India’s talks with NATO

Why in news?

There have been talks that India had held its first political dialogue with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in December 2019.

What is NATO?

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, or NATO, is a political and military alliance of 28 European countries and 2 countries in North America (United States and Canada).
- It was set up in 1949 by the US, Canada, and several western European nations to ensure their collective security against the Soviet Union.
- It was the US’s first peacetime military alliance outside the western hemisphere.
- NATO is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium while the headquarters of the Allied Command Operations is near Mons, Belgium.
- **Collective defence** is laid out in **Article 5** of the North Atlantic Treaty in which members of NATO are committed to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.

What are the origins of NATO?

- At the end of WWII, as battered European nations started to rebuild their economies, the US was critical to prevent the westward expansion of communist USSR.
- The **European Recovery Programme**, known as the **Marshall Plan** promoted the idea of shared interests and cooperation between the US and Europe.
- The USSR declined to participate in the Marshall Plan, and discouraged eastern European states in its sphere of influence from receiving American economic assistance.
- Later, series of events took place regarding the expansion of territories that led the US to conclude an American-European alliance against the USSR
- In 1948, the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the **Brussels Treaty of collective defence**, which meant that if any of the signatories faced an attack, they would be defended by all the others.
- The US Congress passed the **Vandenburg Resolution** which was the stepping stone to NATO.
- Later, the **NATO treaty** was signed in Washington DC in 1949 with 12 signatories initially.

What is the significance of India’s talks with NATO?

- The North Atlantic alliance has been engaging both China and Pakistan in bilateral dialogue.
- **Engaging China**- Until 2019, NATO had held nine rounds of talks with Beijing, and

the Chinese Ambassador in Brussels and NATO's Deputy Secretary General engaged with each other every quarter.

- **Engaging Pakistan**- NATO had also been in political dialogue and military cooperation with Pakistan
- It opened selective training for Pakistani officers and its military delegation visited Pakistan in November 2019 for military staff talks.
- **India's talk with NATO**- Engaging NATO in a political dialogue would provide New Delhi an opportunity to bring about a balance in NATO's perceptions about the situation in regions and issues of concerns to India.

What common ground does India have with NATO?

- **India's perspective**- In New Delhi's assessment, there was a convergence in the perspectives of both India and NATO on
  - China
  - Terrorism
  - Afghanistan, including Pakistan's role in Afghanistan
- **NATO's perspective**- From NATO's perspective, it was not China, but Russia whose aggressive actions continued to be the main threat to Euro-Atlantic security
- NATO had faced difficulties to convene meetings of NATO-Russia Council due to Russian refusal to place issues such as Ukraine and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty on the agenda.
- **China factor**- While NATO did deliberate on China's rise, the conclusion was that China presented both a challenge and an opportunity.
- **Other areas**- The Indian side felt maritime security was a principal area of conversation in the future, given a substantial common ground with NATO.
- **Next steps-** In NATO's view, India, given its geo-strategic position and unique perspectives on various issues, was relevant to international security and could be an important partner.
- New Delhi may consider proposals emanating from NATO, if any, on bilateral cooperation in areas of interest to India, based on the progress achieved in the initial rounds.

References

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