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NAM IN THE CHANGING WORLD SCENARIO

The Non-aligned movement (NAM), a coalition of the developing states, mostly former colonies, emerged as an important political force in the midst of a new post war international scenario marked by cold war politics. For more than a quarter of a century, the movement has been functioning as a sub-system in the world politics, aimed at changing the unequal global relationship between the developing and the developed countries and creating a just, and peaceful world order. As the movement's basic precepts—shunning the cold war politics and endeavouring to create an equitable world economic order were viewed by a majority of the Third World countries as the main vehicle of guaranteeing their newly-earned independence, world peace and stability. The club then started expanding in its size, focus and activities.

Since inception the movement participated in all the major global politico-economic developments. A conspectus of NAM's involvement in various issues and developments, both political and economic, shows a two fold manifestation of the movement itself. First, the very ideology of non-alignment acted as a foreign policy principle of the majority of developing countries. Second, the movement has provided a loose political association of the developing countries with broad policy goals.¹

1. *NAM history and reality : A study.* (Allied publishers. New Delhi 1987)
p. 1.

However, the world has dramatically changed over the last decade. Together the movement has also changed to adopt the changing world scenario. From an initial focus on decolonization, world peace, detente, the movement has shifted its priority on global economic issues and North-South dialogue. The shift was oriented by the changing need of the developing countries themselves.

The post war international order has been markedly changed due to some astounding global developments of late 1980's; perhaps the most positive ramification of such development has been the demise of cold war *raison d' etre* of NAM. In this context some of the pertinent questions that may now be raised are (a) Does NAM still retain its validity in present world politics ? (b) If not what would be its new strategy of survival ? (c) To what extent can the new strategy meet up the requirement of the current changes in world politics ? These are some of the issues to be taken up in this paper. The first section of the paper is an attempt to highlight few past achievements of NAM in order to understand the total spectrum of its functions performed so far. The second section deals with the Ninth Non-aligned summit that opted for a fresh political course of action rejecting the earlier political rhetorics and prejudices. Besides, some of the problems like territorial, politico-ideological and social, interstate and other political wars that sap the vitality of the countries of NAM have been identified. The last section deals, perhaps, with the most crucial and critical issue/the relevance or validity of the movement as a whole in present world politics.

1. Non-aligned Movement—A Retrospective Overview

The origin of the NAM owes its credence as a reaction against the cold war that aimed at turning the Afro-Asian countries into mere pawns in power game of the supper powers. Thus, what the newly independent countries opted for was to assert their independence, safeguard their interests and legitimate rights. In this connection, non-aligned movement seemed to be the convenient

forum where they could project their new image in international arena. In the last three decades, the movement has consolidated and had great influence and impact on world politics covering a wide range of issues.² The objectives and achievements of the movement are manifold—political, economic, social, psychological as well as technical.

Promotion of the UN role

The non-aligned movement in course of time became the most influential group within the United Nations. It is worthwhile to mention that all the previous conferences of the non-aligned countries were aimed at strengthening the role of the United Nations as an authentic world organization to promote peace and stability in the world. Even in the first summit conference of the NAM in Belgrade in 1961, all problems concerning the principles of the Charter were considered as well as the composition of the UN organs, implementation of their decisions, and achievement of universalization of the UN. It may be mentioned here that at the ninth summit conference, 1989 at Belgrade the UN was given the top priority in view of its peace keeping role in the changing global scenario.³

Under the auspices of the UN, the non-aligned bloc acted as an opinion forming body on various issues embracing politics, economics, strategic, social and humanitarian. Such collective opinion had its positive ramifications on many of the crucial global issues at least from the psychological point of view. The non-aligned countries became the ardent campaigners of rapid decolonization, disarmament, and voiced for the creation of a just international economic order. This campaign was waged within

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2. See for details. A.W. Singham and Shirley Hune, *Non-alignment in the Age of Alignment*, Zed Books, London, 1986. p. 13-75.
 3. *Declaration*, Ninth Conference of Head of States or Government of Non-aligned countries, Belgrade, 1989, p. 4-5.

the limits of the UN and its specialized agencies, within the accepted norms of the international law. Within a short time, the movement was successful in introducing some new problems, ideas, interests and priorities which substantially influenced international relations.

