

NATO and Canada

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- The North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington on April 4, 1949. It was designed to promote the stability of the North Atlantic area and to safeguard the freedom of its people — based on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and international law.
- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the only international organization with an integrated command structure, standardized operating procedures, and standing forces available to support preventive diplomacy.
- NATO has both a political and a military committee structure for consultations and consensus decision making. The senior components of NATO are the North Atlantic Council, the Defence Planning Committee, and the Nuclear Planning Committee.
- In the 40 years of the Cold War, the NATO alliance formed the common defence of the democratic countries of Western Europe and North America. In 1991, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO adopted a strategic concept that maintained the principle of collective defence, but also emphasized dialogue and co-operation with the countries of the Warsaw Pact, which were the former adversaries of NATO.
- Since the end of the Cold War, NATO's political side has become stronger and its members are working to promote political dialogue and co-operation with the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.
- New co-operative security programs and mechanisms were developed in the 1990s. These include the Partnership for Peace program, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the NATO–Russia Permanent Joint Council, and the NATO–Ukraine Commission.
- Recent discussions on NATO reform have centred around three developments. First, the deployment of SFOR, a stabilization force, to Bosnia and the deployment of KFOR, a NATO-led multinational force, to Kosovo have demonstrated that NATO members need flexibility to counter more diffuse threats to their security. Second, discussions have occurred on a more cohesive role for Europe within a larger alliance. Third, the changes in the European security environment and the prospect of enlargement require a modification of the military command headquarters structure.