



NATO Ally Status to India

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Two top American lawmakers have moved a key legislation in the Senate which seeks to advance the US-India strategic relationship.

The legislation will amend the Arms Control Export Act to bring India at par with the US' NATO allies– Israel, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea for purposes of selling military items under the ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) list.

Background

- There are two technology control lists in the US system – one is under the Export Administration Regulations, which places controls on the sale of dual-use items that have both civil and military uses and the second is the ITAR list.
- The civil nuclear deal paved the way for India to access items on the first set of lists, i.e. those under the Export Administration Regulations.
- The Arms Control Export (AEC) Act governs the ITAR list. The amendment, therefore, will make it possible for the US to fulfil India's operational requirements in quick time, thus improving its reliability on supplies.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a military alliance established by the North Atlantic Treaty (also called the Washington Treaty) of April 4, 1949, by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
- A key provision of the treaty, the so-called Article 5, states that if one member of the alliance is attacked in Europe or North America, it is to be considered an attack on all members. That effectively put Western Europe under the "nuclear umbrella" of the US.

NATO has only once invoked Article 5, on September 12, 2001 following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in the US.

- As of 2019, there are 29 member states, with Montenegro becoming the latest member to join the alliance in 2017.
France withdrew from the integrated military command of NATO in 1966 but remained a member of the organization. However, it resumed its position in NATO's military command in 2009.

Recent Issues

- A big source of the internal strain is American President Donald Trump's recurrent demand that countries devote an amount equal to at least two percent of GDP to defence spending In 2018.
However, only seven of NATO's 29 member states hit the two-percent target.
- Strained relationship over selling of defence equipments.
 - The US has halted delivery of equipment related to its F-35 fighter jets to Turkey over its plans to buy Russia's S-400 missile defence system.
 - U.S. wants Turkey to buy the Patriot defence system of the USA, instead of Russia's S-400s.
- Recently, the Republic of Macedonia changed its name to the "Republic of North Macedonia" to enter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) as its accession to both organizations was vetoed by Greece.
- The move comes after India and the US signed the COMCASA (Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement) in 2018.
- The two countries are also in advance discussion to sign another foundational agreement of the BECA (Basic Exchange Cooperation Agreement).
- It also comes ahead of President Donald Trump's scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka, Japan.

Importance

- The amendment is moved as part of the National Defense Authorization Act 2020 of the USA, giving a big boost to India-US defence trade.
- This would remove current legislative barriers to export of major high-tech defence equipment to India which is normally shared with only a few countries.
- Although, it is an important signal of US political support for enhancing defense ties but is unlikely to have tangible impact on trade flows in the near term.
- The amendment needs to be passed by both the Senate and the House of Representatives before it can be signed by the US President into law.