



## Should India Join NATO?

This article is based on [“Why India must not say ‘no’ to NATO”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 06/04/2021. It talks about the pros and cons of India becoming a member of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#).

In the last few years, European countries have asserted to play a significant role in the Indo-Pacific region. India too knows that no single power can produce stability and security in the Indo-Pacific.

Moreover, China’s meteoric rise has dramatically heightened India’s need for closer security relationships with politically reliable, like-minded states. In order to tackle this geopolitical challenge, India will have to undertake more deliberate efforts to counter-balance the juggernaut of Chinese power.

One such arrangement, which has been recently floated by many western countries, is [extending NATO’s membership to India](#). Although NATO’s membership in India will have positive implications, it will have serious ramifications too.

### Arguments for India Becoming NATO’s Member

- **End of Cold War:** During the Cold War, India’s refusal to join any of the Military bloc (NATO or Warsaw pact led by the USSR) was premised on its non-alignment.
  - That argument had little justification once the Cold War ended during 1989-91. Since then, NATO has built partnerships with many neutral and non-aligned
- **Creation of Deterrence:** Article 5 of the NATO treaty held that an attack against a member nation of the NATO would be considered to be an attack against all the members of the alliance and would call for joint military action against the aggressor.
  - This would create deterrence for China and Pakistan to attack India.
- **Military-Strategic Benefits:** An India-NATO dialogue would simply mean having regular contact with a military alliance, most of whose members are well-established partners of India.
  - Further, India has military exchanges with many members of NATO — including the US, Britain, and France — in bilateral and multilateral formats.
  - Therefore, in the longer term, India would derive military-strategic benefits from a partnership with the world’s most powerful alliance.
- **Era of Multi-Alignment:** India might align with China and developing nations against the US in [World Trade Organisation \(WTO\)](#) but militarily oppose China while contemplating a [“Quad”](#) with the USA, Japan, and Australia.
  - Also, Egypt and Israel are both NATO partners who maintain defense relationships with Russia.
  - Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, and Austria are all NATO partners with long-standing neutralist traditions.
- **Convergence on Many Issues:** A sustained dialogue between India and NATO could facilitate

productive exchanges in a range of areas, including terrorism, changing geopolitics; the evolving nature of military conflict, the role of emerging military technologies, and new military doctrines.

## Argument Against India Becoming NATO's Member

- **Conflict Within NATO:** NATO members have conflicting opinions on how to share the military burden and strike the right balance between NATO and the EU's quest for an independent military role.
  - Further, NATO members disagree on policy related to Russia, the Middle East, and China.
- **Deteriorate Relations With Russia:** By becoming a NATO member, India's long-standing and strong ties with Russia will get frayed.
  - Russia has shown displeasure on account of India's growing strategic convergence with the US.
  - Moreover, this could further strengthen the already deepening relation between China and Russia.
  - Considering that **India still is heavily dependent on the Russian military equipment**, joining NATO seems like an eminently bad idea.
- **Issue of Sovereignty:** Another issue would be the establishment of NATO bases on India's territory.
  - This might invite widespread protests in the country and may even be considered an infringement of our sovereignty.
- **Dragging Down Into Various Conflicts:** The downside of joining NATO is that India would get dragged into various conflicts around the globe.
  - This would result in a lot of Indian soldiers dying in various conflicts in which we have no reason at all to be involved in.

## Conclusion

The bureaucratization of the engagement between India and western countries has prevented India from taking full advantage of re-emerging geopolitics of the Atlantic. However, India's recent proactive approach has certainly sought to end this prolonged political neglect.

Given this, a pragmatic engagement with NATO countries must be an important part of India's foreign policy but it must refrain from becoming a formal member of NATO.

### ***Drishti Mains Question***

India's continued reluctance to engage a major institution like NATO will be a stunning case of strategic self-denial. Critically Analyse.