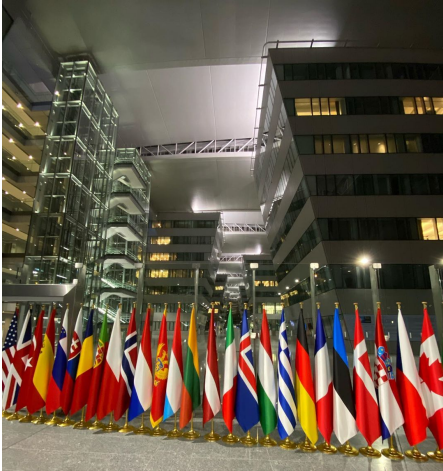


# *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*

## *(NATO)*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded by 12 European and North American Countries following World War II in April of 1949. The purpose of the organization is to ensure mutual protection should a member country ever be attacked by another country. Today, NATO consists of 30 member countries. To join NATO, a country must be unanimously invited and meet specific criteria. To help secure global peace, not only do NATO countries support one another, they also support non-NATO countries by helping them economically and militarily. For example, NATO troops in Iraq are helping to train the military to stand independently. “Operation Ocean Shield” uses naval ships from NATO countries to fight piracy in the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Sea to provide security to ships off the Horn of Africa. NATO also uses its resources to help member and non-member countries after a natural disaster. It does this because it believes the world will be safer and more secure if victims of natural disasters receive help quickly.



Some of the advantages to the U. S. being a member of NATO are increased stability and security, shared intelligence, and continued diplomatic dialogue with member countries.

Some disadvantages to the U.S. being a member of NATO are that alliances are tricky. While they can stabilize and secure regions, they can also destabilize a region, especially if that region believes the alliances are a threat. Additionally, NATO rules require that each member country donate two percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to it, but some member countries fail to meet this obligation. Currently, two-thirds of NATO’s budget is covered by the U.S., which has forced some to question this imbalance.



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