Economic activities

Since 1970 the movement has shifted its main focus from global politics to global economics and in this sphere its role is quite laudable. From the beginning a wide range of economic programme was launched aiming with a view to correct the economic imbalance inherited from colonialism and imperialism,⁴ but also attaining of economic development of member nations through collective self-reliance. The attention of the member states on economic problems was first drawn at the Belgrade conference in 1961 which later got further elaboration at the Cairo conference in 1964 ultimately leading to the establishment of the UNCTAD and formation of Group of 77⁵. Later, the question of economic problems of the NAM countries was highlighted and given top priority in the third conference of the non-aligned nations at Algiers in 1973. The Algiers conference provided the basis upon which proposal of the New International Economic Order was put forward. The new economic consciousness grew largely due to some of negative experiences of the Third World countries. It may be relevant here to mention that by the mid-and-late sixties most of the newly independent countries of Afro-Asia were facing insurmountable economic problems at home. The lack of technology, skilled manpower, resources, severe competition in world market dominated by the west and excessive dependence on foreign aid

4. Non-aligned conferences, *Basic documents, 1969-75*. Banderniake Centre for International Studies. Colombo, 1976, p. 15.

5. See for details, U.S. Bajpai (ed), *Non-alignment : Perspectives and prospects*. Lancer Publishers. New Delhi, 1983. p. 174.

and assistance mostly from the western sources were some of the impediments on the way of rapid industrialization and development of other infra-structures. This was better manifested in the Annual Report of 1964-65 of the Ministry of Indian External Affairs : "With the achievement of independence, the most important task before the Asian and African states has been the promotion of the social and economic development of their peoples which had been retarded during the years of the colonial rule. Unfortunately they all suffer in varying degrees from lack of skilled manpower and shortages of financial resources. It has come to be recognized that these handicaps cannot be overcome without the assistance of the developed countries on the one hand and a cooperative effort by the developing countries themselves on the other"⁶. The feeling was shared by most of the Afro-Asian developing countries whose resolve to attain collective self-reliance through the NAM was manifested in various efforts and plans. In this connection, to ensure elaborate cooperation on regular basis, a coordinating committee was set up⁷ and responsibilities were given to specific member countries for the proper utilization of resources of the non-aligned countries and also to work out a plan for detailed practical cooperation. The main fields of mutual cooperation and activities were raw materials, trade, transport, industry, financial and monetary cooperation, scientific and technological development, food and agriculture, fisheries, telecommunications, insurance, health employment and human resource development, tourism, sports, international cooperation for economic research and information system, solidarity fund for social and economic development.⁸

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6. Cited in Dewan C. Vohra, *India's Aid Diplomacy in the Third World*, Vikas Publishers. New Delhi, 1980, p. 186.
 7. In the Ninth Summit Conference of the Non-aligned Countries which was held in Belgrade during 4-8 September 1989, decision was taken to set up a 12 member Nation Group to pursue dialogue with the G-7.
 8. The Non-aligned movement has set up an International Centre for Public Enterprises in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, Centre for Science and Technology

Despite the elaborate economic programmes adapted by the NAM the fact remains that not much progress has yet been made for their implementation. The main reason of this failure appears to be inability of many member states to achieve a reasonable degree of economic independence from the developed countries which virtually controls the world economy. Also there is an absence of realization that the concept of security is no longer conventional in nature. It is through economic independence and cooperation with other developing countries that political independence could be maintained. Thus, in many important regions of the world, regionalism has been instrumental in bringing forth some degree of loose economic integration within the nations i.e. ASEAN, whereas organizations like SAARC, GCC, Arab Cooperation Council and the Maghreb Union and the likes are still on an experimental basis. However, hopes are still alive that mutual cooperation and support will help the non-aligned and other Third World countries to unlock the presently stalled North-South dialogue and the implementation of the NIEO in future.

2. Ninth Non-aligned Summit : Reflection on Major Issues

The ninth non-aligned summit was held in Belgrade during 4-8 September 1989 in the backdrop of a qualitative shift in international relations marked by the demise of second cold war and the beginning of a period of super power detente. The new spirit of detente and its positive fall-out on world politics, and the growing concern of the Third World nations at such changes with economic implications for them ultimately led the summit to put stress on new areas of cooperation among the Third World nations.

