

# India & the Non-Aligned Movement

Day 40 of your revision. India's one original contribution to the grammar of world politics — what it meant, how it travelled, who attacked it, and where it stands today. **Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.**

PYQ trail on this chapter (UPSC 2016–2025): **8 questions · twice each in 2024 and 2025.**

## A The Idea — Meaning, Bases, Purpose

### I Non-Alignment — the core proposition

*“Non-alignment was never about staying away from global politics; it was about staying above it.” — C. Raja Mohan*

- India's principal contribution to the **theory and practice of international politics**.
- Setting → after the Second World War, newly independent states of Asia, Africa and Latin America looked for an alternative to the two Cold War blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union.
- Core idea → an **independent foreign policy**, **freedom of judgment on each issue**, refusal to join **military alliances** — and no withdrawal from world affairs.
- Scale → from **25 states at Belgrade (1961)** to about **120 members** today; **nineteen summits** between 1961 and 2024.
- Agenda shift → Cold War bloc politics → decolonization → the North–South economic divide → today, strategic autonomy, terrorism, climate change and reform of global governance.

*“...a policy of acting according to our best judgment and furthering the principal objectives and ideals that we have...” — Jawaharlal Nehru (1964)*

### 2 What It Is Not

Meaning has varied with the writer's own vantage point. Western scholarship often read non-alignment as **neutrality** or **neutralism**, borrowing from European precedent — a misreading, since non-alignment arose in a different setting and rests on distinct principles.

- Georg Schwarzenberger** → separates non-alignment from isolationism, non-commitment, neutrality, neutralization, unilateralism and non-involvement; it means specifically keeping out of Cold War military alliances.
- George Liska** → among anti-alliance policies, traditional isolationism or neutrality differ from non-alignment, which opposes *all* alliances — including those among other states.
- U Nu** (Burma) → tied non-alignment to Cold War neutralism, i.e. staying out of the East–West ideological struggle.

| Term           | What it means                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Neutrality     | Non-involvement in an actual war between belligerents; a neutral state can still become a belligerent if circumstances change.                                 |
| Neutralization | A permanent, obligatory status of not participating in wars, even when sovereignty is threatened. Classic case: Switzerland.                                   |
| Non-Alignment  | Non-involvement in Cold War rivalry; not permanent neutrality but independence of foreign policy and avoidance of alliances that could compromise sovereignty. |

### Two core components

- Opposition to military alliances** → antipathy toward the Cold War system of military blocs.
- Independence of foreign policy** → freedom to frame and pursue policy on national interest, free of external pressure or bloc alignment.

### 3 Bases of Non-Alignment — negative and positive

#### Negative basis — the anti-military-alliance policy

- Avoiding Cold War entanglement** → staying out of alliances kept nations clear of superpower confrontations.
- National security** → alliances could provoke adversaries and raise the risk of conflict on one's own soil.
- Preserving sovereignty** → military pacts carry obligations that erode independent decision-making.

#### Positive bases

- Ideological independence** → post-colonial states carried distinct cultural identities and socio-economic problems; they wanted systems suited to their own context, not wholesale Western capitalism or Soviet communism. Staying out of both blocs guarded domestic priorities from external ideological pressure.
- Economic development** → aid was needed, but not aid tied to political or ideological conditions. **Bokaro Steel Plant** — after the U.S. Congress refused assistance, India secured Soviet help without altering its foreign policy. **Aswan Dam** (Egypt) — after Western withdrawal, Egypt turned to the Soviet Union while retaining non-alignment.
- Independence of judgment** → **U Nu** and **Kwame Nkrumah** stressed judging each issue on its merits, free of bloc pressure; positions taken case by case on the specific circumstances of each question.

## 4 Non-Alignment & Sovereignty — a two-way pull

| How it enhances sovereignty                                                                                                  | How it limits sovereignty                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Attribute of sovereignty</b> — an independent foreign policy reinforces autonomy in international relations.              | <b>Restraint in exercising sovereign rights</b> — unrestricted freedom, especially on questions of war, can damage international peace. |
| <b>Democratic principle</b> — equality among nations, against the hierarchy built into alliances that serve dominant powers. | <b>Commitment to peace</b> — non-aligned states accept certain constraints on their conduct to support global stability.                |

## 5 Peace, Disarmament & Conflict Resolution

Non-alignment reaches past national interest to hold peace itself as an objective.

- Recognition of the catastrophic potential of **nuclear war** → emphasis on preventing global conflict.
- Support for **disarmament and arms control** → reductions in nuclear arsenals and military spending.
- Faith in **international organizations** → trust in the United Nations for dialogue and peaceful settlement.
- **Contribution** → the **Moscow (Partial) Test Ban Treaty, 1963** owed much to non-aligned pressure; non-aligned states have acted as mediators on the strength of their impartial standing.

