
RELEVANCE OF NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM) AS A FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) emerged during the Cold War as a strategy adopted by newly decolonised states to preserve sovereignty and strategic autonomy within a bipolar international system. NAM played a crucial role during the Cold War in preserving the sovereignty and autonomy of newly decolonised countries within a bipolar international system and in shaping the geopolitics of the 20th century, but the end of the Cold War raised questions regarding its relevance in the 21st century.

This paper tries to find an answer to this question. It discusses the meaning of foreign policy along with its various determinants and elaborates upon facets of the Non-Aligned Movement, such as its history, its need and its founding principles.

Additionally, the paper traces the role played by NAM in the geopolitics of the 20th century with the help of certain examples. In this paper, the researchers have made a humble attempt to discuss the relationship of India with NAM and other member countries of NAM. The researchers have tried to highlight the relevance of NAM in the 21st century by discussing the manner in which NAM has tried to reinvent itself in the past few decades in accordance with the ever-changing nature of global politics.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Non-Aligned Movement, Geo-Politics, Neutrality, Isolationism

INTRODUCTION

NAM emerged in the turbulent times of the Cold War. It served the interests of its member countries and helped in ushering in peace and prosperity in the otherwise conflict-torn world. NAM as a foreign policy helped India to maintain a balance between the two power blocs and also aided it in taking a firm stand on several issues. It provided India with a strong bargaining power and helped it in achieving the status of a strong nation even when it was in shambles after the decolonisation in 1947. But after the disintegration of the USSR, NAM appears to be irrelevant.

This paper tries to evaluate the relevance of NAM in the 21st century and highlight the manner in which it has and can continue to influence the geo-politics by analysing the views of experts as mentioned in existing literature, such as research papers, books, etc.

1. MEANING AND DETERMINANTS OF FOREIGN POLICY

Derivation of The Term Foreign Policy

The word foreign policy is made up of two words: foreign and policy. The word foreign is derived from Old French “*forain*”, which means strange, foreign, exterior or outside¹ and word policy, which is derived from the French word “*policie*”, which means the study of government or good government.²

Foreign policy decision-making brings together a series of processes and different actors. It plays a pivotal role as far as the international affairs of a state are concerned. A country must have a good foreign policy. A good foreign policy provides an impetus to the position and prestige of a country in world affairs and also assists in achieving national interests and vice versa.

Various Definitions of This Term

Encyclopedia Britannica states that foreign policy is a set of general objectives that guide

¹Etymology of Foreign, available at: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/foreign> (Last visited on October 7, 2025).

² Etymology of Policy, available at: https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=policy&ref=searchbar_searchhint (Last visited on October 7, 2025).

the activities and relationships of one state with other states.³ *Cambridge Dictionary* terms foreign policy as a policy followed by a government while dealing with other countries on certain matters, namely, trade or defence⁴

George Modelska has defined foreign policy as the system of activities that has evolved by the communities for changing the behaviour of other states and also for adjusting their own activities in the international environment.⁵ He further adds that foreign policy should throw light on how states try to change the behaviour of other states and also succeed in doing so.⁶ He clarifies that a change in the existing behaviour of states is the primary objective of foreign policy.⁷ He also added that foreign policy is a dynamic concept which keeps changing.⁸

Joseph Frankel states that foreign policy consists of decisions as well as actions, which are related to the relations between various states and the formulation as well as implementation of a set of ideas governing the behaviour of states while they interact with other states in order to defend and enhance their national interests.⁹

Determinants of Foreign Policy

The foreign policy is determined mainly because of:

i. Internal or Domestic Factors

Countries differ in terms of their size, socio-economic development and political regime. They also differ in terms of their political institutionalisation and societal structures. Military and economic capabilities, cultures, public opinion and personality traits of political leaders also vary from one state to another. These differences have a direct effect on both the foreign policy-making process and foreign policy decisions.¹⁰

³ Foreign Policy, available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/foreign-policy> (Last visited on October 7, 2025).

