

Cold war era: Afro-Asia solidarity

Toshi Anand
Assistant Professor
J.D.V.M.P.G.College, Kanpur,U.P

After India attained freedom in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister realized that the traditional foreign policy choices of imperialism, balance of power, and isolationism didn't serve the majority of the newly independent countries. He said, "Every country has a right to choose its own path." The international politics got a new dimension by addition of the policy of non-alignment. The Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi (March 1947) and the conference of Afro-Asian Nations in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 proclaimed the determination of Asian and African countries to consolidate their independence and to pursue their own developmental paths. Most of the African and Asian countries affirmed the Five Principles (Panchsheel) at Bandung conference and later on first non-aligned conference at Belgrade in 1961 in which 25 countries participated. Among them were 6 African countries were: Liberia, Libya, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gold Coast (Ghana) and Sudan. These principles provided for peaceful co existence, mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non aggression, non – interference in each other's internal affairs, recognition of mutuality and equal benefit. The first summit of the Movement of non-aligned countries was convened by the leaders of India, Indonesia, Egypt, Syria and Yugoslavia. The movement contributed indisputably to the struggle for national independence and decolonization and gained immense diplomatic prestige. In the 1960s and 1970s, non-alignment included nearly all the Asian and African countries and became a platform of coordination to struggle for the respect of the economic and political rights of the developing world. In 1973 Algiers Conference, the concept of a "New International Economic order" was launched.

Sustainable economic growth and development could be pursued within the context of the NAM and within the axis of south cooperation.¹⁹ NAM addressed the asymmetries and imbalances of the global economy and it developed strategies to promote the economic and social empowerment of the south. The non-aligned nations adopted economic cooperation among themselves as an alternative as an alternative means to reduce

their dependence on the industrially advanced countries. The concept of south-south cooperation emerged as a universal principle, both as a strategy in support of the development efforts of the developing countries and as an instrument for promoting collective self-reliance in order to ensure system. It was realized that strengthening of south-south cooperation was necessary to create a more truly interdependent global economic order. The role of industrially more advanced countries like India became more crucial.

The issues which concerned NAM before cold war appeared to be more ideological and political. The issues, which concern the developing world, including NAM, remain the exploitative nature of natural resources by industrial and developed world. The deprivations and backwardness among the developing states were their major concerns. The NAM showed greater unity on these issues. NAM demanded that multilateral debts of low-income developing countries be written off. The issue of cooperation among south-south states had been further increased when various regional group formations have taken place both at international and regional level. Many of the issues with which the NAM has been concerned –poverty and the ‘gap between rich and poor, global security, environmental conservation have assumed even greater significance.

SOUTH –SOUTH COOPERATION IN THE 1990S THROUGH NAM , G-15, G-77 AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS:

The regional cooperation through NAM, G-77 and G-15 in south–south cooperation framework or interregional cooperation like ECOWAS provided India and these countries with newer opportunities and challenges. The regional groupings were working to promote sustained growth and balanced development of the region and of member states and have added a fresh impetus to growth of south –south cooperation. The activation of trade block like Southern African Development Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ETC. boosted expectations even further. Regional trade agreements helped countries built on their comparative advantages, sharpen their industrial efficiency and act as a launch pad to integrate into world economy. South - South cooperation as come to assume important role

in the third diplomacy in recent years. In order to become more independent and less reliant on the north, the south-south cooperation is vital for third world countries. Starting with NAM, UNCTAD-I formation of 'Group of 77' and the creation 'Group of 15' the least developed countries (LDCs) have moved a long ways and means to contribute to each others economic and social progress by effective utilization of complementariness between their respective resources and requirements.

Thus, today south-south cooperation is an economic necessity and is based on equality and free will of the third world countries. The agenda of out-south cooperation has increased manifold and has become broad base during course of its development, which covers not only economic issues but also all issues of social concerns. These include cooperation in agriculture, trade, banking, eradication of poverty and social injustices, human resources enhancement, regional and multilateral cooperation, technical cooperation etc. and many more.

G-15: At the initiative of Indi, a summit level growth for south-south consultation and cooperation known as G-15 was established by ninth NAM summit at Belgrade in 1989, Since 1990 the G-5. The goals of G-15 included fruitful debate on economic issues among developing countries which aimed at increasing the level of contacts among themselves, to bring comprehensive and intense cooperation in the economic sphere; to develop economies of member countries by exchange of information, technology, to forge unity and solidarity among themselves with a view to change the intransigent and hostile attitude and policies of developed nations and also to pressurize them for aforesaid all objectives.

