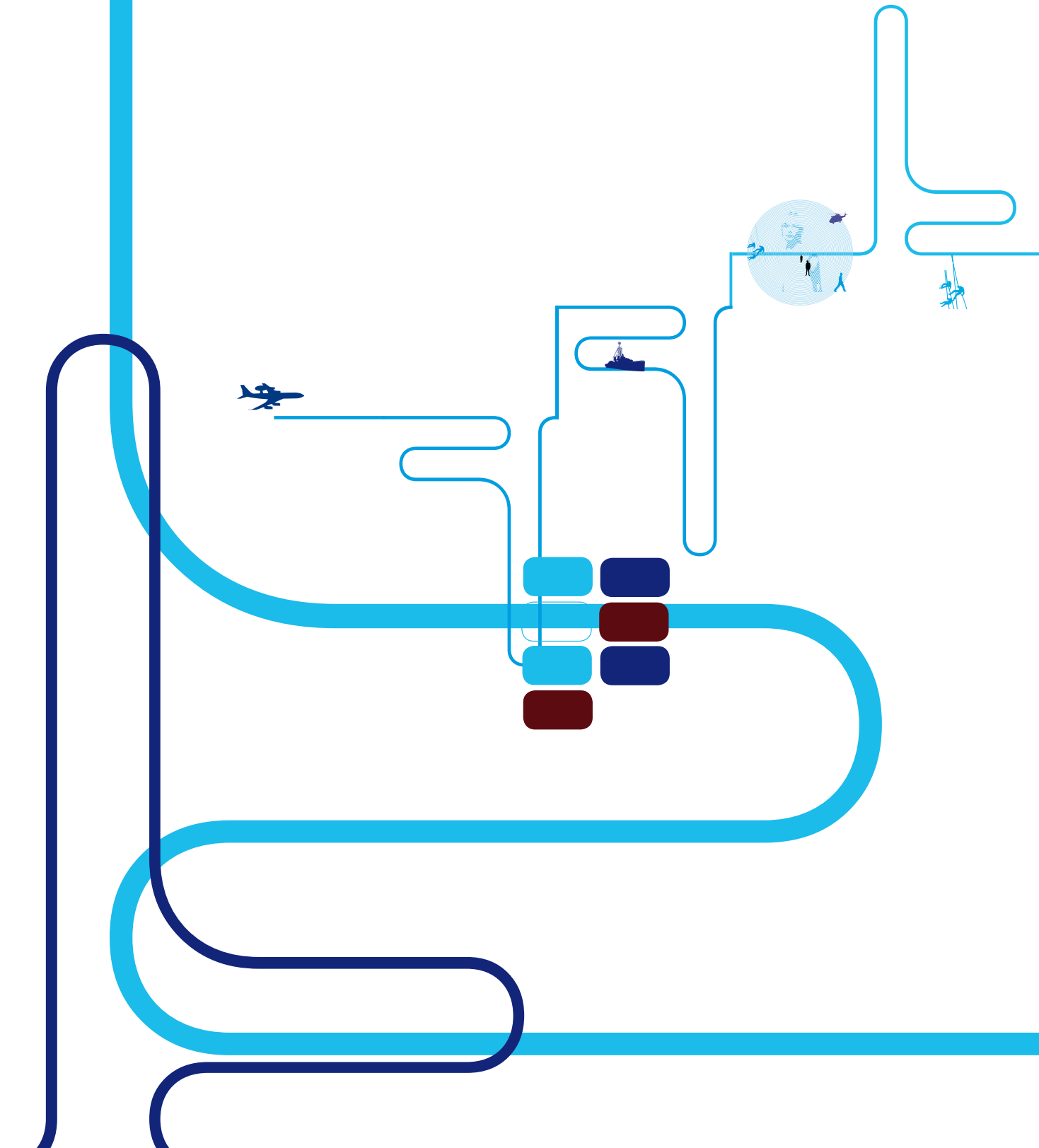




TOGETHER FOR SECURITY
An introduction to NATO







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The North Atlantic Alliance

In the course of over half a century of existence, both the Alliance and the wider world have developed in ways that NATO's founders could not have envisaged.

As the strategic environment continues to evolve, the pace of NATO's transformation is increasing. NATO is addressing a broader spectrum of security challenges than in the past and has to protect its populations both at home and abroad. Threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism know no borders, which implies that NATO must also be able to deploy and sustain forces at great distances, as in Afghanistan. In parallel, it is developing the necessary means and capabilities to be able to

respond to these new demands and is contributing to international efforts dealing with these many challenges.

While the nature of the threats faced by member states and the way in which NATO deals with them are changing, the basic tenets of cooperation within the Alliance remain true to the principles of the Washington Treaty. The principle of collective defence is at the very heart of the founding treaty. It remains a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together, committing them to protect each other.

NATO provides a political-military framework for managing security challenges, that links European and North American interests and aims to build security based on understanding and cooperation for the benefit of future generations.



