



NATO

in the 21st century

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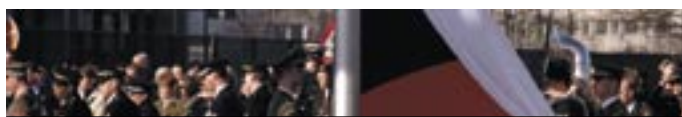
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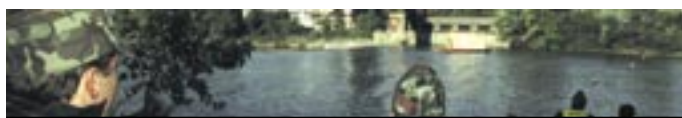
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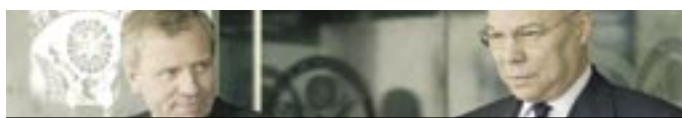
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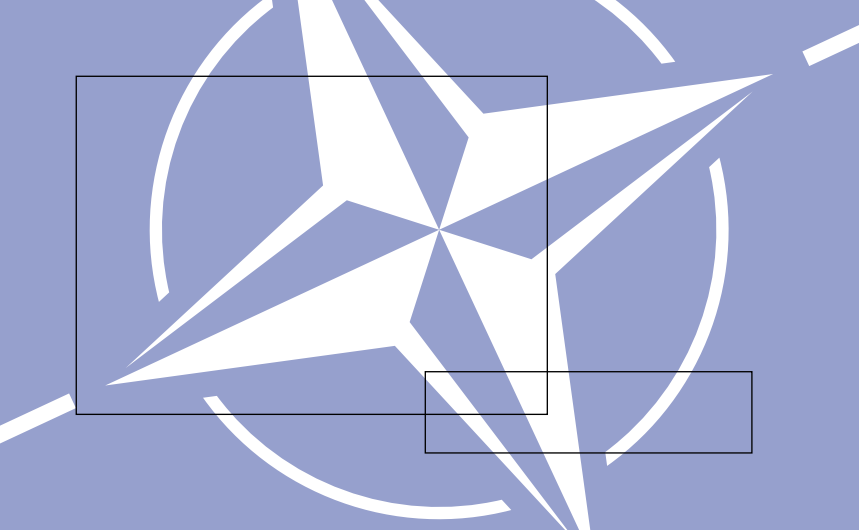
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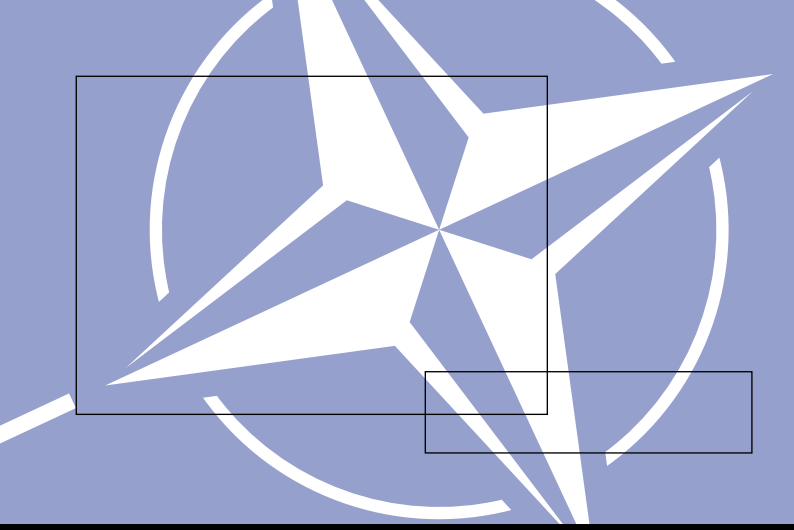


The *Atlantic* *Alliance*

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) embodies the transatlantic link that binds Europe and North America in a unique defence and security alliance. NATO's essential and enduring purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. To this end, NATO has provided for the collective defence of its members since its foundation in 1949. It has also acted as an essential forum for consultation on security issues of interest to its members, and as an essential pillar of peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

