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*Promoting a more transparent and accountable NATO*



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**Welcome** to NATO Watch's quarterly *Observatory*: the only online publication dedicated entirely to news and independent commentary on NATO policy-making and operational activities. The clips are drawn from a wide range of subscriptions, feeds and alerts covering a substantial part of the major English language newspapers and other periodicals worldwide.

**NATO Watch** conducts independent monitoring and analysis of NATO and aims to increase transparency, stimulate parliamentary engagement and broaden public awareness and participation in a progressive reform agenda within NATO.

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## NATO Watch Essay:

### NATO's emerging approach to autonomous weapons: lessons from the capture of missile defence policy by the military industrial complex

Autonomous weapons technologies, which rely on artificial intelligence, are advancing rapidly and without sufficient public debate or accountability. Oversight of increased autonomy in warfare is critically important because this deadly technology is likely to proliferate rapidly. Leading this arms race are the United States, China, Russia, South Korea, Israel and a few EU/NATO member states. NATO policy in this area is beginning to emerge, largely driven by the United States (which announced [two key AI strategy documents](#) in 2019). In January, the US Congress [backed](#) the creation of a national AI strategy as part of the country's annual defence authorization bill.

For nearly a decade, a coalition of non-governmental organisations has pushed for a treaty banning lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), or 'killer robots', saying human control is necessary to judge the proportionality of attacks and to assign blame for war crimes. At least 30 countries including Brazil and Pakistan (but no NATO member states) want a ban, according to the [coalition's website](#), and a UN body has held meetings on the systems since at least 2014.

NATO and its member states are in the process of agreeing how the alliance should target and coordinate investments in so-called 'emerging and disruptive technology (EDT)', with plans to release AI and data strategies later in 2021. In recent years NATO has publicly declared its need to focus on EDTs, and in October 2019 NATO Defence Ministers identified seven

science and technology areas that are of direct interest: AI, data and computing, autonomy, quantum-enabled technologies, biotechnology, hypersonic technology and space. An eighth (Materials) was added as an area for future consideration and development. These areas were further elaborated in a March 2020 [report](#) by the NATO Science and Technology Organization ([STO](#), a NATO subsidiary body and "the world's largest collaborative research forum in the field of defence and security"), which provided an assessment of the impact of EDT advances over the next 20 years. Among the report's conclusions was that disruptive effects would most likely occur through combinations of EDTs and the complex interactions between them.

NATO is also working towards a strategy for both fostering these technologies—through stronger relationships with innovation hubs and specific funding mechanisms—and protecting EDT investments from outside influence. NATO is expected to eventually develop individual strategies for each of the seven science and technology areas, but in the short to medium term the priority is AI and data, [according](#) to David van Weel, NATO's assistant secretary general for emerging security challenges.

Exactly where the alliance falls on the spectrum between permitting AI-powered defence technology in some applications and regulating or banning it in others is expected to be a hotly debated topic at the 14 June NATO summit and beyond. Within the European Union, for example, European Commission (EC) President Ursula von der Leyen has made AI oversight a priority and the EC has been working steadily toward this goal (see e.g. the EC's [AI white paper](#) and [Ethics Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence](#)). Within NATO, however, it seems likely that the balance will tilt towards permitting AI-defence technologies, especially if the debate is led by the United States and the military industrial

complex (MIC). In his [farewell address](#) in 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of the dangers of the MIC's "unwarranted influence". Six decades later, and the [military-industrial complex is now operating on steroids](#) within the United States, with significant knock-on effects throughout NATO. The MIC certainly played an influential role in the development missile defence technologies within NATO.

On 12 May 2021, NATO [marked](#) the 10th anniversary of the agreement between Romania and the United States to establish NATO's land-based ballistic missile defence system in southern Romania. Built and operated by the United States on behalf of NATO, the missile defence base forms part of a larger European NATO missile defence system that also includes radars and ships across Europe. The decision to develop a capability to protect NATO's European members from ballistic missile threats was taken at the NATO Lisbon Summit in 2010 and NATO's work on missile defences continues today. Speaking at the 'Aegis Ashore' missile defence site in Deveselu, Romania, NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană [claimed](#) that missiles "remain a weapon of choice for potential adversaries", while he also stressed that missile defence "plays a vital role for NATO's deterrence and is purely defensive". Both claims are questionable, although the nature and scope of the missile threat were central to the decision taken in 2010.

A 10,000-page feasibility study funded by NATO (i.e., by European and US taxpayers) on the missile threat to Europe and how to defend against it was completed in May 2006. The classified study was developed by an international consortium of industries, led by the US firm Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). SAIC not only carried out the feasibility study, it was also the successful bidder for the NATO missile defence contract worth 75 million euros over a period of six years. This contract was agreed

behind closed doors at the NATO Riga summit in November 2006, with no prior independent scrutiny of the feasibility study or debate in the elected chambers of the then 26 NATO member states. None of the NATO-funded feasibility studies and missile proliferation threat assessments over the past fifteen or so years that have been used to justify deployment of territorial missile defences have been declassified and openly published. Today, missile defence are not only a firmly established component of NATO's collective defence posture, but continue to be a [source of strategic tension](#) with Russia and a [complicating factor](#) in nuclear arms control deliberations.

It is imperative, therefore, that the debate within NATO on autonomous weapons is open and transparent. The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called on states to prohibit weapons systems that could, by themselves, target and attack human beings, [calling them](#) "morally repugnant and politically unacceptable". With NATO leadership such weapons could be banned by a treaty similar to the initiatives that successfully prohibited antipersonnel landmines in 1997 and cluster munitions in 2008. Preserving meaningful human control over the use of force is an ethical imperative and a legal necessity.

# News, Commentary and Reports:

## Arctic Security

The Arctic region, or High North, strategically important during the Cold War became less significant after the end of the confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. However, due to both the warming climate in the Arctic and the re-emergence of geopolitical competition in the region, the Arctic is once again of growing strategic importance. Climate change is reportedly occurring at a faster rate than previously thought, which will have a significant impact on the Arctic and on the security of Arctic littoral states. In February, Denmark was the latest member of the Arctic Council to announce that it was significantly strengthening its defence capabilities in the Arctic, including long-range drones and radars.

The Biden administration is leading an international campaign opposing Moscow's efforts to set maritime regulations along the Northern Sea Route—which runs between Norway and Alaska—and trying to resume discussions about international military activity in the Arctic region, according to Associated Press. In late May, Russia assumed the Arctic Council's rotating chair. At a meeting of Arctic Council foreign ministers in Reykjavik, Blinken said, the "Arctic remains a region free of conflict where countries act responsibly", countering Russia's contention that resuming talks of military activity in the region would increase security.

[Pivot to Arctic: What's Behind US-NATO Military Buildup in High North?](#) Sputnik, 22 May 2021

[US, Russia at odds over military activity in the Arctic](#), Associated Press, 20 May 2021

[Arctic Council, EU, NATO on Agenda as Military Leaders Addressed Arctic Security Issues](#), High North News, 12 May 2021

Edited by Duncan Depledge and P. Whitney Lackenbauer, [On Thin Ice? Perspectives on Arctic Security](#), North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network, 2021

[How Delta, Rangers, and the Green Berets' unique training would pay off in an Arctic war with Russia](#), Business Insider, 14 April 2021

[Russian military buildup in the Arctic has northern NATO members uneasy](#), Defense News, 11 April 2021

Rolf Folland, [Arctic Security: Deterrence and Détente in the High North](#), The Arctic Institute, 30 March 2021

Ian Anthony, Ekaterina Klimenko and Fei Su, [A Strategic Triangle in the Arctic? Implications of China-Russia-United States Power Dynamics for Regional Security](#), SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, no. 2021/3, March 2021

[Climate change risks new cold war in Arctic, warns Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg](#), The Times, 19 March 2021

David Axe, [Two halves of a possible naval battle played out along the Norwegian coast as NATO and Russia practiced for war](#), Forbes, 1 March 2021

[Denmark to spend more on Arctic defence as melting sea ice prompts jostle for control](#), Reuters, 11 February 2021

[Norway's defense minister: We must ensure strategic stability in the High North](#), Defense News, 11 January 2021

## Autonomous Warfare and Artificial Intelligence

Autonomous weapons technologies, which rely on artificial intelligence, are advancing rapidly and without sufficient public debate or accountability. Oversight of increased autonomy in warfare is critically important because this deadly technology is likely to proliferate rapidly. Leading this arms race are the United States, China, Russia, South Korea, Israel and a few EU/NATO member states. NATO policy in this area is beginning to emerge, largely driven by the United States (see NATO Watch Essay above).



Sebastian Sprenger, [NATO tees up negotiations on artificial intelligence in weapons](#), C4ISR Net, 27 April 2021

[Project Force: AI and the military – a friend or foe?](#) Al Jazeera, 28 March 2021

[Artificial intelligence leads NATO's new strategy for emerging and disruptive tech](#), Defense News, 15 March 2021

Peter Layton, [The Artificial Intelligence Battlespace](#), RUSI Commentary, 9 March 2021

[New focus on emerging and disruptive technologies helps prepare NATO for the future](#), NATO News Release, 3 March 2021

Matthew Breay Bolton, Matilda Byrne, Ryan Gariepy, Emilia Javorsky, Volker Lehmann, and Laura Nolan, [Addressing the threat of autonomous weapons: Maintaining meaningful human control](#), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, January 2021

[NATO leader: Allies must avoid capability gaps while investing in disruptive tech](#), Defense News, 15 February 2021

[NATO Selects Thales to Supply Its First Defence Cloud for the Armed Forces](#), Althority, 25 January 2021

[US has 'moral imperative' to develop AI weapons, says panel](#), The Guardian, 26 January 2021

[A Comprehensive Approach to Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems](#), Joint Air Power Competence Centre (undated) – this 644-page technical manual covers all aspects of having to counter the full spectrum of unmanned aircraft and their respective system components.