References in this publication to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are marked by an asterisk (*) referring to the following footnote:
“Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.”



Responding to change

1949
Signing of the Washington Treaty, 4 April

1961
Erection of the Berlin Wall

Alliance origins

In 1949, when ideological clashes between East and West were gaining momentum, 12 countries from both sides of the Atlantic formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The primary aim was to create a pact of mutual assistance to counter the risk that the Soviet Union would seek to extend its control of Eastern Europe to other parts of the continent.

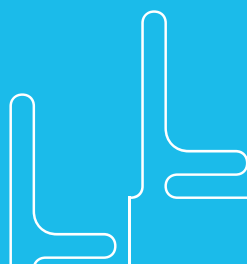


At the time, Europe was still recovering from the devastation caused by the Second World War. However, between 1947 and 1952, the US-funded Marshall Plan afforded the means to stabilize Western European economies. By committing to the principle of collective defence, NATO complemented this role by helping to maintain a secure environment for the development of democracy and economic growth. In the words of the then US President Harry S. Truman, the Marshall Plan and NATO were “two halves of the same walnut”.

“ Through the Alliance,
Western Europe and
North America achieved
an unprecedented level
of stability ”

By the early 1950s, international developments, culminating in the outbreak of the Korean War, appeared to confirm Western fears of the Soviet Union’s expansionist ambitions. Accordingly, NATO member states increased their efforts to develop the military and civilian structures needed to implement their commitment to joint defence. The presence of North American forces on European soil, at the request of European governments, helped to discourage Soviet Union aggression. Moreover, as time passed, more states became Allies.

Through the Alliance, Western Europe and North America achieved an unprecedented level of stability, laying the basis for European economic cooperation and integration. At the beginning of the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, the Alliance actively contributed to overcoming the old East-West divide of Europe by reaching out to former enemies and pursuing a cooperative approach to security.





1989
Fall of the Berlin Wall

The end of the Cold War

During the Cold War, NATO's role and purpose were clearly defined by the existence of the threat posed by the Soviet Union. By the early 1990s, the Warsaw Pact had been dissolved and the Soviet Union had collapsed. With the disappearance of its traditional adversaries, some commentators believed that the need for NATO had also been removed and that future defence expenditure and investment in armed forces could be dramatically reduced.

Many NATO Allies started cutting their defence spending, some by as much as 25 per cent. However, it soon became apparent that although the end of the Cold War might have removed the threat of military invasion, instability in some parts of Europe had increased. A number of regional conflicts, often fuelled by ethnic tensions, broke out in the former Yugoslavia and in parts of the former Soviet Union, and threatened to spread.

“ preserve peace
and stability in
Europe and prevent
the escalation of
regional tensions ”

New forms of political and military cooperation were now required to preserve peace and stability in Europe and prevent the escalation of regional tensions. Indeed, NATO engaged in institutionalised relations with former adversaries, creating new mechanisms for cooperation. It also underwent major internal reforms to adapt military structures and capabilities to equip members for new tasks, such as crisis management, peacekeeping and peace-support operations, in addition to ensuring their continued ability to fulfil their fundamental defence roles. In response to these security challenges, NATO not only remained a tightly knit Alliance with responsibility for collective defence, but also became the focus for a partnership of culturally diverse countries cooperating closely in the wider field of security.



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1995
NATO engages in its
first crisis management
operation

9/11

2001
Large-scale terrorist attacks in
New York and Washington D.C.

NATO invokes
Article 5 for first
time in its history

September 11

The Strategic Concept adopted at the 1999 Washington Summit described future threats as “multidirectional and often difficult to predict” and devoted special attention to the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. It also made clear that Alliance security interests could be affected by other risks of a wider nature, such as acts of terrorism, sabotage and organized crime, as well as the disruption of the flow of vital resources.

Events quickly brought home how prescient the Allies had been. On 11 September 2001, terrorists used passenger airliners as weapons of mass destruction against targets in the United States. The shocking brutality of the attacks and the means used to achieve them demonstrated the vulnerability of open and democratic societies to a new form of asymmetrical warfare. The next day, in an act of solidarity, the Allies invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, NATO’s collective defence provision, thereby affirming that an attack upon one or several constituted an attack upon them all.

Article 5

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an 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-defence 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 armed force, to restore

and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

The Alliance subsequently adopted measures to support the United States. It moved quickly, deploying vessels to the Eastern Mediterranean early October to board and search ships suspected of terrorist activity. This deployment continues today as Operation Active Endeavour, which now encompasses the entire Mediterranean. Also among the measures adopted, individual Allies deployed forces to Afghanistan in support of the US-led operation against al Qaida - the terrorist group responsible for the 9/11 attacks - and the Taliban - the regime harbouring it. The Alliance has been leading the follow-on peacekeeping mission, the International Security Assistance Force, since August 2003.