The member countries opted for recasting their approach to world politics in the face of fundamental changes in international

in Lima (peru), International Centre on Transnational Corporations in Havana (Cuba), and Non-aligned News Agency pool started work in 1975. See for details, *Declaration, Ninth Summit Conference of Head of states or government of Non-aligned countries*, Belgrade, 1989. p.95-112.

arena. The participants firmly rejected 'prejudice' and dogma and sought cooperation, 'coordination,' 'concertation' and openness.⁹ Realistic and pragmatic approach of the participants has been reflected on the selection of some priority areas as the primary focus of attention of the movement i. e. nuclear disarmament, reduction of global economic disparities, complete abolition of colonialism, protection of environment, human rights and strengthening of the effectiveness and role of the UN.¹⁰

It has been a fact that despite the constraint of resources, quite a few of them are waiting at the threshold to emerge as nuclear powers. In this connection, K. Subrahmanyam's observation is quite significant when he identified that the very sophisticated armaments are being piled up in a few non-aligned countries which having close links with the superpowers have been drawn into the cold war confrontations.¹¹ But Mr. Subrahmanyam absolutely avoids the fact that India is currently the number one arms importer of the third world countries. This trend has directly affected the movement's course of action and policy and helped to mislead the world community as a whole.

Against this backdrop, the non-aligned countries viewed that the development and disarmament are the two main and closely connected problems of the contemporary world. The accelerated rate of arms race has been considered the greatest impediment on the way of development. The summit leaders expressed concern at the problems of poverty, food supplies and minimal health facilities. The summit leaders were hopeful that a possible detente between the two superpowers might lead to a way for future reduction in arms race.

9. *The Muslim*, September 4, 1989.

10. See for details, *Declaration*, Ninth Conference of Head of States or Government of Non-aligned Countries, Belgrade, 1989 p. 4-5.

11. Cited in U.S. Bajpai (ed), *Non-alignment: Perspectives and Prospects*, op. cit., p. 134.

As mentioned the non-aligned movement from the beginning realized that accelerated economic and political growth of the non-aligned countries is a *sine qua non* for the world development as a whole. But as it stands today, the Third World reveals a gloomy picture of a deteriorating economy. It may be mentioned that the Third World which includes seventy five per cent of world population contributes to only thirty per cent of the world income. It is estimated that at the end of the decade, the average per capital income will be US \$ 3600 in the advanced countries while in the developing countries it will be only \$265.¹² Of the approximately 3.9 billion inhabitants of the developing world, more than one billion are illiterate and another billion suffers from hunger and about one billion have earnings of less than thirty US cents per day.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, the economic issues at the summit encompassed three main areas i.e. the debt crisis, the New International Economic Order, and the North-South dialogue. One of the thorniest problems that the summit took notice of is the debt crisis amounting to \$ 1320 billion which the Third World is plagued with. A concern was also expressed at the summit meeting that the external debt service, particularly at current high interest rates, was draining a disproportionately higher share of export earnings, as well as of the GNP and savings of developing countries. The net negative transfer of resources was not only depriving the developing countries of badly needed resources for development. But it also keeps undermining their adjustment and economic efforts. To resolve these debt problems the summit meeting gave top priority to political measures for an improvement of the global economic environment, including international trade and commodity prices, the revival of substantial net capital transfers to developing countries, access of their product to the markets of the developed countries and the continuation of economic reforms in the developing countries in accordance with their own development and social

12. Cited in K.P. Misra (ed.), *Non-alignment : Frontiers and Dynamics*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p. 196.

priorities.¹³ For achieving these objectives, it was felt essential to get support of large resources and its applicability should be extended to all indebted developing countries and to all types of debt. With the help of the world organization like the World Bank and IMF the developing countries sought to overcome the current debt crisis and meet the requirements of growth adequately.

For restructuring, remodeling and rearranging the present economic cooperation among the developed and developing countries, the ninth summit conference came out with the following recommendations which cover almost all the spheres of the international economic cooperation:

- (i) developing debtor and developed creditor countries should review, in a spirit of openness and cooperation, all concrete measures that could effectively bring debt servicing in line with the actual payment capacity of debtor countries resources ;
- (ii) developing debtor and developed creditor countries jointly and urgently undertake the broadest possible implementation of existing initiatives and elaborate new ones for dealing with the debt problem, especially those that are based on the concept of debt and debt service reduction ;
- (iii) an appropriate forum under the auspices of the UN should be convened with the participation of international financial institutions and banks to review all aspects of the problem of external debt within the context of an improved environment for development ; and
- (iv) non-aligned countries should consider the possibility of establishing a debtor's forum for the exchange of experiences and information and for mutual consultations with a view to strengthening their negotiating position in the area of external debt.¹⁴

13. See for details, *Declaration* : Ninth conference of Head of States or Government of Non-aligned countries. Belgrade, 1989, p. 80-84.

