

## Introduction

The North Atlantic treaty organization (NATO) is a military alliance of 19 European and North American nations. Founded on April 4, 1949, it was originally intended to protect against the former Soviet Union. Yet the Cold War is now over, and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) is now disintegrating into separate nations. Further, the Warsaw Pact, a similar alliance between the USSR and seven European communist countries, was ended in 1991. Meanwhile, NATO is gradually expanding in size, has taken on several new military operations, and still costs billions of dollars.

In the late 1940s, Western European nations such as the United Kingdom, France, Holland, and Germany were left both financially and militarily weak after World War II. At the same time, the Communist Soviet Union controlled Central and Eastern Europe, and had occupied Poland and East Germany. To counteract a possible expansion from the Soviets into West Europe the United States undertook two important initiatives: the Marshall plan, a huge donation of financial aid; and NATO, a military alliance between North America and non-communist Europe.

The main defensive structure of the North Atlantic treaty is summarized in Article 5, which says 'an armed attack against one or more [members] shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree ... the use of armed force to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.' Decisions on how to act are taken by representatives from its member states, while several American Supreme Commanders control military operations. Around 3 billion dollars was invested in NATO over its first 20 years, of which about one-third came from the U.S.

Until the late 1980s, NATO acted mainly as deterrence against Soviet attack. However, its first use of military force was in 1995 when it entered the war in Bosnian and Herzegovina, with further military action in 1999 against the Yugoslav government of Slobodan Milosevic. Meanwhile, NATO first invoked Article 5 on 12 September 2001 when it declared the Al-Qaida terrorist attacks on the United States an attack on all its members. Since then, NATO has patrolled Eastern Mediterranean shipping, flew warning systems over the U.S., and acted against terrorist groups in the Balkans. Further, even though NATO does not lead the operations in Afghanistan, its members provide most of the military force.

At present, there is much debate over whether NATO is needed in the post-Cold War era. Many people argue that the original uses of NATO are now over, and that other organizations could more efficiently undertake its few recent operations. Meanwhile, supporters of NATO believe that it has and is adapting to the new security concerns of the 21st century, such as international terrorism, rogue states, and weapons of mass destruction.

Many politicians and economists in both Europe and North America argue against continuing NATO. American opponents of NATO say the United States is militarily strong and can pursue action unilaterally or form alliances when needed. The recent war

in Iraq is an example of such an alliance between the U.S., U.K., Spain, Italy, and other nations. Meanwhile, European countries such as Germany and France are arguing for stronger military ties within the European Union, which some see as an attempt to undermine or replace NATO. Both France and Germany opposed the war with Iraq, while France also left full membership of NATO in 1966.

Yet there are many influential supporters of NATO around the world. These people argue that NATO was an effective body for the war in Yugoslavia. Further, NATO continues to give an important alliance between Europe and North America, which benefits both parties and aids their fight against shared problems. Moreover, NATO has adapted after the Cold War--for example, expanding to include the former Warsaw Pact members of Poland, the Czech republic, and Hungary, while Russia and NATO are now allies. In the future many nations from the former Soviet Union hope to join the treaty, saying that they now share similar democratic values.

In the following two articles, supporters and opponents of NATO express their views on the future of the treaty. The first article is a lecture by Lord Robinson, the secretary-general of NATO. He argues that NATO has moved on from the days of the Cold War, and is now an important and strategic military alliance for the war against terrorism. The second article is an online policy statement by the Libertarian Party, the third largest American political party. It views NATO as unnecessary after the Cold War--therefore ending the treaty would save American taxpayers billions of wasted dollars.

### Summary

The following two articles take opposing views on the future relevance of NATO and its value to American defense, and thus disagree on whether NATO should be continued or disbanded.

Lord Robertson, the author of the "yes" article, is strongly in favor of continuing and expanding NATO. His main point is that a militarily strong European Union would not damage NATO, but would instead serve the interests of all concerned. Europe and North America share many common security concerns in the 21st century, and NATO is the perfect organization to collaborate on these issues. The bottom line is that post-September 11 the only credible response to such transnational threats is multinational, and NATO is the most effective body for such co-operation.

The Libertarian party, whose policy statement is the "no" article, believes that President Bush should pull the United States out of NATO and save taxpayers billions of dollars. It says that there is no reason for the United States to keep paying to support rich European nations like France, England, and Germany against a Soviet threat that no longer exists. Since the end of the Cold War, politicians have kept NATO going by continually finding new missions that should be instead funded by the Europeans. In short, NATO may be a good deal for foreign politicians, but it is a raw deal for the American public.

### Key points

Obsolescence: Is the North Atlantic treaty still relevant?

Yes: NATO has and is adapting to the security concerns of the 21st century.

No: The treaty was designed to resist the Soviet threat, which is no longer a problem.

Cost: Should American taxpayers money be spent on NATO?

Yes: NATO forms an essential security alliance between North America and Europe for fighting common problems such as the war on terrorism.

No: Rich countries like England, France, and Germany should fund expensive humanitarian missions in Europe, such as those in Bosnia and Yugoslavia.

Alternatives: Is NATO the best organization for the defense of Europe and North America.

Yes: NATO is the perfect organization to collaborate on the common security concerns of the 21st century.

No: The United States is militarily strong and can form alliances in times of conflict.

Yes: Further military integration in the European Union would strengthen NATO.

No: A militarily strong European Union would replace NATO as the best defense of Europe.