The 9/11 attacks were followed by others on Alliance territory, less dramatic in scale but equally malevolent in nature. These incidents and others elsewhere have confirmed for NATO leaders the importance of several long-evolving realisations.



“ contribute to the development of comprehensive political, economic, and military solutions ”

Firstly, threats to the transatlantic community in the 21st century will be increasingly asymmetrical in nature and sponsored by sub-state groups rather than the freestanding armies of nation-states. To counter them, Allied militaries must become more deployable, mobile and efficient.

Secondly, these new threats may originate from beyond the Euro-Atlantic area. For that reason, NATO must become an Alliance with global partners that recognizes that risks must be faced wherever they may originate.

Finally, NATO cannot confront these dangers alone. The transatlantic Alliance must contribute to the development of comprehensive political, economic, and military solutions by working together with non-governmental and international organizations such as the United Nations, the European

Union, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Only such an approach will address the economic as well as the political and ideological roots of conflict.

With these factors in mind, NATO leaders embarked on a review of Alliance activities and working procedures. This has resulted in a series of initiatives, which include:

the creation of a NATO Response Force - a technologically advanced, flexible, deployable, interoperable and sustainable force including land, sea, and air elements

improving capabilities in areas key to modern military operations such as strategic lift and air-to-ground surveillance

a streamlined military command structure

the adoption of a Comprehensive Political Guidance intended to provide the framework for the Alliance's strategic priorities for the next ten to fifteen years

the expansion of operations in Afghanistan to cover the entire country as well as assistance through the training of security forces and reconstruction work

assistance to the Government of Iraq through the training of its security forces, as well as support to the African Union and the initiation of counter-piracy activities

engaging in institutionalised relations with countries from the Middle East through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

In parallel, NATO has also been pursuing Euro-Atlantic integration by extending invitations for membership to the Alliance and to its partnership programmes, so as to multiply the benefits of security to a wider number of countries.



NATO AWACS aircraft provide air surveillance for major events and crisis situations



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A major player in crisis situations

2003
NATO assumes responsibility
for ISAF in Afghanistan

Afghanistan

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom, a counter-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, which ousted the repressive Taliban regime. Concern arose that Afghan security forces could not stabilize the country on their own. The Bonn Conference was therefore organized in December 2001, requesting that the United Nations (UN) approve a force that would assist in the establishment and training of security forces. The UN Security Council Resolution 1386 of 20 December 2001, provided for the creation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its deployment to Kabul and surrounding areas. ISAF and the Afghan Transitional Authority – the forerunner of the Afghan national government – negotiated a Military Technical Agreement in January 2002 that detailed ISAF's tasks.

Initially, ISAF was neither a NATO nor a UN force but a coalition of the willing deployed under the authority of the UN Security Council. Volunteering countries led ISAF for six-month rotations (initially the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany and the Netherlands).

While these missions made progress, they were hampered by a lack of continuity until, eventually, in August 2003, the Alliance assumed strategic command, control and coordination of the mission, allowing for the creation of a permanent ISAF headquarters in Kabul.

“ ISAF coordinates closely with the Afghan national government ”

At first, ISAF's mandate was limited to the capital city of Kabul and surrounding areas, but it gradually expanded to cover Afghanistan in its entirety: It first expanded to the north, the west, then to the south and finally the east of the country – the most dangerous and volatile region of Afghanistan.

ISAF's overriding role is to assist the Afghan government in extending its authority across the country and creating a secure environment. To do so, it assists in the development of Afghan security forces through army and police training; it identifies reconstruction needs of civilian facilities; supports the government to disarm illegally armed groups and engage in counter-narcotic efforts; and supports humanitarian assistance activities.

It is also trying to increase interaction between civilian and military entities and develop a more systematic approach to cooperation in the field. To illustrate this, some of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams – small groups of civilian and military personnel under the responsibility

of ISAF - work across the country on civil projects such as building schools and orphanages, repairing roads, decommissioning weapons, demining, and the like.

ISAF coordinates closely with the Afghan national government. During December 2003 and January 2004, for instance, it assisted Afghan authorities in security provision for the convening of the Constitutional Loya Jirga, a grand council, which adopted the Afghan constitution. In September 2006, NATO and Afghanistan issued a “Framework for Enduring Co-operation in Partnership” that concentrates on promoting defence reform, defence institution-building and interoperability between the Afghan National Army and NATO members. In addition, a Senior Civilian Representative from NATO articulates the political and military goals of the Alliance, working directly with the Afghan government and other international organizations and maintaining contact with neighbouring countries.



NATO led a 10-year peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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The Balkans

In the wake of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, NATO intervened militarily to halt or head off conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, in Kosovo in 1999 and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in 2001.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, NATO Allies conducted air operations against Bosnian Serb forces in August and September 1995. This action helped shift the balance of power between parties on the ground and persuade the Bosnian Serb leadership to accept the peace settlement, which was negotiated in Dayton, Ohio. NATO peacekeepers arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995 under the Implementation Force (IFOR). IFOR was succeeded by the Stabilisation Force (SFOR), which ten years later, in December 2005, was brought to a successful end. The peacekeeping mandate was then handed over to the European Union.