### As a technique of conflict resolution

- **Avoid taking sides** → impartial mediation becomes possible.
- **Suspension of moral judgment** → in the interest of peace, refraining from assigning blame and concentrating on settlement.
- **Belgrade illustration** → **Nehru** appealed to both the United States and the Soviet Union to halt nuclear tests without naming who began them — the urgency of ending the arms race placed above the question of fault.

### Critiques

- **Justice against peace** → the approach can appear to equate aggressor and victim, weakening justice.
- **Restraint against interest** → a fine line separates withholding judgment for peace from withholding it for self-interest; credibility rests on genuine impartiality.

## B From Policy to Movement

## 6 Bandung 1955 & Belgrade 1961

### Bandung Conference (1955)

- Precursor to NAM → **29 Asian and African countries**, called by **Sukarno** of Indonesia, met to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation.
- The **Ten Bandung Principles** → respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, peaceful coexistence.
- **Christopher Waters** reads Bandung as foregrounding decolonization and Cold War anxieties; **Carsten Rauch** treats it as the first step toward NAM.

### First Summit, Belgrade (1961)

- Formal founding of NAM → **25 states**.
- Key figures → **Josip Broz Tito** (Yugoslavia), **Jawaharlal Nehru** (India), **Gamal Abdel Nasser** (Egypt), **Kwame Nkrumah** (Ghana), **Sukarno** (Indonesia).
- Two primary objectives → (i) non-alignment with any superpower bloc; (ii) national liberation and decolonization.
- **John A. Graham** → the aim was a buffer of non-aligned states to resist external pressure during the Cold War and to hasten decolonization.

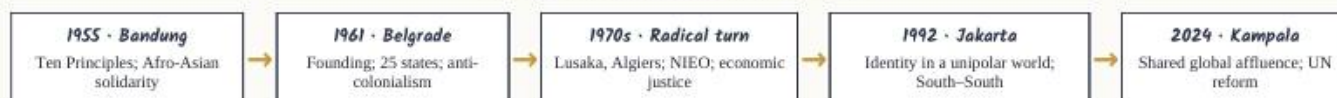
### Debate on NAM's roots — 1955 or 1961?

- **Peter Willetts** → non-alignment as a coherent idea was not born until 1961 and did not survive beyond that year; linking NAM to Bandung gives it “false roots.”
- **Keethaponcalan** → disputes this, stressing the continuity between Bandung's principles and NAM's formation.

## 7 Evolution of the Movement — and its Summits

Institutionalization ran through regular summits, standing committees for routine affairs, and a shift of leadership after **Nehru**, **Nasser** and **Tito** to states such as Zambia, Tanzania and Cuba. The movement grew more demanding and more radical — a fair share of global resources, economic justice — put greater weight on solidarity and **collective self-reliance** through South–South cooperation, and pressed for firmer coordinating structures.

### Five turns of the movement, 1955 to 2024



| Summit · Year · Venue     | Remembered for                                                              |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bandung, Indonesia (1955) | Precursor; Ten Principles; foundation of non-alignment.                     |
| 1st · Belgrade (1961)     | Founding; 25 states; non-alignment, anti-colonialism, peaceful coexistence. |

|                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2nd · Cairo (1964)                     | Wider membership; economic cooperation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 3rd · Lusaka (1970)                    | Lusaka Declaration; opposition to apartheid; non-interference.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4th · Algiers (1973)                   | NIEO proposed; support for the Palestinian cause.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 5th · Colombo (1976)                   | Colombo Declaration; self-reliance against neo-colonial dependence.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 6th · Havana (1979)                    | <b>Fidel Castro</b> ; anti-imperialism; internal divisions over closeness to the Soviet Union.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 7th · New Delhi (1983)                 | India reasserted non-aligned roots; disarmament and economic questions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 8th · Harare (1986)                    | Strong anti-apartheid focus; economic development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 9th · Belgrade (1989)                  | Held amid the end of the Cold War; environment and human rights added.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 10th · Jakarta (1992)                  | Jakarta Declaration; identity in a unipolar world; South–South cooperation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 11th · Cartagena (1995)                | Relevance affirmed; call for UN democratization.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 12th · Durban (1998)                   | <b>Nelson Mandela</b> ; debates on globalization.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 13th · Kuala Lumpur (2003)             | Opposition to unilateralism; anti-terrorism.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 14th · Havana (2006)                   | Reaffirmation of principles; the Havana Declaration restructured the agenda around peace, disarmament, South–South cooperation, human rights, sustainable development and multilateralism.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 15th · Sharm El Sheikh (2009)          | Global economic crisis; call for a fairer financial system.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 16th · Tehran (2012)                   | Large participation; Iran used it to counter isolation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 17th · Port of Spain, Venezuela (2016) | Sanctions and economic crises; solidarity in adversity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 18th · Baku (2019)                     | Reaffirmed principles; terrorism, climate change, inequality.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 19th · Kampala, Uganda (2024)          | Theme “Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence”; Bandung and Belgrade principles reaffirmed; support for Palestine and a Gaza ceasefire; comprehensive UN and Security Council reform with greater African representation (Ezulwini Consensus, Sirte Declaration); SDGs by 2030; reform of the international financial architecture; climate action on equity and common but differentiated responsibilities; pandemic preparedness; condemnation of terrorism; admission of South Sudan; Uganda chairing both NAM and the G-77. |