G-15 reflected the quest of the developing countries to find ways and means of cooperation among themselves to mutual advantage. G-15 insisted on an equitable economic order, which will help combat unemployment and poverty. The main thrust of G-15 remained to develop trade contacts and also to promote technological knowhow among the member states. This group opposed to trade barriers among the states, which hamper the free flow. The G-15 committed to ply a catalytic role in fostering south-south cooperation. It may be explained that was established in the firm belief that there is a considerable potential for, greater and mutually beneficial cooperation among the developing countries of the south, particularly in the fields of trade, investment and technology. The group believes that South

–South cooperation is not just a slogan but a practically reality. G-77 was established on 15 June, 1964 by 77 developing countries at UNCTAD in Geneva. It is largest inter governmental Organization of developing counties in UN (United Nations) for promoting their collective economic interests.

GROUP OF 77: The non-aligned nations constitute the majority of members of the Group of 77 (presently 134 members including some non aligned states). They can continuously exert pressure on the international community to reform the prevailing economic and the monetary systems. Policy guidelines for the reinforcement of – collective self-reliance have been concretized by the NAM since the formation of the Group of 77. India played a prominent role in sponsoring economic cooperation as an integral program among the G-77 and non-aligned countries. India had laid greater stress on mutually beneficial economic relationship to underscore the significance of south-south collective self-reliance. The economic and technical cooperation among developing countries had thus evolved as a central concern of the G-77 and NAM. The third world countries had undergone a change during the, last few years and most important of all was emphasis on economic diplomacy. South-South cooperation had by now become the new mantra of the G-77 and NAM. India was also engaged in constructing relations of partnership and cooperation with regional organizations like the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and African Development Bank. India was an active participant at the partnership meeting of the UNECA at Addis Ababa in April 1996.

Special envoys of the ‘Prime Minister and the Minister of External Affairs were also deputed to represent India at the summit and ministerial meetings of the SADC in Lesotho in August 1996 and of ECOWAS in Abuja in July 1996 respectively. India also participated in the Tokyo International Conference of African Development (TICAD) at Abidjan in July 1996. Cooperation between India and the countries of Africa within (IOR-ARC) has constituted a positive example of South South cooperation and Afro-Asian solidarity with the aim of harnessing the rich natural resources and abundant productive capacities of the region for mutual benefit.

The OAU (Organization of African Unity) was formed in 1963 to promote unity and solidarity among African states. It played an important role in decolonization and end of apartheid in African states and India cooperated actively with OAU due to common causes. In 1993, it obtained permission from United Nations to develop a “Mechanism for conflict prevention, Management and Resolution.” OAU was transformed into AU (African Union) in Durban (South Africa) and India is actively participating with endeavors in developing Africa with AU.

CONCLUSION: India and Africa have also been close partners in the nonaligned movement. They stood together to safeguard the freedom of option in conducting foreign policy respectively. Nehru remarked: “We will not be involved in cold war operations; we have enough developmental problems of our own.” That freedom still underpins the interaction with the world, whether it pertains to political, security or economic choices. Both Africa and India have worked together based on their shared common views in several multilateral forums such as the UN, Common wealth, WTO, etc. to defend the interest of developing countries. However, new approaches are required to strengthen this to resolve problems of our countries. India has actively participated with Africa in the Zimbalist process of giving a new dynamism to the non-aligned movement and in preparing for the 50th anniversary of the 1955 Bandung Conference on Afro-Asian Solidarity. The new initiatives of IBSA (India-Brazil and South Africa) is in fact already giving a new dynamism to the voice of the developing countries by bringing them closer together. There is a drive towards regional cooperation in Africa that reflects that reflects the natural urge of the African Countries towards their economic and, eventually, political integration. There is also the important need to address the problem’ of market fragmentation. The East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), common market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic cooperation of West African State (ECOWAS) are indicators of this trend. While these may be nascent regional groupings, their agenda and ambition should assure their long future as building blocks of Pan-African Cooperation. For thousands of years, the Indian Ocean served as a medium for cultural and commercial interaction between Africa and India. An Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional cooperation (IORARC) has recently started functioning seriously.

Besides, a stage has now been reached where the future visions of India and Africa are converging rapidly. One of the main roles of India's foreign policy under Jawaharlal Nehru was to seek a voice in the Council of the world for the newly independent states of India and Africa. Historical relations between India and African countries has helped in strengthening the determining the future trajectory of ties between India and Africa. The past has enriched the present and reinvigorated the bright future of engagement between India and Africa.

Book References:

Babbage, Ross and Sandge Gordon (eds.) 1992: *India; s Strategic Future : Regional State or Global Power* , Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Chacko Priya (2012) : *Indian Foreign Policy: The Politics of Post Colonial Identity from 1947 to 2004*, London and New York: Rutledge.

Buzan , Barry (1987) : *People, States and Fear : The National Security problem in International Relations*, New Delhi : Trans Asia Publishers.

Biju, M.R. (2000) *India's Foreign Policy: Towards a New Millennium*, New Delhi: National Publishing House.

Gupta, M.G. (1987) : *Rajiv Gandhi's Foreign Policy: A Study in Continuity and Change*, Agra, M.G. Publishers.