

## **Non-aligned movement and its relevance today**

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### **Abstract**

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) emerged in the context of the wave of decolonization that followed World War II. It was founded during the height of the Soviet-U.S. Confrontation in 1961 in Belgrade. Its political bearing has diminished in the post-cold war environment with the disintegration of USSR but NAM is still relevant in today's international environment. With the passage of time NAM emerged as a political personality of its own. In the present study an attempt has been made to evaluate the relevance of NAM today in the light of the purposes and objectives on which it was originated. The opinion of one section of the people is that NAM has lost its relevance as its basis, the bipolar world has become dead. However, the opinion of the other section is that NAM is still abide its founding principles, ideas and purposes to establish peaceful and prosperous world and promotion of disarmament. With the decline of the cold war regional conflicts and crises have not ended. Now NAM can play a meaningful role in the present international scenario to promote world peace and bring about nuclear arms control and disarmament by nuclear powers. The fact is that NAM has not lost its relevance. The policy will last as long as the sovereign state system exists. Its validity cannot be questioned in the same way as the United Nations Organisation and its charter are not invalidated by the sins of omissions and commissions of the organization and its member states. Like UN, the objectives of NAM are largely of a long term and universalistic in nature.

**Keywords:** NAM, cold war, bipolar world, relevance, world peace

### **1. Introduction**

Non-alignment is one of those phenomenon of international politics which appeared after the Second World War in cold war situation on the international scene. It has provided a new twist to the world politics and has represented an important force in shaping the nature of international relations. It became a protector for newly independent countries to escape from race of militarization promoted by two world powers at that time.

A significant milestone in the development of NAM was the Bandung Conference of Asian and African countries in 1955 hosted by Indonesian President Sukarno. The conference adopted a declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation which included Nehru's five principles and a collective pledge to remain neutral in the cold war. After six years of Bandung conference, the organization was founded on a wider geographical basis during the collapse of the colonial system and the independence struggles of Africa, Latin America and other regimes of the world at the height of the cold war.

It was founded in Belgrade in 1961 and is largely conceived by India's first Prime Minister J.L. Nehru, Indonesia's President Sukarno and Egypt's President Nasser, Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah, Yugoslavia's President J. B. Tito. Their actions were known as the initiatives of five. These leaders were prominent advocate of a middle course for states in the developing world between the western and eastern blocs in the cold war. Conference was attended by 25 countries. The founder of NAM were preferred to declare it as a movement but not an organization in order to avoid bureaucratic implications of the latter.

### **1.1 Factors responsible for the emergence of NAM**

Some negative and positive factors and circumstances in the International politics were responsible for the emergence of this movement. The newly independent nations of Asia and Africa were deeply enriched with the feeling of nationalism and were not ready to compromise with their freedom at any stage. As these states were economically undeveloped and to attain economic development, they were not ready to join one of the bloc and become dependent fully on it. The newly independent states having common cultural and racial aspects wanted to preserve and promote it by coming together and unite in the form of NAM. They have common social, economic and political problems and needed a common platform to discuss and to bring development in their countries.

At the time of the existence of the NAM, cold war was at its peak and military alliances were the key feature of the two power blocs, both seeking their goals of increasing alliance and support from smaller and less powerful countries. Therefore, to avoid these military alliance and to follow an independent foreign policy, they opted the policy of NAM. Also, these countries were afraid of any type of control of these powerful nations on their sovereignty. This fear make them united and follow the principles of NAM.

However, certain conditions were laid down by founding members to join the NAM, as follows:-

- Having independent foreign policy
- Having Sovereign state
- Peace loving country
- Non-aligned with any power bloc
- Mutual respect for every nation's sovereignty and territory
- Non-Interference in internal affairs of other countries

- Avoidance of aggression
  - Promote equality, cooperation and benefit for all nations.
- The principles, that would govern relations among large and small countries, known as 10 principles of Bandung which were later adopted as the main goals and objectives of NAM.

## 2. Objectives

The primary objectives of non-aligned countries focused on the support of self-determination, national independence and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, opposition to apartheid, non-interference to multi-lateral military pacts and the independence of non-aligned countries from great powers or bloc influence or rivalries, the struggle against imperialism in all its forms and manifestations, the struggle against colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, foreign occupation and domination, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states and peaceful co-existence among all nations, rejection of the use of threat or use of force in international relations, the strengthening of the U.N., the democratization of international relations, socio-economic development and the restructuring of the international economic system as well as international cooperation on an equal footing. After Lusaka conference in 1970, the member nations added the peaceful resolution of disputes, abstention from the big power military alliances and pacts and opposition to stationing of military bases in other countries as aims of the movement.

