincible doomsday machines like an underwater drone armed with a nuclear warheads.
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- Additionally, Russia has boasted the procession of weaponery powerful enough to sweep away coastal facilities, aircraft carriers.
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- Russia is also said to be developing hypersonic vehicles (high speed) that are impossible to intercept as it flies in a cloud of plasma “like a meteorite”.
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- **China -** Propelled by massive economic growth in recent decades, China has now announced its emergence a power block in the international politics.
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- It has been becoming increasingly vocal in a multitude of global issues and has upended its territorial claims in the South China Sea.
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- China massive infrastructure program “Belt and Road Initiative” has also seen it bankrolling many countires, which has greatly enhanced its clout.
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- **Signficantly -** This time it is a three-cornered Cold War, without any corner having committed countries to act together as military allies.
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- Potential allies are hedging currently, as there seems to be no clear agenda for any of these powers to protect the interests of the weaker countries.
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What has NAM evolved over the years?

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- **Profile -** “Non Aligned Movement” was envisioned as a platform for those who didn’t want to be dictated by the then two superpowers - USSR and USA.
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- It held its first ministerial in Belgrade (erstwhile Yugoslavia) in 1961 and complete independence of members in their foreign policy was ingrained.
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- Notably, beyond merely asserting independent soverign pursuits, NAM also actively worked to diffuse tensions between the warring cold war blocks.
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- **Diversity -** The block was a big diverse one with 120 countries with very different cultures, economic parameters and human development indices.
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- India was one of NAM’s key leaders and ensured that it remained ideologically netural by balancing both leftist (Cuba) and rightist (Signapore) countires.
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- India helped in retaining Egypt in NAM by curtailing the wrath of the rest of the Arab world in 1979, and also worked to keep the group politically revevant.
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- **Current Status -** As the cold war ended, there were proposals for winding up NAM in its Ghana Ministerial in 1991, as the purpose has lapsed.

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- But these proposals were nixed as India argued that the essence of NAM was freedom of thought and action, which was beyond mere bloc congregations.
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- Although greated diminissed, NAM continue to be relevant today as a signficant power block in the international forums like the UN.
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What are recent NAM developments concerning India?

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- **NAM 2.0 -** There were calls for rejiging the non-alignment concept in 2012 to suit the emerging current realities of an emerging and assertive China.
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- The call was for India to take the lead in strengthening the partnerships within NAM and seting new standards for power politics in the international arena.
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- While the ideas rooted in humanistic values were noble, there were structural challenges for India in imagining the proposed alternative universality.
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- Also, coming in the backdrop of India's growing strategic partnership with the U.S. and tensions with China, there was little incentive for India to go neutral.
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- **Redundance -** The Modi government has perceived NAM as a mere remanant of the Neruvian era, that lacks any significance currently.
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- In the mesh of other developmental priorities involving economy, security, neighbourhood and the diaspora issues, NAM is largely forgotten.
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- India's is presently advancing a transactional foreign policy, which gives little scope for leading a diverse and largely poor bloc like NAM.
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How does the future look?

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- As a close defence partner of the U.S. and a member of the "Quadrilateral"

(India, U.S, Australia, Japan), India is right in the U.S. camp.
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- Doklam and the Maldives have shown that China is in no mood for a compromise and has been explicitly enhancing its defence budgets.
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- Given the context, strengthening partnership of near equals like IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) could be considered as a hedge to guard soverignity.
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- These groups could be knit together with the objective of dealing with concensus issues like - climate change, terrorism and protectionism.
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- While it is inevitable that most countires will have links with the dominant trio (U.S., China and Russia), intertwining alliances will guarantee independence foreign policy pursits of all.
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- Hence, it is important for India to not get subordinated into one of the emerging poles and rather work to proliferate multiple worldwide alliances.
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Source: The Hindu

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