With the end of the Cold War, the Alliance took on new fundamental tasks, including building security partnerships with democracies across Europe, through the Caucasus and into Central Asia. In response to changes in the overall security environment, the Alliance has taken on additional responsibilities. These include addressing both instability caused by regional and ethnic conflicts within Europe and threats emanating from beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

Today, the Alliance is engaged in an increasingly broad range of activities, designed to promote cooperation with Russia, Ukraine and other countries outside NATO and to confront proactively the new security challenges of the 21st century, such as those posed by international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In order to remain effective in defending and promoting security in this new and rapidly changing security environment, the Alliance is engaged in an ongoing transformation affecting all aspects of its agenda, with new missions, new members, new capabilities, new partnerships, and new ways of doing business.



Responding to new security threats

The terrorist attacks against the United States of 11 September 2001 – in which passenger airliners were used as weapons of mass destruction – brought home the way in which the security environment has changed since the end of the Cold War and the vulnerability of modern society to new security threats. In response, the Allies invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, NATO's collective defence provision, for the first time, providing political and practical support for the United States at a critical moment. Moreover, since then, they have both assisted the United States in its response to the terrorist attacks and taken steps to enhance NATO's capacity to deal with the threat posed by international terrorism.

Although the events of 11 September 2001 were a great shock to the Alliance, NATO had begun adapting its working culture to address the changing security environment several years earlier. In 1999, the Allies agreed a new Strategic Concept. This document, which sets out the security threats faced by the Alliance and the way in which it seeks to address them, described the security risks as "multidirectional and often difficult to predict" and devoted special attention to the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their 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 organised crime, as well as the disruption of the flow of vital resources.

To address such threats, the Alliance took a series of initiatives aimed at improving its military capabilities and enhancing cooperation both among members and with Partner countries and other international organisations. These included a Defence Capabilities Initiative, a high-level programme introduced in 1999 to update military capabilities in response to the new security environment; the establishment in 2000 of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Centre, in which Allies share information about the threat of weapons of mass destruction and seek to coordinate the most appropriate responses; and the development of a European Security and Defence Identity within the Alliance to enable NATO's European members to take on greater responsibilities in the security and defence field.



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▲ North Atlantic Council meeting at the Prague Summit

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 added new urgency to these efforts. In their wake, NATO embarked on a comprehensive review of its activities and working procedures. This culminated in a package of reforms, initiatives and programmes endorsed by Alliance leaders at the Prague Summit in November 2002. At the same time, 14 Allies deployed forces in Afghanistan in support of the US-led operation against *al Qaida*, the terrorist group responsible for the attacks, and the Taliban, the regime harbouring it, as well as in the follow-on peacekeeping mission, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in Kabul. Moreover, at the request of member countries playing an active part in this mission and to provide continuity, NATO has assumed responsibility for leading ISAF and is examining the possibilities of other similar operations beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

Although NATO members have occasionally disagreed over the most appropriate ways to respond to new security threats, all recognise that such threats may originate from beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, and that they cannot be solved by one organisation alone, nor by relying on defence structures designed to deal with conventional military conflicts. In addition to working together with other competent organisations, the Alliance must therefore adapt to face new and different challenges. As a result, NATO has moved from being a geographically defined alliance to one that recognises that security threats are no longer limited in terms of their location and predictability and is prepared to address them whenever and wherever they occur.

Moreover, in order to build a more secure environment, NATO is forging ever closer relations with international organisations, including the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations and even the World Health Organization, and with non-member countries, including Russia, Ukraine, and Partners both in the Euro-Atlantic area and in the wider Mediterranean region.



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Alliance origins

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Eastern and Western Europe found themselves separated by the ideological and political divisions of the Cold War. Eastern Europe fell under the domination of the Soviet Union. In 1949, 12 countries from both sides of the Atlantic formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to counter the risk that the Soviet Union would seek to extend its control of Eastern Europe to other parts of the continent.

Between 1947 and 1952, the Marshall Plan afforded the means of stabilising Western European economies. NATO's role as a political and military alliance was to provide for collective defence against any form of aggression and 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".