14. *Ibid.*

Besides, some concrete recommendations were made to deal with the drastic deterioration of the financial aid flow from the North which in recent time has become a great concern for the South. Needed reforms in the international monetary system, reducing the real interest rate of aid, allocation of special drawing rights, non-discriminatory international trading system and removal of protectionism and trade barriers were the main issues that drew attention of the summit leaders. The latter also put stress on implementation of Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP), ratified earlier by the developing countries, increased participation of women in the development of non-aligned and other developing countries and the problem of homelessness.

As the North-South dialogue as a corollary to the NIEO got its usual place for discussion in Belgrade, the developing countries felt that they have great potentialities to develop themselves in terms of raw materials which are the determinant factor of economic development and political self-sufficiency. From geographical view point, the Third World consists of four groups of countries : African states, Arab states of North Africa and Middle East, Asian states and Latin American states. Geopolitically, these parts form the southern segment of the earth—the periphery which is the seat of the poor countries.¹⁵ In raw material reserves developing countries are not so poor as viewed. The following table illustrates the raw materials potential of the developing countries. Despite having such potential the developing countries cannot develop this resource base into real wealth due the lack of capital, technology and know-how.

The conflict between the industrialized rich nations and the developing poor countries--the former being the large scale producer of manufactured goods and the latter, the producers of raw

15. *Non-alignment in the Eighties*, International Round Table. Peterovara-din, Yugoslavia, 28-31 August 1981, Institute of International Politics and Economics. *Review of International Affairs*. Belgrade, p. 205.

Table : Distribution of Mineral raw materials-1979
(in percentage of world reserve)

Raw materials	Western countries	COMECON countries	Developing countries
Petroleum	10	16	74
Tin	4	17	79
Earth gas	22	38	40
Iron	35	36	29
Bauxite	38	6	56
Phosphate	39	18	43
Copper	41	14	45
Nickel	44	15	46
Coal	49	48	3
Manganese	52	29	19
Zinc	69	16	15
Lead	70	17	13

Source : Cited in *Non-alignment in the eighties*.
Belgrade 1982, p., 201.

materials acts as a great obstacle to the stability and the balanced growth of the world economy. It may be mentioned here that the lack of political initiative on the part of developing countries has resulted in inefficacy to deal with the North on many of the outstanding issues. In formulating any strategy of dealing with the North much may be derived from the resources that they are endowed with.

As it appears, the North-South dialogue suffers from problems like the divergent opinion of the developing countries, the uneven development of both North and South, absence of well articulation in Southern demands as well as of the South to realize that internal reforms are more even important than international reforms. However, the most conspicuous forces acting

against the South are the inadequate attention of the North which acting from a position of strength seems to neglect the cause of the South as well as their preoccupation with the domestic issues and problems.

As routine discussions in most of the non-aligned conferences, the issues of decolonization and human rights also came up in the agenda as mere political rhetorics. The analysts and observers now feel that anti-imperialist and anti-super power jargons are losing their relevance in the current context. The movement's early focus on anti-colonialism has become irrelevant now in view of the world becoming almost decolonized. Nevertheless, the fact cannot be denied that even at the dawn of the 21st century, about twenty territories and thousands of people are living under alien domination and foreign occupation.¹⁶ Similarly, on the issue of human rights, the movement expressed concern over the violation of human rights in many parts of the world including the repression in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza. But it is an irony in many of the non-aligned countries, the ruling regimes show little or no respect to human rights at all. Besides, hunger and starvation in many parts of the world were a matter of grave concern to the leaders at the summit from a humanitarian point of view.