⁴ Foreign Policy, available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/foreign-policy> (Last visited on October 7, 2025)

⁵ Jesmine Ahmed, "The Theoretical Significance Of Foreign Policy In International Relations- An Analysis" Volume 7 Issue 2, *JCR* 2020.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ AS Bojang, "The Study of Foreign Policy in International Relations" *J Pol Sci Pub Aff* 2018.

¹⁰ Supra note 5.

ii. External or International Factors

The external factors that influence the foreign policy of a state are: the international system or power structure, international law, international organisations, alliances, military strength, arms race, etc.¹¹ This list is only illustrative and not exhaustive. Along with these, there are a number of other factors that determine the foreign policy.

There are two conflicting views. According to one, both international and domestic determinants are interconnected with each other, and according to others, both are completely independent of each other. Even though both views appear to be correct, it is worth noting that the interaction between the domestic and international determinants varies from country to country in accordance with the prevailing political environment.¹²

Diplomacy is also considered a tool of foreign policy. War, alliances, and international trade are all manifestations of it.¹³ Over the period of time, even technology has also been recognised as an important determinant of foreign policy. Even the former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, once commented that the internet has brought about a change in every aspect of human life. It has changed the way people communicated, learnt and live as well as the strategic context for diplomacy in the 21st century.¹⁴

2. NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT: CONCEPTUALISATION AND HISTORY

Need for Non-Aligned Movement

After the end of the Second World War, both superpowers were involved in the making of military alliances. India and most of the newly independent Asian and African Nations stepped into the international atmosphere in this hostile environment. The newly independent countries were shocked by the unfriendly international environment and were left with no option but to join one or the other of the power blocs.¹⁵

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Supra note 3.

¹⁴ Modernizing Diplomacy, available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/189411.pdf> (Last visited on October 7, 2021 3:45 PM).

¹⁵ B Gopal, "Relevance of Non- Alignment" *IJPS* Jan. - March 1991, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Jan. - March 1991).

Resultantly, the new countries had to compromise their sovereignty and decision-making power. The newly independent countries wanted to protect the independence and sovereignty that they had won after a relentless struggle for decades.¹⁶

Meaning of Non-Aligned Movement

In the backdrop of these circumstances, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru came up with the concept of Non- Alignment. According to this concept, the countries were not required to join either of the two power blocs and, in this way, could keep themselves away from military alliances.¹⁷ This ensured the freedom of decision-making and an opportunity to play a constructive role in International Politics.¹⁸

Emergence of the Third World

The Non- Aligned Movement is considered to be the Third World's response to the Cold War. In fact, the concept of the Third World would not have emerged if there had been no Cold War.¹⁹

The rapid rise of nationalism amongst the countries which were the colonies brought about a hundred new countries in the world as they achieved independence from the colonial powers. After getting independence, these countries became members of the Third World. One of the major reasons why these countries became colonies was that they were politically weak, economically backward, and weren't able to resist the European powers.²⁰

But these countries soon realised that even if they were politically independent, they were not economically independent as they were required to ask for aid from various powerful countries.²¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, in the early stages of the Cold War, tried to find a Third Way and did not accept the idea of being part of the Western Bloc.²²

Bandung Conference 1955

The Bandung Conference took place from 18 to 24 April 1955 in Bandung, Indonesia. In

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Guy Arnold, *A-Z of Non Aligned Movement and Third World*, (Scarecrow Press Inc. 2010).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

this conference, delegates from several newly independent African and Asian countries met in order to affirm their desire to be independent and not align with world powers. This conference was chaired by the then Indonesian President, Sukarno, and was attended by representatives from 29 countries.²³

It laid out the fundamental rights of people living in colonies and demonstrated the strength of their resistance to European domination. The Bandung Conference paved the way for Third-World countries on the international stage.²⁴ At this conference, even the idea of peaceful coexistence was put forward, but it was accepted by neither the USA nor the USSR.²⁵

Founding Member Countries of NAM

The roots of NAM lie in the friendship which existed between the three leaders of that time, namely Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Egypt's leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. These three visionary leaders held a meeting in 1956 known as the Bandung Conference. Whatever ideas that they put forward during this meeting were supported by two more leaders, namely Indonesia's Sukarno and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. Together, these five leaders are known as the five founder members of NAM.²⁶

