

NATO has been an essential element of Canadian foreign and security policy since the Alliance's inception in 1949. Any pillar that has stood for so long can easily be taken for granted. However, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of an entirely different security environment have placed NATO in a new context, presented it with new and complex challenges, and led to much reflection about its future role. This is an environment where violent ethnic conflict provoked suffering not seen on the continent since the Second World War; where a host of nations emerging from the long darkness of oppression re-asserted their independence; an environment where adversaries became partners; an environment where Europe seeks to take greater responsibility for its own security; an environment in which the concept of security itself has been redefined; an environment where nothing can be assumed.