The founding members of NATO – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States – committed themselves to come to each other's defence in the event of military aggression against any one of them. By binding North America to the defence of Western Europe, the Alliance demonstrated that any attempt at political and military coercion against Western Europe would fail. Simultaneously, it ensured that national defence policies would gradually become more integrated and interdependent.



▲ Europe divided

◀ Cold War missile

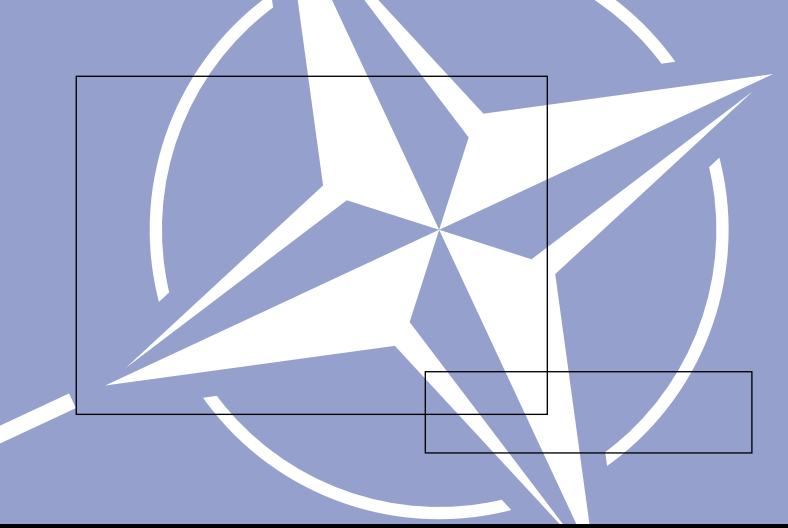


By the early 1950s, international developments, culminating in the outbreak of the Korean War, appeared to confirm Western fears of the Soviet Union's expansionist ambitions. Accordingly, NATO member states increased their efforts to develop the military structures needed to implement their commitment to joint defence. The presence of North American forces on European soil, at the request of European governments, helped to discourage the Soviet Union from thinking that aggression could succeed. Moreover, as time passed, more states became Allies. In 1952 Greece and Turkey joined the Alliance, followed three years later by the Federal Republic of Germany, and in 1982 by Spain.

Through the Alliance, Western Europe and North America not only jointly defended their independence but also achieved an unprecedented level of stability. Indeed, the security provided by NATO has been described as the "oxygen of prosperity" which laid the basis for European economic cooperation and integration. At the beginning of the 1990s, it also helped end the Cold War and with it the division of Europe.

▲ North Atlantic Council meeting in Paris

◀ Signing the Washington Treaty



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 at the insistence of the newly liberated countries of Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union had collapsed. With the disappearance of 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.

In the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, many NATO Allies cut their defence spending significantly, some by as much as 25 per cent. However, hopes for a still larger peace dividend proved unduly optimistic. 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. NATO countries rapidly came to the conclusion that their commitment to collective defence and the cooperation achieved through NATO continued to provide the best guarantee of their security.



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Furthermore, although the prospect of military invasion had receded, new forms of political and military cooperation were required to preserve peace and stability in Europe and prevent the escalation of regional tensions after the end of the Cold War. Indeed, major internal reforms were needed to adapt military structures and capabilities to equip them 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 the new security challenges, NATO has evolved from being primarily a tightly knit Alliance with responsibility for collective defence, to becoming the focus for a partnership of nations cooperating closely in the wider field of security.



▲ Monitoring regional conflict

◀ Then NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner meeting Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev



How *NATO* works

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.

The most important decision-making body in NATO is the North Atlantic Council on which each member country is represented by a permanent representative with the rank of ambassador, supported by a national delegation



