

## The relevance of the Non-Aligned

The tenth Non-Aligned Movement summit was held in the midst of a raging debate over whether NAM, in the present context, can be considered a valid movement. The draft declaration, prepared prior to the summit and since amended, reflected this debate. The declaration tried to dispel this doubt while admitting that “the demise of the Cold War and East-West polarity have given rise to doubts in some quarters concerning the continued validity and relevance of non-alignment.”

Although the concept of non-alignment arose in the postwar era when the United States and Soviet Union were confronting each other—which with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, is no longer the state of affairs—the debate fails to take into account all the dynamics, especially the fact that, although the idea of non-alignment came into existence at the height of the Cold War, it did not arise because of it. The reality is, as the Bandung Conference in 1955 clearly laid out, that non-alignment is essential in order to maintain independence, sovereignty, and equality of states. The issue of “sovereign equality” is also the basis of the United Nations Charter and U.N. membership. It is the basis of the centuries-old concept of sovereign nation-states. It is this age-old, accepted foundation principle of the state system, affirmed by international law, that is increasingly neither observed nor respected, except in rhetoric.

The 10 principles which came out of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia in April 1955 contained what was relevant then, and what is even more relevant today. The declaration urged the nations to have respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations; to give recognition to the equality of all races and

to the equality of all nations, large and small; and to abstain from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.

The idea of mutual cooperation, which later came to be known as South-South cooperation, first came to light at Bandung. Calling for mutual assistance in technical training, scientific education, and establishment of multi-lateral trade and payments arrangements, the Bandung Conference urged the attending nations to establish national and regional banks and insurance companies.

There is no question that the basic principles on which the NAM was established remain far from being practiced in today's unipolar world. An Indian journalist put it best: “The West did not disband NATO because the Soviet threat from the East had collapsed, New threats have been invented and new missions are being sought for the western alliance. The same holds true for NAM.”

What are these new threats and new missions in the case of the Non-Aligned Movement? King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan has proposed that, at a time when economic groupings are replacing military blocs, the role of NAM in bringing about the establishment of a new international economic order assumes even greater importance. Clearly, the most striking common factor of the majority of NAM member nations is their economic backwardness and dependent status in international economic relations.

In addition, NAM members are facing new threats, expressed by Malaysia, Indonesia, and India. Leaders from the three countries describe a concerted campaign by the U.S. and Europe to erode national sovereignty and intervene into the affairs of developing nations, by means of supposedly defending human rights, democracy, and the environment. Charges of human rights violations often come from reports prepared by non-governmental organizations, sponsored by politically and financially powerful academic foundations, which become the basis for governmental intervention later.

who gave us birth.’ ”

Rao added that 30 years ago, “we were also at a turning point of history—the world then seemed to teeter at the edge of a nuclear catastrophe.” The Indian prime minister went on to quote the words of one of the fathers of India and the Non-Aligned Movement, the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, describing the world as he saw it in 1961, and noted the almost eerie similarity to the current period. Nehru had said: “The most fundamental fact of the world today is the development of new and mighty forces. We have to think in terms of the new world. There is no doubt that imperialism of old-style colonialism will vanish. Yet, the new forces may

help others to dominate in other ways over us and, certainly, over the underdeveloped and backward. We have to build in our own countries societies where freedom is real. Freedom is essential because freedom will give us strength and enable us to build prosperous societies.” In the current period, Rao said, “we have to learn to scrutinize every advice. . . . There are other dangers lurking in the shadows—dangers to which developing societies are particularly prone.”

### Suharto's reform proposals

President Suharto's speech on behalf of the host nation was carefully worded with constructive concepts. He pro-