## 8 Achievements of the Movement

- **Decolonization and anti-imperialism** → support for liberation struggles in Asia, Africa and Latin America; moral and political pressure on colonial powers through the UN.
- **Transformation of the international system** → a larger body of sovereign states shifted the balance in the UN General Assembly and gave voice to marginalized nations.
- **New International Economic Order** → the North–South divide brought to the centre; demands for fairer trade, technology transfer and unconditional assistance.
- **Peace and disarmament** → instrumental in the Partial Test Ban Treaty (1963); consistent advocacy of nuclear disarmament.
- **Against racialism and apartheid** → opposition to South Africa’s regime and support for sanctions; steady backing of Palestinian rights.
- **Cultural and informational initiatives** → a non-aligned news pool to reduce dependence on Western media; cultural and educational exchange.

### Six contributions — Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya

1. Accelerated decolonization by strengthening freedom struggles and mobilizing world opinion.
2. Became a force against imperialism, neo-imperialism, racism and hegemonism.
3. Universalized the international system → turned weaker states from objects to subjects of international relations.
4. Advanced the case for a new international order based on equality.
5. Reduced polarization by de-emphasizing power blocs.
6. Promoted communication and cooperation over power politics.

## 9 The “Third Force” Question — why it did not consolidate

- NAM gave a collective voice to states unwilling to take sides in the US–USSR rivalry; its genesis lay at **Bandung (1955)**, where the term “**third world**” was also coined.
- Through the Cold War it worked as a **buffer** between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, pressing anti-colonialism, self-determination, disarmament and the primacy of the UN.
- In the 1970s some members tried to convert NAM into a formal **UN voting bloc** and to add an economic dimension; **Kwame Nkrumah’s neo-colonialism** named the continued Western control over new states.
- **Rapid expansion** → over 120 members by 1990 → consensus harder, strategic coherence diluted.
- **Fault lines** → regional and ideological splits from Colombo (1976) through Havana (1979) into the 1980s exposed a serious risk of rupture.
- **No permanent secretariat**, no enforcement machinery → weak follow-through compared with the UN.

- Members' differing dependence on the superpowers for aid undercut unity and the claim to equidistance.
- **And yet** → it universalized international relations, advanced decolonization and gave the Global South a platform — a partial third force, limited by size and structure rather than by the idea itself.

**UPSC 2024 · 20m** During the Cold War, the Non-Aligned Movement tried to become a "Third Force" in world politics, but failed because it was too large and unwieldy. Comment.

## C India and the Movement

### 10 Why India Chose Non-Alignment

The choice combined **idealism**, **realism**, **pragmatism** and a sense of **Indian exceptionalism**.

- **Avoidance of military alliances** → national interest was best served by staying clear of Cold War blocs that could invite aggression; preference for collective security and international law.
- **Realism and security** → limited military capability meant that joining either bloc carried risk without adequate defence; non-alignment was a prudent guard for sovereignty.
- **Pragmatism** → **Nehru** balanced principle against the need to protect national security and secure development.
- **Indian exceptionalism** → projecting a distinct civilizational identity and contributing to global peace through independence and diplomacy.

*Nehru — strategy, not dogma*

India should keep out of "other people's quarrels" unless "our interest is involved"; and — "We should either be strong enough to produce some effect or we should not interfere at all."