▲ Preparing for take-off

◀ North Atlantic Council in session

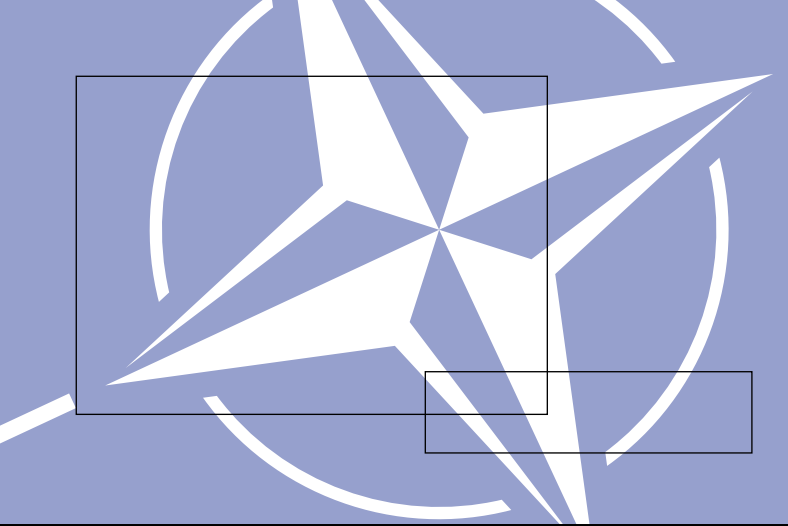
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consisting of diplomatic staff and defence advisers. The Council meets at ambassadorial level at least once a week and usually more frequently. There are also regular meetings of the Council at the level of foreign ministers, defence ministers and, from time to time, heads of state and government.

NATO is headed by 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 member nations. 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 and peace-support. NATO's political and military structures provide for the advance planning required to enable national forces to carry out these tasks, as well as the organisational arrangements needed for their joint command, control, training and exercising.



Building security through partnerships



Many of the underlying problems responsible for the division of Europe during the Cold War were compounded by ideological, political and military antagonism between East and West. Since the dramatic changes which brought the Cold War to an end, NATO has taken a series of initiatives to strengthen security and stability by establishing institutions for dialogue, confidence building and cooperation with former adversaries, as well as other European states and neighbouring countries in the wider Mediterranean region.

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. 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 peacekeeping operations. Tailored to the individual needs of each country, it offers opportunities for practical cooperation in many different fields, allowing participants to choose as much or as little from the programme as their security needs require. Activities range from military exercises and workshops to seminars and training courses. Particular emphasis is placed on making military



▲ **Joining the Partnership for Peace**

◀ **Check point**

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forces more transparent and subject to proper democratic oversight and control. The experience gained through the Partnership for Peace has contributed significantly to the cooperation between the countries participating in peace-keeping forces such as the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo Force (KFOR).

In 1995, NATO established 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. Activities include invitations to participants from Dialogue countries to attend courses at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany and the NATO Defense College in Rome, Italy.

In 1997, NATO and Russia and NATO and Ukraine placed their bilateral cooperation on a more formal basis. Bilateral agreements were signed between each of these countries and NATO to lay the foundations for their future relationships. The NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council and the NATO-Ukraine Commission were established as a means to facilitate regular consultation and discussion of security matters. Topics discussed at meetings of these bodies have ranged from peacekeeping in the Balkans, crisis management and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to defence conversion, environmental protection and civil-emergency planning.

In 2002, the Allies and Russia formed a deeper and closer relationship with the creation of the NATO-Russia Council, which replaced the Permanent Joint Council. This involved much more than a change of name and placed the relationship on an entirely new footing. The new forum, in which all countries participate as equals, is chaired by the NATO Secretary General and has identified the struggle against terrorism, crisis management and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as key areas of cooperation. As with the North Atlantic Council, decisions taken by the NATO-Russia Council are made on the basis of consensus.





NATO *enlargement*



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From the early 1990s, a number of Eastern European countries concluded 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 Alliance's Prague Summit in November 2002, seven more countries – Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – were invited to begin membership talks. They formally joined the Alliance at the end of March 2004.

The seven newest members and other NATO aspirants 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 political goals, including the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes, respect for democratic procedures and the rule of law, and 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 Alliance membership would bring.

