



Pandit Nehru and the Non-Aligned Movement: Foundations, Principles, and Impact on Cold War Diplomacy

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the emergence, development, and institutionalization of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) during the Cold War era. It analyzes the historical, ideological, and strategic foundations of non-alignment and highlights Nehru's contribution in shaping an independent foreign policy for newly decolonized nations. The paper argues that non-alignment was not merely a policy of neutrality but a comprehensive framework based on sovereign equality, strategic autonomy, anti-colonialism, peaceful coexistence, and independent decision-making. It explores the influence of domestic imperatives such as economic development, nation-building, and security concerns on India's foreign policy choices. The study further evaluates Nehru's leadership in major international forums, including the Bandung Conference, Afro-Asian solidarity initiatives, United Nations diplomacy, and nuclear disarmament efforts. Through an examination of key events such as the Congo Crisis and the Sino-Indian conflict, the paper assesses the practical challenges and limitations of non-alignment. The findings suggest that Nehru's vision provided developing nations with an alternative diplomatic path amid Cold War bipolarity and laid the foundation for the principle of strategic autonomy that continues to influence India's foreign policy. Despite criticisms and changing global realities, the intellectual and institutional legacy of Nehru within NAM remains significant in contemporary international relations.

Keywords- Jawaharlal Nehru; Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); Cold War Diplomacy; Strategic Autonomy; Sovereign Equality; Anti-Colonialism; Bandung Conference; India's Foreign Policy.

1. Introduction

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which emerged from the decolonization process in the 1950s, became an important feature of international relations during the Cold War. India played a crucial role in its establishment and evolution, with Jawaharlal Nehru recognized as one of its founding fathers. Throughout its history, India's approach to Non-Alignment has received both support and criticism within the academic and policy communities. While its fundamental principles of sovereignty, equality, and mutual respect for internal affairs drove India's diplomatic approach, the political context influencing several decisions has been overlooked. It was not merely an idealistic or value-based exercise. Non-Alignment derived from political-economic imperatives and security considerations relevant to the survival and socio-economic development of the newly independent country.

India's active engagement and leadership in the formation of the movement from 1950 to

1964 constitute an important chapter in the evolution of Non-Alignment. The relevance of Non-Alignment as a policy adopted by newly independent states during the Cold War era is widely acknowledged. Many key events shaping India's socio-political dynamics laid the foundations for this engagement, influencing its approach towards this concept. (S. Singh, 2014)

2. Historical Context: India, Nehru, and the Emergence of a New Foreign Policy

When India gained independence in 1947, its Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru found a world alive with anticolonial movements, yet still marked by the divisions of empire. He strove to forge a new nation from many peoples, respecting domestic diversity while projecting abroad through a united front the ideal of universal brotherhood. Nehru believed colonialism, despite its formal end, still imprisoned much of Africa and Asia. After World War II, the ideological conflict between two new power centres the United States and the Soviet Union had acquired the urgency of an emerging global order. Even in mid-century, much of the world remained untouched by either of them, and the two competing systems the capitalist West and the communist East still sought to recruit other nations for their designs. To Nehru, this world represented still another predicament, with a pressing choice demanded of countries freshly liberated of colonial rule. A hesitant choice, however, could turn colonialism into neo-colonialism.

At times, Nehru expressed acute awareness of the predicament facing millions of fellow citizens newly freed from colonial domination. He earnestly believed that mere political independence, without economic, social, and cultural independence, would usher in a new form of servitude. Accommodation to any foreign power, through alignment, risked perpetuating the old and familiar predicament of subordination. As a mature statesman, Nehru viewed choice on the international stage as an extension of his domestic concerns. Where relevant, Nehru's foreign policy could reflect the exact reverse of his personal situation. He was a native of the British Empire, recently liberated from colonial bondage, yet one of the first to arrive at an independent judgment on the relationship, without needing to side with either colonizer or colonized.

3. Conceptual Foundations of Non-Alignment

As India emerged from colonial rule, three critical factors shaped its quest for a unique international position of non-alignment: first, the nation's immediate geo-strategic situation and the potential of external powers to thwart national efforts; second, a profound anti-colonial commitment including to its own erstwhile oppressor—derived both from the democratically legitimized national liberation struggle and from the anti-colonial solidarity sought internationally; and third, the development needs of a largely agrarian and underdeveloped economy and a desire to choose freely between competing economic systems (S. Singh, 2014). Nehru's non-alignment cannot, therefore, be understood adequately as mere geopolitical choice. Rather, it embodies a blend of pragmatism (seeking to retain freedom of choice, while preserving peace and security) with an anti-colonial commitment (to avoid appealing to the superpowers, an imperial matrix of domination).