"We are not going to join a war if we can help it; we are going to join the side which is to our interest when the time comes to make the choice." — **Jawaharlal Nehru**

#### How scholars read the choice

| Scholar                | Reading                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Henry Kissinger</b> | India's non-alignment, though irritating for the United States, was the most appropriate course India could follow.                                         |
| <b>Aparna Pandey</b>   | Given India's limited military and economic strength, non-alignment was the best strategic option to assert influence and lead among decolonizing nations.  |
| <b>K. Natwar Singh</b> | A coherent doctrine, not a rigid ideology; India retained independence and a voice on major issues.                                                         |
| <b>K. Subramanian</b>  | A calculated move in realpolitik — aligning with neither bloc kept flexibility, strategic autonomy and the ability to shape events on India's own interest. |
| <b>J.N. Dixit</b>      | The dissent — naïve; Nehru did not grasp that India's idealism would not stop its neighbours from pursuing cynical realism.                                 |

#### Answer-frame — idealism and realism together

- **V.P. Dutt** → what appeared as India's idealism was in substance its pragmatism; morality served interest.
- **Realist core** → a materially weak India refused NATO and Warsaw Pact commitments to stay clear of conflicts serving no national purpose.
- **Economic pragmatism** → aid and technology drawn from both blocs — U.S. PL-480 food aid; Soviet steel plants and heavy industry, Bokaro after the American refusal.
- **Autonomy enabled mediation** → the Korean War ceasefire efforts show engagement without taking sides.
- **Bandung logic** → post-colonial states stayed out of the East–West contest to concentrate on independence, poverty and development; non-alignment was a policy option, not equidistance.
- India's leadership earned it the label "**Trade Union of the Third World**" → a code of conduct for MNCs, protection of domestic producers, the earliest Indian move toward South–South cooperation.
- **Realist critique** → **Hans Morgenthau** saw neutrality as weakness in a world of power politics; the 1962 defeat exposed the limits of diplomacy against aggression.
- **Assessment** → idealist in vocabulary, realist in function — and with a fresh US–China rivalry unfolding, political space between great powers remains rational for developing states.

**UPSC 2021 · 20m** "Non-alignment was little more than a rational strategy on the part of a materially weak India to maximise its interests within a bipolar distribution of global power." Comment.

### 11 India's Role & Contribution

- **Maintaining NAM's integrity** → keeping the movement independent of any single member's agenda; upholding its relevance through the Camp David Accords and the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- **Support for newly liberated nations** → assistance to new states in Africa and Asia; opposition to external intervention; advocacy of the NIEO.
- **Against colonialism, imperialism and racialism** → NAM aided decolonization across Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the 1960s–70s, drawing on India's own freedom struggle; opposition to discrimination by skin colour.
- **Disarmament** → support for the Moscow Test Ban Treaty and concern at the discriminatory character of nuclear regimes; NAM declared the 1970s the "**Decade of Disarmament**" at the UN.

- **NIEO** → economic independence alongside political freedom; self-reliance and cooperation among members.

#### Scholars on the contribution

- **C. Raja Mohan** — in *The Third World Beyond the Cold War: Continuity and Change*, acknowledges India's significant role in shaping NAM.
- **Sabyasachi Bhattacharya** — India contributed on three fronts: **ideological** (upholding non-alignment, advocating NIEO), **diplomatic** (building unity among diverse members) and **humanitarian** (peacekeeping and disarmament).
- **Shyam Saran** — in *How India Sees the World*, holds that even as NAM's relevance for India narrowed, the principles of non-alignment still govern Indian foreign policy.

#### Diplomatic weight

- **Nehru**, with **Tito** and **Nasser**, was a principal architect of NAM's principles and objectives.
- Hosting summits — notably the **7th Summit at New Delhi (1983)**, which reasserted non-aligned roots.
- Active engagement raised India's international profile and reinforced an independent foreign policy.
- Post-Cold War critique → some ask "non-alignment with whom," calling NAM a relic.

#### Non-alignment as identity, and as interest

- Non-alignment grew out of India's civilizational sense of itself and its non-violent freedom struggle — identity and interest, not imitation.
- Core idea → India's vital decisions should not be externally determined; national interest, not bloc loyalty, sets policy.
- "Genius of the people" → an ancient but resurgent India projecting peace, cooperation and anti-colonialism over confrontation.
- Interest served → aid and security from both blocs; Soviet reassurance against a Chinese threat and during the 1971 crisis, when Washington was seen as unreliable.
- The merger of smaller Afro-Asian states into NAM shifted its axis from East–West tension to North–South issues and the NIEO.

