Need for India's Entry to NATO-Plus

Why in news?

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to US in June 2023, there have been talks to include India in the fold of NATO.

What is NATO and NATO plus?

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

- NATO is a *transatlantic military alliance* of ***31 countries*** with the majority of members from Europe.
- It was set up in *1949* as a collective security against Soviet Union, *headquartered in* ***Brussels, Belgium*****.**
- In April 2023, ***Finland*** become its 31st member.

To know more about India's relation with NATO click here.

NATO Plus

- NATO plus refers to a security arrangement of NATO and the five treaty allies of the U.S. **— *Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, and South Korea*** as members.
- It has a goal to enhance "global defence cooperation" and win the "strategic competition against China.
- The term NATO Plus is *not an officially recognised* or established concept within NATO.
- It has been used in discussions and debates regarding the potential expansion of the alliance.

What is India's position in inclusion to NATO and NATO Plus?

- In March 2023, US Permanent Representative to NATO quoted that the NATO alliance was open to more engagement and should India seek that.
- In May 2023, US recommended strengthening the 'NATO-Plus' framework by including India in the grouping.
- India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar rejected this idea by saying that *"NATO template does not apply to India".*
- India believes that it is capable of countering any Chinese aggression on its own.

What are the pros and cons for India if it joins NATO Plus?

Pros of Joining	Cons of Joining

• **Containing China-**The target of NATO is to contain Russia, now the focus of NATO Plus is clearly defined to contain China**.** • Recent incidents like Doklam issue, Ladakh standoff is the expression of border disputes between India and China. • **Regional security-** The enhanced defence capabilities will address the potential threats of India. • **Robust security architecture**- India can access many advanced military technologies, inter-operability, intelligence-sharing platforms.	• **Relationship with Russia** - It will crumble India's strategic partnership with Russia. • **Chinese threats** - Hopping into the Taiwan strategy of the U.S. under NATO Plus has the possibility of Chinese justification for further military build-up along the India-China border. • **India's autonomy-** India's independent policy against China will be changed to align with the objectives and strategies of alliance. • It would limit India's flexibility in engaging with neighbours and regional organisations. • **Other challenges-**NATO's larger geopolitical agenda starting from Eurasia to the Indo-Pacific may divert resources and attention away from these pressing issues and will not be of much help to India.

What should be India's priorities?

- **India's role** - India as a responsible development partner, a First Responder, and a voice of the Global South reflects a quest towards becoming a leading power.
- Its status as the fastest-growing fifth largest economy with high demographic dividend, and the world's second-largest military, it has vital role to play as a regional and global soft power
- **Focusing on regional dynamics-** India has its own unique security challenges such as border disputes, terrorism and regional conflicts.
- One of the best possible options for India is to manage external turbulences, leverage rival power centres and derive benefits for itself and create more policy space to facilitate its own rise.
- **India's membership in Quad**- Quad, which is named as "Asian NATO" by China, looks more promising than NATO Plus.

QUAD is Quadrilateral security dialogue with India, Japan, Australia and US as its members.

References

1. The Hindu| India should refuse US NATO Plus bait
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3. NATO| Member Countries
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