The movement stems from a desire not to be aligned within a geo-political/military structure and therefore does not have a very strict organizational structure. The summit conference of heads of states of member countries is the highest decision making authority. The chairmanship rotates between countries and changes at every summit meeting to the country organizing the summit.

Secretaries General of NAM had included such diverse figures as Suharto – a militaristic anti-communist and Nelson Mandela – a democratic socialist and famous anti-apartheid activist. In spite of having different ideologies by the member countries, the NAM is unified by its declared commitment to world peace and security.

During 1980 decade, the movement of non-aligned countries played an important role in the struggle of the establishment of a new international economic order that allowed all the people of the world to make use of their wealth and natural resources and provided wide platform for a fundamental change in international economic relations and the economic emancipation of the countries of the south. At the 7<sup>th</sup> summit held in New Delhi in March 1983, the movement described itself as history's biggest peace movement.

By the end of 1980, the movement was facing the great challenge brought about by the collapse of the social bloc. At the ending of the cold war, there have been several arguments about the fact that there is hardly any requirement for the NAM in contemporary politics. As non-alignment was simply a product of cold war and therefore, with the claimed end of cold war it has lost its relevance.

### 2.1 Irrelevance of NAM

Also, its amorphous character had led critics to scoff at its marginality. The original criterion for membership have been diluted and the dividing line between non-aligned and aligned have been somewhat coloured. The regional quarrels and

ambitions have tended to displace the larger objectives and demands. The economic power of the rich nations combined with grave economic difficulties and challenges have placed new constraints on the activity, initiative and bounce of the Non-alignment movement.

It was said that NAM is not relevant today in this unipolar world as many of its members are heavily dependent on U.S. The circumstances that led to the creation of this movement have undergone a vast change which have diminished the utility of NAM doubtful.

It was also said that cold war has been ended, military blocs have tumbled down and due to the advances in science and technology, military bases have become a thing of the past. Due to the collapse of Soviet Union and communist bloc, bipolar world is non-existent. Irreversible trends towards peaceful co-existence and active economic-cooperation was visible clearly.

Some of the opinions that NAM has become defunct due to various reasons. There are other groups of nations similar to the NAM as G-77, ASEAN and the Common Wealth which are more effective in dealing with economic and trade issues. Foreign aid has been declining at about 10% annually. Instead of relying on aid, NAM countries have to get more private investment into their countries.

Some have expressed the opinion that at present, NAM has no leadership on global issues and there are also disagreements among the members. NAM has no position even on issues like Human Rights, Child exploitation and gender issues, nuclear non-proliferation, child labour, poverty, terrorism besides other social and economic issues. Even, issues on which there is a consensus such as the drug trade, international terrorism and non-proliferation, NAM has not been able to achieve much. As a result, the organization has no direction and its members have to follow the western dictates in this regard.

After the end of the cold war many countries have lost interest in NAM. In 2004 Malta and Cyprus have joined the European Union. NAM is criticized as it has failed to promote peace and many of its members have been involved in bloody internal and external violence as civil war in Cambodia and war between Iran and Iraq. Most of the members do not use NAM platform to resolve disputes nor do they contribute much effort to make it more effective.

NAM has emphasized the importance of cooperation and unity among its members but cohesion remained a problem due to the size of organization and divergence of agenda. The movement fractured from its own internal contradictions when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. It was supported by Soviet allies while other members (Muslim states) condemn it.

### 2.2 Relevance of NAM

However, after the end of cold war, the NAM has been forced to redefine itself and reinvent its objectives in the contemporary world system. The movement continues to see a role for itself after realizing that it has really to play against western hegemony and neo-colonialism in a unipolar world.

It opposes foreign occupation, interference in internal affairs and aggressive unilateral measures but has also shifted to focus on the socio-economic challenges, facing member states especially inequalities, manifested by globalization and the implications of neo-liberal policies. The NAM also has identified under-developed economy, poverty and social

security. It believes that international community has not created conditions conducive to development and has infringed upon the right to sovereign development by each member state. Issues such as globalization, the debt burden, unfair trade practices, the decline in foreign aid, donor conditionality and the lack of democracy in international financial decision making are some of the factors inhibiting development. The organization appeals for the protection of cultural diversity and the tolerance of the religious, socio-cultural and historical peculiarities that define human rights in a specific region. The NAM can also act as a guide and overseer of the conditions of human rights in some of the member states which have poor human rights records like Syria and Egypt.