“ create a stable environment for the future development of Kosovo ”

NATO's military intervention in Kosovo followed more than a year of escalating violence and Belgrade's repeated violations of UN Security Council resolutions calling for an end to its repression of Kosovo's Albanian population. In March 1999, the Alliance decided to launch an air campaign against the military and paramilitary structures of the Yugoslav government responsible for the repression. The decision was reached after all other options had been exhausted and peace talks had again failed to overcome Belgrade's intransigence.

The air campaign was to last 78 days and resulted in an end to all military action by the parties to the conflict; the withdrawal from Kosovo of the Yugoslav Army, Serbian police and paramilitary forces; agreement on the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence; agreement on the unconditional and safe return of refugees and displaced persons; and assurance of a willingness on all sides to work towards a political agreement for Kosovo.

The mandate of the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) comes both from a Military-Technical Agreement signed by NATO and Yugoslav commanders and from UN Security Council Resolution 1244, both of

June 1999. KFOR was made responsible for deterring renewed hostility, establishing a secure environment and demilitarising the Kosovo Liberation Army. In addition, KFOR supports the international humanitarian effort and works together with the international civil presence, the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), to create a stable environment for the future development of Kosovo.

Following the declaration of independence on 17 February 2008, NATO reaffirmed that KFOR shall remain in Kosovo on the basis of UNSCR 1244, unless the UN Security Council decides otherwise. This position was again reiterated by NATO leaders at the Strasbourg/Kehl Summit in April 2009. They also stated that the Alliance remains fully committed to supporting the establishment of the agreed multi-ethnic security structures in Kosovo. They welcomed the deployment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the progress made so far in implementing existing commitments to standards, especially those related to the rule of law, protecting ethnic minorities and historical and religious sites, and combating crime and corruption.

“ In order to reinforce long-term stability in the Western Balkans, NATO is trying to integrate countries from the region into Euro-Atlantic structures ”

In August 2001, the president of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* requested the support of NATO to disarm ethnic Albanian groups which could potentially destabilize the country. NATO agreed, on the condition that the government would reinstate certain minority rights. The representatives of the country's ethnic Albanian community and the government reached a political settlement, which was brokered by special envoys from various international organizations, including NATO, and from the United States. This opened the way for NATO to deploy some 3 500 troops on a 30-day mission to disarm ethnic Albanians on a voluntary basis.

At Skopje's request, NATO troops remained in the country providing protection for monitors from the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe until the end of March 2003 when the mission was taken over by the European Union. These initiatives helped head off civil conflict and prepare the ground for reconciliation and reconstruction in the country.

KFOR is now the only remaining large-scale Allied force deployment in the Balkans, although NATO maintains headquarters in Sarajevo and Skopje to assist the host governments in defence reform.

In order to reinforce long-term stability in the Western Balkans, NATO is trying to integrate countries from the region into Euro-Atlantic structures. Albania and Croatia joined NATO on 1 April 2009; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* is a candidate for NATO membership; and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia became NATO Partners on 14 December 2006.





The Mediterranean

Launched in the wake of the September 11 attacks, Operation Active Endeavour is a maritime surveillance operation led by NATO's naval forces to detect, deter and protect against terrorist activity in the Mediterranean. NATO vessels deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean and started patrolling the area as early as 6 October 2001. In view of its success, it was expanded to the Strait of Gibraltar early 2003 and subsequently to the entire Mediterranean a year later, in March 2004.

While the operation is limited to terrorism-related activities, it has beneficial effects on the overall security of the Mediterranean for trade and economic activity.

The Gulf of Aden

Growing piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa is threatening to undermine international humanitarian efforts in Africa and, more generally, disrupt vital sea lines of communication and economic interests in the area.

NATO is actively helping to increase security by conducting counter-piracy operations in the area: Operation Allied Provider (2008), Operation Allied Protector (2009) and Operation Ocean Shield (ongoing). It is considering a possible long-term role in counter-piracy, in full complementarity with the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and with actions against piracy by other actors, including the European Union.



Assistance to Iraq

NATO has a vital strategic interest in a stable Iraq and has been supporting the Iraqi Government through the NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) since 2004. NATO and Iraq have also agreed to pursue their cooperation in the long-term and have formalized this by approving proposals for a Structured Cooperation Framework.

NATO is helping the country provide for its own security by training Iraqi military personnel either in or outside Iraq; supporting the development of the country's security institutions; coordinating the delivery of equipment donated by individual NATO member countries; and more generally, providing support for defence reform in Iraq.

