

NON-ALLIANCE POLICY AS A PRINCIPLE OF SHAPING THE NATIONAL SECURITY WITH A FOCUS ON THE CASE OF AZERBAIJAN

Khayal ISKANDAROV IBRAHIM*
Vugar MAMMADZADA MAHAMMADALI*
Sadi SADIYEV SALEH**

*War College of the Armed Forces, Republic of Azerbaijan

**International Military Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Defense,
Republic of Azerbaijan

***Abstract:** Non-alignment, both as a foreign policy perspective of some particular states is a critical factor of contemporary international relations. The paper focuses on the history of non-alignment policy during the Cold War and after its demise. The evolution of Non Aligned Movement is delineated, the challenges are highlighted and prospects are estimated. The article looks at the current state of the NAM in the face of rapidly changing international order. The paper presents the comparative analysis of Azerbaijan's security policy as a country pursuing non-alignment policy.*

***Keywords:** non-alliance policy, Non Aligned Movement, balance, neutral, organization.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Conducting collaborative struggle against fascism and militarism allied countries did not continue their cooperation after the Second World War. The economically and militarily-politically active country, USA was claiming the world leadership. USSR in its turn was trying to carry out a

communist revolution in Europe. And this confrontation between two different ideologies formed the struggle between two sides vying for dominance, exploiting every opportunity to exert undue influence especially on European countries [1]. The emergence of a bipolar world and the formation of two military blocks (NATO and the Warsaw Pact) after

the Second World War ushered in an intense rivalry between different countries. Finding an effective grand strategy to survive between two hostile powers inevitably requires a balanced policy. In this context, the underdeveloped countries felt the need to join efforts for the common defense of their interests, to strengthen their independence and sovereignty and to express a strong commitment with peace by declaring themselves as “non-aligned” from either of the two nascent military blocks [2]. This need ended up with the formation of new organization, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The stated dominant objective of the NAM was to facilitate and provide a viable platform for countries, which did not want to align themselves militarily with the two Cold War era superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union [3]. It in the past enabled the NAM aspired countries to avoid the limitations and entanglements of other alliances. In fact, non-alignment for those countries was a strategy for survival as a free and independent sovereign nation. The NAM was born at a tumultuous time when a plethora of countries was striving to get rid of

the colonial rule. Moreover, the arms race threatened the planet as never before.

The term non-alignment was first coined by George Liska. Who used to describe it the policies of the states, which decided not to join either of the two power blocs in world politics of post war years. George Liska was the first to come close to accepting the term of Non-alignment, in a really scientific manner [4]. The decision to adopt non-alignment was not merely an idealistic dream of neutrality, but was, rather, based on a realistic assessment particular countries’ geopolitical situation. It gave those countries room to maneuver according to their own interest rather than allowing them to become confined within the limitations of a Cold War alliance. Hindsight reveals the consequences of this approach.

2. NON-ALLIANCE POLICY: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Non-Aligned Movement was founded by the countries that wanted to resist the efforts of NATO and Warsaw Pact to enlist them in the Cold War. Despite the criticism and

skepticism of some politicians and experts, such as John Foster Dulles and Henry Kissinger, nonalignment functioned throughout the Cold War both as a movement and as a strategy [5]. With the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, the détente between former adversaries rendered the NAM useless, where the United States is considered the only superpower. However, approximately thirty years after the end of the Cold War, the Non-Aligned Movement still exists. Is it considered the remnant of the Cold war or today's geopolitical situation also necessitates its existence? NATO was also deemed the vestige of the bygone era, but later proved its relevance, even importance right after 1991 Rome summit, through adopting its new Strategic Concept, which ushered in the whole transformation of the Alliance. The international system or, to be precise, the dynamics of the new world order are constantly changing. This also justifies the need to continue because the system could end up with several rival blocs or power centers in the future. In order to continue and be relevant and efficient, the movement must be revamped and reshaped [6]. Today, the main purpose of the

NAM is to serve as a mechanism aimed at applying the principles of international law. The movement believes that each country is a sovereign and independent state and everything must be accorded with the status regardless of the size of that country. In order to shed light on it we should hark back to Bandung conference when core principles of NAM were adopted for the first time. The Bandung principles include [2]:

1. Respect of fundamental human rights and of the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. Respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

3. Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.

4. Non-intervention or non-interference into the internal affairs of another -country.

5. Respect of the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

6. a. Non-use of collective defense pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers.

b. Non-use of pressures by any country against other countries.

7. Refraining from carrying out or threatening to carry out aggression, or from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.