Perhaps, a major issue that came up at the summit was their concern with the present world environment. This has, in fact, been a demand of time and age. A vast majority of the nations now feel that the planet is to be saved from an ecological imbalance and disaster. In this connection, it may be mentioned that the security concern of nations now envisages a world free from pollution, soil degradation, desertification, deforestation as well as an overwhelming concern to maintain the ozone layer undisturbed. This concern transcends the national boundary. In recent time, environment has also been related to development, hence environ-

16. *Declaration*, Ninth conference of Head of States or Government of Non-aligned countries, Belgrade, 1989, p.8.

mental protection is now viewed as an integral part of the development of world as a whole. As it appears now, concerted measures by global community to fight the unforeseen consequences of environmental degradation seem to be in the forefront now.

The ninth non-aligned summit sought international cooperation in the field of environmental protection that called for a global multi-lateral approach to solve the severe problems of environmental deterioration. A contention that the developed countries are responsible for the present state of environment has led the countries of the non-aligned movement to form a Planet Protection Fund with contributions mostly from the developed countries¹⁷. Besides, the summit lauded the measures taken under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the proposal for convening the second United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992 where the latter concepts would be treated with an integrated approach.

Regional conflicts : challenges to NAM from within : Although the non-aligned movement originated as a reaction against cold war politics, after nearly three decades of formal existence an objective assessment of the Third World political situation would reveal a stark reality that many of the non-aligned countries have not been able to keep themselves truly non-aligned under compelling circumstances at different points of time. The reasons for this aberration are due to (i) the conflicts among some of the non-aligned countries which are fundamentally rooted in their past social,

17. In the Ninth Summit conference at Belgrade, Former Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi proposed the establishment of a 18 billion dollar Planet Protection Fund with universal membership under the agis of the United Nations to protect the environment and called for the one thousandth part of each members country's GDP as a contribution. But some LDC's from South Asia and Africa made it clear that they were not in a position to contribute anything to the proposed Fund. India's proposal was diluted and it was decided to recommend the creation of a special fund without giving any name.

political, economic and historical developments, (ii) the emergence of regional powers in many quarters of the globe. As a result of this phenomenon, many of the non-aligned countries had to veer their political direction towards either of the superpowers who fought the proxy wars as part of their respective strategies to increase their spheres of influence.

Thus, in the seventies when the non-aligned countries were beginning to consolidate their nation statehood the NAM had to confront conflicts at the regional level which were waged by the countries belonging to the movement itself. The chronic animosity between the two superpowers, despite its fierce intensity on many occasions, did never lead to a full-scale war between them whereas the Third World ultimately turned into a theatre of most of the wars, crises and conflicts with its negative spill-over effect on many parts of the world.

Most of the conflicts that have taken place between and among the Third world countries can be categorized into four groups.¹⁸ First are the conflicts arising from resistance to change, as in the case of Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Cambodia. Perhaps, the case of Afghanistan is a vivid manifestation of how a traditionally non-aligned country fell prey not to a mere interference, but to a full-scale invasion by a superpower placing the political status of the country in a quandary. This incident put particularly the neighbouring countries like Pakistan in a difficult situation who got involved directly into the conflict between the Mujahideens and the pro-Soviet Kabul regime. In Pakistani perception the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan transformed Pakistan's geo-strategic situation as it increased Islamabad's sense of vulnerability. The Pakistani, Iranian, Chinese and the Western leaders shared the same apprehension that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was a part of its long term strategy to gain access to the Persian Gulf and the Indian

18. See for details. D. R. Goyal, "Challenge of the Regional Conflicts". *World Focus*. Vol X. Number 6, June 1989, p. 20-22.

Ocean. But India being a close ally of the Soviet Union, at the same time projecting her role as a leading non-aligned country approached the Afghan crisis with an ambivalent policy. Nevertheless, the crisis had significance for India's strategic environment and impinged on its relation with the superpowers as well. Now, despite the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as per the Geneva Accord, the real solution still remains far, as the domestic factions with their divergent views and opinions on the issue have not been able to come to a consensus on any positive solution.

Second, conflicts, mostly mini-wars have been caused by the ambitious neighbours having expansionist and hegemonistic ambitions. Such examples are Morocco's attempt to grab western Sahara and Indian's actions in relation to her smaller neighbours.

Third, racism, religious prejudices, ethnic violence and internal insurgency have been a source of conflict in many parts of the Third World which despite having an internal dimension, later on brought external inputs into the conflict to complicate the situation. Mention may be made of the conflicts between Ethiopia and Somalia, between India and Srilanka, between India and Pakistan etc. Also the sectarian conflict of Lebanon inviting foreign forces to occupy the land on several occasions cannot probably be ignored.

