

Non-Alignment 2.0

Non-Alignment 2.0 is a strategic foreign policy approach proposed for India in the post–Cold War period, especially amidst rising multipolarity, globalization, and new power centers. Initiated in 2012 with a policy report titled “**Non-Alignment 2.0: A foreign and strategic policy for India in the 21st Century**,” it was crafted by an Indian think tank led by Sunil Khilnani. The core principle is that India should preserve strategic autonomy while selectively engaging with all major global powers, avoiding fixed alliances.

Why was Non-Alignment 2.0 necessary?

- Old Non-Alignment (NAM) was characterized by a bipolar world driven by the USA and USSR, ideological blocs, political neutrality, and a security focus on individual states.
- The New Global Reality encompasses a multipolar world, with powers such as the US, China, the EU, and Russia. It involves interest-based coalitions, strategic flexibility, and focuses on economic, technological, and cybersecurity.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, combined with the emergence of China, global terrorism, climate change, energy insecurity, and technological conflicts, made traditional non-alignment strategies insufficient.

Core Pillars of Non-Alignment 2.0

Key philosophical shift: From avoiding alliances to selecting issue-based partnerships

- Non-Alignment 2.0 does not equate to neutrality (Multi-alignment).
- Non-Alignment 2.0 signifies India's strategic autonomy, empowering the nation to make independent foreign policy choices without reliance on fixed alliances.

Multi-Alignment

- Interact with several powers simultaneously.
- USA: Technology, defense legacy
- Russia: Energy, defense legacy
- EU: Trade, norms
- China: Economic engagement and deterrence
- Avoid relying on any one source of power.

- Using internal strength as the foundation of foreign policy and for:
 - Strong economy
 - Social cohesion
 - Technological capability
 - Democratic legitimacy

Strategic Autonomy

- India has the independence to set its policies without external influence.
- No enduring military alliances.
- A standalone position on international conflicts.
- Foreign policy based on domestic capacity, such as technological capability, economic strength, and social cohesion, serves as the foundation for India's strategic autonomy under Non-Alignment 2.0.

National Interest at the Core

Non-Alignment 2.0 prioritizes India's national interest over ideological considerations. National interests include:

- Territorial Integrity
- Economic growth
- Technological sovereignty
- Religion stability (South Asia and Indo-Pacific)

Security Dimension

Key security concerns addressed:

- China's growth and border conflicts
- Terrorism linked to Pakistan's sponsorship
- Security in the Indian Ocean
- Cyber and Space Warfare

Policy Response

- Military preparedness
- Defence diplomacy
- Strategic partnerships (not alliances)
- Indigenous defense manufacturing

Economic Dimension

Non-Alignment 2.0 treats economic strength as strategic power. The key elements are:

- Open but protected economy
- Diversified trade partners
- Secure supply chains
- Energy diversification (oil, gas, renewables)

Economic dependence differs from strategic vulnerability.

Regional focus – Neighbourhood first

- Maintaining stability in South Asia is essential.
- Cooperative regionalism
- Foster collaboration instead of dominance.
- Active engagement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Global Governance and Institutions

Non-Alignment 2.0 supports:

- Reform of the UN Security Council
- Democratic global institutions
- Voice for Global South
- Issue-based coalitions (such as climate, health, and finance)

Differences: Non-Alignment 1.0 v/s 2.0

- Non-Alignment 1.0 originated during the Cold War, a period marked by a bipolar power structure. Its core approach was ideological, focusing on distancing itself from blocs to maintain political independence.
- Non-Alignment 2.0 relates to the post-Cold War period. It features a multipolar power structure, emphasizing pragmatic strategies and cooperation with various actors. Its main aim is to achieve strategic autonomy.

Criticism of Non-Alignment 2.0

- Too vague, lacks enforceability
- Difficult balancing between the US and China

- Risk of strategic overstretch
- Implementation relies heavily on state capacity

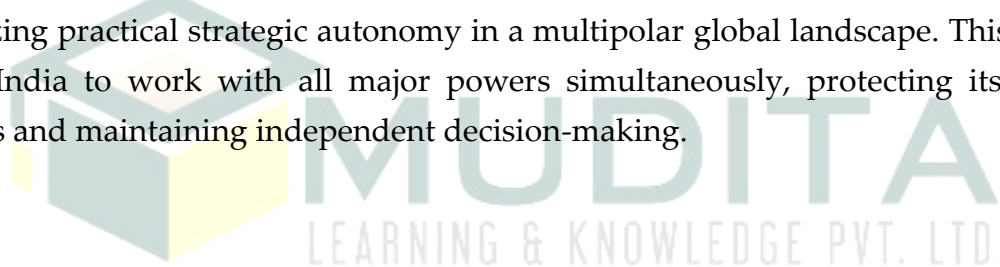
Relevance Today

- US – China rivalry
- Russia – Ukraine War
- Indo – Pacific tensions
- Technology nationalism
- Climate negotiations

India's current foreign policy of issue-based alignment reflects Non-alignment 2.0 in practice.

In Brief

Non-alignment 2.0 evolves India's foreign policy from solely ideological neutrality to prioritizing practical strategic autonomy in a multipolar global landscape. This strategy allows India to work with all major powers simultaneously, protecting its national interests and maintaining independent decision-making.





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