As a leading voice for non-alignment, India articulated a deeper theoretical elaboration of international relations than hitherto publicly debated on the self-proclaimed world stage—namely, that international polity comprises neighbourhoods and not just states; that external suzerainty over any neighbourhood impairs a state's freedom of choice; and that international dominance over a neighbourhood deters national development (Abdullah, 2013). The lack of such theoretical elucidation disorients the "International Relations" discipline even today. Yet Nehru sought neither formulation nor theoretical debate. His conception does habitually forgo linearity, pivoting in pluri-linear fashion instead, moving freely across State-formation and Economic-development and serially shifting among Temperature-stages and Longitudes.

3.1. Ideational Underpinnings: Pragmatism, Anti-Colonialism, and Sovereign Choice

As an anti-colonialist, Indian Independence Leader, and the first Prime Minister of India, Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru felt the need to devise a foreign policy that would suit an independent India in pursuit of national economic and social development, and that would not bring his country under the dominance of any one of the Great Powers. Nehru's foreign policy was firmly founded on the principle of Sovereign Equality and Non-Alignment. India's post-colonial situation must not only be understood in its local context. It must also be placed in the global context of decolonization of Asia and Africa. Nehru's foreign policy, indeed, went beyond India's own needs and became instrumental in shaping of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the global arena.

The crux of Nehru's non-aligned policy demands accuracy to distinguish it from India's neutralist stature in the bipolar world during the Cold War period from the mid-1940s up to the end of the 1960s. The statement of neutrality, based on a universe of two forces or camps a Realpolitik outlook could hardly escape the pressure of colonialism/militarism concept. It will be more appropriate to use the concept of Non-Alignment (S. Singh, 2014) which Indian leaders of the time coined in the early 1950s. Nehru's policy of Non-Alignment must thus be illustrated from the time of Indian independence (1947) to the policies that led to the formation of the NAM in 1961.

Nehru's exposure to Western and Eastern thoughts through extensive writings and reading of classics of world literature throughout his life shaped his policy. The study of Indian civilization, history and culture and encounters of civilizations played the key role in shaping the thought. Nehru combined many sources of influences and inspirations selectively and systemically to formulate his own philosophy of life such as the theory of knowledge, idealism, socialism, pragmatism and techniques of political science with impartiality. The pragmatism of his philosophy is reflected in the concept of Non-Alignment.

Non-Alignment incorporates complementary and supplementary ideas some of which utmost towards peace and harmony, humanism, social justice, equality, empowerment of deprived and underprivileged; openness, pluralism, and recognition of diversity and differences of societies, ethnicity and people; honour and dignity of life, humanity and identity; and the sanctity of human elements, human beings social on one hand, and social justice and economic development, equality and standard of life on the other hand which are constitutively incorporated into the body of doctrine and ideals.

3.2. Strategic Calculus: Security, Economic Development, and Autonomy

The immediate concerns of Nehru and independent India were rooted in the quest for security against military aggression, the will to promote economic growth and development, and the desire to attain genuine national autonomy in decision-making affairs. The trauma of the partition and the birth of an independent nation-state subject to external violations of its territorial integrity demanded urgent attention in formulating both domestic and foreign policies. The external strategic environment at that time was one in which the newly independent nations faced military threats and invasions from their neighboring countries owing to their inherent weakness and vulnerability. In India's case, it had already incurred violations of its sovereignty from bordering countries. The urgent imperative for security, therefore, had first priority in its approach to foreign policy. Consequently, it had already declared that India would not only survive as an independent nation, but would help humanity save itself from impending doom through collaboration with other nations. The quest for social, economic and national reconstruction in the face of foreign threat of military intervention was therefore heralded and promoted as an essential step towards preventing an impending doomsday for humanity.

