

19. NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

BACKGROUND

Canada is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO's declared aim is the prevention of war:

It works to achieve this by striving to improve understanding between East and West and by possessing sufficient strength to deter an attack on any member of the alliance. The Treaty provides that Alliance members will come to each other's assistance in the event of an armed attack upon any one of them.¹

In the years immediately following the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, the Allies set up machinery for collective defence, and extended membership to include Greece, Turkey and the Federal Republic of Germany. By the mid-1950s they were facing a more varied Soviet challenge and recognized that progress on European and other issues required efforts to strengthen Western unity, solidarity and cooperation. A committee of "Three Wise Men", established in 1956, recommended ways of improving political consultation and led to improvements which helped NATO to face up to the difficulties and opportunities of the following decade: Berlin crises, the Cuban missile crisis, French withdrawal from the integrated military structure, the question of the control of nuclear weapons, and negotiations on arms control focussing on such questions as nuclear non-proliferation.

In 1967, faced with a changing strategic situation, NATO carried out a review of its policies and issued a report entitled: "The Future Tasks of the Alliance" (the Harmel Report). This report indicated that the basic policy of NATO is to pursue the two objectives of defence and detente, and stated that the aim of all member countries is to achieve a just and lasting peaceful order in Europe accompanied by appropriate security guarantees.

The record of East-West relations over the last twenty years has been a mixed one. Nonetheless, NATO has continued to pursue better relations with the East whenever that was possible. In the early 1970s it supported negotiation of the SALT I Treaty, the conclusion of the Berlin agreements, and the launching of negotiations on European security and conventional force reductions. A period of stagnation following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979, and the imposition of martial law in Poland in the early 1980s has recently given way to renewed hopes for improvements focussing on the INF Treaty, new negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe, and progress on other arms control issues.

At the same time, NATO has continued to give attention to the requirements of Western cohesion and defence. The Atlantic Declaration of 1974 reaffirmed the commitment of all members to the Treaty and clarified further their responsibilities in such

¹ NATO Information Service, *NATO and Warsaw Pact Comparisons*. Brussels, 1984, p. 1.