Since most of its members are developing nations of third world, NAM serves as a great platform to have their voice in the U.N. As these countries are fighting against sociological and economical problems and looking forward for development, it can provide its members a forum where they can discuss their common problems, evolve solutions and work out positions in tackling the international problems of peace, security, development, environmental safety and human rights. etc. In such situations, NAM can act as a protector for these small states against the western hegemony. It empowers the member states to take its own decisions without any external influence. It can also play a strong role in devising methods to foster cooperation among these nations to ensure sustainable development and will lead to great progress in various fields as science and technology, culture and economics.

In the post-cold war era, the summit conference of Indonesia-1992, Columbia-1995 and South Africa-1997 reaffirmed the continued relevance of non-alignment. The end of cold war have raised various hopes as well as possibilities of creating a new world order. However, the economy has started moving along the path of the new dynamics of globalization, the expectations of humanity to attain a new, just and equitable international system based on respect, justice and equity among nations, do not seem to be realized. Though wealth and trade have grown, life expectancy and access for primary education have increased and infant mortality has gone down yet poverty, hunger, employment, environment degradation and threat to peace through stockpiling of nuclear weapons were not considered seriously. Similarly, the important fact is that a number of conflicts have been settled through dialogue and agreements, there has also been exacerbation of existing disputes, emergence of new conflicts and reappearance of ethnic, religious and socio-economic rivalries are not compatible to the peaceful and secure international environment. Simmering disputes, violent conflicts, aggression and foreign occupation, interference in internal affairs of other states, religious intolerance, policies of domination and hegemony, national and transnational terrorism are such major and dangerous obstacles to harmonious coexistence among states. The NAM will have to discuss all these issues as they are affecting developing countries.

NAM is still abide its founding principles, ideas and purposes to establish peaceful and prosperous world, promotion of disarmament, preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty and even prohibited invasion. With the passage of time NAM emerged as a political entity of its own and it can

play a big role in controlling and changing the present international environment. NAM continues to be a global movement of all the third world countries which constitutes 2/3 of the total membership of the world community. It stood committed to secure restructuring of international economic relations. The threat to world peace, security and development continues to be present. NAM has been all along the movement against apartheid, terrorism, totalitarianism and authoritarianism in world politics. In this direction some progress has been registered and much has to be done. Since 1973 the group has supported the discussion of the case of Western Sahara's Self-Determination before the U.N. The movement reaffirmed in its meeting in 2009 (Sharm El. Sheikh) the support to self-determination of the Sahrawi people by choosing between any valid option, welcomed the direct conversations between the parties and remembered the responsibility of the U.N. on the Sahrawi's issues.

But most important aspect is the need to realize that NAM did not originate as an ideological camp. It was a revolt against bloc divisions and dominance of the international system by few powers. A non-aligned country wanted a measure of freedom for itself and at the same time, to acquire some leverage through this bigger association in the international system. In that sense NAM provided the emerging and struggling countries a certain psychological security, though not fool-proof and not even demonstrate but nevertheless permitting some sense of belongings. It offered them in a harsh and cruel world some kind of an anchorage without entangling alliances and with their independence intact making it possible for their voice to be heard with a greater seriousness.

It continues to be the need of the time. It has not been only a negative movement against cold war and alliance politics but a movement for the unity of new nations against colonialism and neo-colonialism. Since 1961, the organization has supported the discussion of the cause of Pueroto Rico's self-determination before the U.N. Long term objectives of NAM as establishing NIEO and democratisation of the international system have to be achieved and it continues to live as single largest movement in international relations.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> NAM summit in Havan (Cuba) in September 2006 the member countries adopted purposes and principles of the movement in the present international situation.

### 2.3 Purposes

- To promote and reinforce multinationalism and in this regard, strengthened the central role that the UN must play.
- To serve as a forum of political coordination of the developing countries to promote and defend their common interests in international relations.
- To promote unity, solidarity and cooperation between developing countries based on shared values and priorities agreed upon by consensus.
- To defend international peace and security and settle all international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of U.N. charter and international law.
- To encourage relations of friendship and cooperation between all nations based on the principles of international law particularly those enshrined in the charter of the U.N.