The necessities of nation-building in a multi-national, multi-religious and multi-lingual polity in the immediate aftermath of partition continued to dominate Nehru's attention at both the domestic and foreign levels (D. Muraviev et al, 2022). The absence of colonial rule made the economic development and upliftment of the masses an independent choice for the country. Therefore, Nehru categorically and unequivocally declared that there would not be any outside interference or dictation in the choice of the country's developmental model. Hence, development of the country remained an individual national pursuit untrammelled by outside influences or interventions, and assistance from nations was welcome as long as it respected India's independence of choices and decisions—not as a condition with stipulations attached.

4. Nehru's Leadership and the Early NAM Trajectory

Nehru's leadership played a significant role in shaping the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and its early trajectory (Abdullah, 2013). The movement emphasised political efforts to find peaceful solutions to conflicts and aimed for a just and equitable international economic order. NAM was successful in keeping member countries from becoming involved in Cold War ideological conflicts. After the Cold War, NAM challenged multilateralism and called for reforms in the United Nations, rejecting unilateral actions and force. The movement faced difficulties in redefining its role, especially since the idea of non-alignment was often interpreted as neutrality, whereas leaders like Nehru maintained that non-alignment did not equate to passivity. Nevertheless, NAM grew into a powerful initiative contributing to world peace and retaining a neutral stance during Cold War tensions.

Emerging from British rule in 1947 amid the Cold War, India sought to avoid entanglements in other countries' foreign policies. Nehru perceived a danger of new imperialism arising from the post-war American economy and thus adopted a policy of neutrality and non-alignment. The country de facto supported the Soviet Union and China, with Nehru's efforts to build good relations with Mao Tse-Tung often blurring neutrality into alignment. Despite border conflicts with China, Nehru viewed the country as a peaceful nation misunderstood by the West. The United States condemned India's neutral stance as immoral and regarded it as a fellow democracy with shared historical struggles. Many U.S. officials predicted India would eventually align with the West, but this expectation remained unmet (S. Singh, 2014).

4.1. Founding Moments: Bandung and the Framing of Non-Alignment

A growing interest in forging a third path of diplomatic engagement encompassed multiple visions and policy approaches that were neither aligned with the West nor the Soviet bloc. The 1955 Bandung Conference offered an opportunity to reflect on the specific characteristics of this third path by considering Nehru's approach to political thought and diplomatic practice in the post-colonial world. The joint statement from the 1954 Tito-Nehru talks has been recognized as a foundational document of the Non-Aligned Movement (Vucetic, 2017). The ten principles of peaceful coexistence articulated at Bandung captured the spirit of solidarity and fraternity that Nehru and the Afro-Asian countries sought to inject into international relations (Abdullah, 2013). Yet instead of imparting rigid doctrines or immutable tenets, Nehru framed non-alignment as a sovereign choice, a voluntary and independent posture that offered the maximum scope for diverse solutions tailored to the specific requirements of each State.

4.2. Policy Instruments: Diplomacy, Non-Alignment as Practice, and Multialign Negotiations

The Indian government and its leaders framed non-alignment as a foreign policy that offered the possibility of a peaceful, development-oriented path to modernization. Nehru personally championed the NAM during its formative years and emerged as what one scholar has called "the initial leader of the movement" (Abdullah, 2013). Throughout his tenure, the Prime Minister strongly advocated for these principles through the medium of diplomacy

and through multialign negotiations in which government representatives from multiple states simultaneously pursued similar objectives with more than one third party.

5. Internal and External Challenges to Non-Alignment

The global landscape that enveloped the newly independent Indian nation in 1947 was characterised by increasing cold war tensions and conflict between the USA and USSR, which continued till the fall of the USSR. India abstained from openly aligning with either of the superpowers at the height of the cold war by adopting a policy termed “non-alignment” (Abdullah, 2013). Non-alignment provided considerable diplomatic scope and encouraged India to strengthen its bilateral ties with both superpowers, while still championing the decolonisation process in other parts of the world without major power intervention. The non-alignment policy sought to advance peace, cooperation and development in ‘countries on the path to building self-sufficiency’. The 1955 conference in Bandung saw the core principles of non-alignment crystallised and subsequently endorsed by leaders of sixteen Afro-Asian countries.