## **Arms Control and Disarmament: Open Skies Treaty and New START**

The United States withdrew from the Treaty on Open Skies on 22 November 2020. The nearly 30-year-old treaty reduces the risk of war by allowing the remaining 33 member countries to conduct reconnaissance flights and collect data on their military forces and activities. This is the third arms control agreement that the President Trump administration withdrew from. He also took the United States out of the [Iran nuclear deal in 2018](#), and the

[Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces](#) treaty in 2019. There were also concerns for the future of [the last treaty limiting US and Russian strategic nuclear weapons](#), New START, which was due to expire in February 2021.

In January 2021 Russia also announced that it would quit the Open Skies Treaty. Citing "lack of progress" on maintaining the functioning of the treaty after the US withdrawal, the Russian foreign ministry [said](#) in a statement it was beginning "domestic procedures for the Russian Federation's withdrawal from the Open Skies treaty". In May the Russian parliament's lower house voted to exit the treaty, but the decision to withdraw still needs to be approved by the upper house of parliament and signed by President Putin. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Russian legislators that although he believes it is unlikely, a "new diplomatic process will start" if the United States were to state its intention to return to the treaty. The EU has pressed the United States to reconsider its decision to leave and has urged Russia to remain in the treaty and remove flight restrictions.

There was better news in February, when the new Biden administration and Russia agreed to extend the New START nuclear pact by five years. In a [statement](#), NATO welcomed the extension, stating "NATO allies believe the New START Treaty contributes to international stability, and Allies again express their strong support for its continued implementation and for early and active dialogue on ways to improve strategic stability". "NATO allies are determined to uphold existing arms control and non-proliferation agreements and support further negotiations on these issues", it added.

[Russian lawmakers vote to follow US out of overflight treaty](#), Associated Press, 19 May 2021

Julia Berghofer, [As Open Skies falls apart, Europe needs to find its voice](#), ELN Commentary, 12 May 2021

Katarina Kertysova and Alexander Graef, [Open Skies in the Arctic: Challenges and Opportunities](#), ELN Euro-Atlantic Security Report, May 2021

[Cognitive Biotechnology: opportunities and considerations for the NATO Alliance](#), Johns Hopkins University & Imperial College London, NATO Review, 26 February 2021

[North Atlantic Council Statement on the Extension of the New START Treaty](#), 3 February 2021

Leopoldo Nuti, [NATO's Role in Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Arms Control: A \(Critical\) History](#), Istituto Affari Internazionali, January 2021

Alexander Graef, [Is there a future for Open Skies without Russia?](#) Carnegie Moscow Center, 26 January 2021

[NATO signatories to Open Skies Treaty to meet Russian delegates regarding Russian withdrawal](#), Foreign Brief, 25 January 2021

[Russia Follows US to Withdraw from Open Skies Treaty](#), Military.com, 17 January 2021

[NATO open for transparency dialogue with Russia over its withdrawal from Open Skies Treaty](#), TASS, 15 January 2021

Moritz Pieper, [Strategic Stability beyond New START: Russian Policies and Interests in Nuclear Arms Control](#), Russian Analytical Digest, no. 260, 20 December 2020

Liana Fix and Ulrich Kühn, [Strategic Stability in the 21st Century](#), Russian Analytical Digest, no. 260, 20 December 2020

Alexander Graef, [Conventional Arms Control and Military Confidence-Building with Russia](#), Russian Analytical Digest, no. 260, 20 December 2020

OPINION POLL [Arms Control and Attitudes of the Russian Population and Elites Towards US-Russian Relations](#), Russian Analytical Digest, no. 260, 20 December 2020

## Belarus Crisis

After the longtime president of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, claimed 80% of the vote in what many Western governments said was a sham election on 9 August 2020, for months protesters across the country turned

out in large numbers, only to be met with a fierce police crackdown. On 23 May 2021, Lukashenko ordered the forced landing of a passenger flight over Belarus and the detention of a prominent dissident journalist, Roman Protasevich, and his girlfriend, Sofia Sapega, who were on board. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the forced landing amounted to state hijacking and called for both an urgent international investigation and the release of Protasevich. The incident was also condemned in a North Atlantic Council statement on 26 May.

[NATO, EU Powers Talk Tough Over Belarus But Can't Protect Exiled Dissidents](#), Newsweek, 28 May 2021

[Hard to believe Russia was not involved in Belarus plane 'hijacking' - NATO secretary-general](#), Sky News, 28 May 2021

[Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Belarus](#), NATO Press Release, 26 May 2021

[NATO chief accuses Belarus of hijacking plane, calls for blogger's release](#), Reuters, 25 May 2021

## China-NATO relations

NATO has maintained a dialogue with countries that are not part of its partnership frameworks, on an ad-hoc basis, since the 1990s. One such country used to be China. However, at the NATO Leaders' Meeting in December 2019, the [London Declaration](#) recognised China's growing influence and international policies and suggested that these "present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an alliance". This was the first time that NATO had addressed the rise of China. Since then a transatlantic threat perception of China has emerged and has become more vocal at subsequent NATO ministerial meetings (including a classified report discussed by NATO Foreign Ministers in December 2020), as well as within the NATO 2030 initiative (see below). Without proper scrutiny NATO member

states risk being drawn into a great power competition between the United States and China without having reflected on the motivations, advantages and shortcomings of such a strategy.

China-US tensions have continued following the change of US president, with serious disagreements across economic, political, security and human rights dimensions. In January the National Security Advisor to new US President Joe Biden, Jake Sullivan [said](#) the United States must be prepared to impose costs on China. Sullivan stated the United States should be “prepared to act, as well as impose costs, for what China is doing in Xinjiang, what it’s doing in Hong Kong, for the bellicosity and threats it is projecting towards Taiwan”.

During the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in March 2021 the new US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [encouraged](#) NATO members to join the United States in viewing China as an economic and security threat. While saying that the United State would not force its allies into an “us-or-them choice”, he emphasised that “When one of us is coerced we should respond as allies and work together to reduce our vulnerability by insuring our economies are more integrated with each other”. Blinken cited China’s militarisation of the South China Sea, use of predatory economics, intellectual property theft and human rights abuses.

Similarly, in his closing [press conference](#), at the same meeting, the NATO Secretary General echoed Blinken’s oppositional rhetoric regarding China. While saying “We don’t regard China as an adversary”, Stoltenberg nevertheless continued to advance reasons for agreeing with Washington: “The rise of China has direct consequences to our security....

So, one of the challenges we face as we now have this forward looking process with NATO 2030 is how to strengthen and how to work more closely together

as allies, responding to the rise of China”. For [perspective](#), China has a total of 13 military bases worldwide, including the 9 on atolls in the South China Sea, while the United States has over 800 foreign military bases.

What’s now unfolding could be portrayed as the ultimate fulfilment of George Orwell’s nightmarish vision, in his dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, of a world divided geographically, politically and militarily into three rival super-states: Oceania (North America plus Britain), Eurasia (Russia and Europe), and Eastasia (China).

Simon Tisdall, [China v Russia v America: is 2021 the year Orwell’s 1984 comes true?](#) The Guardian, 11 April 2021

Michael D. Swaine, [China Doesn’t Pose an Existential Threat for America](#), Foreign Policy, 21 April 2021

Shada Islam, Michael D. Swaine and Rachel Esplin Odell, [America Needs a New Transatlantic Script to Deal with China](#), National Interest, 12 April 2021

Hans Binnendijk, [NATO’s focus on China is too narrow](#), Defense News, 3 April 2021

**Must Read:** Ann Wright, [In Alarmist Turn, NATO Is Increasingly Positioning Itself in Opposition to China](#), TruthOut, 29 March 2021

Vladimir Petrovsky, [China “a full-fledged strategic adversary” to NATO?](#) Modern Diplomacy, 28 March 2021

[China will not allow history to repeat itself. Chinese defense minister said during a visit to site of Chinese Embassy in former Yugoslavia](#), Global Times, 27 March 2021

[Counterview: How should Europe position itself towards China?](#), Brussels Report, 30 March 2021

Sarah Bjerg Moller, [China’s rise is exactly the kind of threat NATO exists to stop](#), Washington Post, 12 March 2021

Luke Coffey, [NATO should not get distracted by China](#), Arab News, 5 March 2021

[NATO grapples with grasping China’s transportation clout in Europe](#), Defense News, 5 March 2021



Thomas De Maizière and A. Wess Mitchell, [NATO Needs to Deal With China Head-On](#), Foreign Policy, 23 February 2021

[China's rise to define transatlantic ties, NATO chief says](#), Reuters, 19 February 2021

Alan W. Dowd, [NATO's Pacific plans](#), Legion, 17 February 2021

[Nato to discuss multilateral stance on China, Russia at first Biden-era talks](#), South China Morning Post, 16 February 2021

Bryce Barros and Etienne Soula, [Here and Now: Chinese Interference in the Transatlantic Space](#), GMF, 9 February 2021

[NATO leader right to look east](#), Weekend Australian Editorial, 8 February 2021

[U.S. must be prepared to impose costs on China - Biden security adviser](#), Reuters, 29 January 2021

Lindsey W. Ford and James Goldgeier, [Retooling America's alliances to manage the China challenge](#), Brookings, 25 January 2021

Michael Klare, [President Biden's China Conundrum: Can He Achieve Progress Where It Matters While Avoiding a New Cold \(or Hot\) War?](#) TomDispatch, 14 January 2021

Charles A. Kupchan and Peter Trubowitz [A China Strategy to Reunite America's Allies](#), Project Syndicate, 4 January 2021

Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova, [Towards a NATO China Strategy](#), International Centre for Defence and Security, Policy Brief #NATO 2030 Series, No.2, January 2021

[China blasts Nato with British aircraft carrier 'heading to South China Sea'](#), South China Morning Post, 1 January 2020

Andrew Cottey, NATO and the China challenge, in Joseph McQuade, ed. [NATO and the Asia-Pacific](#), (NATO Association of Canada, 2020), pp. 11-15.

