# Need for Non-Aligned Movement

## What is the issue?

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The recent developments in the international order reflect the need for a renewed non-aligned movement as a soft balancing mechanism against powerful states.

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## What was the soft balancing strategy?

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- The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and its precursor, the Bandung Afro-Asian conference in 1955 were examples of this.
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- It was adopted by the weaker states towards great powers engaged in intense rivalry and conflict after the Second World War.
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- The newly emerging states had little material ability to constrain superpower conflict and arms build-ups.
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- They hence, under the leadership of India's Jawaharlal Nehru, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser and Indonesia's Sukarno adopted a soft balancing strategy, the NAM.
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- It was later joined by Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito.
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- It aimed at challenging the superpower excesses and was a mechanism for preventing the global order from sliding into war.
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## Was NAM successful?

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- In the long run, some of the goals of NAM were achieved.
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- Despite its shortcomings, the NAM and the Afro-Asian grouping acted as a limited soft balancing mechanism.
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- It attempted to delegitimise the threatening behaviour of the superpowers.
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- It was particularly through their activism at the UN and other such forums including that on Disarmament.
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- The non-aligned declarations on nuclear testing and nuclear non-proliferation helped concretise the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty.
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- They also helped create several nuclear weapon free zones as well as formulate the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.
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- The tradition of ‘non-use of nuclear weapons’ was strengthened partially due to non-aligned countries’ activism at the UN.
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- Also, the UNGA declared decolonisation as a key objective in 1960.
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- It was practised, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, in Africa, parts of Asia and the Caribbean.
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- NAM definitely deserves partial credit for ending colonialism through their activism at the UN General Assembly.
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## Did NAM lose its relevance?

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- In the 1970s, some of the key players, including India, began to lose interest in the movement.
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- They started forming coalitions with one or the other superpower to handle their conflicts with their neighbours.
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- The Western countries often portrayed non-alignment as pro-Soviet or ineffective.
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- The general intellectual opposition was the result of the Western scholarly bias against a coalitional move by the weaker states.
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- In the hierarchical international system, the weaker states are expected to

simply abide by the dictates of the stronger ones.
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## How is the international order at present?

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- The great powers are once again launching a new round of nuclear arms race, territorial expansion and militarisation of the oceans.
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- The freedom of navigation activities of the U.S. is generating hostile responses from China.
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- In turn, China is building artificial islets and military bases in the South China Sea and expanding its naval interests into the Indian Ocean.
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- The U.S. as the reigning hegemon will find the Chinese takeover threatening and try different methods to dislodge it.
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- If the present trends continue, a military conflict in the South China Sea is likely and the naval competition will take another decade or so to become intense.
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- Smaller states would be the first to suffer if there is a war in the Asia-Pacific or an intense Cold War develops between the U.S. and China.
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## Why is NAM needed now?

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- A renewed activism by leading global south countries may be necessary to delegitimise the new imperial ventures.
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- These states must play a balancing role to avoid the international order from deteriorating and to prevent any new forms of cold and hot wars.
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- China, the U.S. and Russia need to be balanced and restrained.
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- Some countries are already showing some elements of strategic autonomy favoured by the NAM.
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- Developing countries can engage more with China and India and restrain the U.S. and Russia from aggravating military conflict in Asia-Pacific.
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- More concrete initiatives are needed by the emerging states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) grouping.
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- The soft balancing by non-superpower states has a key role to play in this.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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