- To promote and encourage sustainable development through international cooperation and to that end jointly coordinate the implementation of political strategies which strengthen and ensure the full participation of all countries, rich or poor in the international economic relations, under equal conditions and opportunities, but with differentiated responsibilities.
- To encourage the respect, enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all on the basis of the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity, avoiding politicization of human rights issues, thus ensuring that all human rights of individuals and peoples, including the right to development are promoted and protected in a balanced manner.
- To promote peaceful co-existence between nations regardless of their political, economic, and social systems.
- To condemn all manifestations of unilateralism and attempts to exercise hegemonic domination in international relations.
- To coordinate actions and strategies in order to confront jointly the threats to international peace and security, including the threats of use of force and the acts of aggression and other breaches of peace caused by any country or group of countries.
- To promote the strengthening and democratization of the U.N. giving the General Assembly the role granted to it in accordance with the functions and powers outlined in the charter and to promote the comprehensive reforms of the U.N. Security Council so that it may fulfill the role granted to it by the charter in a transparent and equitable manner, as the body primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
- To continue pursuing universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament, as well as a general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control and in this context, to work towards the objective of aiming at an agreement on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time to prohibit their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use to provide for their destruction.
- To oppose and condemn the categorization of countries as good or evil based on unilateral and unjustified criteria and the adoption of a doctrine of pre-emptive attack including attack by nuclear weapons which is inconsistent with international law, in particular, the international legally binding instruments concerning nuclear disarmament and to further condemn and oppose unilateral military actions or use of force or threat of use of force against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of non-aligned countries.
- To encourage states to conclude agreements to establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East which is a positive step and important measure towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.
- To promote concrete initiatives of South-South cooperation and strengthen the role of NAM in co-ordination with G-77, in the re-launching of North-South

cooperation, ensuring the fulfillment of the right to development of our peoples through the enhancement of international solidarity.

- To respond the challenges and to take advantage of the opportunities arising from globalization and interdependence with creativity and a sense of identity in order to ensure its benefits to all countries, particularly those most affected by underdevelopment and poverty with an view to gradually reducing the abysmal gap between the developed and developing countries.
- To enhance the role that civil society including NGO's can play at the regional and international levels to promote the purposes, principles and objectives of the movement.

## 2.4 Principles

- Respect for the principles enshrined in the U.N. Charter and International Law.
- Respect for sovereignty, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of all states.
- Recognition of the equality of all races, religions, culture of all nations both big and small.
- Promotion of dialogues among peoples, civilizations, culture and religions based on the respect of religions, their symbols and values, the promotion and the consolidation of tolerance and freedom of belief.
- Respect and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all including the effective implementation of the right of people to peace and development.
- Respect for the equality of rights of states, including the inalienable right to each state to determine freely its political, social, economic and cultural systems without any kind of interference.
- Reaffirmation of the validity and relevance of the movement's principled positions concerning the right to self-determination of people under foreign occupation and colonial or alien domination.
- Rejection of unconstitutional change of governments.
- Non-interference in internal affairs of other states.
- Condemnation of the use of mercenaries in all situations especially in conflict.
- Total rejection of aggression as a dangerous and serious breach of international law.
- Respect for the inherent rights of individuals or collective self-defence in accordance with the U.N. charter.
- Condemnation of genocide war crimes and systematic and gross violation of human rights in accordance with the U.N. charter and international law.
- Rejection and opposition of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- Promotion of pacific settlement of disputes adjuring under any circumstances from taking part in coalitions, agreements or any other kind of unilateral coercive initiative.
- Defence and consolidation of democracy.
- Promotion and defence of multi-lateralism and multilateral organizations to resolve problems through dialogue and cooperation.



- Support to efforts by countries, suffering international conflicts to achieve peace, justice, equality and development.
- Defence and promotion of shared interest, justice and cooperation, regardless of difference existing in the political, social, economic systems of the states on the basis of mutual respect and equality of rights.
- Respect for the political, economic, social and cultural diversity of countries and peoples.

In the light of these purposes and principles of the movement in present international situation, the movement is publicity committed to the tenets of sustainable development and the attainment of the millennium development goals. The eight goals are the world's time bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in many dimensions- income, poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion while prompting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability.

