

22. 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 co-operation. 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.

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