



North Atlantic Treaty Organization: Collective Security for the Free World

WHAT IS NATO? The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a political and military alliance between 30 nations in North America and Europe. Its mission is to safeguard allied nations' security and freedom and provide collective defense of member nations. Collective defense means that an attack on one NATO country is treated as an attack on all countries. This alliance protects each member, including the United States, from threats by other nation states and terror groups.

WHY WAS NATO FOUNDED? NATO was formed in 1949 as a reaction to the Soviet Union's expansion in Europe. While the Soviet Union could overpower singular nations, it could never successfully wage a full-scale war against all European nations and the United States united together. Thus, NATO has served as an effective and longstanding deterrent against nations that sought to invade NATO members. To this day, NATO members have not been invaded from outside enemy forces.

WHO IS IN NATO? NATO Members include the United States of America, Canada, and most (but not all) European countries: The United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia are members.
***Notable non-NATO members in Europe:** Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, **Ukraine**, Belarus

The text of the NATO treaty known as **Article 5** enshrines the principle of collective defense:
“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one of more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered and attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of force to restore and maintain security of the North Atlantic area.”

Article 5 has only been invoked once in NATO history: as a response to the 9/11 attacks against the United States. NATO members joined the United States' invasion of



Afghanistan and provided security to the replacement Afghan government.

WHERE IS NATO? NATO has been headquartered in Brussels, Belgium since 1967. Previously, Paris, France was the headquarters from 1952-1967, and London 1949-1953. NATO forces have undertaken various missions around the world, and include existing presences in: [Kosovo](#), [Iraq](#), and [Africa](#).

HOW HAS NATO EXPANDED? Article 10 of NATO's founding document states, "The Parties may, by unanimous agreement, invite any other European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty." This creates an **open door** for all European nations to join NATO as long as they meet NATO's stated criteria: 1) be a democracy, 2) have a market economy, 3) fairly treat minority populations, 4) commit to resolve conflicts peacefully, 5) contribute militarily to collective defense, and 6) maintain democratic civil-military relations. As such, the above nations ascended to NATO's commitments and joined the alliance with unanimous agreement.

HOW NATO BENEFITS THE UNITED STATES

- NATO's ability to deter potential enemies, namely Russia, improves the prospect for peace in Europe. The United States lost over 500,000 men in Europe during WWI and WWII, but since 1945 there has not been a major conflict involving a European NATO state. NATO deters external threats and preserves peace amongst its members, making the possibility of the U.S. being dragged into another European war far less likely.
- NATO member states are expected to meet certain commitments, including political, economic, and military targets to ensure they are contributors, not just beneficiaries. This helps strengthen our alliance structure to meet our geopolitical goals around the world.
- In 2006, NATO countries' defense ministers agreed that all members would commit to spending 2% of their GDP on defense spending. The United States already spent around 3% of our GDP on defense – most countries were far below this mark.
- As the largest financial contributor to the defense of NATO countries, the United States can tacitly set the priorities of the body for all nations' mutual benefit, particularly ours.

ENSURING EQUAL PROTECTION

- President Trump rightfully put pressure on the NATO countries that did not meet their NATO defense contribution commitments. In 2018, only five nations met these commitments. However, by 2021, that had increased to ten nations.
- The lack of European spending both put our allies' security at a terrible disadvantage against our enemies and risked the strategic capabilities of NATO overall. That's why it's important that our allies invest in their own protection. President Trump's pressure on NATO led to European partners spending [\\$50 billion more](#) on defense spending (a 19% increase) from 2016 to 2020, ensuring a more equitable and capable security coalition that can collectively deter evolving threats.

NATO'S ROLE IN PUTIN'S INVASION OF UKRAINE

- Ukraine is not a member of NATO, but it would like to be. However, since they are not in NATO, they do not have the same collective security guarantees from the United States and other NATO members to defend their territory when they are invaded. That is why the

United States and other European nations have not sent our own troops to fight Russia. Putin uses the excuse that he invaded Ukraine because he feels threatened by NATO expansion, especially after NATO expanded to former Soviet States, and because Ukraine was interested in joining NATO.

- In the 2008 NATO Bucharest summit, the United States announced that Ukraine would ultimately become part of NATO.
- In 1994, the United States and Russia provided security guarantees to Ukraine through [The Budapest Memorandum](#), in exchange for turning over former Soviet nuclear weapons. Russia blatantly broke the agreement.
- While Ukraine sought NATO membership, Putin [coordinated corruption](#) in the country, [invaded and annexed](#) Crimea, and waged Russian [mercenary paramilitary operations](#) in Eastern Ukraine. These acts all successfully deterred NATO members from admitting Ukraine into NATO.
- In 2015, France and Germany expressed concern that Ukrainian membership would bring NATO into a war with Russia, and as much as [77 percent of Germans](#) opposed arming Ukraine to defend against Russia. Majorities in France, Italy, and Germany did not want to come to the defense of a Ukraine in a conflict against Russia.
- However, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine NATO states provided over 20,000 anti-tank missiles, 800 anti-aircraft stingers, 2,000 Javelin anti-aircraft systems, thousands of guns, five helicopters, and billions in financial and humanitarian aid to Ukraine (as of March 2022).
- NATO states announced [massive increases](#) to their military spending to exceed the 2 percent goal after the Russian invasion of Ukraine as well.