### 3. Conclusions

The cold war has ended but peace in the world is still threatened by forces of extremist, discord, aggressive nationalism and terrorism and large stocks of weapons of mass destruction. These problems cannot be solved by one country alone regardless of its size and resources whereas the NAM is considered the biggest representative of the developing world, it can pressurize the international society. Therefore, it can be said that the relevance of NAM is more justified in present global scenario. The essence is the right to consider every issue on merit and the right to take whatever action is considered feasible against what is regarded as wrong.

In fact, the cold war is dead but not the regional conflicts and crises. Intense economic and technological competition is emerging among several strong nations. The non-aligned countries have to learn to maneuver among them and successfully face the menace of new colonialism imposed through various W.T.O. round.

In the present scenario, the success of NAM lies in the fact that NAM 16<sup>th</sup> Summit held at Tehran (Iran) in August 2012 was attended by all the 120 members to discuss the objectives and to preserve strategic space, ensure social and economic development. Though U.S. and allied western nations and Israeli attempted to pressurize and isolate Iran to abandon parts of its nuclear programme. Great pressure was brought on U.N. Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon by Washington and Tel Aviv not to attend the meeting. However, the mild and generally pliant Ban could not bring himself to abandon the precedent sent by his predecessors and skip the event.

Hosting the summit successfully was a great confidence booster for Tehran which was able to present its case in the largest international organization of developing nations. In its final declaration the summit unanimously supported Iran's right to develop all aspects of its nuclear programme for peaceful purposes within the framework of the Non-proliferation Treaty and criticized attempts to isolate Iran and punish it with unilateral sanctions.

NAM acted as catalyst to foster the cooperation between South-South nations. The movements has collaborated with other organizations of the developing world primarily the G-77 forming a number of joint committees and releasing statements and documents representing the shared interests of

both groups. This dialogue and cooperation can be taken as an effort to increase the global awareness about the organization and bolster its political clouts. It raises issues of major concern for the south countries and initiate economic, political and social development concerns to achieve the desired results of moving from developing to developed countries. NAM acts as a platform which negotiate and conclude disputes peacefully, security the favourable decisions for each member nation. It protects the member from the huge and influential power in the international sphere. In this regard the most important role of NAM today lies in the framing a concrete economic growth for a just fair international economic order. Economic cooperation between developed and developing states forms part of the three fold strategy advocated by NAM: reliance on their resources, promotion of cooperation among non-aligned states themselves and fostering cooperation with the advanced states. The globalization and liberalization world-wide trends have generated complex economic problems. The rich-poor gap has widened. The WTO rules and procedures have failed to provide adequate economic gains to the III World.

The movement has been outspoken in its criticism of current UN structures and power dynamics saying that the organization has been utilized by powerful states in such a way that violate the movement's principle. Some reforms required to make it more responsible and representative. Suggestions are made, aimed at improving the transparency and democracy of UN decision-making. The UN Security Council is the element which it considers the most distorted, undemocratic and need of its reshaping. Permanent members and their veto's have lost much of their relevance. Though NAM has consistently sought to improve the bargaining position of its member countries in UN and other global economic forums.

The fact remains that non-alignment has not lost its relevance. Since most of the problems faced by the developing nations during cold war period are still continue to persist. The time is ripe to evaluate the past and formulate the future policies of the non-alignment countries to change the existing international order and establish a new international order based on friendship, cooperation, justice and fair play to improve the lots of third world and to restore human rights, democracy and world peace. NAM has to redefine its role in the changed international situation. It needs a shift of emphasis in priorities to face new challenges. Its role would depend largely on its inner strength, unity and cohesion. It is, therefore, incumbent for all member states to work earnestly towards promoting solidarity and unity of the movement.

NAM has to set its priorities carefully. It has a role to play in WTO negotiations to protect and advance the trading rights and opportunities of developing countries and in muscling up their negotiating positions and skills.

It can make the protests of developing nations against arbitrary application of western concepts of human rights. It can also play a meaningful role in bringing about nuclear arms control and disarmament by the nuclear powers. Thus NAM continues to be relevant so long as there is exploitation, war, hunger, poverty and disease on the earth. The uniqueness of NAM lies in the fact that its goals do not merely serve the national interest of member states but it stands to promote the cause of humanity which are universalistic in nature.

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