

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) - UPSC International Relations

The Non-Aligned Movement or NAM is an important international organisation in which India has played a significant role since its inception. This is an important topic for the [UPSC exam](#) international relations segment. In this article, you can read all about the Non-Aligned Movement for the IAS exam.

Non-Aligned Movement (NAM): Introduction

The NAM is an international forum of 120 developing countries that believe in the ideal of non-alignment with the major power blocs. It **was established in 1961 in Belgrade**, former Yugoslavia under the leadership of the then Indian Prime Minister **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru**, President of Egypt **Gamal Abdel Nasser** and the President of Yugoslavia **Josip Broz Tito**.

- In the aftermath of the Second World War and the decolonisation process, many countries in the developing world in Asia and Africa felt the need for a strong movement towards securing peace and prosperity, and establishing security for all countries.
- This was when the world was divided into two power blocs, that of the USA and the Soviet Union, especially after the signing of the [NATO](#) and the Warsaw Pact.
- Most of these countries felt the need for mutual cooperation and coordination with respect to not formally aligning with or against any of the power blocs.
- The collapse of colonialism and the cold war led to the need for improved coordination among the Global South.
- It is interesting to note that the term 'third world' arose during the cold war era to denote countries that were not aligned to either of the two power blocs.

NAM Functioning

NAM does not have a permanent secretariat or a formal hierarchy.

- Its administration is rotational and non-hierarchy.
- NAM takes decisions by consensus, which need not be universal, but only requires substantial agreement.
- It has a Coordinating Bureau which is based at the UN in New York City.
- NAM meets every three years at the NAM Summit Conference of Heads of State.
- At the Summit, a chair is chosen, which is a post held for three years.
- In NAM, every member country has equal weight.
- The current chairperson of NAM is Ilham Aliyev, the President of Azerbaijan. He holds the post till 2022.

NAM Member Countries

The list of NAM member countries are given in the table below:

There are currently 120 member countries in the NAM. India is a founding member of the organisation.

- Our neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Afghanistan are also members.
- China has an observer status.
- All African countries except Western Sahara and South Sudan are members of NAM.

- In the Americas, many South and Central American nations are members.
- Among European countries, Azerbaijan and Belarus are members of NAM.
- There are many organisations and countries that are given the observer status. Some of them are the [United Nations](#), African Union, Arab League, Commonwealth Secretariat, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, etc.
- It is the largest inter-country organisation outside of the UN.

NAM Objectives

One of the chief objectives of NAM was *“to create an independent path in world politics that would not result in member States becoming pawns in the struggles between the major powers.”*

- The three elements that define the approach of the organisation are:
 - Right of independent judgement
 - Struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism
 - Use of moderation in relations with all big powers
- In the current times, an objective of the organisation is restructuring the international economic order.
- NAM espouses ideals such as the right to self-determination, anti-apartheid, anti-colonialism, national independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of nations, anti-imperialism in all forms, non-adherence to multilateral military pacts, disarmament, against racism, against foreign occupation and domination, peaceful coexistence among all countries, strengthening the UN, no use of threat or force in international relations, socio-economic development, etc.

NAM Evolution

Most historians agree that the most important antecedent to the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement was the **Bandung Conference** of 1955.

- The Bandung Asian African Conference brought together 29 heads of state/government of the first post-colonial generation of leadership from Africa and Asia.
- This gathered Nehru, Nasser, Tito, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Sukarno of Indonesia under one umbrella. They were leaders of international standing and attracted many other countries of Asia and Africa into the NAM.
- In this conference, the Ten Principles of Bandung were adopted and these would be the guiding principles of NAM.
- **The 10 Principles of Bandung are:**
 - Respect of fundamental human rights and of the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.
 - Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.
 - Recognition of the equality among all races and of the equality among all nations, both large and small.
 - Non-interference or non-intervention into the internal affairs of another country.
 - Respect the right of every nation to defend itself, either individually or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the UN.
 - Non-use of collective defence pacts to benefit the specific interests of any of the great powers.
 - Refraining from acts or threats of aggression and use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any nation.
 - Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means.
 - Promotion of mutual interest and cooperation.
 - Respect for justice and international obligations.

- The formal establishment of NAM took place in Belgrade in Yugoslavia in 1961 with 25 developing countries. This is when the first NAM Summit Conference took place. India is a founding member.
- One of the ideals behind NAM was that the newly-independent nations, that had just come out of the yoke of colonialism, should not lose their independence by aligning with either one of the Great Powers (USA and USSR).
- The founding fathers of NAM were keen to call it a movement and not an organisation so as to avoid the bureaucratic implications of the term 'organisation'.
- The founding members also stressed on the fact that NAM did not mean the members were to be passive or neutral to world affairs, but rather, it affirmed the belief that all countries were free to have an independent opinion on international affairs.

Relevance of NAM

In the post-cold war era, NAM has had to realign its approach, with several experts citing the organisation's irrelevance in a unipolar world since the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi skipped the 17th and 18th NAM summits (India was represented by the Vice President) indicating a neglect of NAM from India.
- Some opine that this represents a shift in India's foreign policy.
 - Many experts are of the opinion that India is looking to change from a non-aligned to a multi-aligned perspective.
 - Also that NAM would not be of much use in furthering India's global positions on many matters such as UNSC reforms and terrorism.
- The importance of NAM, nevertheless, should not be undermined because it is a significant force that supported third world countries against western imperialism, coercion and domination.
- NAM countries form 2/3rd of the membership of the UN General Assembly, and hence, it can form an important voting bloc.
- NAM, along with the G-77 gives a superior numerical strength to developing countries and has helped keep many third world issues ahead of the agenda at the UN. This can also help India's cause in garnering a seat at the Security Council.
- NAM can be a useful platform to raise awareness about issues like climate change, cross-border terrorism, human rights violations, etc.
- NAM encourages an equitable world order and the organisation can act as a bridge between countries with varying political ideologies and systems.

NAM is not an entirely insignificant organisation today. Although the world today is very different from the bipolar world of the fifties, many issues still haunt us, along with the rise of new problems and challenges like global terrorism, climate change, economic imbalances, etc. NAM can be a global platform where developing and smaller nations can bring to the fore their grievances and press the international community for reforms.