8. Peaceful solution of all international conflicts in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

9. Promotion of mutual interests and of cooperation.

10. Respect of justice and of international obligations.

We apparently see that the Bandung principles state that member countries will refrain from using force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country, settle all international disputes by peaceful means and promote mutual interests and cooperation. In a nutshell it contributes to world peace through creating a third group to water down the tension between different blocs. If the members of this Movement had taken sides in the Cold War between the Eastern and the Western blocs, the war would have been more deepened than it was. Through

declaring their non-alignment policy, the countries participating in the NAM avoided being the playgrounds of the confrontation of the superpowers. For instance, through pursuing non-alignment policy India, Brazil Australia and New Zealand managed to survive unscathed unlike Afghanistan, Vietnam, Oman and Korea, those countries suffered most. Because of the positive neutrality that the Movement exhibited, the world has become a more peaceful place to live in [7]. NAM countries have been immensely contributing troops to UN and NATO operations when the objectives coincide.

But it is no exception that sometimes malign ambitions (because of diverse and competing interests of member states) overcome the founding principles of NAM. Apart from the proclivity towards either blocs (Western or Eastern) some members have even gone to war with one another (for instance, India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq). As well as, the global powers such as the United States, EU, Russia and China have resources to limit NAM's ability to impact global trends or to enforce its own resolutions. NAM does not have any viable tools and

internal mechanisms to enforce UN resolution, which have been pending for years. The NAM has never assumed any mediating role between the countries which are in conflict with each other and has not defined such a role for itself. That is the reason the Movement is broadly accepted impotent in the face of political instability and border disputes amongst member states. Continued ties with their former colonial masters in some countries (control and hegemony of external forces) impose undue limit on their independent policies. NAM is a coalition of nations seeking consensus - the closest possible convergence of views on matters of mutual interest. However, sometimes a conflict of interest and ideological difference among leaders are inevitable, and of course, it wreaks havoc on the efficiency of the whole Movement. And these are the most sobering challenge for member states looming over future years. In spite of it, the NAM could have a larger role in the future. The Movement has influenced international thinking on many issues including apartheid, decolonization, wars of national liberation, withdrawal of foreign

forces from fledgling countries and sovereignty over natural resources. Even though it does not rule out the conflict, but reduces its likelihood. Non-Aligned Movement affords its members a forum where they can discuss their common problems and work out strategies to tackle international complications of peace, security, development, terrorism, human rights and environmental safety. It is important to recognize that when the NAM was founded its principles did not seek to form a third or alternate bloc in order to serve as a counterbalance against the influence of the superpowers [8]. The bottom line is, we have to perceive the NAM as a movement not an organization which leads to more equitable, peaceful, prosperous and secure world.

3. THE EXPERIENCE OF AZERBAIJAN AS A COUNTRY PURSUING NON-ALLIANCE POLICY

Geopolitical realities are what largely shape a state's attitude towards others. The geopolitics of the South Caucasus is complicated, volatile and fragile. Three independent countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia and

Armenia) once were a part of the same empire. After the demise of the Soviet Union, all three countries got their independence. The paths of the three South Caucasus republics have been different ever since in terms of their geo-political orientations, with Armenia being a CSTO member, Azerbaijan pursuing an independent policy regarding global powers, and Georgia, apparently, demonstrating a pro-NATO position [9]. The lack of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia's increased assertiveness in the region and the absence of a NATO presence are central elements in understanding the current situation in the region [10].

In 1993 when national leader Heydar Aliyev came to power, Azerbaijan was teetering on the brink of civil war [1]. The mixture of internal politics with geopolitics had made the conduct of foreign policy much more complex. Having gone from a checkered past to a democracy, Azerbaijan was struggling to institutionalize democratic changes. Then President Heydar Aliyev established the balanced foreign policy in order to get around the looming civil war in

the country. Today his balancing act is evident in relations with the West, Russia and Iran, which aims to avoid antagonizing global and regional powers.

Today Azerbaijan is in a situation of war. 20 percent of its territory has been occupied by Armenia, which is the member of CSTO. However, it in fact does not intimidate Baku. Because an occupied part is an integral part of Azerbaijan and CSTO does not have any right to meddle in, if a war breaks out again. Azerbaijan's rising global profile is reshaping its approach towards major partnerships in the changing global order. Azerbaijan is showing signs of pursuing strategic autonomy separately from non-alignment since it has all resources to sustain this approach. The country benefits from utilizing different partnerships rather than shunning them. Azerbaijan needs deeper engagement with its friends and partners if it is to develop advantage in its dealings with its adversaries. Azerbaijan is today well positioned to define its bilateral relationships on its own terms without political and ideological crutches from other countries.

A non-aligned approach to relations with global and regional powers has been in practice long before Azerbaijan's formal integration in 2011. It makes sense to differentiate three phases of Azerbaijan's foreign policy after it gained the independence for the second time: 1991-1993, 1993-2003, 2003-present). The overridingly important objective goal in the next two phases was and is to preserve Azerbaijan's independence and make it a leading country in the region, as well as increase its role in the international arena. Thus, Azerbaijan's non-alignment is an upshot of pragmatic foreign policy rooted in ground realities. Rather than representing a drastic shift in its external orientation, Azerbaijan's membership in NAM is a natural extension of the "balanced foreign policy" introduced by the national leader Heydar Aliyev and is successfully conducted by the incumbent government. This essentially informal realist approach was initiated in the context of the severe challenges posed by domestic instability, encirclement by hostile regional powers and the loss of sovereignty over nearly one-fifth of