▲ ▲ NATO leaders and then Secretary General Javier Solana at the Washington Summit

▲ New Allies on peacekeeping duty

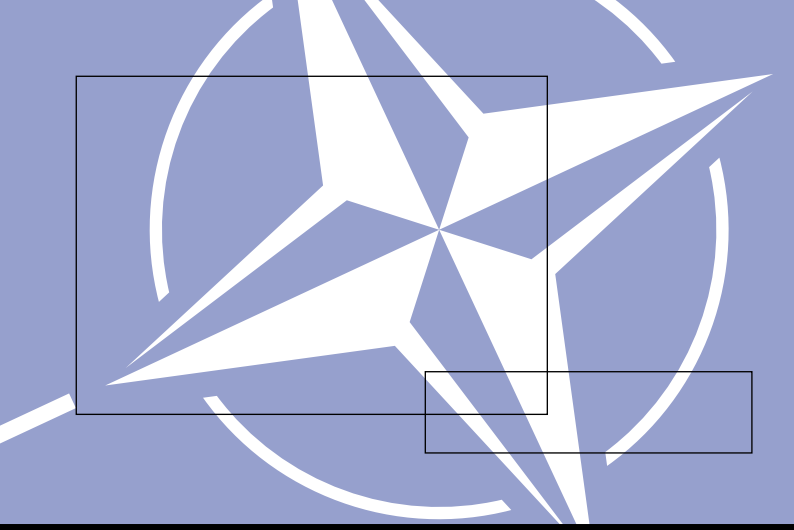


NATO governments have made clear that the enlargement of the Alliance is not an aim in itself, but a means of extending NATO's security further afield and making Europe as a whole more stable. The enlargement process helps to head off conflict, because the very prospect of membership serves as an incentive 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.



▲ Flag-raising ceremony for new members

◀ Signing accession protocols



NATO

in the *Balkans*

In the wake of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, the Alliance has focused much attention and energy on the Balkans. NATO has intervened militarily to halt or head off conflict there on three occasions – in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, in Kosovo in 1999 and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* in 2001 – and is currently leading two peacekeeping missions, the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) in the southern Serbian province of Kosovo. Both missions seek to guarantee a secure environment, in which all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origins, can live in peace and where, with international aid, democracy can begin to grow.

NATO peacekeepers arrived in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 1995 and in Kosovo in June 1999 together with soldiers from many Partner countries, including Russia and Ukraine. In both regions, NATO had been heavily involved in campaigns to help end large-scale fighting. 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.

SFOR has a UN mandate not just to maintain peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also, where necessary, to enforce it. As the security situation has improved the number of troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been reduced. At the same time, the nature of the task has evolved. Today, SFOR helps refugees and displaced persons return to their homes and seeks out war crimes suspects to bring them to justice. SFOR is also contributing to the reform of the Bosnian military – divided at the end of hostilities into three ethnically based rival armies (Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serb) – to avert any prospect of renewed conflict.

NATO's military intervention in Kosovo followed more than a year of escalating violence, increasing risks of the extension of the conflict throughout the region, and Belgrade's repeated violations of UN Security Council resolutions calling for an end to its repression of Kosovo's



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▲ French peacekeeper in Sarajevo

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. Faced with the UN Security Council's inability to undertake action to ensure that its resolutions relating to the conflict were respected, the NATO countries concluded that their only option was to resort to military means to halt a humanitarian catastrophe and restore stability to the region. The air campaign was to last 78 days.

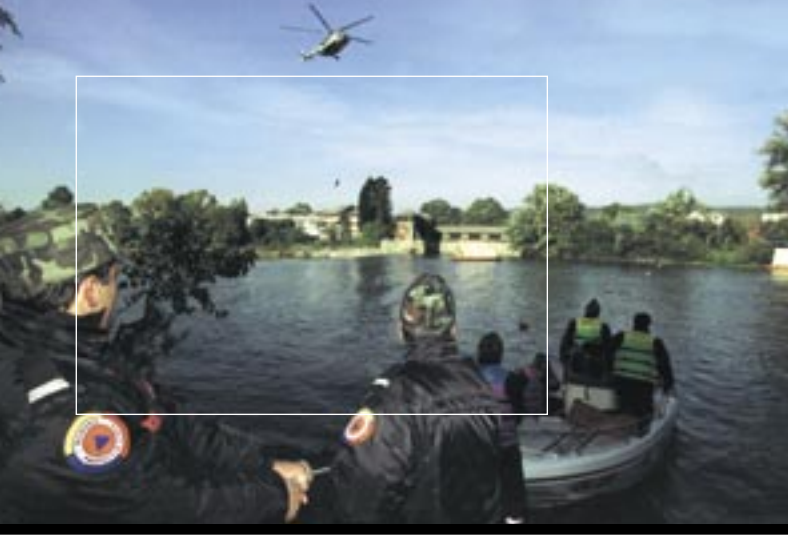
Despite the intense political debate over the Alliance's intervention, the action taken resulted in the achievement of the fundamental conditions needed to begin reconstruction. These were an end to all military action by the parties to the conflict; the withdrawal from Kosovo of the Yugoslav Army, Serbian 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.