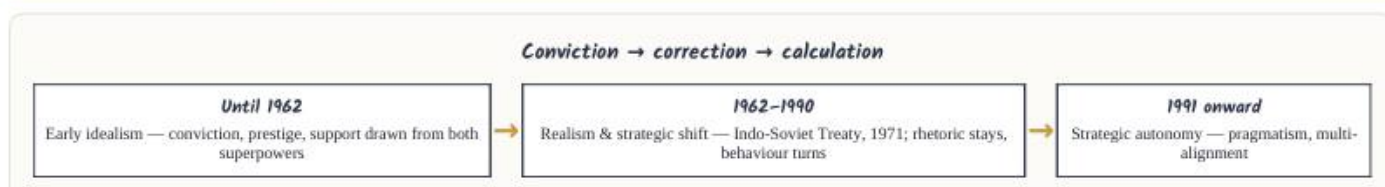
#### Answer-frame — normative ethos and soft power

- NAM was the political expression of Afro-Asian and Latin American struggle against colonial and imperial power after the Second World War.
- **Normative ethos** → sovereignty, non-interference, anti-colonialism, anti-racism, disarmament, peaceful coexistence, equity.
- **Soft-power link** → leadership of NAM gave India moral standing and influence beyond its material capabilities.
- Post-Cold War shift → under-development, poverty, unfair trade, debt, and the democratization of international financial decision-making.
- Defence of cultural diversity and social peculiarities strengthened India's appeal as a voice of the Global South.
- Contemporary expressions → the **International Solar Alliance**, Yoga Day, and cooperation on climate, health and terrorism carry the same normative signature.
- **Assessment** → the ethos remains an asset for India's soft power, provided convening power is converted into deliverable outcomes.

**UPSC 2016 · 10m** Comment on India's contribution to the Non-Aligned Movement and its contemporary relevance.

**UPSC 2023 · 20m** The relevance of the normative ethos of the Non-Aligned Movement in magnifying India's soft power.

## 12 Phases of India's Engagement



- **Early idealism (until 1962)** → non-alignment pursued with conviction, drawing support from both superpowers and prominence among developing nations. **Shashi Tharoor** notes it gave India diplomatic flexibility and influence out of proportion to its actual capabilities. The Sino-Indian war and difficulties at the UN then exposed practical limits and divergent interests.
- **Realism and strategic shift (1962–1990)** → a turn toward realism; the **Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971** stressed mutual security and marked a departure from strict non-alignment. India grew critical of US policies read as neo-colonial, and Western observers began to treat NAM as anti-American.
- **Post-Cold War and strategic autonomy (1991 onward)** → a more pragmatic policy, expressed today as strategic autonomy and multi-alignment.

After 1962 "the rhetoric of nonalignment remained," but behaviour "assumed a more Realist orientation"; and after 1991 a third phase of "more pragmatic foreign policy hewing closely to the principles of Realism." — **Sumit Ganguly**

## 13 The New International Economic Order

Championed by India in the 1970s and proposed at **Algiers (1973)** → to address the poverty of developing countries and bridge the North–South gap through fair trade, technology transfer and financial assistance.

Restructuring the economic order
Control over natural resources
Regulation of MNCs
Producer associations on the OPEC model

- **Main tenets** → total restructuring of the economic order; control over natural resources; regulation of MNCs operating in member territories; freedom to form producer associations like OPEC without economic or military resistance.
- **Aims** → challenge neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism, curb the negative role of MNCs, and rebuild world economic relations on self-reliance and equality.
- **Challenges** → stiff opposition from industrialized states, who held the existing system adequate; members' lack of economic and military power; the

insecurity dilemma among post-colonial societies; divisions among developing states; and failure to use oil as an economic weapon.

- **Outcome** → no significant economic justice achieved, but the North–South question was established as central to world politics.

## D After the Cold War

### 14 Does NAM Still Matter?

Several founding objectives were met → most colonies gained independence; apartheid ended with **Nelson Mandela**'s election in 1994; and the Cold War closed in the early 1990s, removing the rivalry that had justified non-alignment. That raised the question of purpose.

*Keethaponcalan — why the movement is still needed*

Unresolved issues (poverty, neo-colonialism, debt, terrorism, climate change — **Vijay Prashad** notes that many economic problems remain open); the continuing national interests of small members; and a shift from unipolarity toward multipolarity (**Daniel W. Drezner** points to the rise of China and India).

#### The relevance debate

##### A SPENT FORCE

old slogans, no machinery, no purchase on outcomes

C. Raja Mohan · Harsh V. Pant · G. Parthasarathy · Prabhat Shukla

##### A STANDING ASSET

freedom of judgment; a floor for small states

Shyam Saran · Shashi Tharoor · M.K. Narayanan · T.P. Sreenivasan

*Sreenivasan sits on both sides — NAM needs revival, and its essence was always strategic autonomy*

#### Case against relevance

**C. Raja Mohan** — NAM lost meaning even before the Cold War ended, having failed to shape global affairs.

**T.P. Sreenivasan** — NAM needs revival amid India's closeness to the United States and strained ties with China; its decline has weakened its ability to address economic disparities.