The first summit of NAM was attended by 25 member states. The 18th summit was held in Azerbaijan in 2019 and was attended by 120-member countries and 17 observer states.²⁷

Today, NAM comprises 53 countries from Africa, 39 from Asia, 26 from Latin America and the Caribbean and 2 from Europe. There are 17 countries and 10 international organisations that have been granted Observer Status at NAM.²⁸

Principles on Which NAM Is Based

NAM was established in accordance with certain principles which were proclaimed at the

²³ The Bandung Conference, *available at:* http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_bandung_conference-en-3da59f16-567b-4b2d-8060-4c2482e56dd9.htm (October 8, 2025).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *Contemporary World Politics*, (National Council for Educational Research and Training 2020-21).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Members and Other Participants of NAM, *available at:* <https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf/Members-and-other-participants.pdf> (Last visited on October 8, 2025).

Bandung Conference. These principles are popularly known as the “Ten Principles of Bandung” and were adopted as the main goals of the non-alignment policy. Every member country of NAM is required to fulfil these principles.²⁹

These principles are:

- i. Respecting fundamental human rights, purposes, as well as the principles of the United Nations Charter.
- ii. Respecting sovereignty as well as the territorial integrity of all nations.
- iii. Recognising the equality of all races and nations irrespective of their geographical size.
- iv. Not interfering in the internal affairs of any other country.
- v. Respecting each nation’s right to defend itself in accordance with the UN Charter.
- vi. Abstention from collective defence agreements and exertion of pressures on other countries.
- vii. Refraining from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country or from giving threats to any other country regarding the same.
- viii. Settling international disputes by not using force.
- ix. Promoting mutual interests and cooperation between all the countries of the world.
- x. Respecting justice and international obligations.³⁰

Belgrad Summit 1961

The first non-aligned summit was held in Belgrade in 1961 as a result of the culmination of mainly the following factors:

²⁹History and Evolution of Non Aligned Movement, available at: <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?20349/History+and+Evolution+of+NonAligned+Movement> (Last visited on October 7 2025).

³⁰NAM and Bandung Principles as relevant today, available at: <https://www.southcentre.int/question/non-aligned-movement-and-bandung-principles-as-relevant-today-as-ever-south-centre/#> (Last visited on October 7, 2025).

- i. Cooperation among the five founder countries
- ii. Growing tensions during the time of cold war
- iii. Widening arenas of cold war
- iv. Entry of many newly decolonised African countries into the international arena.³¹

At the first formal summit in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, the two super-powers of that time, even though they were reluctant, were compelled to admit that NAM was a bona fide movement with its own political standpoint, and thus it could not be ignored.³² After the Belgrade Summit, NAM started having its summits every three years and in this way became the most crucial forum for the Third World.³³ The country which hosts the NAM Summit becomes the Chair of the conference. In addition to this, that country also undertakes the overall responsibility of coordinating its activities.³⁴

3. HOW NAM WAS RELEVANT IN THE 20th CENTURY

NAM Is Not Isolationism

The policy of NAM must not be confused with the idea of isolationism. Isolationism refers to the policy of remaining aloof from world affairs. Non-alignment is not isolationism. *Encyclopediæ Britannica* defines isolationism as the policy that focuses on avoiding political and economic relations with any other country.³⁵

Isolationism sums up the foreign policy of the US from the American War of Independence in 1787 up to the beginning of the First World War.³⁶ In comparison to this, the non-aligned countries played a crucial role in mediating between the rival alliances, namely the USA and USSR, for the purpose of promoting the idea of peace and stability. The strength of

³¹ 1961: First NAM summit in Belgrade, *available at*: <https://frontline.thehindu.com/world-affairs/india-at-75-epochal-moments-1961-first-nam-summit-in-belgrade/article65727322.ece> (Last visited on December 13, 2025).

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Non-Aligned Movement, *available at*: <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/non-aligned-movement> (Last visited on October 8, 2025).

³⁵ Isolationism, *available at*: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/isolationism-foreign-policy> (Last visited on October 8, 2025).