KFOR's mandate 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 is thus responsible for deterring renewed hostility, establishing a secure environment and demilitarising the Kosovo Liberation Army. In addition, the NATO-led force 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 the province.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,* NATO responded in August 2001 to a request from the country's president to disarm ethnic Albanian groups whose activities threatened the security and stability of the country. This intervention followed a political settlement between representatives of the country's ethnic Albanian community and the government that was brokered by special envoys from various international organisations, including NATO, and from the United States. In this way, some 3 500 NATO troops collected close to 4 000 weapons during a 30-day mission. This action and a smaller, follow-on NATO presence helped head off civil conflict and prepare the ground for reconciliation and reconstruction in the country. At Skopje's request, NATO troops remained in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* 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.

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.



NATO's *wider activities*

Media coverage of NATO inevitably focuses on high-level diplomacy, Alliance summits and military campaigns. But most of the Alliance's work takes place away from the glare of publicity. NATO is every day involved 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 the Alliance opened a Euro-Atlantic Disaster Relief Coordination Centre through which it is able to coordinate emergency and relief operations in the event of a disaster, both natural and man-made. NATO was, for example, heavily involved in coordinating the delivery of aid to refugees fleeing fighting in Kosovo in 1999, has provided assistance to the victims of flooding or earthquakes in a number of countries including several in Central Europe during summer 2002, and helped Turkey prepare civil-emergency measures to protect its population from the possibility of attack by weapons of mass destruction during the Iraq war in 2003.

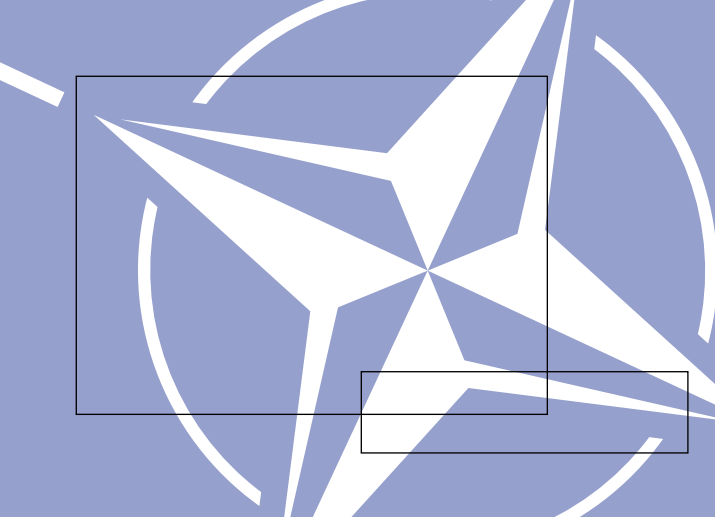


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NATO also has a Science Programme that supports collaboration in civil science between scientists from NATO-member and Partner countries. Some 10 000 scientists a year participate in various ways in events and projects supported through the programme, including initiatives to improve computer networking and expand internet access among the research community of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Moreover, in line with the shift in NATO priorities since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the programme is moving increasingly towards supporting collaboration on research projects related to the defence against terrorism and countering other threats to modern society.

▲ Preparing for civil emergencies

◀ NATO-funded research in the Black Sea



The *transatlantic relationship*



▲ NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and US Secretary of State Colin Powell

The relationship between Europe and North America is at the heart of the Atlantic Alliance. Over the years, this relationship, like any constructive relationship, has had its ups and downs and evolved in response to changing external circumstances. In the aftermath of the Second World War, the European economy remained crippled, making NATO's European members highly dependent on the United States. President Truman and other American policy-makers at the time of NATO's conception aimed not only to create a prosperous and democratic European partner but also to help build a structure, which would serve legitimate North American security interests. Moreover, their lead in this period acted as an economic and military catalyst for Europe's recovery, serving to channel the continent's creative energies into reconstruction and reconciliation and providing the conditions that would lead to the eventual development of the European Union.

