**Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**, [international organization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/international-organization) dedicated to representing the interests and [aspirations](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aspirations) of developing countries. In the early 21st century the Non-Aligned Movement counted 120 member states.

The Non-Aligned Movement emerged in the [context](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/context) of the wave of [decolonization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/decolonization) that followed [World War II](https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II). At the 1955 [Bandung Conference](https://www.britannica.com/event/Bandung-Conference) (the Asian-African Conference), the attendees, many of whose countries had recently gained their independence, called for “abstention from the use of arrangements of [collective](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collective) defense to serve the particular interests of any of the big powers.” In the context of the [Cold War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War), they argued, countries of the developing world should abstain from allying with either of the two superpowers (the [United States](https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States) and the [U.S.S.R.](https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union)) and should instead join together in support of national self-determination against all forms of [colonialism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism) and [imperialism](https://www.britannica.com/topic/imperialism). The Non-Aligned Movement was founded and held its first conference (the Belgrade Conference) in 1961 under the leadership of [Josip Broz Tito](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Josip-Broz-Tito) of Yugoslavia, [Gamal Abdel Nasser](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gamal-Abdel-Nasser) of Egypt, [Jawaharlal Nehru](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jawaharlal-Nehru) of India, [Kwame Nkrumah](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kwame-Nkrumah) of Ghana, and [Sukarno](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sukarno) of Indonesia.

As a condition for membership, the states of the Non-Aligned Movement cannot be part of a multilateral military alliance (such as the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](https://www.britannica.com/topic/North-Atlantic-Treaty-Organization) [NATO]) or have signed a bilateral military agreement with one of the “big powers” if it was “deliberately concluded in the context of Great Power conflicts.” However, the idea of nonalignment does not signify that a state ought to remain passive or even neutral in international politics. On the contrary, from the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement, its stated aim has been to give a voice to developing countries and to encourage their concerted action in world affairs.

Unlike the [United Nations](https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations) (UN) or the [Organization of American States](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Organization-of-American-States), the Non-Aligned Movement has no formal constitution or permanent secretariat. All members of the Non-Aligned Movement have equal weight within its organization. The movement’s positions are reached by [consensus](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consensus) in the Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government, which usually [convenes](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/convenes) every three years. The administration of the organization is the responsibility of the country holding the chair, a position that rotates at every summit. The ministers of foreign affairs of the member states meet more regularly in order to discuss common challenges, notably at the opening of each regular session of the [UN General Assembly](https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-General-Assembly).

One of the challenges of the Non-Aligned Movement in the 21st century has been to reassess its identity and purpose in the post-Cold War era. The movement has continued to advocate for international cooperation, multilateralism, and national self-determination, but it has also been increasingly vocal against the inequities of the world economic order.