## Climate Change

NATO has recognized the adverse effects of climate change on international security. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, for example, said that environmental and climate change will shape the future security environment and have significant

implications for the alliance's planning and operations. Similarly, the Wales Summit Declaration in 2014 identified [climate change, water scarcity and increasing energy needs](#) as future disruptors of security. While there is a growing willingness in NATO to discuss and explore responses to climate-related dangers, the policy road ahead within the alliance remains uncertain.

The NATO Secretary General acknowledged the need for NATO and the armed forces to contribute to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 in a speech in [September 2020](#). However, the pressure to raise military spending to hit NATO targets is likely to undermine this aim. Indeed, the poor quality of emissions reporting in this sector means that no one actually knows whether military carbon emissions are falling or not. A key step is thus for member states to calculate the specific carbon footprints of their militaries and then report these figures. More difficult will be persuading all members to carry out similar climate and carbon reduction actions when climate policies are not equally prioritised across the nations.

This report examines the size of the military carbon footprint in Europe. It then critically assesses the policies and measures in place to reduce them, arguing that they are inadequate.

**Must Read:** Stuart Parkinson and Linsey Cottrell, [Under the radar: The Carbon Footprint of Europe's military sectors](#), Conflict and Environment Observatory, Scientists for Global Responsibility and The Left in the European Parliament, February 2021

The response so far within the NATO 2030 initiative has been inadequate. Rather than exploring options for cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation, the focus has primarily been on the resulting security risks and the promotion of energy saving in member states' armed forces. However, this 'greening of the

military' agenda not only results in such absurdities as adding [solar panels to battle tanks](#), it shifts responsibility away from NATO member states to do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for which they are collectively responsible.

[Secretary General addresses global leaders on NATO's response to climate change](#), NATO News Release, 22 April 2021

Jens Stoltenberg, [NATO's climate challenge](#), Politico, 22 April 2021

Ahmet Uzumcu, Tacan Ildem and Fatih Ceylan, [The new challenge for NATO: Securing a climate-changed world](#), New Atlanticist, 20 April 2021

[NATO May Be Planning to Build Solar Panel-Powered Tanks](#), Interesting Engineering, 15 April 2021

Erin Sikorsky and Sherri Goodman, [A Climate Security Plan for NATO: Collective Defense for the 21st Century](#), Policy Exchange, 13 April 2021

Rene Heise, [NATO is responding to new challenges posed by climate change](#), NATO Review, 1 April 2021

[NATO must reduce military emissions — Jens Stoltenberg](#), Deutsche Welle, 10 March 2021

Peter Suci, [Bad Idea? NATO Tanks to go Green—Add Solar Panels](#), National Interest, 24 February 2021

[Nato chief suggests battle tanks with solar panels as militaries go green](#), National News, 5 February 2021

Eric Wolff, [How the Department of Defense could help win the war on climate change](#), Politico, 4 January 2021

## Collective Defence

At successive summits since 2014, NATO leaders have agreed a range of measures to enhance their deterrence and defence posture, including the establishment of an enhanced Forward Presence in Poland and the three Baltic states. They have further recognised that credible deterrence requires these small multinational forces to be underpinned by a robust reinforcement strategy.

[Baltic states vow to tighten defense ties with an eye on Russia](#), Defense News, 24 May 2021

Matthew R. Kambrod, [NATO defending Europe is a pipe dream](#), Defense News, 6 May 2021

[NATO briefs on forward presence at OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation](#), NATO News Release, 27 January 2021

Jack Watling and Sean MacFarland, [The Future of the NATO Corps](#), RUSI Occasional Paper, January 2021

Viktors Domburs, [NATO invented new threat in the Baltic States](#), Modern Diplomacy, 6 January 2021

## COVID-19 and Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge: a global public health emergency on a scale not seen for a century. It clearly required, and continues to rely on a health care driven response and thus falls largely in the province of the individual NATO member states, and (for some European states) within the shared sovereignty which is delegated to the European Union. NATO and allied military personnel have also been helping to save lives by supporting civilian efforts against COVID-19, both in member states and partner countries.

The level of preparedness as well as the actual public health strategies adopted in most NATO member states, as in many other countries, appear to have been inadequate or deeply flawed. More broadly, the virus has revealed fundamental flaws in the strategies many states employ to provide security for their people. NATO has continued to cling to old concepts of national security rather than adopt more human-centric and cooperative approaches to help address public health threats. This is evident in the often repeated [claim](#) by NATO officials that the alliance helped to “prevent the health crisis from becoming a security crisis”. Covid-19 is a human security crisis and the failure to recognise it as

such is telling. Moreover, by continuing to argue for increased military spending, NATO perpetuates the current imbalances in strategic thinking and allocation of resources that delivers an annual budget for the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention of less than \$7 billion, while the US defence budget is in excess of \$700 billion.

[NATO International Military Staff teams up with partners to learn valuable lessons about the ongoing pandemic](#), NATO News Release, 31 March 2021

[Secretary General welcomes Poland's vaccine support for NATO](#), NATO News Release, 24 March 2021

[Coronavirus response: NATO and Latvia support to North Macedonia](#), NATO News Release, 22 March 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General addresses COVID-19 response at Lessons Learned Conference](#), NATO News Release, 16 March 2021

[Alliance scientists study the military impact of COVID-19](#), NATO News Release, 16 March 2021

[Montenegro appeals to EU, NATO for medical staff to help it fight COVID-19](#), Euractiv, 10 March 2021

[Coronavirus response: NATO delivers equipment to Montenegro](#), NATO News Release, 1 February 2021

[Spike in COVID-19 cases among US Marines arriving in northern Norway](#), Barents Observer, 10 January 2021

## **Cyber Security, Information Warfare and Hybrid Threats**

While NATO does not have its own cyber weapons, the alliance established an operations centre in August 2018 at Mons, Belgium. Several member states have since offered their cyber capabilities. The new NATO cyber operations centre (CYOC) is expected to be fully staffed by 2023 and able to mount its own cyberattacks.

Investigators into the December 2020 [SolarWinds](#) cyberattack [revealed](#) in January 2021 that Russian hackers

likely breached up to 250 US networks. The US Government and many cyber experts blame Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), for the attack—the Russia Government denies any involvement. The hackers apparently managed their breach from US servers, while 'early warning' sensors implanted in foreign networks by US Cyber Command and the US National Security Agency failed to detect potential attacks.

In April, the US Government [applied](#) sanctions and carried out diplomatic expulsions on Russia in response to the cyberattack, as well as its alleged interference in the 2020 US election and "severe human rights abuses" in Crimea. In doing so the US formally named the SVR as the force behind the SolarWinds hack. It was the first strong action by the United States in response to an international cyber operation. The move was supported by the Five Eyes countries as well as some NATO countries. Russia [responded](#) by blacklisting senior US officials and targeting the US diplomatic mission.

According to a new [report](#) released in January by an independent research group based at Oxford University, 'cyber troop activity' continues to increase around the world. In 2020 the researchers found evidence of 81 countries (up from 70 countries in 2019), using social media to spread computational propaganda and disinformation about politics. Twelve of the 81 countries are NATO member states, while two, the UK and United States were identified as having a high 'cyber troop' capacity. The 12 NATO member states and the actors engaged in these activities are as follows:

- *Croatia*: government agencies/ politicians and parties;
- *Czech Republic*: politicians and parties/ citizens and influencers;
- *Germany*: politicians and parties/ citizens and influencers;
- *Greece*: government agencies/ politicians and parties/ citizens and influencers;

- *Hungary*: government agencies/ politicians and parties/ private contractors/ citizens and influencers;
- *Italy*: politicians and parties/ private contractors;
- *Macedonia*: politicians and parties/ citizens and influencers;
- *Netherlands*: politicians and parties;
- *Spain*: politicians and parties/ private contractors/ citizens and influencers;
- *Turkey*: government agencies/ politicians and parties/ private contractors/ citizens and influencers;
- *UK*: government agencies/ politicians and parties/ private contractors/ civil society organisations/ citizens and influencers; and
- *USA*: government agencies/ politicians and parties/ private contractors/ civil society organisations/ citizens and influencers.

[Countering cognitive warfare: awareness and resilience](#), Johns Hopkins University & Imperial College London, NATO Review, 20 May 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General highlights collaboration as key to strong cyber defence at "Defence Disrupted" conference](#), NATO News Release, 19 May 2021

Erica D. Borghard, [Cyberspace Is Neither Just an Intelligence Contest, nor a Domain of Military Conflict: SolarWinds Shows Us Why It's Both](#), Lawfare, 12 May 2021

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[Russia expels 10 US diplomats as part of retaliation for sanctions](#), The Guardian, 16 April 2021

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[NATO to improve cyber defense in bid to boost alliance resilience](#), C3ISRNet, 15 April 2021

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[The Tallinn-based NATO cyber defence centre to lead research on securing 5G networks for military mobility](#), Estonian World, 16 January 2021

Bojan Stojkovski, [Flawed Cybersecurity Is a Ticking Time Bomb for the Balkans](#), Foreign Policy, 4 January 2020

## Defence Budgets, Procurement and Burden Sharing

The burden-sharing debate has dominated successive NATO Summits (see, for, example the discussion in Observatory No. 48). The reluctance of many European member states to spend more on defence has been a major grievance of most US presidents, but especially former President Trump.

