



Examining the pending NATO applications

Committee: NATO

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Introduction

Numerous nations have recently shown interest in joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in short NATO, seeking its security and unrestricted support, as a result of Russia's assault against Ukraine. These nations include Bosnia & Herzegovina, Georgia, and Ukraine. Sweden and Finland have also sought membership, have been accepted, and are undergoing the ratification process; they are already present at NATO meetings.

Nations need to fulfil certain criteria and obligations to join NATO and to be invited to join full consensus needs to be reached between existing member states.

The other three countries' membership applications, which are partly motivated by the possibility of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are generating some debate. Especially Ukraine's aspiration to join the alliance as some countries fear that it could cause an expansion of the ongoing war. NATO while not immediately accepting their membership applications still offers continuous support to the countries suffering the consequences of the war. If the situation continues to intensify NATO members might decide to have a different take on the pending NATO applications.

Definition of Key Terms

Aspirant countries

Countries that have expressed interest in joining NATO are working to meet the alliance's standards and requirements for membership.

Membership Action Plan (MAP)

Established to assist aspirant countries in joining NATO. MAP is a comprehensive program tailored to individual countries providing advice, assistance, and practical support. It is meant to

help countries modernize political, defence and economic institutions and align them with NATO standards. Participation in MAP is not a guarantee for future membership. The decision to invite a country to join NATO needs to be unanimously met by all members of the alliance. ` 1949

Washington Treaty

The founding treaty of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The treaty established the basic principles and goals of the alliance, including the commitment of member states to the collective defence of the North Atlantic area and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The treaty furthermore established the North Atlantic Council, the principal decision-making body. The treaty has often been amended and has grown to include 30 member states.

Open door policy

This policy is based on Article 10 of the 1949 Washington Treaty which states that membership to NATO “European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area”.

NATO Enlargement

Process of inviting and integrating new member states to join NATO. Enlargement is based on the concept of consensus meaning that all NATO members need to agree to the admission of a new member state. NATO Enlargement has caused debate because of its sometimes threatening implications for non-member states, even though it is a peaceful alliance.

General Overview

Application Process

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), is an international alliance of 30 countries in North America and Europe. The purpose of NATO is to promote its democratic values and defend against common threats. Under Article 10 of its founding treaty, NATO membership is open to any European state and North American state that is able and wishes to further the principles of the 1949 Washington treaty and show that they can contribute to the security of the North Atlantic

area. Furthermore, countries applying for NATO membership need to fulfil certain requirements: be a European state or Canada, have a stable democratic system that respects human rights and the rule of law, have a functioning market economy, can contribute to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area and have the capacity to implement NATO’s decisions and take responsibility for applications. To gain NATO member countries need to go through a multiple-step process. First, they need to declare their interest and are then invited to engage in dialogue with NATO about membership aspirations and reforms the countries would need to make. Aspirant countries may then be invited to participate in the Membership Action Plan (MAP). Once allies have decided to invite an aspirant country accession talks to begin.

In the accession talks individual invitees are sat down and the talks ensure that preconditions to join NATO are met, such as having a functioning democratic system and having the ability to militarily contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Furthermore, resources, legal issues and the contribution to NATO's common budget are discussed. This is all determined on a proportional basis, according to the size and economy of the country. Invitees are also required to take measures to protect NATO's intelligence and work with the NATO office of security.

At the end of these discussions, countries need to create a timetable in which the reforms they need to make are lined out, reforms can continue after they have become a member. When the reform timetables are finished invitees send them out along with a letter of intent to NATO's Secretary General. After accession protocols are signed and ratified by NATO countries, these become an integral part of the 1949 Washington Treaty. Governments of new NATO members ratify the Treaty according to national procedures. After that is finished the NATO Secretary General invites the new member country to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty. Finally after depositing their instruments of accession a country formally becomes a member of NATO.

Currently, five countries are aspiring to join NATO: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Sweden and Ukraine. Finland and Sweden completed accession talks in July 2022 and are official invitees and thus participate in meetings as such.