**Harsh V. Pant** — clinging to "old shibboleths" without new goals leaves NAM ineffective against contemporary challenges.

**G. Parthasarathy** — NAM lacked binding principles and amounted to a coalition of convenience; its loose structure limits action.

**Prabhat Shukla** — transactional diplomacy has cut NAM's relevance; India must assure reciprocal support if it expects support in need.

**General critique** — weak leadership, economic weakness of members, failure to adapt to globalization, terrorism and climate change; no permanent secretariat or firm decision-making machinery; the African Union, ASEAN and BRICS now carry much of the agenda NAM once held.

#### Case for relevance

**Shyam Saran** — non-alignment still governs Indian foreign policy, ensuring relative autonomy and separating substance from posture; the friendship with Russia illustrates this.

**Shashi Tharoor** — the world increasingly resembles a Cold War with three dominant poles, which strengthens the case for reviving NAM to protect India's strategic autonomy.

**M.K. Narayanan** — NAM remains relevant for small states, giving them a collective voice on global issues.

**T.P. Sreenivasan** — non-alignment is misunderstood; its essence is freedom of judgment and action, i.e. strategic autonomy.

**Structural record** — growth from 25 states (1961) to about 120 members; a role in facilitating China's UN accession; participation in WTO negotiations; cohesion around anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism and anti-racism; a collective platform on terrorism, climate change and globalization.

**A new template** — cooperation on pandemics, climate change and terrorism, and a bridge-building role in a polarized order where multilateralism is under strain.

#### Answer-frame — India's own distance

- NAM was founded in 1961 to assert independence from the US and Soviet camps and to advance sovereignty, non-interference and equitable development.
- **Signs of decline** → over the last two decades, weak and inconsistent leadership and fragmented priorities among 120-plus members have reduced coherence.
- **India's shift** → the Prime Minister's absence from recent summits signals reduced priority, part of the move to multi-alignment.
- **Assessment** → NAM's future depends on redefinition and reform, not on India's attendance alone; the idea survives even as the institution needs renewal.

UPSC 2025 · 10m

Does the Non-Aligned Movement have any future in the wake of India's growing indifference towards it?

### 15 From Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment

#### Non-Alignment 1.0 and 2.0 — what carries over

- Both are anti-violence, anti-imperialist and anti-colonial.
- Both aim to protect national interest — sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Both reject formal military blocs and uphold an independent, autonomous foreign policy.

#### What changes

- 1.0 → non-alignment from bloc politics; 2.0 → multiple alignment.
- 1.0 emerged in the Cold War; 2.0 in the setting of globalization and liberalization.
- 1.0 was largely **Nehru**'s personal initiative; 2.0 arose from the changing dynamics of a multipolar world.
- 1.0 diluted ties with neighbours; 2.0 deepens them through **Act East** and **Link West**.

- 1.0 was strictly against military alignment; under 2.0 India has signed **LEMOA** and **COMCASA**, moving away from a purely Nehruvian posture.

### The Non-Alignment 2.0 document (2012)

- Framed by **twelve experts** on international relations, defence and foreign policy → a prescription for India's foreign and strategic policy over the following decade.
- **Objectives** → identify opportunities and challenges; enhance strategic autonomy while upholding liberal values; set out a comprehensive framework built on India's economic and security capabilities.
- **Key formulations** → "strategic autonomy has been the defining value" since independence; the goal is "to give India maximum options"; and knowledge is "the field that is vital to defining national power in the twenty-first century."
- **Criticism** → **Bharat Karnad** calls it a regressive roadmap, faulting its overemphasis on ideational and moral influence and questioning the revival of non-alignment when material power drives international relations.

### Strategic autonomy and multi-alignment

- Terminology → the phrase "**Non-Aligned**" was first used by **V.K. Krishna Menon** at the UN General Assembly in **1953** and by **Jawaharlal Nehru** in **1956**.
- **S. Jaishankar** → non-alignment belonged to a specific era and context, but the independence of action within it remains a thread of continuity in Indian foreign policy.
- **Multi-alignment** → engaging several powers at once on specific interests — defence, trade, technology — without a single alliance.
- **Nirupama Rao** → strategic autonomy is now driven by sustained economic growth, energy and maritime security, and access to technology and innovation, pursued through "well-rounded strategic relationships and partnerships with all the major powers."
- **Tanvi Madan** → India's NAM heritage still supplies diplomatic flexibility, letting it engage many states without binding itself to one bloc.