³⁶ *Contemporary World Politics*, (National Council for Educational Research and Training 2020-21).

NAM countries lies in the fact that they succeeded in remaining non-aligned even when both the superpowers tried their best to make them a part of their respective alliances.³⁷

NAM Is Not Neutrality

Non-alignment shall also not be confused with the idea of neutrality. Neutrality means the policy of staying out of war. States which practice the policy of neutrality are not required to participate in a war. Neutrality means staying impartial towards the belligerents.³⁸ On the contrary, the non-aligned states were actively involved in wars due to a number of reasons. Not only did they prevent wars from breaking out between other countries, but they also tried to end the wars that had already broken out between the countries.³⁹

NAM as an Economic Pressure Group

Over time, NAM started paying more attention to economic issues. At the Belgrade Conference, it was demanded that the gains of technological advancement must be applied to various fields of economic development to hasten the process of achieving international justice. President Tito of Yugoslavia proposed the holding of a world conference in order to consider the economic problems of the South.⁴⁰

The Fourth NAM Summit appealed for the establishment of the New International Economic Order. Over the period of time, NAM transformed itself into a collective economic movement.⁴¹

Under the aegis of NAM, developing countries focused on the restructuring of the international economic system, as this system lacked legitimacy, owing to the fact that when it was devised at that time, most of the developing countries were not free.⁴²

NAM not only highlighted the socio-economic problems which the third world countries were grappling with, but also protected the interests of these countries from being crushed

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Neutrality, *available at:* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/neutrality> (Last visited on October 8, 2025).

³⁹ Supra note 36.

⁴⁰ Surendra Chopra, "The Emerging Trend In The Non- Aligned Movement" *IJPS* Vol. 47, No. 2 (April - June 1986).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

by Western Hegemony. It provided new dimensions to the strength of developing countries and provided a boost to their morale of developing countries.

Role Played by NAM in Dealing with Apartheid

In African countries like South Africa, the evil of apartheid acted as a major hindrance in the process of realization of human rights. During the 2nd NAM conference, which was convened in Cairo, a warning was given to the government of South Africa regarding the existing practices of racial discrimination and apartheid. The support which was provided by the NAM was an important external factor which helped in putting an end to the evil of apartheid.⁴³

The relationship between South Africa and the NAM dates back to Bandung, where representatives of the liberation movements of South Africa were present. This laid the foundation of a long-standing relationship in which solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement and the joint struggle to end it were central.⁴⁴ NAM, by voicing its opinions against apartheid, also tried to curb human rights violations.

Role Played by NAM In Disarmament

One of the cardinal principles of NAM was the adoption of disarmament. NAM promoted the idea of disarmament as it considered nuclear weapons as a threat to the survival of mankind, and also for harmony and global peace.⁴⁵ Its successive gatherings have urged for rejecting nuclear ideology and adopting complete disarmament and have adhered to its founding ideals based on humanitarian goals.⁴⁶ NAM also played an active role in preserving world peace and establishing a peaceful and prosperous world by promoting the idea of disarmament.

Therefore, it can be observed that in the 20th century, NAM played a proactive role in not only preserving world peace but also promoting peace and prosperity in the world. In addition to all this, NAM also promoted disarmament and a sovereign world order.

⁴³ The South African Institute of International Affairs, *SAIIA Report No.10* (1998).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ NAM position on disarmament, *available at:* <https://iins.org/nams-position-on-disarmament-of-nuclear-weapons/> (Last visited on October 8, 2025).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

4. NON- ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND INDIA

India's Position In NAM:

India is the founder and largest member of NAM. It was an active participant in NAM meetings till the 1970s, but India's inclination changed over the period of time; its inclination towards the USSR created confusion for smaller members. This is because earlier India had criticised other nations for joining alliances, but later on in 1971, it signed the Treaty of Friendship with the USSR for 20 years.⁴⁷

While the outside world saw it as India joining the Soviet Alliance, the Indian government justified its actions because it needed diplomatic and military support during the Bangladesh crisis and thus signed the aforementioned treaty.⁴⁸.

