

NATO's 70th Anniversary Meet

Why in news?

Leaders of the member states of [NATO](#) (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) are gathered in London to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the defence alliance.

When and why was NATO formed?

- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) was founded in 1949 as a defence alliance.
- It was meant to ensure collective protection for its members against the threat of possible post-War communist expansion and aggression by the Soviet Union.
- The key member States included the United States, Canada, and American allies in Europe.
- The Soviet Union too, formed its own defence and political alliance with Eastern European nations as a counterbalance to NATO.
- In this context was signed the Warsaw Pact in 1955.
- This alliance was disbanded after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991.

What is the current relevance of NATO?

- NATO has traditionally focused on Russia and the European neighbourhood.
- It had the need to deter "revisionist" and "militarily advanced" Russia, and the threat posed by rogue nations such as North Korea.
- However, with the collapse of the USSR, NATO lost its fundamental purpose of existence.
- For most NATO members, the primary concern now is the expansionist ambition of China.

What are the present contentions within NATO states?

- France's President Emmanuel Macron has clashed publicly with both U.S. President Donald Trump and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan.
- President Macron described NATO as "brain dead".
- He also accused Turkey of working with Islamic state proxies.
- He observed that the common enemy today was the terrorist groups.
- However, the NATO states do not have the same definition of terrorism

among them.

- In this context, he referred to Turkey wanting to recognise the [Kurdish YPG](#) militia as a terrorist organisation.
- The militia fought alongside US special forces in Syria against the IS.
- On the other hand, President Erdogan of Turkey calls for NATO's support to defeat Syrian Kurds at its borders.
- This is something that France and the US do not agree with.
- But Erdogan rejects NATO's military plan for the Baltic nations against Russia, unless Turkey receives support for its plans in regards with the Kurds.
- The withdrawal of US Forces from Syria is another irritant in the NATO relations.
- **Expenditure** - During NATO's [Brussels Summit in 2018](#), Trump criticised European nations, especially Germany for not spending enough on defence.
- As per an agreement that was reached in 2014, member nations are supposed to spend up to 2% of their GDP on defence on a voluntary basis.
- According to NATO data until 2018, the US spends the highest percentage of its GDP (at least 3.5%) on defence.
- The Europeans, including the French, the Germans, the Italians, and the Spaniards, spend less than 2%.

What are the challenges before NATO?

- There is much for the NATO leaders to pay attention to including issues related to China and Russia, and the future of arms control.
- However, a key priority now relates to the difference and disunity in the alliance.
- There is very limited scope for the convergence of the distinct national priorities of the member countries.
- France's priority at the moment is the eradication of terrorism from northeast Syria.
- The US under Trump clearly wants to get out of the Middle East and focus more on the military rise of China.
- The challenge is made stronger by the personalities of the leaders.
- The Europeans are clearly impatient with Erdogan.
- On the other hand, Trump's unpredictability and repeated attacks on European countries and leaders has not endeared him to them.

Source: Indian Express



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