5.1. Domestic Imperatives: Development, Nehruvian Modernization, and Public Opinion

To bring about India’s socio-economic transformation according to his vision of Nehruvian modernization, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru needed external economic, technical, and institutional support from the West (S. Singh, 2014). Hence, after independence Nehru’s new foreign policy was primarily guided by the nation’s urgent domestic imperatives. Nehru’s commitment to non-alignment was often projected publicly as an expression of India’s embedded tradition of neutrality, as enunciated in the panchsheel, and as a deliberate non-acceptance of the constraints of the bipolar world order. However, in reality, it was heavily influenced by the imperatives of modernization. He frequently emphasized that non-alignment was necessary to enable India to devote full attention to attaining the goals set in the First Five-Year Plan.

5.2. Global Pressures: Bipolarity, Non-Alignment in Practice, and Shifts in Alignment

During the mid-1950s, external circumstances increasingly tested India’s commitment to non-alignment. In particular, the rising pressure of bipolarity and the growing identification of non-alignment with the Soviet bloc prompted Nehru to reassert the principles of India’s foreign policy. The frustrations associated with these constraints highlighted the distinction between non-alignment as doctrine and non-alignment in practice. Despite a closely similar trajectory illustrated by domestic imperatives and regional responsibilities, the relevance of the Indian experience to the case of Algeria differed substantially both in terms of the nature of external involvement and in the timing of intervention—factors that help account for the designated mid-point in the Nehruvian sequence.

Bipolarity took on added salience following the earliest supra-regional instances of non-alignment, when the United States and the Soviet Union engaged actively in the negotiation and exploitation of bilateral treaties of assistance. The Amsterdam Treaty with Pakistan represented a particularly conspicuous example of the first of these tendencies. At about the same time, both blocs responded to the forward movement of the Algerian nationalist movement with extensive supplies of arms, economic assistance, and political support. The Indian prerogative of non-alignment in respect to such overtly regional situations became increasingly tenuous, yet precedent was established for the application of the concept to peripheral dilemmas—whether in the form of sporadic active intervention on behalf of one of the contending parties or of protracted passive support of perceived aspirations on the part of both (S. Singh, 2014).

6. Non-Alignment in Practice: Case Studies from the Nehru Era

Despite significant pressures—internal and external—Jawaharlal Nehru successfully

retained and practiced the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) throughout his leadership. Nehru aligned with the intentions of Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who, in 1942, described defence as a numeric problem: “you can only resist them with the same instruments he uses: guns, money, men; or with arguments.” These “arguments” included peace and cooperation in all forms. While endorsing the principles of freedom, equality, and peace, Nehru naturally highlighted socio-economic development, because a prosperous country is less likely to engage in war. Developing nations therefore acquired a special status; those relatively well off but also beset by underdevelopment and impoverishment, or those sufficiently developed and peaceful but having themselves undergone violent upheaval, remained equally privileged, since peaceful growth goes hand in hand with human dignity. Accordingly, every Non-Aligned nation retained—indeed, was encouraged to maintain—freedom to choose its political, economic, social, and technological policies, including alliances. (Abdullah, 2013)

6.1. The Congo Crisis and Afro-Asian Solidarity

The United Nations operations undertaken between 1960 and 1964 during the Congo Crisis, marked by unprecedented UN Security Council involvement into internal conflicts, became an emblematic case of the non-aligned approach and profoundly affected Nehru’s vision of Afro-Asian and non-aligned solidarity (Abdullah, 2013). The crisis emerged after the Congo gained independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960, yet colonial legacies persisted through the economic domination by multinational corporations, especially the powerful Union Minière du Haut-Katanga. Soon after independence, a faction in the southern province of Katanga, supported by Western interests, proclaimed secession from the Congo. The envisaged non-aligned solution promoting an African leader to mediate a settlement—promptly crumbled amid Western-sponsored killings of the nationalist PM Patrice Lumumba. As a leading figure in the expanding Afro-Asian bloc, Nehru sought the fulfilment of the Bandung vision to ensure decolonization and economic independence. Framing contemporary developments as “a second Bandung,” he highlighted the repression of the Congolese majority in Katanga, where mineral wealth financed “unbridled terror” against the people, and argued that the “tragic events” in Katanga had “clear neo-colonial dimensions.”

6.2. Peaceful Nuclear Disarmament and the Quest for Moral Leadership

The last years of Jawaharlal Nehru’s life witnessed a markedly intensified focus on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as desired to reaffirm India’s claim to moral leadership in world affairs and hence its status as a non-aligned state. These discussions coincided with an increased emphasis on the dual need of disarmament and a ban on nuclear testing in the diplomatic agenda of the newly established Afro-Asian group of nations, which India co-led. Between 1962 and 1963, India made two proposals to the international community that remain speculative today. The first sought to establish a world authority empowered to regulate the manufacture and distribution of weapons of mass destruction. The second sought a solemn pact among nations, guaranteeing the non-use of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (J Nordin, 2013).