India further justified its stance by highlighting that even though it had signed the Friendship Treaty with the USSR, it still had good relations with other countries like the US.⁴⁹ Soon, this step of India led to the weakening of NAM, and many smaller nations drifted towards either of the power blocs.

India's Relations with Other NAM Members

After the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship and co-operation, there was a drastic change in the attitude of Egypt towards Bangladesh. On October 13, 1971, Julfikar Ali Butto, the leader of the Pakistan People's Party, on a 3 days tour to Egypt, tried to convince the Egyptian government to involve itself directly in the war of 1971. Mahmud Riyadh, the then foreign minister of Egypt, delivered his speech in the UNO in which he mentioned that there was a need for a permanent solution to the crisis within the United Pakistan.⁵⁰

India adopted the New Economic Policy in 1991, and after the disintegration of the USSR, its increasing inclination towards the US raised questions over its seriousness about the idea of non- alignment.⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Contemporary World Politics*, (National Council for Educational Research and Training 2020-21).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Redowanul Karim, "Role of the Arab World in the Liberation War of Bangladesh"

⁵¹ *Contemporary World Politics*, (National Council for Educational Research and Training 2020-21).

NAM: India's Foreign Policy During the Cold War

India's foreign policy was neither negative nor passive. It was also not a policy of 'fleeing away'. India actively intervened in world affairs in order to reduce the Cold War rivalries. India also played a crucial role in reducing the differences between the existing alliances and thus prevented a full-scale war from breaking out.⁵²

Indian diplomats and leaders communicated and mediated between Cold War rivals, such as in the Korean War.⁵³ India played a crucial role in the Korean War, even when India had no geopolitical interests in the Korean Peninsula. During the Korean War, Nehru's decision was influenced by V.K.K Menon, who believed in the idea that non-alignment should guide India's foreign policy. During the Korean War, India offered its assistance by sending a medical ambulance unit as part of the UN Command instead of armed battalions. India also tried its best to involve other member countries of the NAM in this mission.⁵⁴

The Indian leaders tried to activate certain regional and international organisations, which were not a part of either of the blocs. A non-aligned posture helped India to maintain a balance while dealing with both the super-powers. In case India felt ignored or pressured by one superpower, then it always had an option of tilting towards the other, and in this way, no power alliance could take India for granted.⁵⁵

NAM As A Forum for India's Soft Power

In the Cold War period, India was considered amongst the greatest soft powers in the world. Soft power was the only way for underdeveloped and newly decolonised India to fulfil its global ambitions.⁵⁶ Via the use of soft power, India could expose the richness of its culture as well as moral arguments. As a founder of the Non-Aligned Movement NAM and critic of imperialism and colonialism, India presented the value-based policies that helped it in

⁵² Ibid

⁵³70 years of the Korean War: India's lesser-known role in halting it, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/research/70-years-of-korean-war-indias-lesser-known-role-in-halting-it-6476030/> (Last visited on October 9, 2025).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Patryk Kugiel, "India's soft power in South Asia" International Studies 49(3&4) 351–376 2012 JNU.

generated goodwill.⁵⁷ By using NAM as a platform, India asserted its soft power and paved the way for itself for active leadership at various multilateral platforms.⁵⁸

India and NAM in Recent Years

Over the past few years, several developments have taken place which have raised doubts regarding whether or not India is serious about NAM and its policies.

For instance, the Prime Minister of India skipped the 17th Non-Aligned Movement summit, which was held in Venezuela in 2016. It is worth noting that it was only the second such instance where the Head of State didn't participate in a NAM conference.⁵⁹ This action was viewed by many experts as India adopting a US-centric policy, brushing aside the ideas of non-alignment.⁶⁰

India has joined as a member of the G20.⁶¹ And after that, it has declared itself a nuclear weapons power.⁶² Thus, India has abandoned its call for global nuclear disarmament.

India has also joined the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.⁶³ Joining this coalition can be viewed as a counterforce to the rise of China in the Indo-Pacific Region. NAM opposes the formation of collective military and security alliances.