Relations with Countries aspiring to join

NATO ties to Ukraine go back to 1991 when Ukraine became a partner country. After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, NATO increased its assistance in the area. NATO provided the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for Ukraine since the 2016 Warsaw Summit. CAP intends to help Ukraine

defend itself from cyber attacks, and terrorism and help Ukraine build its military defence. Between 2002 and now Ukraine repeatedly expressed interest in joining NATO, and in 2005 intensified talks about its aspirations were held. However, in 2011 Ukraine withdrew again wanting to remain more neutral. Then in 2017, the Ukrainian parliament reinstated interest in joining NATO and in 2020 President Volodymyr Zelenskyy stated that it is a top priority for Ukraine to join NATO. On the 30th of September Ukraine formally applies to join NATO. NATO continuously condemns Russia's war of aggression and further increases support for Ukraine, in terms of strategic and some military aid. Due to the implications a Ukrainian NATO membership could have for the expansion of the war, many

members are cautious to accept Ukraine into the alliance. Ukraine points out that the open-door policy is not respected, even though they meet NATO's requirements. Some allied countries remain vague on whether they want Ukraine to join the alliance while others express that they do not want to risk Ukraine joining NATO as it could result in a full-scale war, since in the case of a member being attacked allied countries would be forced to fully engage.

Another country seeking to join is Bosnia and Herzegovina. NATO relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina reach back to the 1990s. In 2010 the country was invited to join the MAP and in 2019 a

reform program was submitted by them. In light of Russia's invasion in 2022, NATO increases support for Bosnia and Herzegovina trying to strengthen the country.

Georgia is aspiring to join NATO. In 2006 NATO offers Georgia intensified dialogue. In 2008 allied foreign ministers conclude that Georgia should develop an annual national program so that it can eventually join NATO. NATO has already increased support for Georgia as they face external threats and interference by Russia due to its proximity.

Timeline of Key Events

4 April 1949: The 1949 Washington Treaty is signed by the 12 founding members: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. The “open door policy” emerges from Article 10 of this Treaty.

23-25 April 1999: Launch of the Membership Action Plan (MAP) at the Washington Summit. **May 2002:** President announces Ukraine’s goal of eventual NATO membership.

21 April 2005: Dialogue on Ukraine’s aspirations to NATO membership and related reforms, an informal meeting.

21 September 2006: NATO foreign ministers in New York announce the decision to offer an Intensified Dialogue to Georgia.

9 July 2008: Allied foreign ministers find that Georgia should develop an Annual National Programme **22 April 2010:** NATO invites Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the MAP **2014:** Russia annexes Crimea

2 December 2015: NATO encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to further undertake reforms to realise their aspiration so that it can activate participation in MAP, they also welcome Georgia’s progress.

20 July 2016: Sets out CAP at the Warsaw Summit

1 June 2017: Ukraine reinstates objective to join NATO

1 September 2020: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy makes it a main objective for Ukraine to join NATO

5 December 2018: Bosnia and Herzegovina joins MAP

February 2022: Russia invades Ukraine

18 May 2022: Finland and Sweden submit official letters of application to join the NATO

29-30 June 2022: All aspiring countries take part in the Madrid Summit. NATO reaffirms open door policy.

4 July 2022: Finland and Sweden complete accession talks.

5 July 2022: Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden are signed, they are now official Invitees.

Major Parties Involved

All current NATO members

Since the decision for another country to join NATO needs to be unanimously made by all members, all members are involved. However different countries have different views on if a country should join or not and if not what other solutions can be found to support the aspirant country. Some countries are hesitant to accept other countries since it has certain consequences for them in terms of supporting the country that joined the military alliance. For example, in case Ukraine would join NATO the other countries in NATO would need to enact Article 5 of the 1949 Washington Treaty. Article 5 of the treaty states that if one member state is attacked the other members must consider it an attack on themselves and thus aid the country with all their might. Many members do not want to fully aid Ukraine and thus possibly trigger an even further reaching war.

Russia

Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 many new countries in its proximity are determined to join NATO, seeking protection and support from Russian forces.

Ukraine

Ukraine had previously expressed interest in joining NATO however due to Russia's invasion this matter has become more urgent and in September of 2022 Ukraine formally applied for membership. Even though NATO supports Ukraine in its fight against Russia, many member states are unsure if letting Ukraine join the alliance would not create even more tension and potential for a larger-scale war.

Georgia

Also seeks membership due to its proximity to Russia and the threats that result from it.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The only aspirant country currently participating in the MAP. NATO has increased support towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Some member state supports its joining.

Possible Solutions

One way to decide if a country should gain NATO membership would be to weigh the pros and cons for each aspirant country. Member countries provide their stance and argue why one country should join the Alliance or why a country should not.

In case a country urgently needs to join NATO an acceleration of alliance membership could be proposed. An acceleration in membership, however, could come with many implications. Considerations need to be taken to prevent NATO from worsening an already devastating conflict.

If there are objections to a state joining the alliance other solutions to support the country can be found, earlier examples of such aid programs are:

- [Defence Education Enhancement Program \(DEEP\)](#)
- [Comprehensive Assistance Package \(CAP\)](#)

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