As the level of political and military tensions steadily increased following China’s military incursions and subsequent 1962 war, Nehru convened a PANCHAYAT of eminent Indian citizens to discuss the country’s forthcoming foreign policy, and particularly proposals concerning nuclear disarmament and non-alignment, and their consonance with India’s national security. The PANCHAYAT subsequently emphasized the need for further efforts toward disarmament, but questioned the expediency of an immediate move toward the general moral leadership, preferring to await the “consolidation of freedom” at home and the demonstrated transmission of Nehru’s teaching to future leaders thereafter, in order that the aim of general leadership might be legitimately claimed.

6.3. Non-Alignment and the Afro-Asian Bloc in United Nations Forums

Following the 1955 Bandung Conference, Nehru sought to orient Afro-Asian cooperation towards an independent, non-biased international order and to establish an emerging Afro-Asian bloc within the UN. He contributed significantly to, and sought to steer, the Afro-Asian initiative at the 1957 UN General Assembly, where the Afro-Asian group took shape in draft resolutions on apartheid and disarmament. Furthermore, in support of the newly independent countries of the former Belgian Congo, Nehru sought to secure and frame an Afro-Asian response at the UN in 1960–1961. Afro-Asian initiatives in these forums elevated India's international standing, conferred significance on non-alignment, and broadened the scope of Indian diplomacy to pursue principled political engagement beyond the bilateral. However, both initiatives triggered simultaneous pressures to align with the USSR.

7. Evaluation of Nehru's Legacy within the Non-Aligned Movement

Nehru's leadership galvanized early enthusiasm for non-alignment that continues to resonate. The conceptual foundation rested on a choice oriented towards sovereign equality, leading to a legacy of strategic autonomy. Institutionalized within a coalition of developing states, non-alignment evolved beyond its original aims yet still reflected Nehru's guiding influence.

Nehru's legacy is enshrined in principles of sovereign equality and independent strategic choice, corresponding respectively to the challenges of the 1960s and the broader historical context of anti-colonialism and non-alignment. He remains one of the founders of non-alignment, having participated in the formative Bandung Conference dialogue and actively championed the cause until his passing. His influence continues to shape India's international posture, and the influential World Wide Non-Alignment Movement originated in India days after his death (Abdullah, 2013), guaranteeing continued recognition as an early leader of non-alignment.

7.1. Conceptual Legacy: Principles of Sovereign Equality and Strategic Autonomy

Nehru's commitment to the principles of sovereign equality, independence, and non-interference in the bilateral relations of states constituted the conceptual legacy of his engagement with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). He sought to place these principles at the core of international order, consistently highlighting their strategic relevance and necessity in the context of the Cold War. In the early years of negotiating bilateral relations with Third World states, Nehru's personal leadership facilitated the articulation of these principles as necessary conditions to pursue economic and technical developmental cooperation. Further, these principles provided an essential framing for a broader range of state-to-state negotiations, as well as for the articulation of strategic Non-Alignment (Abdullah, 2013).

7.2. Practical Legacy: Diplomatic Framing, Leadership, and Institutionalization of NAM

Nehru's conceptual legacy within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is complemented by his practical legacy comprising diplomatic framing, leadership, and the institutionalization of NAM (Abdullah, 2013). The prime minister's deft framing of non-alignment and commitment to its implementation played a critical role during the Cold War in establishing and sustaining the movement. The early trajectory and actions taken by Nehru indicate that non-alignment was conceived by India as a broader set of diplomatic principles and practices designed to meet the need for a flexible foreign policy and to secure the country's strategic objectives, including autonomy from the superpowers. The institutionalization of NAM commenced with the Accra Conference in 1958 and continued with the Belgrade Conference in 1961, when

the term became officially associated with the broader movement that had emerged at the Bandung Conference in 1955. Nehru's advocacy for early, high-level deliberations of Afro-Asian states regarding non-alignment at the summit constituted a considerable diplomatic effort (S. Singh, 2014) and was carried out with the intent of having Afro-Asian states agree on a common interpretation of the concept at subsequent meetings.