The NATO Defence Ministers meeting in February reviewed progress and it was revealed that 2021 will be the seventh consecutive year of increased military spending, and that since 2014, European allies and Canada have contributed a cumulative extra \$190 billion. Nine NATO member states (out of 30) are expected to spend 2% of GDP on defence (the NATO target), while 24 are expected to spend at least 20% of investment in military equipment.

During the February meeting, the NATO Secretary General stressed that "adapting to the future requires sustained investment in our defence".

He also wants to change who pays for key missions. One way to achieve that will be to increase NATO's relatively small common budget—much of it is currently taken up in administrative and infrastructure costs, like running the Brussels headquarters—and use those funds to support missions, such as air policing in the Baltics or multinational battle group deployments along NATO's eastern flank. Currently, the nation that deploys troops on such missions pays the bill. Countries like Canada, that do not meet the 2% spending commitment but participate in several NATO missions, would likely [benefit](#) from such a change in the funding arrangements.

This latest iteration of the burden-sharing debate is designed to appease Washington. President Biden is expected to be just as demanding about military spending as his predecessor. However, there are two fundamental flaws in this 'fairer-burden' sharing discussion. First, justifying greater military spending when government budgets have already been ravaged by restrictions imposed to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic is going to be a hard sell, especially as the burden may well fall on those least able to carry it (i.e., the evidence [suggests](#) that high military spending exacerbates existing inequalities within societies). Second, and the ongoing elephant in the room, while most European member states probably do not need to spend more, the United States certainly needs to spend less on the military. A cut of 10% in the [pandemic of Pentagon spending](#), for example, would release more than \$70 billion for other more pressing needs.

[Leonardo to upgrade NATO AWACS aircraft](#), Jane's, 24 May 2021

[NATO gives industry aim points for next-gen rotorcraft](#), Vertical, 13 May 2021

[Defence Expenditures of NATO Countries \(2013-2020\)](#), NATO News Release, 16 March 2021 – see the data [here](#)

Vivienne Machi, [Where does NATO fit into the global hypersonic contest?](#) Defense News, 15 March 2021

Kris Osborn, [Upgrade You: NATO's Global Hawk Drones Are About to Get Even Better](#), National Interest, 9 March 2021

[NATO chief threatens defeat over dire budget](#), The Courier, 8 March 2021

John Deni, [There's a Better Way to Press for NATO Burden-Sharing](#), Defense One, 4 March 2021

Max Swinscow-Hall, [NATO should be a global driver of a values-based innovation agenda](#), Imperial College London, 4 March 2021

Jonas Dringelis, [Baltic States In Danger Of Being Left Without NATO Support If Funding Not Increased](#), Eurasia Review, 24 February 2021

[Why would Russia's Kalashnikov make a NATO-friendly assault rifle?](#) Defence News, 23 February 2021

[High In The Sky: NATO Set To Deploy RQ-4D Phoenix Drones That Can Spy From 62,000 Feet](#), Eurasian Times, 21 February 2021

[13 Allies and one NATO partner expand munitions cooperation amid significant success](#), NATO News Release, 19 February 2021

[NATO spending still contentious](#), Arkansas Online, 18 February 2021

[NATO's Phoenix Fleet Achieves IOC](#), AinOnline, 16 February 2021

[NATO Alliance Ground Surveillance force achieves initial operational capability](#), NATO News Release, 16 February 2021

[NATO chief wants to change who pays for key missions](#), Stars and Stripes, 15 February 2020

[NATO's new fleet of surveillance drones is deemed mission-ready](#), Defense News, 15 February 2021

[NATO Kicks Off New Burden-Sharing, Tech Efforts](#), Breaking Defense, 15 February 2021

[Austin to press NATO allies on defense spending](#), Politico, 12 February 2021



[United States to provide AN/PRC-158 Manpack UHF SATCOM Radio Systems for NATO](#), Army Recognition, 6 February 2021

[Agency awards Firefly contract for deployable communications and information systems](#), NATO NCI Agency, 4 February 2021

Tim Haesebrouck, [NATO Burden Sharing after the Wales Summit: A Generalized Set Qualitative Analysis](#), *Defence and Peace Economics*, 2021

[Think tank pitch to Biden: Broker a NATO bank to finance new weapons](#), Defense News, 14 January 2020

[NATO Should Create Its Own Bank, CAP Report Urges](#), Center for American Progress, 13 January 2021

Max Bergmann and Siena Cicarelli, [NATO's Financing Gap: Why NATO Should Create Its Own Bank](#), Center for American Progress, 13 January 2021

## Energy Security

According to the 2018 [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), energy security plays an important role in NATO's common security. A stable and reliable energy supply increases the alliance's resilience against political and economic pressure (para 76). While recognising these issues are primarily a national responsibility, NATO "will continue regular allied consultations on issues related to energy security" and "refine NATO's role in energy security in accordance with established principles and guidelines, and continue to develop NATO's capacity to support national authorities in protecting critical infrastructure".

Arnold C. Dupuy, Dan Nussbaum, Vytautas Butrimas and Alkman Granitsas, [Energy security in the era of hybrid warfare](#), NATO Review, 13 January 2021

## Enlargement & Partnerships

### *Austria*

NATO-Austria relations are conducted through the Partnership for Peace framework, which Austria joined in

1995. NATO and Austria actively cooperate in peace-support operations (currently in Afghanistan and Kosovo) and have developed practical cooperation in a range of other areas.

[NATO and Austria sign agreement on liaison office in Vienna](#), NATO News Release, 10 May 2021

### *Bosnia Herzegovina*

Bosnia and Herzegovina became a member of the NATO Partnership for Peace programme in 2006 and was invited to join the Membership Action Plan (MAP) in 2010. However, it was only in 2018 that NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to accept the country's first Annual National Programme—a precondition for activation of the MAP.

Hamza Karčić, [Why Biden Should Fast-Track Bosnia's NATO Accession](#), RUSI Commentary, 24 May 2021

[Podzic and Cooper spoke about BiH's Cooperation with NATO](#), Sarajevo Times, 18 May 2021

[NATO Dismisses Russian Warning to Bosnia Against 'Hostile Step'](#), Balkan Insight, 19 March 2021

[Bosnian Officials Reject Russia's 'Twisted Threat' Over NATO Cooperation](#), RFERL, 19 March 2021

[Russia warns it will 'have to react' if Bosnia moves to join NATO](#), Reuters, 18 March 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General highlights long-standing and mutually beneficial partnership between NATO and Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), NATO News Release, 18 March 2021

### *Colombia*

Colombia is NATO's first partner in Latin America, and NATO has been working with Colombia since 2013. Since 2017 NATO and Colombia have cooperated under the framework of an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme.

On 22 January 2021, Colombian Vice Foreign Minister for Multilateral Affairs

Adriana Mejía, Vice Defence Minister for Strategy and Planning Jairo García, and NATO representatives agreed to extend their bilateral cooperation. New areas of cooperation could potentially include resilience, interoperability and defence capability planning.

[Strengthening relations with Colombia](#), NATO News Release, 22 January 2021

### ***EU-NATO relations***

Since signing the Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation in July 2016, NATO and the EU have been discussing how to expand their joint work, including by bringing more coherence in their respective defence capability development priorities and output. The European Council Conclusions of June 2018 called for further deepening of NATO-EU cooperation. And in July 2018 a new [Brussels Joint Declaration](#) was signed by the NATO Secretary General, the President of the European Council, and the President of the European Commission. NATO and the EU signed a further agreement on 10 December 2018 to cooperate in promoting good governance in the defence and security sector. A core current debate centres on whether the EU should develop 'strategic autonomy', and if so, whether this should be carried out independently of NATO or as a European pillar within the alliance.

[German, Dutch diplomats urge stronger NATO-EU ties](#), Politico, 20 May 2021

[Deputy Secretary General discusses NATO-EU cooperation at military mobility symposium](#), NATO News Release, 7 May 2021

[Directors General of the NATO and EU International Military Staffs meet to assess ongoing cooperation](#), NATO News Release, 16 March 2021

[NATO and EU must co-operate on military mobility 'at highest levels', report says](#), Jane's, 4 March 2021

[Secretary General at European Council: NATO and the EU must do even more together](#), NATO News Release, 26 February 2021

[Top NATO, EU officials plead for unity between US, EU](#), Anadolu Agency, 20 February 2021

[Minister: Detachment from NATO would widen divisions in the EU](#), Euractiv, 1 February 2021

Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, Martin Quencez and Gesine Weber, [Seizing Biden's Pivot to Europe: Time for Responsibility-Sharing](#), GMF Policy Brief, 1 February 2021

Marcin Terlikowski, [European Strategic Autonomy and Third Countries: The Defence Industrial Dimension](#), GlobeSec, January 2021

Barbara Kunz, [Time for Big Picture Thinking](#), Internationale Politik Quarterly, Winter 2021 Issue - EU-NATO relations have been debated for decades, but progress has been slow and key questions left unanswered

Max Bergmann, [The EU Is the Military Ally the United States Needs](#), Foreign Affairs, 6 January 2021

### ***Finland***

Finland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994 and became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. Finland is one of NATO's most active partners and has contributed to NATO-led operations and missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan. It is one of five countries that has enhanced opportunities for dialogue and cooperation with NATO.

[NATO Deputy Secretary General and Allies exchange views with the Finnish Foreign Minister](#), NATO News Release, 24 February 2021

### ***Georgia***

A 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration promised eventual NATO membership for Georgia—a position reiterated at several NATO summits since. NATO's supports Georgia's aspirations to join the alliance, through the NATO-Georgia Commission, the Annual National Programme, its role as an enhanced opportunities partner, and the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package. However, membership for Georgia

remains unlikely while several member states have concerns about Georgia's unresolved conflict with Russia.

