STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What does India’s Shift from Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment mean?

International Relations

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What does India’s Shift from Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment mean?

Meaning of the Shift

Non-Alignment (Cold War)

- No formal military alliance with any power bloc (US / USSR)
- Focus on strategic autonomy

Multi-Alignment (Post-Cold War)

- Simultaneous engagement with multiple major powers
- Issue-based, interest-driven partnerships

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Reasons for the Shift

- End of Cold War (1991): Bipolar world collapsed
- Globalisation: Economic integration became priority
- Rise of China: Need for flexible balancing strategy
- Energy & Defence Needs: Dependence on diverse partners
- Multipolar World: Power dispersed across regions

Features of India’s Multi-Alignment

- Cooperation with competing powers simultaneously
- Avoidance of exclusive military alliances
- Focus on national interest over ideology
- Strategic autonomy retained, not abandoned

Examples of Multi-Alignment in Practice

- With USA: QUAD, defence agreements (LEMOA, COMCASA)
- With Russia: Defence supplies, energy, nuclear cooperation
- With China: Trade relations, BRICS, SCO (despite tensions)
- With Europe: Trade, technology, climate cooperation

- Global South: Leadership through G20, NAM, Voice of Global South

Non-Alignment vs Multi-Alignment

Non-alignment → Distance from blocs : Multi-alignment → Engagement with all blocs

Benefits of Multi-Alignment

- Greater diplomatic flexibility
- Access to technology, capital, markets
- Better strategic balancing in Indo-Pacific
- Enhanced global stature

Challenges of Multi-Alignment

- Managing contradictions (US–Russia, US–China)
- Risk of pressure from major powers
- Maintaining credibility with all sides

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