Fourth, many of the conflicts emanated from territorial disputes among the members of the Third World. In this regard the territorial disputes between Iran and Iraq over the Shatt-al-Arab and Indo-Pak disputes over Kashmir can be cited as examples. While the former resulted in long eight-year-war of attrition between the two Gulf countries, the latter drove the two countries into three wars with its bitter legacy still continuing today. The contentious issue of Kashmir at present has brought a new sore in Indo-Pak relations—both being the members of the non-aligned movement. It may be mentioned that both India and Pakistan continue their mutual recrimination for their alleged assistance to ethnic unrest in respective countries.

Apart from the conflicts that have so far sapped the movement's vitality another factor that poses a challenge to the movement is the tendency among some regional countries to be dominant powers in their respective regions. In this connection, the case of South Asia can be an example where India through use of coercive diplomacy is seeking to exert its dominance over the smaller countries of South Asia. While Indian's dominating posture has got the tacit blessing of the two superpowers, in other regions like the Gulf and the Maghreb Africa, events are yet to reveal any clear picture about the preponderant power in these regions.

The foregoing brief analysis reveals a conflictive scenario in the Third World that put the movement into a fragile and vulnerable situation. In such a scenario the NAM was manifested in numerous declarations calling the conflicting parties to desist themselves from these acts and keep the conflicts away from 'east-west' confrontation. In this case, the NAM acted as a peace making body and not a peace keeping one which is the task of the UN. In the final analysis, "the regional conflicts pose a serious challenge Most of the nations and territories involved in these conflicts are part of the NAM and the clash of arms among them makes a mockery of the movement's commitments and pronouncement".¹⁹

3. Non-alignment—its relevance in present day world

In the context of the rapid changes in global scenario where the world socialist order has been crumbled, bloc politics and bipolarity are no more existing, the fear of nuclear war is fading away, some quarters are questioning the continued relevance of the NAM. They substantiate their arguments by raising the fact that many of the NAM members are not really committed to the ideology of non-alignment and all they have failed to settle conflicts between one another. But such question can be raised also about other international organization, such as, OAU, Commonwealth and

19. *Ibid.* p. 21.

others. For example, the NAM was not the only one to have failed to bring the disastrous war between Iran and Iraq to an end. The organization of African Unity and Commonwealth also failed to settle so many disputes among their member countries. Therefore non-aligned movement may have lost its political role to some extent. But it cannot be denied that at the appearance of new power configuration, NAM's two major issues—economic and environmental could be more important factors to keep its relevance for the foreseeable future.

The recent non-aligned conference has taken place against the backdrop of a rapid transformation in world politics, especially in East Europe. Of special concern to the non-aligned nations was the impact of this change on the Third world. Some ideological differences were sharply visible on some issues among the members of the movement. Despite the end of cold war and the beginning of the genial cooperation continue to believe that capitalism, imperialism and racialism are still to be condemned while a section of others believe that these old rhetorics have little relevance in the present context. In keynote address Yugoslav President stated that it was time for twenty eight years old grouping to adapt to a changing world and get away from tired cliches about imperialism and colonialism. In contrast, Robert Mugabe's uncompromising condemnation and rejection of imperialism, colonialism and racism including zionism was rejected on fundamental principles with no compromise is noteworthy.²⁰

The ninth summit was held at a time when the movement is going through a critical juncture of its history. With the independence of Namibia the major remnant of colonialism has disappeared. The Western sponsored military blocs particularly the Warsaw pact tend to lose their teeth. With the emergence of Gorbachev phenomenon and Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan anti-Soviet

20. *The Statesman*, September, 5, 1989.

rhetorics have lost their appeal. In recent years, particularly following the demise of second cold war, numerous Third World conflicts are becoming more and more autonomous whereas the regional countries remain instrumental in the sustenance of these conflicts. Moreover, the movement is far from finding out ways and means to resolve them. From strictly politico-strategic point of view, the NAM countries seem to lack a common threat which in the past has been instrumental in consolidating the unity of the movement.

In the changed circumstances confrontation has yielded to cooperation and the very concept of superpower has become debatable, it behoves one to ask what would be the role of the NAM in immediate future? A categorical answer to this query is not possible at this period of time, as a number of questions can be raised before such an attempt like—how can one say that the cold war has permanently ended? Is there any guarantee that the concept of superpower will cease to exist for ever? Can one predict with certainty the nature of future power configuration in the world? Can one guarantee that the aid flow from the G-7 to East Europe will not affect the Third world countries?

