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Q5(d)

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

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Changing International Political Order

Changing International Political Order: Rise of super powers; strategic and ideological Bipolarity, arms race and Cold War; Nuclear threat; Non-aligned movement; Collapse of the Soviet Union; Unipolarity and American hegemony; relevance of non-alignment in the contemporary world.

Core demand of the question

- Recall NAM's origin and **membership**
- State India's growing indifference (multi-alignment, skipped optics, Quad/G20 focus)
- Argue whether NAM still has a future as a Global South caucus, not as Cold War neutrality
- Give a balanced verdict

Revision summary

- **NAM was India's bipolar-era instrument: Belgrade 1961**, refuse camps, keep voice.

Delhi now practises multi-alignment and invests in G20, Quad and 2+2s more than in NAM theatre.

Indifference is real because India was NAM's engine; without it the Movement thins.

A future remains as a Global South UN-and-development caucus, not as Cold War neutrality.

- **Verdict:** damaged as Indian doctrine, not automatically dead as a **membership** habit.

Introduction

The **Non-Aligned Movement**, born at **Belgrade 1961** after Bandung's moral rehearsal, was India's gift to a bipolar world: **refuse camp membership, keep voice. India's present practice is multi-alignment** - Quad one week, BRICS and Moscow the next - with NAM often treated as a museum. The question is whether the Movement has a future **despite** that indifference, not whether Delhi will lead a revival parade.

Body

Indifference is real

Summit photography has shifted to **G20, SCO, Quad** and bilateral 2+2s. **NonAlignment 2.0** (2012) already spoke India's language more than NAM communiqués. **Jaishankar's** energetic diplomacy uses issue-based coalitions. Younger officials read NAM as a speech, not a security system. That indifference matters because India was NAM's intellectual engine. Without a willing engine, a 120-odd member body becomes a caucus of the willing-to-attend.

Why NAM can still live

The **Global South** still needs a room that is not the OECD, not NATO, and not a Chinese classroom. On Gaza, on climate finance, on WHO equity, and on tariff shocks from a returning

Trump, many NAM members want a **universality that is not Western by default** - the theme of Q7(c). Africa and Southeast Asia did not join the Quad. They still vote at the UN in clusters NAM helped socialise. The Movement's future is as a **normative and voting caucus**, not as a military non-doctrine for a world without two camps.

Verdict

- **NAM has a future if it becomes a** South-South consultative platform **with modest aims:** coordinate UN positions, defend policy space, and talk development. It has no future as **Nehru's** moral bipolarity, because bipolarity is gone and India will not sacrifice the Quad for a Havana paragraph. India's indifference is therefore **damaging but not fatal**. Others - Indonesia, South Africa, a returning Egypt - can convene. If they do not, NAM will linger as an annual adjective. The honest 10-mark line: the Movement survives as a **Global South habit**; it does not survive as India's master doctrine.

Flow diagram

NAM 1961 1961 -> Cold War neutrality
NAM 1961 -> Possible Global South caucus
Indian indifference -> Multi-alignment
Multi-alignment -.does not kill. -> Possible Global South caucus

Conclusion

India's indifference has retired NAM as Delhi's organising idea. It has not erased a large **membership** that still needs a non-alliance roof. NAM's future is a South caucus, or it is folklore.

Facts & figures

Belgrade 1961

First NAM summit; **Nehru**, Nasser, Tito, Nkrumah, Sukarno in the founding generation after Bandung 1955.

NonAlignment 2.0

2012 Khilnani-Menon-Nilekani-Saran document: strategic autonomy for a new century, not a NAM secretariat brief.

Membership

NAM remains one of the largest political groupings of the South, which is why it can outlive Indian enthusiasm as a caucus.