8. Limitations, Debates, and Subsequent Developments

Responses to the Non-Aligned Movement have varied enormously. Some scholars and practitioners celebrated it as a revolutionary step towards a new world order, while others criticized it on theoretical or methodological grounds. Still others regarded its demise by the end of the Cold War as proof of its irrelevance, although the 2012 summit in Tehran and, more recently, India's proposed reorganization of the group together with the extraordinary solidarity displayed by its members during the COVID-19 pandemic certainly demonstrate that it remains a viable organization, if not always a particularly effective one. Different political cultures have placed differing emphasis on the reasons for the formation of the movement and the policies officially instituted by it; these in turn have given rise to even wider variations of opinion concerning specific or tactical questions. In the eyes of some, even Nehru's very participation in the movement stemmed from a desperate search for international legitimacy, above all justified on the grounds of a rejection of racism. Indices of the post-1960s idiosyncrasy of the later "Bandung" school can be observed both in the actual policies advanced and in the more theoretical grounds invoked. The earliest condemnations of the "Nehruvians," whether from abroad or from Pakistani or Indian critics, were seldom limited to the intellectual position, however; and, because of the Hindu-Muslim divide, Pakistan presented a unique problem. In the injection of such issues as "Nehru-merit" the argument then turned both more ethnocentric and more structural than strictly intellectual. Nehru had certainly projected Indian objectives more broadly onto Afro-Asian concerns, and even if Bandung did make implicit criticism of Western policies, it did not single them out; but his endeavours focused on the new elements introduced by the previously colonized states and the newly founded bloc as such. The himself thus transferred even earlier to Djakarta, for though formally less significant it better matched India's interests by continuing to serve the older, broader, non-alignment concept.

8.1. Internal Critiques and Realist Reassessments

Theoretically, the choice of a non-aligned foreign policy was justified not only on the ground of promoting peace and cooperation, but also from power-political considerations. The emerging democracies of Asia and Africa were soon discouraged by the behavior of the two superpowers from looking upon either the East or the West as a firm international bastion against the resurgence of colonialism. In this context they sought an appropriate choice of external policy which would prevent entanglements in great power quarrels and make it possible to pursue a constructive role in both blocks. Such a concept strongly appealed to Nehru, who placed great emphasis upon psychological and political freedom as a condition for economic and social development.

8.2. The Evolution of NAM into the 1970s and beyond

Despite Nehru's conceptual and practical contributions to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), subsequent developments prompted a re-evaluation of its course and assumptions. The corrosive effects of globalization, the influence of realpolitik, and an evolution of conceptual thinking all generated internal debate and critique. The empire's evident centripetal capabilities, underscored by the Sino-Soviet nexus, thus prompted a shift to "non-alignment plus," within which candidate powers and security issues were targeted more explicitly and with less orthodox dogma. By making choices among the great powers, leaders sought to boost per capita levels of security, ensure the benefits of investment and trade, and redress chronic historical injustices. Such policies thus tended toward not non-alignment as practice

but identification with the West—as with Johnson and Vietnam—albeit motivated as much by modernization as ideological passion.

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9. Conclusion

By 1962, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was hailed by many as the most significant international organization ever created by developing nations. Its celebration, however, was foreshadowed by an unprecedented setback. In October of that year, India fought a brief, humiliating war against China in the Himalayas, suffering territorial losses and grievous blows to the integrity of Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy. Non-alignment had justified neutrality in regional struggles for equality; for the Indian government believed national liberation would end foreign exploitation and permit countries to select their friends without pressure. Nehru himself had drawn upon this visionary faith during the Bandung Conference, where he identified as much with the Indonesian revolution against the Netherlands as with his own people's fight for freedom against Britain.

If India so grievously miscalculated China's intentions and capabilities during the critical period preceding the 1962 Sino-Indian War, it lacks good judgment to criticize other imperial powers or foreign governments. In the related period of independence, Chinese leaders regarded India as the most notable example of a country emerging since World War II. The dreams shared by Indian and Chinese leaders during the 1950s of rapid national transformation and deliverance from colonialism, empire, and other questions of hemisphere influence collapsed in the late 1960s, and the new Chinese leadership increasingly expressed the hope that God would help Asia itself and mobilize—including India and Pakistan—out of the jeeps and trucks left behind by the former colonial powers. (Abdullah, 2013)

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