[President Duda tells Georgians Poland will back their EU, NATO bid](#), First News, 26 May 2021

[Georgian special forces in NATO Trojan Footprint drills](#), Agenda.ge, 13 May 2021

[Chairman of the NATO Military Committee reiterates NATO's enduring commitment to Georgia](#), NATO News Release, 5 May 2021

[NATO Secretary General discusses partnership and domestic developments with Georgian Prime Minister](#), NATO News Release, 17 March 2021

[Georgia continues to boost its defence capabilities with NATO support](#), NATO News Release, 10 March 2021

[Georgian President meets NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg](#), Georgian Journal, 23 January 2021

[NATO Secretary General and the Georgian President discussed strengthening partnership](#), NATO News Release, 22 January 2021

## **India**

India is a country rarely discussed in any of NATO's operational activities, regional dialogues or global partnerships. However, this is likely to change as NATO shifts its focus to emerging threats from outside NATO's traditional Euro-Atlantic area, and especially given its growing support for US interests in the Asia-Pacific. Within such a scenario, India will be seen as a key country to counter-balance China's and Russia's growing influence. Indeed, it seems likely that India may soon be included in NATO's growing strategic partnership framework as a 'Partner Across the Globe'.

[NATO Secretary General highlights the importance of a global approach to security at India's Raisina Dialogue](#), NATO News Release, 13 April 2021

Abdurrahman Utku Hacıoğlu, [The case for NATO's global partnership with India](#), NATO Defence College Policy Brief no.03, February 2020

## **Israel**

Israel has been a member of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue since it was initiated in 1994 and is developing closer cooperation with the alliance.

George Tzogopoulos, [NATO 2030 and Israel](#), Israel Hayom, 1 February 2021

[Israel's Growing Importance to NATO](#), Algemeiner, 1 February 2021

## **Libya**

Libya was gripped by violence following the overthrow of Moammar Gadhafi during the 2011 NATO intervention. The second Libyan Civil War that followed (16 May 2014 – 23 October 2020) was ended by a permanent ceasefire agreement. On 10 March 2021, an interim unity government was formed, and a general election is slated for December 2021. NATO has offered to assist Libya with building up its defence and security institutions.

Dogachan Dagi, [Date with history: Nato launches attacks on Libya](#) (March 17, 2011: Action broke consensus on need to protect civilians), Chatham House, 5 February 2021

[NATO ready to contribute to security building in Libya, bloc's chief Stoltenberg says](#), Daily Sabah, 15 January 2021

## **Mediterranean Dialogue**

Initiated in 1994, the Mediterranean Dialogue currently has seven members: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. This framework was set up to develop political dialogue and practical cooperation between the alliance and its partners in the region. In April it was [reported](#) that the Turkish government lifted a veto against Egypt's partnership activities with NATO in 2020 as part of attempts to repair ties with Cairo. The report cites an unnamed NATO official as confirming that NATO recently endorsed a new Individual Partnership Cooperation Programme with Egypt to combine Egyptian security priorities with NATO's security interests in the region.

[NATO and Algeria strengthen scientific cooperation against terrorism](#), NATO News Release, 17 May 2021

[Security experts offer a road map for NATO's future in MENA region](#), Arab News, 10 May 2021

[NATO Secretary General welcomes long-standing partnership with Jordan](#), NATO News Release, 6 May 2021

[Turkey lifted Nato veto over Egypt to woo Cairo](#), Middle East Eye, 30 April 2021

[Coronavirus response: NATO support to Tunisia](#), NATO News Release, 24 February 2021

[NATO Secretary General to meet with Mauritanian President](#), Foreign Brief, 14 January 2021

### **Moldova**

Moldova contributes to the NATO-led operation in Kosovo and cooperates with the alliance and other partner countries in many other areas. Several NATO states have assisted Moldova with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic following a request for assistance.

[NATO delivers IT equipment to the Republic of Moldova](#), NATO News Release, 31 March 2021

[Coronavirus response: NATO support to the Republic of Moldova](#), NATO News Release, 30 March 2021

[Coronavirus response: NATO support to the Republic of Moldova](#), NATO News Release, 24 February 2021

[Cyber Incident Response Capability established in the Republic of Moldova with NATO support](#), NATO News Release, 21 January 2021

### **Mongolia**

NATO has completed a multi-year project (2017-20) to enhance Mongolia's cyber defence capabilities. The project involved setting up a cybersecurity centre for the Mongolian Armed Forces, providing specialised training and equipment and necessary technical support.

[Nato completes project to enhance Mongolia's cyber defence capability](#), Army Technology, 19 January 2021

[NATO helps to strengthen Mongolia's cyber defence capacity](#), NATO News Release, 18 January 2021

### **Policy**

NATO's 'open door policy' is based upon Article 10 of the Washington Treaty, which states that membership is open to any "European State in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area". Under NATO's partnership policies, the strategic [objectives](#) of NATO's partner relations are to: Enhance Euro-Atlantic and international security, peace and stability; ... Build confidence and achieve better mutual understanding, including about NATO's role and activities, in particular through enhanced public diplomacy.

[NATO Expansion: An Idea Whose Time Has Gone?](#) Quincy Institute, Zoom Webinar, 11 May 2021

Srdja Trifkovic, [NATO Unhinged](#), Chronicles, 7 April 2021

Jonathan Power, [Rolling Back on NATO's Expansion Should Be President Joe Biden's Immediate Task](#), In Depth News, 30 March 2021

Mirna Galic, [Opportunity knocks for NATO and its partners in the Asia-Pacific](#), New Atlanticist, 26 March 2021

Luke Coffey, [NATO needs a plan to better engage with Middle East](#), Arab News, 17 March 2021

Sophie Arts and Steven Keil, [Flexible Partnerships Can Help Make NATO Fit for Purpose](#), Just Security, 12 March 2021

Nicholas Williams, [NATO enlargement: Avoiding the next missteps](#), ELN Commentary, 3 March 2021

[Flexible Security Arrangements and the Future of NATO Partnerships](#), GMF Policy Paper, February 2021

[New four-star command allows US general to 'coordinate closely' with NATO allies in Africa](#), Defense News, 23 February 2021

Kalev Stoicescu, [NATO's Southern Neighbourhood: The Alliance Needs a Strategy for the Regions to its South](#), International Centre for Defence and Security, February 2021

### ***Qatar***

Qatar has been actively engaged with NATO since the creation of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, launched at the Istanbul Summit in 2004. In February 2021, Qatar and NATO signed an agreement to open Qatar's mission offices and military representation at the NATO headquarters in Brussels, to implement the arrangements of the Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme.

[Qatar signs agreement to open mission offices, military representation at NATO headquarters](#), The Peninsula, 14 February 2021

### ***Serbia***

Unlike other Western Balkan partners, Serbia does not aspire to join NATO. However, the country is deepening its political dialogue and cooperation with the alliance on issues of common interest, such as defence reforms.

Milica Stojanovic, [Suspensions Persist About NATO's Deadly Bombing of Serbian TV](#), Balkan Transitional Justice, 23 April 2021

Vuk Vuksanovic, [Chinese Drones in Serbian Skies](#), RUSI Commentary, 5 January 2021

### ***Sweden***

NATO and Sweden actively cooperate in peace and security operations, and the country has been a major contributor to NATO-led operations and missions in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Sweden joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994 and became a member of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. Sweden is one of five countries that has enhanced opportunities for dialogue and cooperation with NATO.

Sweden has embarked on its largest military build-up for decades. A perceived threat from Russia prompted

a bill to raise defence spending by 40% over the next four years to £7.2 billion (about 1.5% of GDP). Swedish troop numbers will rise from 60,000 to 90,000 over the four-years. In addition, the country's long-held principle of non-alignment is also coming into question after a majority in the Swedish parliament backed the option to join NATO. This emerged for the first time after the far-right Sweden Democrats party adopted the same stance towards NATO as the rest of the opposition, including the Moderate Party, the Centre Party, the Christian Democrats and the Liberals. With this move, the current majority in parliament intends to keep alive the possibility to apply for NATO membership.

Sweden's possible future NATO membership continues to divide Swedish public opinion, although support for membership is on the rise according to a December 2020 poll published in January by *Dagens Nyheter*. According to the poll, 33% of the respondents were in favour of applying for NATO membership, while 35% of those surveyed opposed it, and about the same amount remained undecided. By comparison, 50% were opposed just five years ago, according to a similar annual survey carried out for the past seven years.

[U.S. Special Operation Forces exercise winter combat in northern Sweden](#), Barents Observer, 8 April 2021

[Sweden clings to its non-NATO status amid substantial defense budget boost](#), Defense News, 8 April 2021

[NATO ill-prepared for large-scale war, finds Swedish report](#), Euractiv, 15 March 2021

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Swedish Ministry of Defence, February 2021

[Swedes increasingly in favour of joining NATO](#), Euractiv, 12 January 2021



[Debate Over 'NATO Option' Brewing as Swedes Equally Divided Over Alliance Accession](#), Sputnik, 12 January 2021

Anna Mulrine Globe, [In Sweden, hawkish defense and feminist diplomacy make odd bedfellows](#), The Christian Science Monitor, 4 January 2021

## ***Ukraine***

Between mid-March and mid-April 2021, there were many warnings from Ukraine and Western governments that Russia was massing troops in Russian-annexed Crimea and around the eastern Ukraine conflict zone. While Russia's intentions were far from clear, Ukraine was not blameless either, and NATO's words and actions did little to de-escalate the crisis.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called on NATO to create a path for Ukrainian membership in response to the crisis. In a phone call with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 6 April, Zelenskyy [said](#) "NATO is the only way to end the war in Donbass" and that Ukraine's entry into the alliance "will be a real signal for Russia". Secretary of State Antony Blinken offered Ukraine the full support of the United States [stating](#), "the US stands firmly behind the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Ukraine," and added that he would discuss the future possibility of Ukrainian membership in NATO.

