

6. NAM for Global South – International Relation

NAM should advance goals of Global South. At the 19th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) mid-term ministerial meeting, the Minister of State for External Affairs urged NAM members to “re-purpose” the movement to align with the aspirations of the Global South. The statement highlighted the need for NAM to evolve from its Cold War origins and focus on present-day global challenges such as economic inequality, climate change, digital divides, and reform of global governance institutions.

Origin and Evolution of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

1. Bandung Conference, 1955

The idea of non-alignment emerged from the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, attended by 29 newly independent Asian and African nations. These nations sought to avoid the ideological polarization of the Cold War between the US-led Western bloc and the Soviet-led Eastern bloc. The concept was rooted in the principle of maintaining sovereignty, independence, and neutrality while promoting cooperation among developing nations. It was inspired by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Josip Broz Tito (Yugoslavia), and Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt) – who are often regarded as the founding figures of NAM.

2. Belgrade Summit, 1961

The first NAM Summit was held in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, in 1961, formalizing the movement. The summit emphasized support for national independence, self-determination, and anti-colonial struggles. It provided a platform for newly decolonized countries to assert their voices in international affairs.

3. The Ten Bandung Principles

NAM's ideology was based on the Ten Bandung Principles, which emphasized –

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and the UN Charter.
2. Sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.
3. Equality of all races and nations.
4. Non-interference in internal affairs.
5. Right of self-defense.
6. Opposition to military alliances serving big power interests.
7. Mutual non-aggression.
8. Peaceful coexistence and settlement of disputes.
9. Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.
10. Respect for justice and international obligations.

Governance Structure

NAM has no formal constitution, secretariat, or budget, relying on consensus-based decision-making. Leadership is rotational, usually changing at each summit. The Chairmanship is currently held by Azerbaijan (since 2019), emphasizing the movement's flexible and non-bureaucratic nature.

Expansion and Structural Development

Membership Growth – From 25 founding members in 1961, NAM has expanded to 120+ member states, representing nearly two-thirds of the United Nations.

Observer Members – NAM also includes observer countries and organizations, enhancing its representativeness.

Jakarta Declaration (1992) – The 10th NAM Summit in Jakarta adopted this declaration, shifting the focus toward economic cooperation, poverty alleviation, foreign debt management, and sustainable development.

Relevance and Role of NAM in the Contemporary World

1. Platform for the Global South – NAM acts as a unified voice for developing nations in global forums like the UN, WTO, and COP climate conferences. It promotes the collective interests of the Global South on issues like equitable trade, technology transfer, and financial inclusion.

2. Addressing the North-South Divide – NAM advocates for fair globalization, bridging economic inequality between industrialized (Global North) and developing (Global South) countries. It calls for

restructuring international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank) to enhance developing country participation.

3. Strategic Autonomy and Independence – Even in the post-Cold War and multipolar world, NAM remains relevant as a symbol of strategic autonomy. It allows nations to maintain an independent foreign policy without aligning militarily or politically with major power blocs. India, for example, uses NAM to balance its relations with the US, Russia, and China while preserving autonomy in global affairs.

4. Promoting Peace, Disarmament, and Conflict Resolution – NAM continues to promote peaceful dispute resolution, nuclear disarmament, and decolonization. It played a major diplomatic role during conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America by encouraging dialogue over confrontation.

5. Economic and Developmental Cooperation – The focus of NAM has expanded to economic development, trade cooperation, digital transformation, and climate resilience. It encourages South-South Cooperation, emphasizing collaboration among developing nations in areas such as technology, agriculture, and education.

Challenges and Limitations of NAM

- 1. Reduced Strategic Relevance Post-Cold War** – With the fall of the Soviet Union, the bipolar order ended, reducing NAM's initial geopolitical purpose. Many member states now engage in other groupings like BRICS, G20, SCO, and regional alliances that provide more tangible benefits.
- 2. Diverse Membership and Interests** – NAM includes over 120 nations with varying ideologies, economies, and strategic priorities. Achieving consensus is often difficult, especially on contentious issues like the Ukraine war, Middle East conflicts, or global sanctions.
- 3. Lack of Institutional Mechanism** – NAM lacks enforcement power and permanent institutions, making its declarations largely symbolic and non-binding.
- 4. Diminished Global Influence** – NAM's visibility has declined as new global platforms (like G20, BRICS, and ASEAN) have gained prominence. Its statements often fail to produce concrete policy outcomes in the international system.

Significance of NAM for India

- 1. Strategic Autonomy** – NAM embodies India's commitment to independent foreign policy, ensuring it is not drawn into great power rivalries.
- 2. Leadership of the Global South** – India uses NAM as a diplomatic platform to represent the collective voice of developing countries and advocate for fairer global governance.
- 3. Promotion of Peace and Global Stability** – India continues to uphold NAM's principles of non-violence, peaceful coexistence, and disarmament, reflecting Gandhian ideals.
- 4. UN and Global Governance Reform** – Through NAM, India advocates for reforms in the UN Security Council, pushing for greater representation for developing nations.
- 5. Economic Diplomacy and Cooperation** – NAM supports India's efforts to build South-South partnerships in technology, energy, and sustainable development.
- 6. Soft Power and Historical Legacy** – India's role as a founding member enhances its moral and diplomatic credibility. NAM remains a symbol of India's consistent commitment to equity, justice, and sovereignty in global politics.

Current Context and Way Forward

The current global environment—characterized by technological competition, climate change, debt crises, and global inequality—demands that NAM redefines its agenda. India and other major members are calling for a “re-purposed NAM”, one that focuses on –

1. Climate justice and sustainable growth.
2. Reform of international financial institutions.
3. Digital inclusion and data sovereignty.
4. Strengthening the Global South's collective bargaining power.

Conclusion

The Non-Aligned Movement, though born out of the Cold War, continues to offer a moral and diplomatic framework for the developing world to assert independence and solidarity. In an age of

multipolarity and renewed great power competition, NAM's future relevance depends on its ability to adapt to modern challenges, promote South-South cooperation, and advance the aspirations of the Global South through practical and coordinated action.

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