Cooperation with Iraq has been taking place in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1546, which requested support from international and regional organizations to help meet the needs of the Iraqi people for security and stability and upon subsequent requests from the Government of Iraq.



Darfur
refugees

Support for the African Union

The first of NATO's missions on the African continent was to support the African Union's Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

The inhabitants of the Darfur province of Sudan have been the victims of a brutal civil war since 2003. The conflict has caused a humanitarian crisis that has led to the killing of tens of thousands and the displacement of millions. At the request of the African Union (AU), NATO started providing support to the AMIS from July 2005 until the completion of this mission on 31 December 2007. When this mission became the UN-AU hybrid mission in January 2008, NATO expressed its readiness to consider any additional requests for support.

In June 2007, NATO agreed to a request from the African Union to provide strategic airlift support for the deployment of its troops for a mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The country has been without effective government since 1991 and has suffered from years of fighting between rival warlords as well as famine and disease.

NATO is also providing capacity-building support to the AU's long-term peacekeeping capabilities, in particular the African Standby Force, also at the request of the AU.

To ensure maximum synergy and effectiveness, NATO's assistance is aligned and coordinated closely with other international organizations – principally the United Nations and the European Union – as well as with bilateral partners.



NATO's wider activities

Media coverage of NATO inevitably focuses on high-level diplomacy, Alliance summits and military campaigns. However, most of the Alliance's work takes place away from the glare of publicity. NATO is involved, on a daily basis, in an array of projects helping to improve Europe's security environment. These include helping reform eastern European militaries, building programmes to retrain former military officers for civilian life, and providing assistance with demining and the disposal of obsolete munitions' stockpiles.

In addition, NATO is active in coordinating humanitarian relief. In 1999 it opened a Euro-Atlantic Disaster Relief Coordination Centre (EADRCC) through which it coordinates emergency and humanitarian assistance from NATO and Partner countries in the event of both natural or man-made disasters. For example, NATO provided assistance to the victims of flooding in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in the United States in September 2005. A month later, a devastating

earthquake in Pakistan left some 73 000 people dead and four million homeless. The North Atlantic Council agreed to extend assistance through the EADRCC. On numerous occasions, the EADRCC has mobilized resources to come to the assistance of countries in the Euro-Atlantic area, which have been hit by floods, forest fires or earthquakes.

NATO has a science programme that sponsors practical cooperation on security-related issues in the fields of civil science, the environment and technology. The NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme seeks to develop recommendations and tangible solutions for a variety of problems, while aiming to respond to the specific needs of participants. Scientists from NATO member, Partner and Mediterranean Dialogue countries participate in these activities, which effectively contribute to overall security by facilitating collaboration, networking and capacity-building.

“ most of the Alliance's work takes place away from the glare of publicity ”



Extending partnerships

NATO partners

“ establishing institutions for dialogue, confidence-building and cooperation ”

Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has taken a series of initiatives to strengthen security and stability by establishing institutions for dialogue, confidence-building and cooperation. It has created relations with former adversaries, as well as other European states, neighbouring countries in the wider Mediterranean region and countries in the Middle East.

An early step in this direction was the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991. Since renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, this has become the principal forum for consultation and cooperation between NATO and non-member countries in the Euro-Atlantic area.

In 1994, NATO introduced an initiative known as the Partnership for Peace (PfP). This is a programme designed to assist participating countries in restructuring their armed forces to enable them to play their proper role in a democratic society and to participate in NATO-led peace-support operations. It offers opportunities for practical cooperation in many different fields, allowing individual Partner countries to tailor their participation according to their specific security needs or interests. The breadth and range of activities is huge, covering areas such as defence reform, crisis management, civil emergency planning, cooperation in the field of science, education and training, and the safe destruction of munitions and small arms and light weapons.

Relations with Russia and Ukraine

“ Russia and Ukraine were among the many countries that committed to partnership activities with NATO from day one ”

Russia and Ukraine were among the many countries that committed to partnership activities with NATO from day one. In 1997, cooperation was placed on a more formal basis with the signing of bilateral agreements between each of these countries and NATO. The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council and the NATO-Ukraine Commission were established as a means to facilitate regular consultation and discussion on security matters and to develop practical cooperation in a wide range of areas.

Since then, in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, which underscored the need for concerted international action to address new security threats, the Allies and Russia have formed a deeper and closer relationship. In 2002, they created the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), chaired by the Secretary General, in which all NRC countries participate as equals and decisions are taken by consensus, to replace the bilateral NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council.

The NRC has identified the struggle against terrorism, crisis management and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as key areas of cooperation.

The NATO-Ukraine relationship has developed progressively over the years. An important aspect is the support given by NATO and individual Allies for Ukraine's ongoing reform efforts, particularly in the defence and security sector. These reforms are vital for the country's democratic development.