the national territory to Armenian occupying forces [8]. Azerbaijan remains neutral and judges every issue on its merit. Azerbaijan does not allow others to use its territory for any hostile activities against its neighbors or any other countries. Not aligning with any of the superpower military alliances is one of the stated objectives of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. The moment it takes sides, there will be a serious trouble. In a nutshell, Azerbaijan's non-alignment policy is predicated on the principles like peaceful coexistence with neighbors, nonparticipation in military pacts and no granting of military bases to the great powers. As national leader Heydar Aliyev mentioned: "You can't be friends with some countries and enemies with others despite the fact that this is the way most countries function. Azerbaijan doesn't want to be an enemy with any country. At the same time, we will not become victim to another country's policies. Azerbaijan has its own independent policy. We are developing good relations with Europe and America and seek to benefit from their experiences while preserving our own national identity and resources" [8].

Some countries have argued that non-alignment requires equidistance from the superpowers, but that is a minority view. The reality is that there is no concept of an equal relationship in global geopolitics. It has been broadly accepted that a tendency towards any superpower (US or Russia in Azerbaijan's case) does not disqualify a nation from membership in the NAM. Participating in the NAM obviously means non-alignment with military blocs. Some members of the NAM are involved in alignment with any other superpower, such as US, Russia and China in pursuit of deepening their bilateral relations in the changing global arena. For instance, Belarus is a member of CSTO, India and South Africa are in BRICS, Uzbekistan is in SCO. Apart from these all African countries participating in the NAM are the members of AU at the same time. Non-alignment is not an ideology but a smorgasbord of positions, which have varied over time [11]. Azerbaijan has tacitly supported NATO while strategic objectives chime with each other's and contradicted the policy measures what it found irrelevant (for instance Kosovo issue). Azerbaijanis is was

one of active members of the anti-terrorist coalition, dedicates certain amount of troops to these operations. Between one third and 40 percent of US supplies to Afghanistan went through Azerbaijan or its air space [12]. Then, Azerbaijan eschewed imposing sanctions on Iran while the whole Europe did it even though there has been no security threat posed to Azerbaijan. On the other hand, it is abundantly clear that siding with the West it opposed to some of the moves that Russia and Iran made (regarding Russo-Georgian and Syrian wars and Crimea crisis). The objectives of Azerbaijan's security policy are to preserve its independence, maintain peace, contribute to stability and security in the region and strengthen international peace and security. Azerbaijan as a NAM country pursues a policy of non-participation in military alliances. This security policy, enabling our country to remain neutral in the event of conflicts, serves us well. For instance choosing Baku to arrange the meetings between the US and Russian (February 2017), as well as NATO and Russian (September 2017) military leaders was not a coincidence. Azerbaijan's multivector policy enables it to earn

friends in an international level. Azerbaijan's membership in the NAM provides it with a formal foundation for its independent foreign policy that potentially reinforces its leadership position within and beyond the South Caucasus region [8]. Looking to the future, it is more apparent than ever that security is more than the absence of military conflict. Threats to peace and the security of the country can best be averted by acting concertedly and in cooperation with other countries. Azerbaijan will chair the NAM in 2019-2022. The XVIII Summit of the NAM will be held in Baku. It has a symbolic meaning, because exactly 30 years after the 1989 Belgrade Summit Europe will have an opportunity of hosting the heads of the states and governments participating in the NAM. Through holding this remarkable Summit and assuming the chairmanship for the next three years Azerbaijan exhibits the signs of allegiance to the objective and principles of the NAM and it will certainly contribute to international peace, security, and cooperation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The world again faces convoluted crises identical to Cold

War era threatening development and security. The bipolar international system (so called "Second Cold War") brings the NAM's founding principles to the fore again. Now more than ever, NAM's existence is vital to contributing to world peace. Non-alignment, as a foreign policy instrument ensures multilateralism, equality and mutual understanding in maintaining peace and security and promotes the needs of member countries to effectively deal with the new global realities and challenges. Today, Azerbaijan's neutrality consists of refraining from taking sides, both militarily and politically, in case of armed conflict. The neutrality for Azerbaijan is a part of the national identity, every debate on international involvement. Azerbaijan's membership in the NAM therefore provides it with a formal foundation for its independent foreign policy that potentially reinforces its leadership position within and beyond the South Caucasus region. It has the opportunity to pursue any economic, political, cultural and social goals of its choice. It does not expect any form of interference from any quarters especially from any of the two world powers, the

US and Russia. It is however, erroneous to assume that only the small states need and could use the NAM as a platform. Non alignment does not mean isolation. Azerbaijan is an enthusiastic partner of NATO and maintains warm relations with both Russia and Iran. The growing partnerships with other Alliances do not forestall the engagement with these countries. Azerbaijan will not be cajoled, enticed or coerced into actions that would jeopardize its standing as a leading country in the South Caucasus region.

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