Ukraine's Ambassador to Germany Andriy Melnyk called for the West to supply advanced weapons to Ukraine and [stated](#) that the only way to prevent a military attack by Russia is for Ukraine to join NATO. "The only other option" Melnyk added "[is] to arm ourselves, and maybe think about nuclear status again". (In 1994 Ukraine relinquished the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal it inherited from the collapsed Soviet Union and joined the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in exchange for security assurances from the nuclear states in what became known as the [Budapest Memorandum](#)).

The immediate emergency ended on the 22 April when the Russian Defence Ministry [ordered](#) its troops to withdraw from the Ukrainian border (although in May, Ukraine and NATO [claimed](#) that only some of the Russian forces had withdrawn and that 80,000 troops remained near the border). Also, Russian President Vladimir Putin responded to an invitation by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to meet, [stating](#) "[i]f President Zelenskyy wants to start restoring these relations, we will only welcome it". However, there are few signs that the long-running conflict between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian forces in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region will be resolved any time soon, especially given the continuing toxic atmosphere between Russia and the West more broadly.

Ukraine signed a partnership agreement with NATO in 1997 and launched talks on full membership in 2005. Since 2014, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, cooperation has intensified. In June 2020 NATO recognised Ukraine as an Enhanced Opportunities Partner. This status is part of NATO's Partnership Interoperability Initiative, which aims to maintain and deepen cooperation between allies and partners that have made significant contributions to NATO-led operations and missions. Ukraine is now one of six Enhanced Opportunities Partners, alongside Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden. Each of the partners has a tailor-made relationship with NATO, based on areas of mutual interest.

A decision on Ukraine's membership Action Plan is unlikely to be made at the NATO summit in June, given the differences in opinion among member states about the gravity of the Russian threat and the desirability of Ukraine's membership in the alliance.

[NATO Deputy Secretary General meets with Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister](#), NATO News Release, 27 May 2021

[NATO has not taken a single step since 2008 towards offering Ukraine MAP - Kuleba](#), Ukrinform, 27 May 2021

[Ukraine says it should have been invited to NATO summit](#), The Hill, 26 May 2021

[US & NATO allies harming potential Donbass peace by giving more money, weapons and support to Ukrainian army](#), says Russian FM, RT, 25 May 2021

[Stefanishyna: Decision on MAP for Ukraine won't be made at NATO summit in June](#), Ukrinform, 21 May 2021

[80,000 Russian Troops Remain at Ukraine Border as U.S. and NATO Hold Exercises](#), New York Times, 21 May 2021

Mariana Budjeryn and Ambassador Thomas Graham, [Neither NATO, Nor Nukes: The Answer to Ukraine's Security is a Strategic Alliance with the United States](#), Just Security, 20 May 2021

[Khomchak at NATO Military Committee: Russia keeps 80,000 troops near Ukraine](#), Ukrinform, 19 May 2021

Mamuka Tsereteli and James Carafano, [Russia is watching: Why NATO must welcome Ukraine and Georgia](#), Heritage Foundation, 18 May 2021

[Sea Breeze 2021: Ukraine, 29 NATO Allies to conduct joint exercise](#), UNIAN, 17 May 2021

Konstantin Eggert, [In Ukraine conflict, Putin hits NATO's credibility](#), Deutsche Welle, 13 May 2021

[US considers boost to security aid for Ukraine, says Blinken](#), Defense News, 8 May 2021

[Ukraine likely not to be invited to NATO summit](#), Kyiv Post, 8 May 2021

Michael Kimmage and Bruno L  t  , [Is the Minsk Process for Eastern Ukraine Dead or Deadlocked?](#) GMF Transatlantic Take, 5 May 2021

John Deni, [Ukraine and Russia: NATO should clarify its deterrent approach, while it still can](#), The Hill, 4 May 2021

Alexei Bayer, [Should NATO admit Ukraine?](#) Kyiv Post, 1 May 2021

[Russians Largely Blame US, NATO Allies for Escalation of Tensions Near Ukraine](#), Russia Matters, 29 April 2021

['NATO expects Russia to embrace political process with Ukraine'](#), Daily Sabah, 27 April 2021

Ali Demirdas, [Russia, Not NATO, Has the Upper Hand in Ukraine](#), National Interest, 26 April 2021

[Russia says Ukraine, NATO 'continuing military preparations'](#), Al Jazeera, 21 April 2021

[Ukraine's accession into NATO supported by 43% of Ukrainians - poll](#), Interfax Ukraine, 21 April 2021

Amy Mackinnon and Robbie Gramer, [Russia Further Ramps Up Military Pressure on Ukraine](#), Foreign Policy, 20 April 2021

[Responding to the New Crisis on Ukraine's Borders](#), Statement by the International Crisis Group, 20 April 2021

Mehmet Fatih Ceylan, [What Role for Turkey in the Crisis between Russia and Ukraine?](#) GMF, 19 April 2021

Ted Galen Carpenter, [The US Lacks Options if Russia Calls Washington's Ukraine Bluff](#), Anti-war.com, 19 April 2021

[NATO calls on Russia to allow freedom of navigation in Sea of Azov](#), Ukrinform, 17 April 2021

[US, NATO Slam Russian Plan to Block Parts of Black Sea](#), VoA, 16 April 2021

Jakub Wisniewski, [NATO accession would not be a way for the West to help Ukraine](#), New Europe, 16 April 2021

[Paris talks seek to defuse growing Russia-Ukraine tensions](#), France 24, 16 April 2021

[Ukraine mulls nuclear arms if NATO membership not impending: Envoy](#), Daily Sabah, 15 April 2021

[US commander warns NATO is ready to respond to aggression](#), Defense News, 15 April 2021

[Judy Asks: Should NATO Admit Ukraine?](#) Carnegie Europe, 15 April 2021

[Visiting Northern Fleet, Defense Minister Shoigu signals buildup along Ukrainian border will end in 2 weeks](#), Barents Observer, 14 April 2021

[NATO-Ukraine Commission addresses security situation in and around Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 14 April 2021

[Is Russia going to war with Ukraine and other questions](#), BBC News, 13 April 2021

[NATO Secretary General and Ukrainian Foreign Minister discuss Russia's military build-up](#), NATO News Release, 13 April 2021

[Joint press point](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba, 13 April 2021

[General Says NATO Prepared to Respond to Aggression Should Deterrence Fail](#), US Department of Defense, 13 April 2021

Olga Stefanishyna, [Ukraine Needs a Clear Path to NATO Membership](#), Foreign Policy, 12 April 2021

[Russia Holds Military Drills amid Tensions in Eastern Ukraine](#), Caspian News, 11 April 2021

Glenn Diesen, [Donbass crisis: Domestic political battles in Kiev, Moscow & Washington could see Ukraine & Russia stumbling into war nobody wants](#), RT, 10 April 2021

[Kremlin defends Russian military buildup on Ukraine border](#), The Guardian, 9 April 2021

[Ukraine's NATO accession would lead to large-scale rise in tensions — Russian diplomat](#), TASS, 9 Apr. 2021

[Ukraine calls up military units in southern regions as Zelenskyy urges NATO membership](#), Ukraine Weekly, 8 April 2021

[Latvia backs proposal to provide NATO MAP to Ukraine](#), Ukrinform, 8 April 2021

[Five NATO countries hold talks on support for Ukraine – Pentagon](#), Ukrinform, 8 April 2021

[Russian force on Ukraine border larger than any time since 2014, U.S. says](#), Reuters, 8 April 2021

[Ukraine to take part in a number of NATO exercises this year](#), Ukrinform, 7 April 2021

[NATO Military Committee Chairman visits Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 7 April 2021

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[US Won't Commit to NATO Membership for Ukraine](#), VoA, 6 April 2021

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[Ukraine urges Nato to hasten membership as Russian troops gather](#), The Guardian, 6 April 2021

[Zelensky expects NATO Allies to help Ukraine achieve MAP](#), UNIAN, 4 April 2021

[Russian 'troop build-up' near Ukraine alarms Nato](#), BBC News, 3 April 2021

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[Russia warns West against sending troops to back Ukraine](#), Deutsche Welle, 2 April 2021

[NATO says it is concerned about Russian military build-up near Ukraine](#), Reuters, 1 April 2021

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[Ukraine ready to get NATO Membership Action Plan – Stefanishyna](#), Ukrinform, 5 March 2021

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[Stoltenberg reiterates: 'NATO's door remains open' for Ukraine](#), UNIAN, 10 February 2021

[Secretary General welcomes Ukrainian Prime Minister to NATO Headquarters](#), NATO News Release, 9 February 2021

[Ukraine security situation and reform agenda at the heart of the Ukraine-NATO Interparliamentary Council meeting](#), NATO News Release, 8 February 2021

[NATO implements Counter-Terrorism Reference Curriculum in Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 5 February 2021

[Ukraine's Defense Ministry, Armed Forces already implement 292 NATO standards and documents](#), Ukrinform, 2 February 2021

[Zelensky asks Biden why Ukraine still not in NATO](#), Ukrinform, 1 February 2020

[Zelensky: Ukraine's NATO membership is one of most important security issues in Europe](#), Kyiv Post, 1 February 2021

Alexandra Hofer, [All the World's a Stage, and Sanctions the Merely Props: an Interactional Account of Sender-Target Dynamics in the Ukrainian Crisis](#), *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 28 no.2, 2021, pp.259-284

## Human security and NATO

The human security paradigm is a worldview in which the focus shifts from the state to a 'human-centric' vision. It is a multifaceted concept that embraces contemporary thinking from peace, post-colonial and feminist studies, and international humanitarian and human rights law. The [NATO 2030 expert group report](#) states that "In recent years NATO has developed a human security agenda aimed at protecting civilians in armed conflict, countering human trafficking, preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. Drawing on lessons from experience in Afghanistan, it has worked to incorporate the human dimension of security (including operational, moral, political, and legal considerations) into NATO operations".