Cooperating with
Mediterranean
Dialogue
countries during
NATO exercises

The Mediterranean Dialogue

“ creating good relations and
improving mutual understanding
with the countries of the
Mediterranean area ”

The PfP initiative was complemented by the 1995 establishment of a Mediterranean Dialogue with six countries - Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia - in the wider Mediterranean region. The programme, which was joined by Algeria in 2000, is aimed at creating good relations and improving mutual understanding with the countries of the Mediterranean area, as well as promoting regional security and stability. In 2004, the Dialogue was elevated to a genuine partnership to promote greater

practical cooperation through assistance in defence reform, cooperation in the field of border security, measures to improve interoperability, and the like. The enhanced partnership also focused on the fight against terrorism. Some Dialogue countries have contributed troops to NATO-led peace-support operations in the Balkans and are participating in Operation Active Endeavour.

The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative

“ The initiative aims to promote practical bilateral cooperation with interested countries in the region ”

The launching of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in 2004 showed the Alliance's willingness to reach out to Middle Eastern countries that are not involved in the Mediterranean Dialogue. The initiative aims to promote practical bilateral cooperation with interested countries of the region in areas such as the fight against terrorism, crisis management, civil emergency planning and border control. At present, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have joined.





A number of so-called contact countries, such as New Zealand, contribute to ISAF

Working with global partners and other international organizations

With security threats becoming more unpredictable in nature, scope and origin, NATO has extended the reach of its partnerships. It has appealed to global partners to help it tackle the global threats that have emerged since the turn of the century. These so-called “contact countries”, which are neither members nor partners of the Alliance, include countries such as Japan, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea.

NATO is also engaged in relations with other international organizations that have a complementary role in promoting peace and security. In the context of crisis management operations, NATO works with organizations that have the tools to ensure a sustainable peace through political, economic and social development. These include the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, as well as other institutions such as EUROCONTROL and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

“ a complementary role in promoting peace and security ”

Over and above these institutional links, the transatlantic relationship between the European members of NATO and the United States makes the Alliance's relations with the European Union distinctive. Like any constructive relationship, it has evolved in response to changing external circumstances. Without tracing the history of transatlantic relations since the end of the Second World War, it is important to highlight that NATO's European members were highly dependent on the United States in the immediate post-war period, both in terms of security and economic growth. In the intervening years, Europe has grown stronger and more united. The European Union began to develop a common foreign and security policy in the early 1990s and is gradually positioning Europe as a more prominent actor in international affairs.

In December 1999, the European Union decided to develop its capacity to take on crisis management tasks and took steps to create the political and military structures required. This paved the way for the European Union to take over two of NATO's missions in the Balkans, a few years later.

This process was facilitated by the “Berlin Plus” arrangements, which allow the European Union to have access to NATO assets and capabilities for EU-led operations when NATO as a whole is not engaged. It is now the foundation of cooperation between the European Union and NATO and has led to the handover of NATO's mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* at the end of March 2003 and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2004.





Pursuing an open door policy

An ongoing process

At a relatively early stage, the founding members of the Alliance – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States – extended the membership of the Organization to include Greece and Turkey (1952), and Germany (1955). Some decades later, Spain joined in 1982.

The next round of enlargement occurred after the end of the Cold War, when a number of Central European countries decided that their future security interests could best be met by joining NATO and voiced their intention of seeking membership. Three former Partner countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland – became members in March 1999, bringing the number of member countries to 19.

At the end of March 2004, in what was NATO's largest wave of enlargement, seven more countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – joined the Alliance. More recently, in April 2009, Albania and Croatia became members. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* will also be invited to accede to the Organization as soon as the country-name issue has been resolved.

NATO's door remains open to any European country in a position to undertake the commitments and obligations of membership, and contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area.



The Membership Action Plan

The seven members that joined NATO in 2004 and those which have followed since, have benefited from a Membership Action Plan that was put in place in 1999 to help interested Partner countries prepare for membership. The plan offers aspiring members practical advice and targeted assistance. In turn, aspiring members are expected to meet certain key requirements, including a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; the fair treatment of minority populations; a commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes with neighbours; the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to the Alliance; and a commitment to the democratic control of their armed forces. Participation in the plan does not offer any guarantee of future membership, but it does help countries to adapt their armed forces and to prepare for the obligations and responsibilities that Alliance membership would bring.

NATO is not in the business of recruiting new members, but the Allies are committed to considering requests for membership from democratic countries, which share Allied values and could contribute to the fundamental aims of the Alliance. NATO governments have made clear that the enlargement of the Alliance is not an aim in itself, but a means of extending NATO's security further a field and making Europe as a whole more stable. The enlargement process helps to head off conflict, because the very prospect of membership serves as an incentive for aspiring members to resolve disputes with their neighbours and push ahead with reforms and democratisation. Moreover, new members should not only enjoy the benefits of membership, they should also be able to contribute to the overall security of all member countries. In other words, they need to be providers as well as consumers of security.