"This is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support." — **S. Jaishankar (2020)**

### Multi-alignment — many partnerships, one decision-maker



"There is some self-interest behind every friendship. There is no friendship without self-interests. This is a bitter truth." — **the Chanakya maxim invoked by India's strategic establishment**

### Answer-frame — 1.0 against 2.0

- Shared ground → anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, protection of sovereignty, rejection of military blocs, an independent foreign policy.
- Divergence → 1.0 sought distance from blocs; 2.0 seeks multiple, issue-based alignments.
- Instruments of 2.0 → LEMOA and COMCASA, Act East and Link West, and non-attendance at NAM summits mark the departure from Nehruvian practice.
- Scholarly framing → **C. Raja Mohan** holds the old tenets less adequate today; **Harsh V. Pant** argues India cannot be pigeonholed into a rigid non-aligned stance.
- Assessment → the grammar shifts from neutrality to engagement; the constant is autonomy in decision-making.

### Answer-frame — debunked, or reinterpreted?

- Non-alignment was the cornerstone of Cold War diplomacy → autonomy through the avoidance of formal alliances.
- A de facto tilt toward the Soviet Union already qualified strict non-alignment, forced by the US posture toward Pakistan and China.
- The 1991 Soviet collapse and economic liberalization pushed a reorientation toward strategic autonomy and strategic partnerships.
- Multi-alignment reinforces autonomy by cultivating a diverse network of partnerships across the geopolitical spectrum.
- Continuity, not rupture → as at Bandung, India can still model a path for the Global South between US–China confrontation.
- Assessment → "debunk" overstates it; India has reinterpreted non-alignment as multi-alignment while keeping strategic autonomy intact.

### Answer-frame — an alternative universality

- Non-Alignment 2.0 (2012) set out a framework for India's foreign and strategic policy, drawing on Nehruvian principles adapted to a multipolar world.
- **Alternative universality** → India offering a model of order distinct from both Western liberal hegemony and rigid bloc politics.
- Strategic autonomy as the defining value → policy that gives India "maximum options" while preserving the core of non-alignment.
- Emphasis on an open global order, deep economic engagement, and knowledge as the key to national power in the twenty-first century.
- A **polycentric order** → states coexisting and cooperating in networks rather than fixed alliances, which is what makes multi-alignment possible.
- Global South leadership → the Voice of Global South Summits and the African Union's entry into the G20 project this aspiration.
- Assessment → 2.0 does frame India as a site of an alternative universality, but its credibility rests on converting convening power into concrete outcomes.

**UPSC 2019 · 10m** Compare and contrast Non-Alignment 1.0 with Non-Alignment 2.0.

**UPSC 2024 · 15m** "India has, of late, chosen to debunk non-alignment in its pursuit of multi-alignment." Comment.

## 16 Non-Alignment & International Relations Theory

| Lens                    | Reading                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Realism                 | A strategy by weaker states such as India to preserve sovereignty and avoid domination in an anarchic system — balancing power without formal alliances. <b>Hans Morgenthau</b> , however, criticized neutrality as utopian and unsustainable where power politics rules.                                   |
| Constructivism          | NAM as shared ideas, identities and norms → a collective identity of non-alignment and solidarity beyond material interest. <b>Hedley Bull</b> , in <i>The Anarchical Society</i> , held that middle powers and dialogue stabilize international order — which fits NAM's mediating and de-escalating role. |
| Strategic autonomy      | The right to make independent foreign policy decisions free of external control — the principle India upheld through NAM.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Kautilya's Arthashastra | An ancient precedent for pragmatic diplomacy → balance of power, avoidance of entanglement, preservation of sovereignty.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Balance of power        | Non-alignment let states hold an equilibrium between the US and Soviet blocs without joining either.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

## 17 Reforming NAM for the Twenty-First Century

**Keethaponcalan** proposes three sets of changes.

| Set             | Proposal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Symbolic        | Rename the movement — non-alignment was never its sole aim; a “ <b>Southern Solidarity Movement</b> ” would stress unity built on shared colonial history and socio-economic conditions. <b>Ran Kochan</b> notes that many members were in fact aligned with a superpower, which strained the label.                                                                                                                                |
| Structural      | Establish a <b>permanent secretariat</b> to improve coordination and image. <b>Sally Morphet</b> observes that rising Global South powers can sustain such an institution, and that fears about cost or exposing internal differences are unfounded.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Policy & agenda | Redefine non-alignment as constructive, selective engagement with major powers rather than non-cooperation — <b>Ran Kochan</b> argues NAM cannot survive as a mere protest movement. Priority to internal development through South–South collaboration, a “ <b>Southern Development Bank</b> ” on the model of the World Bank or Asian Development Bank, and control over natural resources instead of dependence on external aid. |

- **Vijay Prashad** → NAM needs a new charter akin to the NIEO to redefine its purpose for present challenges.