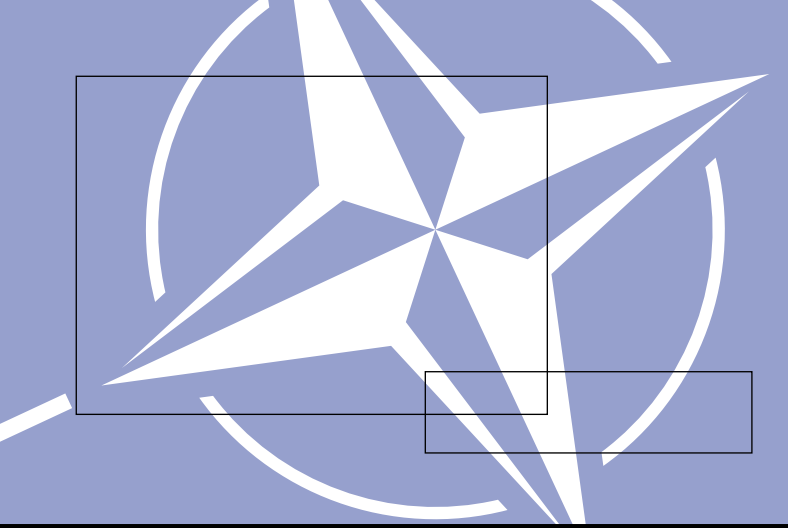
In the intervening years, as Europe has grown stronger and more united, the transatlantic relationship has evolved to reflect changed circumstances. As Europe's political division

disappeared and the European Union began to develop a common foreign and security policy, Europe has gradually become a more prominent actor in international affairs. In this way, the European Union took over NATO's mission to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* at the end of March 2003.

The commitment that all Allies make to each other on becoming NATO members that is enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, namely to come to each other's defence in the event of military aggression against any one of them, was initially conceived as a way of binding North America to the defence of Western Europe. In the event, however, Article 5 was invoked for the first time in NATO's history in response to the terrorist attacks against the United States of 11 September 2001. Since then, the European Allies and Canada have sought, according to their capabilities, to assist the United States and play their part in the fight against terrorism.

Today, NATO's European and North American Allies form a broad transatlantic community, embracing political, economic and security matters. This community is based on interdependence, common values and common interests. While differing national positions mean that Allies will not always agree on action to be taken in their common interests, the purpose of NATO is to facilitate consultations and discussions among them so that consensus can be achieved whenever possible. NATO members are therefore working together to address an ever-growing transatlantic agenda, extending from bringing peace to Southeastern Europe and stabilising new democracies to combating international terrorism and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.



Transforming the Alliance

As the security environment continues to change, the Alliance must transform itself to remain effective. It has to find a new balance between addressing its traditional missions centred on Europe and tackling new global threats. It must also acquire the military capabilities to fulfil its new missions, including the ability to react quickly and flexibly to new challenges. In all of these areas, the Prague Summit set in motion a transformation process to ensure that NATO is able to deal as effectively with the security challenges of the 21st century as it was with the threats of the last.

NATO's role in combating terrorism was refined in Prague with the development of a military concept against terrorism, specific military capabilities to implement this new mission, agreement on a Partnership Action Plan against terrorism, and a stated willingness to act in support of the international community. These measures have laid the groundwork for subsequent actions, including taking responsibility for ISAF in Afghanistan and supporting Poland administer a sector in Iraq.

At the Prague Summit, Allies made specific political commitments to improve capabilities in key areas for modern military operations. Once fully implemented, the so-called Prague Capabilities Commitment will quadruple the number of large troop-carrying aircraft in Europe; establish a fleet of air-to-air refuelling aircraft;