“ providers
as well as
consumers
of security ”



New capabilities for new threats

“ NATO leaders introduced major reforms that were to dramatically reshape NATO’s military assets ”

The security challenges confronting our societies today require forces that are principally equipped and structured to tackle threats such as terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and the instability emanating from failed or failing states.

In the early 1990s, NATO had already started to review its military capabilities, with the aim of moving away from the static formations of the Cold War to more mobile forces needed for crisis-management operations. The events of September 11 accelerated this process. At the Prague Summit, held in 2002, NATO leaders introduced major reforms that were to dramatically reshape NATO’s military assets. They identified specific areas for improvement, created the NATO Response Force and streamlined the military command structure, in an effort to be better able to respond to different security threats either within or beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.



Modernizing military capabilities

In Prague, eight specific fields were identified as being the areas where shortfalls needed the most urgently to be addressed. They included areas such as strategic air and sea lift; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence; and air-to-ground surveillance. Allies have committed to acquiring these capabilities, which are fundamental in enabling the Alliance to respond to new threats. Since the Prague Summit, NATO has explored other areas that need modernizing, particularly in the field of defence against terrorism.

The NATO Response Force

The aim of the NATO Response Force (NRF) is to be able to respond swiftly to various types of crisis situations across the globe, acting as an advance force that can be reinforced by additional troops at a later stage. Based on a core that can be supplemented as necessary, it is a multinational force made up of land, air, maritime and special forces components that can commence deployment with as little as five days' notice and sustain itself on operations for 30 days, or longer if re-supplied.

Elements of the NRF have already been deployed to the United States after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and the surrounding area in September 2005, and to Pakistan following the devastating earthquake that occurred on 8 October 2005.

In addition to its deployability and high-combat readiness, the NRF is effectively the spearhead of NATO's transformation efforts. It trains personnel to function within a highly demanding environment, using emerging technologies in a multinational context. This quality of training is an experience that each and every one of the participants acquires, forming a catalyst for change within national forces, as well as within multinational formations.

Rationalizing the command structure

Adapting to the post-Cold War security environment, NATO reviewed its military command structure to support smaller, more flexible and mobile forces. It radically reduced the number of headquarters and, more significantly, assigned the role of leading NATO's transformation efforts to the US-based strategic command, Allied Command Transformation (formerly the Allied Command Atlantic). The European-based strategic command was made responsible for all NATO operations and is now known as Allied Command Operations.

The streamlining of the military command structure is an ongoing process, which NATO reviews on a regular basis.



The dynamics of the Organization

Consensus decision-making

One of the keys to the Alliance's durability is its decision-making process based on consensus. This means that all decisions have to be unanimous. As a result, protracted consultations and discussions are often required before an important decision can be taken. Although this system may appear slow and unwieldy to an outside observer, it has two major advantages. Firstly, the sovereignty and independence of each member country is respected. Secondly, when a decision is reached, it has the full backing of all member countries and their commitment to implement it.

On some occasions, there is disagreement, as was the case in spring 2003 when countries differed in their estimations of the threat presented by Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. While differing national positions mean that Allies will not always agree on action to be taken, the purpose of NATO is to facilitate consultations and discussions among them so that consensus can be achieved whenever possible.

The principal players

“ The principal political decision-making body in NATO is the North Atlantic Council ”