### Way forward

- The world is more interconnected than ever — climate change, terrorism, poverty and public-health emergencies can be met only together.
- NAM should be positioned neither for nor against any ideology or group of nations, but should select cross-sectoral priorities → counter-terrorism, global governance reform, sustainable development, South–South cooperation.
- **T.V. Paul** → there is space for “**soft balancing**,” so that weaker countries can “delegitimize imperial ventures,” though “the onus is on smaller countries.”
- A democratic, effective, flexible, credible, transparent and representative multilateral platform is what a twenty-first-century order requires.

## 18 The Settled Position

### Where to land an answer on this chapter

Non-alignment was a **strategy, not a doctrine** — an independent foreign policy through which a materially weak India protected sovereignty, pursued development and claimed a leadership role among post-colonial states.

- Its normative ethos — anti-colonialism, disarmament, peaceful coexistence, equity — universalized international relations and gave the Global South a voice, even as size and structure limited NAM as a “third force.”
- The Cold War's close ended much of the original agenda, but its principles persist.
- For NAM itself, relevance now depends on reform → a redefined agenda, firmer structure, and a shift from protest to constructive engagement in a multipolar and interdependent world.

Indian foreign policy is “no longer about choosing sides, but about maximizing options.” — **C. Raja Mohan**

The move from non-alignment to multi-alignment is “not an abandonment, but a reinterpretation” — the grammar changes, but strategic autonomy endures. — **Rakesh Sood**

## 19 Power Quotes

“Non-alignment was never about staying away from global politics; it was about staying above it.” — **C. Raja Mohan**

“...a policy of acting according to our best judgment and furthering the principal objectives and ideals that we have...” — **Jawaharlal Nehru (1964)**

“We are not going to join a war if we can help it; we are going to join the side which is to our interest when the time comes to make the choice.” — **Jawaharlal Nehru**

“This is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support.” — **S. Jaishankar (2020)**

“Strategic autonomy has been the defining value” — the goal is “to give India maximum options.” — **Non-Alignment 2.0 (2012)**

## 20 Scholar Index

Aparna Pandey · Bharat Karnad · C. Raja Mohan · Carsten Rauch · Christopher Waters · Daniel W. Drezner · Fidel Castro · G. Parthasarathy · Gamal Abdel Nasser · Georg Schwarzenberger · George Liska · Hans Morgenthau · Harsh V. Pant · Hedley Bull · Henry Kissinger · J.N. Dixit · Jawaharlal Nehru · Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya · John A. Graham · Josip Broz Tito · K. Natwar Singh · K. Subramanian · Kautilya · Keethaponcalan · Kwame Nkrumah · M.K. Narayanan · Nelson Mandela · Nirupama Rao · Peter Willetts · Prabhat Shukla · Rakesh Sood · Ran Kochan · S. Jaishankar · Sabyasachi Bhattacharya · Sally Morphet · Shashi Tharoor · Shyam Saran · Sukarno · Sumit Ganguly · T.P. Sreenivasan · T.V. Paul · Tanvi Madan · U Nu · V.K. Krishna Menon · V.P. Dutt · Vijay Prashad

## 21 How UPSC Asks It

| Theme                                                           | Year & marks |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| India's contribution to NAM and its contemporary relevance      | 2016 / 10m   |
| Non-Alignment 1.0 compared with Non-Alignment 2.0               | 2019 / 10m   |
| Non-alignment as a rational strategy of a materially weak India | 2021 / 20m   |
| Normative ethos of NAM and India's soft power                   | 2023 / 20m   |
| NAM as a "Third Force" — too large and unwieldy                 | 2024 / 20m   |
| Debunking non-alignment in the pursuit of multi-alignment       | 2024 / 15m   |
| NAM's future and India's growing indifference                   | 2025 / 10m   |
| Non-Alignment 2.0 and an "alternative universality"             | 2025 / 15m   |

## 22 Today's Practice

1. Does the Non-Aligned Movement have any future in the wake of India's growing indifference towards it? (UPSC 2025, 10m)
2. "India has, of late, chosen to debunk non-alignment in its pursuit of multi-alignment." Comment. (UPSC 2024, 15m)
3. "Non-alignment was little more than a rational strategy on the part of a materially weak India to maximise its interests within a bipolar distribution of global power." Comment. (UPSC 2021, 20m)

**Model answers go up tonight** on the Telegram channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Don't break the chain.

See you tomorrow with Day 41 — India & South Asia, Part I.