However, NATO's approach to human security feels like an add-on with narrow interpretations rather than being applied as a guiding principle. Opinion within civil society is divided on whether to get behind NATO's embrace of human security or call it out

as cynical co-optation. In a NATO Watch response to the NATO 2030 report one expert [concluded](#) that there is room for a conversation with NATO "on what we believe human security and wellbeing to be about and which actors ought to be involved".

In February 2021 NATO hosted a two-day [event](#) focused on Human Security consisting of a public high-level digital dialogue and a series of workshops for specialists and practitioners. The high-level dialogue was opened by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and was followed by a panel discussion with the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Professor Mary Kaldor of the London School of Economics, Dr. Walter Dorn of the Royal Military College of Canada, and Ms. Eva Svoboda, Deputy Director of International Law and Policy and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Jamie Shea of the University of Exeter.

[NATO to step up work on Human Security Approach](#), NATO News Release, 26 February 2021

[A changing approach to security](#), Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the conference on Human Security hosted by NATO, 25 February 2021

[NATO & The Protection of Civilians: Toward Implementation](#), Stimson, December 2020 webinar

## Intra-NATO conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean

Turkey and Greece are at odds in a race to develop energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. The two countries have laid claim to overlapping areas, arguing they belong to their respective continental shelves. Relations between Greece and Turkey have deteriorated despite German-brokered dialogue. NATO facilitated a military [de-confliction mechanism](#) between Greece and Turkey in October 2020—including a hotline between the

two NATO member states and the cancellation of specific military exercises—but tensions in the region have continued. Both sides have [deployed warships](#) in a show of force, raising fears of conflict erupting by accident.

In January 2021, Greece and Turkey opened their first direct talks in nearly five years in Istanbul to discuss the maritime disputes in the eastern Mediterranean. Confidence-building talks are ongoing.

[Turkey, Greece to hold talks next week: Turkish defense minister](#), Hurriyet Daily News, 20 May 2021

[Turkey, Greece complete 9th round of NATO technical talks](#), Daily Sabah, 7 February 2020

Agneska Bloch and Israa Saber, [What's Driving the Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean?](#) Lawfare, 25 January 2021

[Greece, Turkey Resume Talks on Maritime Disputes in Mediterranean Under Pressure from EU and NATO](#), VoA, 25 January 2021

Serkan Demirtaş, [Turkey-Greece political dialogue to start after exploratory talks](#), Hurriyet Daily News, 18 January 2021

[Erdogan hopes new Turkey-Greece talks will herald new era](#), Reuters, 12 January 2021

[Turkey says maritime talks with Greece to resume on January 25](#), Al Jazeera, 11 January 2021

## Maritime Security

NATO's 2011 Maritime Strategy sets out a series of activities that includes collective defence, crisis management, cooperative security and maritime security.

[NATO Tests Maritime Security Drone](#), Marine Link, 8 March 2021

[NATO Focused Security Patrols in Western Mediterranean](#), NATO, 8 February 2021

[NATO Boosts Black Sea Naval Presence](#), VoA, 3 February 2021

[NATO's Autonomous UUVs are Working Together to Find Mines](#), Maritime Executive, 29 January 2021

[US Navy conducts interoperability mission with NATO in Black Sea](#), Navy Recognition, 25 January 2021

## Military Exercises

Defender-Europe 21, one of the largest US Army, NATO-led military exercises in Europe in decades, began in mid-March and will last until June. It included "nearly simultaneous operations across more than 30 training areas" in Albania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Kosovo and other countries. Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, commanding general of the US Army Europe and Africa, [said](#) that "While we are closely monitoring the COVID situation, we've proven we have the capability to train safely despite the pandemic". Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu [said](#) that Russia has deployed troops to its western borders for "combat training exercises" in response to NATO "military activities that threaten Russia".

NATO exercise [Steadfast Defender 2021](#) kicked off in May, bringing together more than 20 NATO allies and partners from North America and Europe. The aim is to test NATO's readiness and military mobility – with forces deploying across land and sea, all the way from North America to the Black Sea region and off the coast of Portugal," said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. "With over 9,000 troops, the exercise demonstrates that NATO has the capabilities and the resolve to protect all allies against any threat," he added. Steadfast Defender 2021 will be the first large-scale test of NATO's adapted Command Structure, with the involvement of two new NATO commands – Joint Support and Enabling Command based in Ulm, Germany and Joint Force Command Norfolk, based in the United States.

Pakistan hosted naval forces from 45 countries, including those from Russia



and NATO, for the week-long Aman-2021 maritime exercise in the Arabian Sea in February. The Pakistan Navy said the naval exercise, held under the slogan "Together for Peace", was aimed at "fostering international cooperation to fight piracy, terrorism, and other crimes", according to Anadolu Agency.

[Russia looms large as NATO trains in neighbouring Estonia](#), France 24, 28 May 2021

Lorne Cook, [As Russia tensions simmer, NATO conducts massive war games](#), Associated Press, 28 May 2021

[A year after leading its first convoy since the Cold War, the US Navy is training for a more 'subtle' fight in the Atlantic](#), Business Insider, 24 May 2021

[NATO Maritime Commander: Allies Are Coming Up With Modern Littoral Warfare Concepts, and NATO Needs to Exercise Them](#), USNI News, 20 May 2021

[Joint Force Command Norfolk Kicks off Part 1 of NATO's Steadfast Defender 2021](#), Sea Power Magazine, 20 May 2021

[Pentagon, NATO Demonstrate Transparency Officials Want Russia to Emulate](#), US Department of Defense, 13 May 2021

[NATO exercises sweep Europe amid Russian escalation, rising tensions between Moscow and US](#), CNN, 12 May 2021

[Exercise Steadfast Defender 2021 to test NATO readiness and military mobility](#), NATO News Release, 7 May 2021

[Defender Europe 21 Exercises: Multinational Interoperability, Readiness, Transparency](#), US Department of Defense, 3 May 2021

[Crystal Arrow 2021](#), MNCNE News, 6 April 2021

[Massive, Army-led NATO exercise Defender Europe kicks off](#), Military Times, 16 March 2021

[NATO-led Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise Dynamic Manta Concludes](#), America's Navy, 12 March 2021

[NATO Allies hold simultaneous Baltic Sea, Black Sea drills](#), NATO News Release, 5 March 2021

[NATO Launches Massive Naval Drills 'Dynamic Manta' Aimed At Hunting Enemy](#)

[Submarines](#), Eurasian Times, 24 February 2021

[Nato begins Dynamic Manta 2021 anti-submarine warfare exercise](#), Naval Technology, 24 February 2021

[Dynamic Manta ASW Exercise Kicks Off In Central Mediterranean Sea](#), Naval News, 22 February 2021

[NATO Anti-Sub Exercise Dynamic Manta 2021 Will Include French Carrier Strike Group, U.S. Attack Boat](#), USNI News, 22 February 2021

[Taking COVID into account, NATO presses on with ambitious ASW exercise in Mediterranean](#), Sea Power, 19 February 2021

[Russia, NATO forces participate in Pakistan-hosted military drill](#), Middle East Monitor, 12 February 2021

[Pakistan to Host Russia, NATO Members for Joint Naval Drill](#), VoA, 8 February 2021

## Missile Defence

In May NATO marked the 10th anniversary of the agreement between Romania and the United States to establish NATO's land-based ballistic missile defence system in southern Romania (see NATO Watch essay). Also in May, the United States and nine partners took part in NATO exercise Formidable Shield, held primarily at the UK's Hebrides Range in the Western Isles of Scotland. The exercise was a live-fire air and missile defence drill and involved the participation of several ships and personnel. It was also conducted at the Andoya training site off Norway. The participating nations were Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the UK, and the USA.

[Nato begins air and missile defence exercise Formidable Shield](#), Naval Technology, 17 May 2021

[Admiral Moiseyev slams Norway's ties with the United States as NATO kicks off major missile defence exercise](#), Barents Observer, 16 May 2021

[Nato missile defence exercise begins off Scotland](#), Fife Times, 15 May 2021

[NATO warships start major air and missile defence exercise](#), NATO News Release, 15 May 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General marks 10th anniversary of key missile defence agreement](#), NATO News Release, 12 May 2021

## NATO 2030 Reflection Group

The [NATO 2030 initiative](#) started at the NATO summit in London in December 2019 when leaders asked Jens Stoltenberg to conduct a reflection process on how to strengthen the alliance. He appointed an expert group and their resulting report, [NATO 2030: United for a New Era](#), was published in December 2020 (see box). During the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in February 2021, Stoltenberg further elaborated on these proposals (see [NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.81](#)). He has also consulted with national capitals, young leaders, and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, among others. Ultimately, this process is expected to lead to the elaboration of a new [Strategic Concept](#). A timetable for the delivery of a new strategic concept is likely to be agreed at the June summit.