Over the past few years, India has been striving hard for a multipolar world order and is asserting itself as one of the major players of this world order. The multi-polar world order is closed to the principles of NAM.

5. RELEVANCY OF NAM AS A FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the first two decades of the 21st century, change has been observed in the field of world politics such as; the re-emergence of the idea of bi-polarity in the backdrop of tussle going

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Narendra Modi to skip NAM Summit: First PM to do so

<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/ectxbpHsJ2XUmRkXXqVbpL/Hamid-Ansari-leaves-for-Venezuela-to-attend-17th-NAM-summit.html> (Last visited on October 9, 2025).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ The G20, *available at*: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/organisations/g20> (Last visited on October 9, 2025).

⁶² India, *available at*: <https://www.nti.org/learn/countries/india/nuclear/> (Last visited on October 9, 2025).

⁶³ Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, *available at*: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-diamond-past-present-and-future-quadrilateral-security-dialogue> (Last visited on October 9 2025).

on between Russia and USA, mushrooming up of several regional and international economic organizations in various parts of the world, adoption of a pro US stances by India in the recent past etc. Growing distances between NAM and India have raised questions regarding relevancy of NAM as a foreign policy of India.

But NAM has not become irrelevant in the 21st century. It has tried to reinvent itself amidst the changing global political atmosphere of the 21st century.

New Purposes of NAM

The Havana Summit of NAM, also known as the 14th NAM Summit, took place in 2006. The purposes behind the formation of NAM were laid down at the Bandung Conference. In the Havana Summit, certain new principles and purposes were adopted by the member countries of NAM in accordance with the current political scenario.⁶⁴ These are:

- i. Promoting and reinforcing multilateralism and serving as a forum for political coordination of the developing countries to promote and defend their interests.
- ii. Promoting unity and solidarity between the developing countries in accordance with the shared values and priorities.
- iii. Settling disputes peacefully, defending international peace and security, encouraging friendship and cooperation and peaceful coexistence between all nations in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.
- iv. Promoting and encouraging sustainable development and enjoyment and protection of human rights along with fundamental freedoms for all based on the principles of universality, objectivity and impartiality.
- v. Condemning manifestation of unilateralism and attempts to exercise hegemony in international relations.
- vi. Coordinating actions and strategies for jointly confronting threats to international

⁶⁴Non Aligned Movement Disarmament Database- Summits of the Non- Aligned Movement, *available at:* http://cns.miis.edu/nam/index.php/meeting/index?Meeting%5Bforum_id%5D=5&name=NAM+Summits (Last visited on October 8, 2025).

peace and security, colonialism, etc.

- vii. Continuous pursuit of universal and non-discriminatory nuclear and general disarmament.
- viii. Responding to the challenges arising from globalisation and reducing the gap between the developed and developing countries.
- ix. Enhancing the role of civil society and NGO's at the regional and international levels for the fulfilment of the purposes of NAM.

New Guiding Principles of NAM

The new guiding principles of NAM have been enumerated hereinafter:⁶⁵

- i. Respect for the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and International Law.
- ii. Respect for the sovereignty, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all States.
- iii. Recognising equality of all races, religions and cultures.
- iv. Promoting dialogues among peoples, civilisations, cultures and religions.
- v. Respecting and promoting all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.
- vi. Respecting the equality of rights of all States, including the inalienable right of each State to freely determine its political, social, economic and cultural system.
- vii. Reaffirming the validity and relevance of the principled positions of NAM.
- viii. Concerning the right to self-determination of people under foreign occupation and colonial domination.
- ix. Non-interference in the internal affairs of a State.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

- x. Refraining all the countries from exerting pressure or coercion on other countries, including resorting to aggression or other acts of force.
- xi. Rejecting aggression and serious breach of International Law.
- xii. Respect for the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence.
- xiii. Condemning genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and systematic gross violations of human rights and opposing terrorism in all its forms.
- xiv. Promotion of peaceful means of settlement of disputes.
- xv. Consolidation of democracy and reaffirmation that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people.
- xvi. Promotion and defence of multilateralism and multilateral organisations as the appropriate frameworks to resolve, through dialogue and cooperation, the problems affecting humankind.
- xvii. Support efforts by countries to achieve peace, justice, equality and development, especially those countries which are going through internal disturbances.
- xviii. Complying with the international treaties and honouring the commitments made in the framework of international organisations.
- xix. Defending and promoting shared interests, justice and cooperation.
- xx. Promoting solidarity as a fundamental component of relations among nations in all circumstances.
- xxi. Respecting the political, economic, social and cultural diversity of all countries and people.