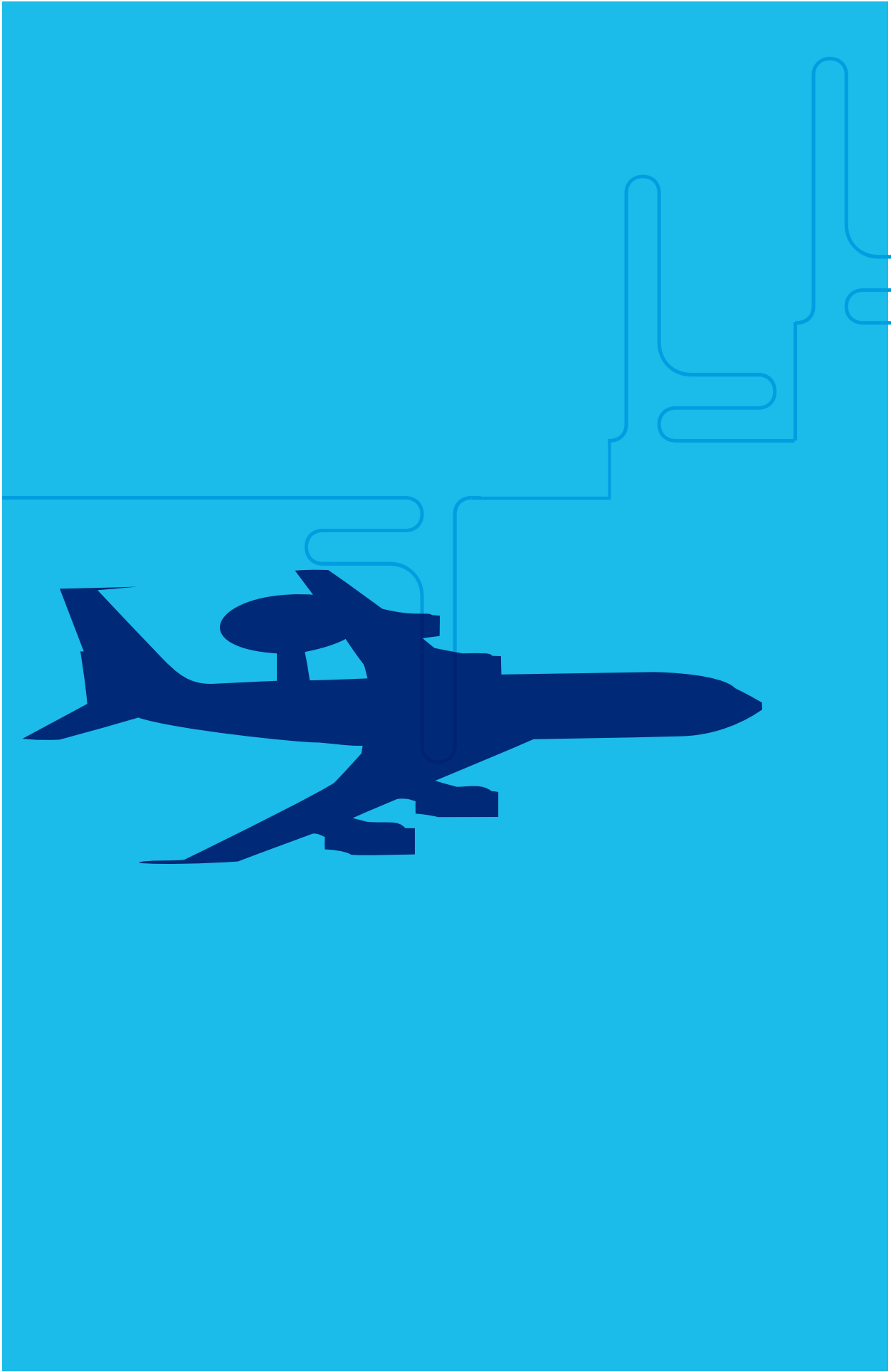
The most important players in NATO are the member countries themselves who, as such, form the Organization. They are represented at every committee level. For this purpose, within NATO headquarters in Brussels, each country has a permanent representative with the rank of ambassador, supported by a national delegation consisting of diplomatic staff and defence advisers, who either attend the committee meetings themselves or ensure that national experts participate.

The principal political decision-making body in NATO is the North Atlantic Council that convenes at ambassadorial level at least once a week. There are also regular meetings of the Council at the level of foreign ministers, defence ministers and, from time to time, heads of state and government. The North Atlantic Council, together with two defence-related bodies - the Defence Planning Committee and the Nuclear Planning Group - are at the head of a complex committee system. Within this system, the Military Committee is responsible for providing these three main bodies with military advice and gives the strategic commanders guidance on military matters. As such, it has a special status as the senior military authority in NATO.

NATO has a Secretary General who is appointed for approximately four years. He or she is a senior international statesman from one of the member countries. The Secretary General chairs meetings of the North Atlantic Council and other important NATO bodies and helps to build consensus among the members. In managing day-to-day activities of the Alliance, he or she is supported by an international staff of experts and officials from all NATO countries.

NATO does not have armed forces of its own. Most forces available to NATO remain under full national command and control until they are assigned by the member countries to undertake tasks ranging from collective defence to new missions such as peacekeeping. In short, NATO is a forum that brings together countries that are prepared to integrate their forces and engage in multinational activities during a given period. Its political and military structures provide for the advance planning required to enable national forces to carry out these tasks, as well as the organizational arrangements needed for their joint command, control, training and exercising.





Into the future

Initially a creation of the Cold War era, the Alliance has taken on new and fundamental tasks since the division of Europe disappeared. It has opened up to Eastern Europe, welcoming new members and creating a network of partnerships stretching as far as Central Asia. It has also engaged in crisis management operations to quell violence caused by regional and ethnic conflicts in Europe, and, more recently, beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

The post-Cold War world has proved to be a more complex security environment – a trend that looks set to continue in the 21st century. The Alliance's Strategic Concept, agreed in 1999, anticipated many of the threats and challenges of the new security environment.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Alliance has been refocusing its efforts to adapt to the reality of asymmetrical threats. It is adopting a broader and more ambitious approach to security by further deepening and extending its partnerships, modernizing its forces and providing assistance in crisis areas that are new to the Organization. In sum, it is accelerating its transformation to develop new political relationships and stronger operational capabilities to respond to an increasingly globalized and more challenging world, for the benefit of members' defence and peace and security.



TOGETHER FOR SECURITY

