

25. 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 others assistance in the event of an armed attack upon any one of them.¹

After the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, the initial concerns of the signatories were primarily military. By the mid-fifties, however, there was a growing sense that NATO needed to address larger security concerns than could be dealt with in strictly military terms, and to generate a greater sense of cohesion in order to combat Soviet efforts to create disunity in the Alliance.

In 1956 a NATO report proposed guidelines for institutionalizing alliance consultative, and suggested a number of non-military areas in which the allies could work together. (For example, resource development, science and public information). The report set the parameters for a consultative process that remains an important part of alliance decision-making. It also outlined a code of conduct for consultations that requires allies to keep each other adequately informed of actions and activities of common interest, to take the opinions of other allies into consideration in the formation of national policy, and to ensure that any member which fails to adhere to alliance consensus decisions in its national policy provides an adequate explanation of this behaviour.

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