As it appears now, the situation is very fluid. Therefore, it is hard to predict the exact course of superpower bilateral relations and their disarmament measures, the dissolution of the NATO and WARSAW pacts etc. In such a scenario the NAM is still to be the best conceivable organization during such a state of flux.

The viability of the movement also depends on the mutual understanding and relationship between the rich and the poor. The countries within the movement are to watch closely the present political changes in order to decipher the trend. In the final analysis, with the superpower blocs unraveling the middle-tier powers will have a more significant role to play in the international decision making along with the United Nations.

Some of the leaders of the Third World who were earlier motivated by the socialist ideals now feel a sense of helplessness in view of the recent developments in East Europe. It may be mentioned here that politico-economic changes and the present transition in the socialist countries of East Europe might adversely affect the interests of the Third World in two ways : first, hardly any progress was made in reaching the 0.7% of the GNP of the North as aid target ; second, the recent opening up of Eastern Europe might divert the development cooperation away from developing and LDCs of the Third World. The NAM countries are apprehensive that this would keep further widening the gap between the rich and the poor. So, the NAM should focus on finding out ways to bridge the gap between the North and the South.

Further, the adverse impact of climate change poses a real threat next only to a nuclear war. Therefore, the main focus of community of nations has to shift to maintain ecological balance for sustainable global development.

The dawn of 1990s may witness a new power configuration in the world that may be characterized by multi-polarity. At the same time there is the speculation of a world being dominated by a single superpower, the USA as the USSR now is a dropout from the same. While the future political scenario is hard to be proejcted at present, the NAM in any eventuality would have to make a reassessment of its aims and strategies. The members would still need to have a collective bargaining power *vis-a-vis* the richer nations on many political issues. Besides, the resources of the Third World are still fragmented, dispersed, divided and therefore weak. If NAM fails to turn these resources of the Third World into a power base, they would be trivialised by the world's strong and powerful nations²¹. Perhaps, the realization that beginning from 1992 the world would have to face a unified European market, should now motivate the poorer states to come under the same platform to have collective economic bargaining power as well.

21. *Dhaka Courier*, June 22-28, 1990, Vol. 6, p. 25.

Concluding Remarks

The ninth summit of the non-aligned movement has taken place at a time when the world is in a process of radical political change. This is discernible in the new thinking of the two superpowers in their cooperative effort to remould and reconstruct the world politico-strategic scene. The superpower and East-West relationship has been dramatically changed and are progressively influencing the overall political situation of the world. As it appears, the vast majority of the member countries has rejected the old prejudice and dogma and opted for enduring cooperation and consultation. The ninth summit faced internal crisis which was pronounced during the Belgrade conference. And mostly it was ideological differences among the countries. The underlying reasons of this are : the movement has come to a cross road of history, a vast majority of the Third World countries is being greatly influenced by the two superpower relationship, the political rhetoric has been denounced and the political rivalry seems to be fading away. In this course of development, the NAM has an unique opportunity to concentrate more on issues related to economic and environmental which are its main concern at present. Thus, with the political and ideological war tending to be over, a wider scope has been created for rethinking of the role of Group of G-77 and NAM. For strengthening the case of the South a Secretariat which was long before proposed by the NAM may be established. This would institutionalize the economic and political movement of the Third World countries. An encouraging factor is that the ideological feud is now almost disappearing which may lead most of the nations of the Third World to concentrate upon their economic upliftment.

Most of the countries of the NAM are politically fragile and economically vulnerable as well as they are involved in intra and inter-state conflicts, which circumscribe the Third World option for mobilizing collective efforts to overcome the economic and political threats currently facing them. It may be mentioned here that now

the most imminent fear of the Third World countries is that the aid flow from developed countries may decline drastically due to its diversion to East Europe. Whether the Third World countries will be able to have shares in peace dividends resulting from disarmament at the global level is far from certain. Finally, the loss or gain of the Third World countries would depend on their ability to exploit the new opportunities provided by the recent change. With the emergence of the new global power configuration, it is the need of the time so that the non-aligned countries unite to strengthen the process of South-South and North-South cooperation to achieve the ultimate goal of NAM.