





NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

Why in News?

- NATO recently celebrated 75 years of its formation.
- Sweden became NATO's 32nd member, marking a significant expansion of the alliance.

About NATO

1. Genesis and Purpose

- Established: 1949 with the Washington Treaty.
- Objective: To act as a deterrent against Soviet expansion after WWII.
- Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium.
- Core Principle: Collective defense under Article 5, invoked only once (after 9/11).

2. Membership

- Founding Members (12): Includes the USA, UK, Canada, France, and others.
- Recent Additions:
 - Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024).
 - Ukraine submitted its application in 2022 and received assurances at the Vilnius Summit (2023).
- EU Non-NATO Members: Austria, Cyprus, Ireland, Malta.

3. Structure and Partnerships

- Funding: Based on Gross National Income contributions by member states.
- Partnership Programs:
 - Partnership for Peace (PfP): Bilateral cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic area.
 - Mediterranean Dialogue (MD): Engagement with Mediterranean countries.
 - Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI): Cooperation with Middle Eastern nations.
 - Collaboration: Works with UN, EU, and OSCE.

Achievements and Initiatives

1. Cold War Era: Maintained tense peace and deterred Soviet expansion.

2. Post-Cold War

- Encouraged dialogue through the NATO-Russia Founding Act.
- Expanded membership to former Warsaw Pact nations.

3. Modern Era

- Ukraine Conflict: NATO members provided significant aid to Ukraine and condemned Russia's aggression.
- Maritime Security: Operations like Sea Guardian enhance safety in the Mediterranean.
- Humanitarian Efforts: Supported Türkiye with temporary shelters during the 2023 earthquakes.
- 2022 Strategic Concept: Identified challenges, including:



- Russia as a direct security threat.
- China as a potential disruptor to European interests.
- Cyber, hybrid, and maritime threats.

NATO Expansion in Eastern Europe

1. History

- After the Soviet Union's collapse (1991), many Warsaw Pact nations joined NATO.
- Open Door Policy (Article 10): Allows any European nation contributing to regional security to apply.

2. Implications

1. **Mistrust with Russia:** Seen as an aggressive move, pushing Russia closer to alliances with China and Iran.
2. **Militarization:** Diverts funds to defense spending, reversing demilitarization trends.
3. **Divisions in Europe:** Creates economic and political rifts between newer and older members.
4. **Increased Tensions:** Russia perceives NATO's presence in Eastern Europe as destabilizing, leading to military confrontations (e.g., Georgia, Ukraine).

Challenges Faced by NATO

1. **Funding Gaps:** Most members fail to meet the 2% GDP defense spending target.
2. **Rising Nationalism:** Growing right-wing discontent with international institutions like NATO.
3. **US Commitment:** Previous administrations questioned NATO's relevance and Article 5 obligations.
4. **Russian Aggression:** Expansion undermined Russia-NATO trust and fueled ongoing tensions.
5. **China's Rise:** Increased military presence in the Indo-Pacific and technological dominance pose challenges.

NATO's Relevance in Modern Geopolitics

Arguments Supporting NATO's Relevance

1. **Collective Security:** Provides a platform for joint defense and crisis management.
2. **Strategic Cooperation:** Strengthens transatlantic ties between North America and Europe.
3. **Adaptation:** Expanding to address modern challenges like cyber threats and climate change.

Criticism

- Critics argue NATO perpetuates Cold War dynamics and contributes to global militarization.

Conclusion

NATO remains a cornerstone of global security, but to maintain its relevance, it must:



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- Innovate and adapt to emerging geopolitical realities.
- Address funding issues and strengthen member commitment.
- Balance military expansion with diplomatic engagement to avoid escalating tensions.

Do you know?

- Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA): A US designation offering defense and trade benefits.
 - Includes 18 countries (e.g., Israel, Japan, South Korea) but not India.
- NATO Plus Five:
 - Comprises NATO and five global partners: Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan, and Israel.
 - Focus: Enhance defense cooperation against emerging threats, particularly from China.