



Has the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) Lost Its Relevance in a Multipolar World?

Non-alignment will Continue to be the Fundamental Basis of our Approach to World Problems and Our Relations with Other Countries.

—Lal Bahadur Shastri

The **Non-Alignment Movement (NAM)**, established during the **Cold War era**, was conceived as a platform for countries that did not wish to align themselves with either the **United States** or the **Soviet Union**. With the end of the **Cold War** and the emergence of a **multipolar world**, questions have arisen about the relevance of **NAM** in contemporary international relations.

The **Non-Alignment Movement** was founded in **1961** in **Belgrade, Yugoslavia**, with the leadership of figures like **Josip Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sukarno of Indonesia**. The movement was rooted in the desire for **political independence** and **economic development**, free from the dominance of the superpowers. NAM's primary objectives included the promotion of **peace, disarmament, and socio-economic development**.

During the Cold War, NAM provided a platform for countries to express their concerns and influence **global politics** without being caught in the binary conflict of the time. It advocated for the **sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, non-intervention in internal affairs, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts**. The movement played a significant role in the decolonization process and in voicing the interests of developing countries on the international stage.

With the end of the Cold War, the **bipolar structure** of global politics gave way to a more complex and interconnected multipolar world. The **United States** emerged as the sole superpower, but regional powers and emerging economies began to assert their influence. The rise of **India, China, Brazil, and other countries** has reshaped the global order, leading to a distribution of power among multiple centers.

The dynamics of international relations have changed. Global issues such as **climate change, terrorism, and economic interdependence** require multilateral cooperation. The influence of non-state actors, including multinational corporations, international organizations, and civil society, has also increased, further complicating the traditional state-centric view of global politics.

One of the primary challenges facing NAM is maintaining its relevance and cohesion in a world where the binary Cold War divisions no longer exist. The movement has struggled to articulate a clear and unified agenda that addresses the diverse interests of its members. With over **120 member states**, NAM encompasses a wide range of **political, economic, and cultural contexts**, making consensus difficult to achieve.

The diversity of **NAM's membership**, which includes countries with varying political systems, levels of development, and regional interests, poses a challenge to unified action. The interests of a small island nation in the Pacific may differ significantly from those of a major emerging economy in Asia or Africa. This diversity makes it challenging to formulate and implement cohesive policies.

The rise of regional organizations and alliances has also impacted **NAM's relevance**. Organizations such

as the **African Union, ASEAN, BRICS**, and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)** offer platforms for regional cooperation and may overlap with **NAM's objectives**. These organizations often have more focused agendas and can address regional issues more effectively.

The processes of globalization and economic interdependence have created new challenges and opportunities. While globalization has led to increased connectivity and economic growth, it has also exacerbated inequalities and vulnerabilities. NAM must navigate these complexities and address issues such as **trade, investment, and sustainable development** in a way that benefits its member states.

Despite these challenges, the Non-Alignment Movement retains potential relevance in the contemporary multipolar world. Its principles and objectives continue to resonate with the aspirations of many developing countries. Here are several ways in which NAM can maintain and enhance its relevance.

NAM can play a crucial role in advocating for a more equitable and inclusive global governance system. In forums such as the **United Nations**, NAM can push for reforms that give greater voice and representation to developing countries. This includes advocating for changes in the composition of the **UN Security Council** and promoting **greater transparency** and accountability in international institutions.

One of NAM's strengths lies in its ability to foster **South-South cooperation**. By encouraging collaboration among developing countries, NAM can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, technology, and best practices. This can help member states address common challenges such as **poverty, healthcare, education, and infrastructure development**.

NAM can contribute to addressing global challenges that require collective action. Issues such as **climate change, sustainable development, and global health pandemics** transcend national borders and demand coordinated efforts. NAM can provide a platform for member states to develop and promote common strategies to tackle these issues.

The principles of disarmament and peaceful resolution of conflicts remain central to NAM's mission. In a multipolar world where regional conflicts and arms races continue to pose threats to global stability, NAM can advocate for disarmament initiatives and support diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes. By promoting dialogue and negotiation, NAM can contribute to global peace and security.

Economic justice and development have always been core concerns of NAM. In the face of growing economic disparities and the challenges posed by globalization, NAM can advocate for **fair trade practices, equitable access to resources**, and policies that promote inclusive economic growth. By addressing issues such as **debt relief, fair trade, and investment in human capital**, NAM can support the economic development of its member states.

To effectively address these challenges and opportunities, NAM must enhance its internal coordination and cohesion. This requires strengthening the movement's institutional mechanisms, improving communication among member states, and fostering a sense of shared purpose. Regular **summits, ministerial meetings**, and working groups can help build consensus and develop actionable plans.

To illustrate the continued relevance of NAM, it is useful to examine specific examples and case studies where the movement has played a constructive role in recent years.

NAM has been active in advocating for **climate justice** and supporting the interests of developing countries in international climate negotiations. During the **COP21 conference** in Paris in 2015, NAM countries played a significant role in pushing for a **legally binding agreement** that recognizes the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. This principle acknowledges that while all countries must take action to address **climate change**, developed countries have greater historical responsibility and financial capacity to do so.

The **COVID-19 pandemic** highlighted the importance of global cooperation and solidarity. NAM countries have worked together to address the public health crisis by sharing medical resources, expertise, and best practices. NAM's emphasis on multilateralism and solidarity has been instrumental in advocating for equitable access to vaccines and healthcare resources for developing countries.

NAM has consistently supported the **rights of the Palestinian people** and called for a just and lasting resolution to the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict**. NAM member states have used their collective voice to advocate for Palestinian statehood, condemn illegal settlements, and call for the respect of international law. This demonstrates NAM's commitment to upholding the **principles of justice** and **self-determination**.

For instance, India abstained on a resolution at the Human Rights Council that called on Israel for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and called on states to implement an arms embargo, which was adopted by the 47-member Human Rights Council.

Although **India's abstention** aligns with its past votes on **HRC** resolutions emphasizing "**accountability**," it did support three other resolutions. These resolutions **criticized Israel for human rights violations against Palestinians**, condemned Israel's occupation of the **Syrian Golan**, and advocated for **Palestinian self-determination**.

NAM has facilitated economic cooperation and trade among its member states through initiatives such as the **South-South Cooperation framework**. For example, the **India-Africa Forum Summit**, which brings together NAM member states from Africa and India, aims to enhance economic ties, promote investment, and support infrastructure development. Such initiatives help strengthen economic partnerships and promote sustainable development.

The Non-Alignment Movement, born out of the geopolitical realities of the Cold War, faces significant challenges in maintaining its relevance in a multipolar world. However, its core principles of **sovereignty, independence, and equitable development** continue to resonate with many countries. By adapting to the changing global landscape and addressing contemporary issues, NAM can remain a vital platform for advocating the interests of developing countries and promoting global peace and cooperation.

The Voice of the NAM is here to be Heard. The Voice of the NAM is here to Stay and to Grow.

— S. Jaishankar

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