▲ ISAF peacekeepers surveying Kabul

◀ Inaugurating the Allied Command Transformation

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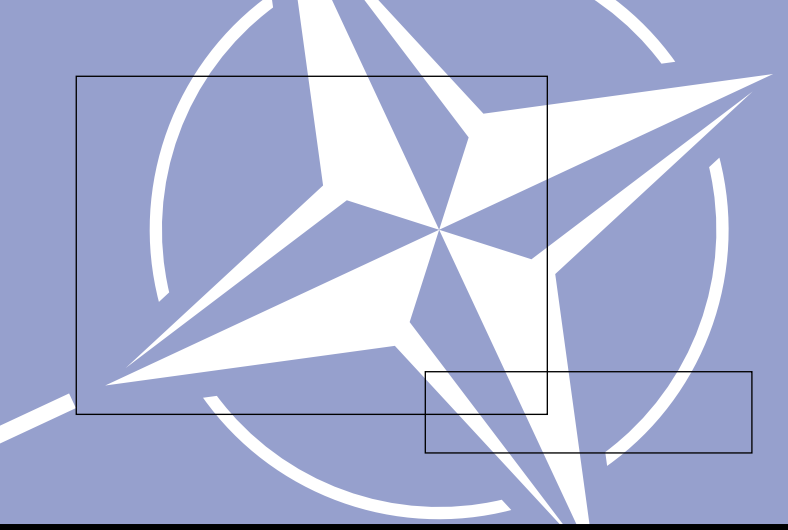


▲ Air-to-air refuelling

ensure that most of NATO's deployable high-readiness forces will have chemical, radiological, biological and nuclear defence equipment; and increase non-US stocks of air-delivered, precision-guided munitions by about 40 per cent. At the same time, the Allies agreed to create a technologically advanced NATO Response Force able to move quickly wherever needed and to act as a catalyst for focusing and promoting improvements in the Alliance's military capabilities and for their continuing transformation. And they endorsed the outline of a new, leaner and more efficient military command structure. In future, NATO will have a strategic command for operations based in Belgium and a strategic command for transformation in the United States with a presence in Europe. The latter will be responsible for the on-going transformation of Alliance military capabilities.

Since March 2004, NATO has had 26 members. Until recently, however, the organisation's working methods remained largely unchanged from those developed in the early 1950s for an Alliance of 12. To operate effectively in the new strategic environment, member countries recognised the need for greater flexibility and for a reduction of bureaucratic structures. Again, the Prague Summit has made a strong start in this direction. The number of committees, formerly 467, has been cut by 30 per cent. More decisions will be taken by subordinate committees, leaving the North Atlantic Council more free to concentrate on strategic issues, while retaining its overall responsibility for the decision-making process of the Alliance. The procedures for ministerial meetings have been streamlined as well, to allow more time for substantive exchanges. Over time, these changes are designed to lead to a more up-to-date and effective working structure within the Alliance.

The many reforms, initiatives and programmes agreed in Prague will constitute the core of Alliance activities for several years to come, the focus being on realistic and achievable measures commensurate with the need to guarantee the security of the territory, populations and forces of NATO members against all threats and challenges.



Into *the future*

NATO in the first decade of the 21st century has evolved considerably from the security alliance created in 1949. In the course of more than a half century of existence, both the Alliance and the wider world have developed in ways that NATO's founders could not have envisaged. NATO has also evolved from the institution that defended Western Europe for four decades during the Cold War, or even that which oversaw Europe's post-Cold War transition in the 1990s. With the integration of new member countries, a process of continuing adaptation is inevitable in order to accommodate the interests of the larger membership without adversely affecting the ability of the Alliance to take decisions in a timely fashion. Indeed, as the strategic environment continues to change, the pace of NATO's evolution will need to increase in order to meet new threats.

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. NATO provides a transatlantic political-military framework for managing security challenges, linking European and North American interests as well as balancing those of its individual member countries.



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NATO's on-going transformation is part of a process designed to enhance the security of Alliance member countries and the future stability and prosperity of the Euro-Atlantic area as a whole. Since the Prague Summit, Allies have intensified efforts to adapt NATO to today's challenges – defending common values such as respect for democracy and human rights; combating international terrorism and the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; building security bridges with Russia and Ukraine; further developing the basis for close cooperation with other Partner countries; and, when other avenues have been exhausted, acting as an effective instrument for managing crises and ensuring that the effects of conflict do not spill over borders or threaten wider stability. It is a comprehensive task which depends on the backing and support of public opinion, in member and Partner countries alike, unwilling to accept the politics of conflict and determined to build security based on understanding and cooperation for the benefit of future generations.





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