Thus, NAM has changed its principles and purposes in the 21st Century in accordance with the changed global politico-economic atmosphere and has thus proved that it has not lost its relevance in the 21st century.

NAM And Call for Reforms in the UNO

Right from its inception, NAM was in favour of UNSC reforms as it was against the domination of the US and USSR in the UNSC.

At the 17th NAM conference in Venezuela in 2016, several ideas were put forward with regard to the possible reforms that could be brought to the UNO. The ideas put forward in this conference were:⁶⁶

- i. NAM countries as a group wanted the representation of third-world countries to make the UNSC more democratic and representative.
- ii. NAM member countries have demanded greater transparency in the process of selection and appointment of the Secretary-General.
- iii. They have also suggested that the process of selection of the Secretary General must be made more inclusive.
- iv. They have also suggested the principles of geographical rotation and gender equality.
- v. The NAM countries also wanted a democratisation of the decision-making processes in the IMF and World Bank. ⁶⁷

Role of NAM Countries in the UNO

NAM currently has a membership of 120 countries. Most of the countries that are a part of NAM are also members of the General Assembly. This makes NAM countries an important voting group in the UNO. Thus, in the future, there is a resolution that has to be adopted in the UN, and if it is against the principles or interests of countries of NAM, then the countries by voting against that resolution or policy can prevent it from being adopted by the UN.

NAM has promoted the equitable world order in the past and continues to do so. It has and

⁶⁶NAM countries seek reform in the UNSC, *available at*: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/nam-countries-seek-reform-of-unsc-to-make-it-more-effective/> (Last visited on October 9, 2025).

⁶⁷Ibid.

continues to play a crucial role in bridging the gaps between the political differences which exist amongst the nations at the regional as well as at the global level. NAM countries' demand for reforms in the UNO can be seen as a step in this direction.

Other Areas

Many of the NAM countries are poor African nations. These nations usually enter into negotiations with China and the US for economic development. In the process of these negotiations, many of the times these countries end up compromising the sovereignty of their land. NAM can provide a platform from which these nations can enter into healthy negotiations with China and the US and can thus assert the idea that it is relevant in the 21st century.

NAM is also a supporter of the idea of Sustainable development. Thus, it can act as a platform where around 120 member countries can enter into consensus with each other on the burning global environmental issues like climate change and migration, as well as on the global security issues like the issue of terrorism.

6. CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be concluded that NAM as a concept and more importantly as a foreign policy can never become irrelevant. The principles laid down at the Bandung Conference and Havana Declaration continue to guide the member countries in their inter-relationships and their relationship with the rest of the world.

NAM has tried to reinvent itself by adopting new principles and purposes, showing that members of NAM are aware of the changing political fabric of the world. The new principles and purposes are in strong consonance with the UN Charter and current problems with which the world is grappling, and this shows that the NAM member countries can help in combating climate change, terrorism, promotion of sustainable development.

Way Forward:

- i. NAM focused on democratising the international system by addressing the existing inequities, and this idea continues to hold relevance even after the end of cold war.

- ii. Since NAM member countries account for around two-thirds of the total strength of the General Assembly, the summits of NAM cannot be ignored, as they can act as a platform for reaching consensus on a plethora of global issues and also their possible solutions.
- iii. NAM can also act as a platform where many ongoing international conflicts and disputes could be discussed and resolved through debates, dialogues and discussions amongst the conflicting parties.
- iv. India must maintain close ties with NAM. This will help India to stay in proximity with the countries which were along with it during the turbulent times. This will also aid India in achieving its goal of being the key driver of the concept of multipolarity.