

What is NATO?

- Nato - the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - is a **military alliance**. It was formed in 1949 by 12 countries, including the US, UK, Canada and France.
- Nato's original aim was to **counter Russian expansion** in Europe after the Second World War. NATO's essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.
- Following the **Soviet Union's collapse in 1991**, many of its former Eastern European allies joined Nato.
- Nato is based on **Collective defence principle** enshrined in "Article 5" of NATO's founding Treaty (Washington Treaty). This principle views an attack on one member as an attack on all.
 - NATO has only once invoked Article 5, on September 12, 2001 following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in the US.
- NATO has its headquarters in Brussels but is dominated by the massive military and nuclear missile power of the US.

There are currently 30 members in NATO

- Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- Other members include: Greece and Turkey (1952), West Germany (1955, from 1990 as Germany), Spain (1982), Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017) and North Macedonia (2020).

How does NATO Function?

- NATO has an **integrated military command structure**.
- Most forces **remain under full national command** and control until member countries agree to undertake NATO-related tasks.
- All 30 allies have an equal say, the Alliance's decisions must be unanimous and consensual, and its members must respect the basic values that underpin the Alliance, namely democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.
- NATO's protection does not extend to members' civil wars or internal coups.
- NATO is funded by its members. The U.S. contributes roughly three-fourths of NATO's budget.

Was there a counter military alliance by Soviets?

- In 1955, when the Cold War was gaining momentum, the Soviet Union signed up socialist republics of Central and Eastern Europe to the **Warsaw Pact (1955)**.
- The Pact, essentially a political-military alliance, was viewed as a direct strategic counterweight to NATO.
- It included Albania (which withdrew in 1968), Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania.
- The Pact was **officially disbanded in early 1991** after the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself.

What are the Alliances of NATO?

NATO participates in three alliances that expand its influence beyond its 30 member countries.

Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC):

- It is a 50-nation multilateral forum for dialogue and consultation on political and security-related issues among Allies and partner countries.