

# CALIBRATED BALANCE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON INDIA AND NON-ALIGNMENT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India's Foreign Policy evolution and changes

In separate statements this week, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar laid out India's world view in the face of global challenges, many of which pull it in different directions. [Mr. Jaishankar's contention](#) was that non-alignment as a concept belonged to a bygone era and that multipolarity in the world necessitated that India would have to take a definite stand, and even take "risks" on issues such as connectivity, maritime security, terrorism and climate change. However, he made it clear that India does not reject non-alignment in its entirety, and that while it would no longer remain disentangled from difficult decisions, it would not compromise on its independence. More importantly, he said that India has "never been part of an alliance system, nor will it ever be". He added that even the U.S. must look beyond its present alliances, and engage with more multilateral arrangements. Mr. Jaishankar explained that while non-alignment worked for India during the Cold War era between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, the fact that India and China share a land boundary would always be a factor in a "new cold war" between the U.S. and China. He spoke of Indo-U.S. cooperation in many fields, and the growing maritime collaboration in particular, but left unsaid the hard reality that military collaboration on land would prove problematic given India's disputed boundary with China, the venue of a nearly three-month-long stand-off between the PLA and the Indian Army.

Mr. Jaishankar's comments are a clear-eyed assessment of India's constraints and avenues for its potential growth. The assertion of India's strategic independence and resistance to joining any alliance comes as a timely reminder amid speculation that tensions with China will push India into a stronger clinch with Washington, which is on its own collision course with Beijing. It is significant that despite multiple references by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the India-China clashes, the deaths of Indian soldiers at Galwan Valley last month, and his call for India and the U.S. to jointly "counter" China, the government has rightly chosen not to raise its tensions with China in any forum other than bilateral talks with Beijing. Equally significant is the government's outreach to Moscow, including a visit by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the participation of Mr. Jaishankar in the Russia-India-China trilateral last month, and the External Affairs Minister's comments that India should also seek to build coalitions with "middle powers", such as the European Union and Japan. A time of crisis often clarifies priorities. At a time of a double crisis for India — battling the novel coronavirus pandemic in the country and Chinese aggression at the border — the message from New Delhi is one of a carefully calibrated balance.

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