### ***A critique of the NATO expert group report***

Concerned that the approach set out in the NATO expert group report will help entrench a systemic three bloc rivalry between China, Russia and NATO-EU-US, NATO Watch asked a group of 10 peace researchers to assess it. Their analysis was published in February 2021: [Peace research perspectives on NATO 2030: A response to the official NATO Reflection Group](#). This report argues, among other things that: the NATO expert group's analysis of past events and future trends, especially in relation to Russia, arms control and violations of international law, are riddled with biases and omissions. Among the alternative proposals are strengthening dialogue and the search for common ground with China and Russia, de-collectivizing the nuclear sharing policy in NATO and withdrawing all remaining US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.

[Secretary General sets out vision on NATO's future with the Council on Foreign Relations](#), NATO News Release, 12 March 2021

[The US Must Rebuild Its Leadership of NATO After Trump. But the European Allies Should Step Up Too](#), International Centre for Defence and Security, Estonia, 26 February 2021

**Must Read:** Medea Benjamin and Nicolas J.S. Davies, [What Planet Is NATO Living On?](#) Common Dreams, 23 February 2021

[NATO2030: future-proofing the Alliance](#). Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference 2021 (online event), 19 February 2021

Rae Street, [No method in this madness](#), Morning Star, February 2021

[Shaping our agenda for NATO2030: NATO's Secretary General engages with Young Leaders Group](#), NATO News Release, 4 February 2021

[NATO 2030: Embrace the change, guard the values A report by the NATO 2030 Young Leaders Group – for this generation and the next](#), February 2021

Rachel Ellehuus, [Repairing and Rebalancing NATO](#), CSIS Commentary, 4 February 2021

NATO 2030: NATO-Private Sector Dialogue with GLOSEC - [The Private Sector's Contribution to Alliance Security](#), 21 January 2021

George N. Tzogopoulos, [NATO 2030 and the "South"](#), BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 1,909, 31 January 2021

[NATO's first policy hackathon about the future of our security](#), NATO News Release, 29 January 2021

Chloe Berger, [Horizon 2030: assessing the impact of socio-economic and governance issues on the future of the MENA Region](#), Elcano Royal Institute, ARI 2/2021 13 January 2021

Jens Stoltenberg, [NATO secretary general: Our alliance must remain strong militarily and politically across the globe](#), Defense News, 11 January 2021

Peter Ricketts, [Rediscovering a Strategic Purpose for NATO](#), PRISM 9, no.1, October 2020

## NATO Defence Ministers Meeting, February 2021

In February the NATO Foreign Ministers held a virtual two-day meeting to discuss four main issues: (a) the NATO 2030 initiative and the continued adaptation of the alliance; (b) progress towards fairer burden-sharing; (c) shared security issues with NATO partners Finland, Sweden and the EU Union High Representative; and (d) NATO's training missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The key activities and decisions taken were as follows:

1. US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reaffirmed Washington's commitment to NATO—including an “ironclad” commitment to Article V—and reassured allies they will be consulted on important decisions (in an attempt to turn the page on four years of withering criticism from former president Trump).
2. The critical issue of the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, scheduled for completion in early May, was discussed but a decision was deferred until the Biden administration completes its own review of the situation.
3. Ministers agreed to expand the training mission in Iraq from 500 to around 4,000 personnel.
4. As part of the NATO 2030 initiative the Secretary General presented a set of proposals for consideration at a summit later in 2021 (the exact date is not yet decided). These proposals included:
  - increasing funding for “core deterrence and defence activities”, including improving ‘burden-sharing’ by jointly fund more of NATO’s work;
  - more measurable national resilience targets and an annual review of vulnerabilities in alliance critical infrastructure and technologies;

- a NATO defence innovation initiative to preserve NATO’s technological edge;
- increasing political coordination between allies and cooperation with “like-minded” partners, especially in response to China and Russia;
- strengthening training and capacity building for partners;
- adapting to climate change, including reducing emissions in the military sector; and
- drawing all of this together in a new Strategic Concept.

5. It was announced that 2021 will be the seventh consecutive year of increased military spending in NATO. Since 2014, European member states and Canada have contributed a cumulative extra \$190 billion.

For further details, see [NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.81](#), 24 February 2021

[Austin Says Afghanistan, Iraq, China Among Topics at NATO Meeting](#), US Department of Defense, 19 February 2021

[Secretary of Defense Briefs Reporters on NATO Defense Ministerial and Ongoing Department of Defense Issues](#), US Department of Defense, 19 February 2021

[NATO Defense Leaders Agree to Increase Iraqi Mission, Defer Decision on Afghanistan](#), US Department of Defense, 18 February 2021

[Defence Ministers reaffirm NATO’s commitment to Afghanistan and Iraq security](#), NATO News Release, 18 February 2021

[Online press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the second day of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers, 18 February 2021

[Defence Ministers discuss NATO 2030, fairer burden-sharing, and deterrence and defence](#), NATO News Release, 17 February 2021

[NATO Defense Ministers Aim for New Chapter in Alliance History](#), US Department of Defense, 17 February 2021

[Readout of Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III Remarks at Day One of the NATO Defense Ministerial](#), US Department of Defense, 17 February 2021

[Online press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the first day of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers, 17 February 2021

[Austin tells NATO allies US is reengaged but warns of Russian threat](#), CNN, 17 February 2021

[Austin Pleased with Discussions with NATO Leaders](#), US Department of Defense News Release, 17 February 2021

[Biden team looks to repair US ties with Europe in first NATO meet](#), Al Jazeera, 17 February 2021

[Biden administration takes more cooperative approach to its first high-level NATO meeting](#), Washington Post, 17 February 2021

[After 'brain death' and Trump, NATO chief proposes reforms for Atlantic alliance](#), Reuters, 16 February 2021

[Austin Will Bring New Tone to NATO Defense Ministerial](#), US Department of Defense, News Release, 16 February 2021

[NATO Defense Ministerial Background Briefing](#), US Department of Defense, 16 February 2021

[Defence Ministers meet to address NATO 2030, burden-sharing, and missions in Afghanistan and Iraq](#), NATO News Release, 15 February 2021

[U.S. enters NATO meetings as China and Russia threats loom and war in Afghanistan drags on](#), CNBC, 15 February 2021

[Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers on 17 and 18 February at NATO Headquarters, 15 February 2021

[NATO Defense Ministers to Discuss Future of Alliance During Ministerial](#), US Department of Defense News Release, 15 February 2021

[Secretary General previews meeting of NATO Defence Ministers](#), NATO News Release, 15 February 2021

[New Pentagon chief to reassure NATO allies](#), France 24, 14 February 2021

## **NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting, March 2021**

In March, the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting was held in person at NATO headquarters for the first time since 2019. The meeting discussed four main issues: (a) NATO's training mission in Afghanistan; (b) Security across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), including the NATO mission in Iraq; (c) The NATO 2030 initiative and the continued adaptation of the alliance; and (d) Relations with Russia, with the participation of NATO partners Finland, Sweden and the EU Union High Representative. The following key activities and decisions were taken:

1. The ministers agreed a formal joint [statement](#) on the "enduring transatlantic bond"—a message that sought to turn the page on the divisions of the Trump era.
2. The United States continued to rebuild bridges with its NATO allies. "You have our unshakeable vow: America is fully committed to NATO", US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a [speech](#).
3. The US Secretary of State and NATO Secretary General continued to encourage the alliance to position itself in opposition to China.
4. NATO continued to argue that despite years of pressure and efforts to engage in a meaningful dialogue, Russia has increased its pattern of repressive behaviour at home and aggressive behaviour abroad.
5. As was the case at the Defence Ministers meeting in February 2021, the critical issue of the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, scheduled for completion by 1 May, was discussed but a decision was again deferred until the Biden administration completes its own review of the situation.
6. The ministers had a "very positive discussion" on the NATO 2030 initiative, but there appeared to be little that was new, with one

exception: Ministers agreed a report aimed at increasing NATO's ability to understand, adapt and mitigate the security impact of climate change. The report remains classified.

7. NATO is aiming to create a 'virus-free' zone at its headquarters in Brussels to allow a Summit to take place in June.
8. Despite the transatlantic bonhomie, on the sidelines tensions resurfaced re Turkey's purchase of a Russian air defence system and US opposition to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

For further details, see [NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.82](#), 5 April 2021

[U.S. Secretary of State Blinken says West needs to cooperate more than ever](#), Reuters, 25 March 2021

[China, Russia Top NATO Agenda as US Seeks to Rebuild Transatlantic Bonds](#), VoA, 25 March 2021

[Blinken Says Alliances Must be Bolstered to Meet New Global Threats](#), VoA, 24 March 2021

[NATO Foreign Ministers discuss Russia and arms control](#), NATO News Release, 24 March 2021

"Reaffirming and Reimagining America's Alliances" – [Speech](#) by Secretary Blinken at NATO Headquarters, 24 March 2021

NATO: [Remarks](#) by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell upon arrival at the NATO Ministerial meeting, 24 March 2021

[NATO Foreign Ministerial Statement](#), Issued by the NATO Foreign Ministers, Brussels, 23rd-24th March 2021

[NATO Foreign Ministers exchange views on the NATO 2030 agenda, Afghanistan, and security across the Middle Eastern and North African region](#), NATO News Release, 23 March 2021

[At NATO, Blinken warns Germany over Nord Stream 2 pipeline](#), Reuters, 23 March 2021

[Strengthening the Transatlantic Bond](#), A conversation between NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, 23 March 2021

[In Brussels, Blinken offers boost for NATO cooperation on Afghanistan](#), Reuters, 23 March 2021

Lorne Cook, [NATO affirms unity, tries to put Trump era behind it](#), Associated Press, 23 March 2021

Secretary Blinken's Meeting with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, [Readout](#), 23 March 2021

## NATO Military Committee

NATO's 30 Chiefs of Defence met in January and May. (For details of the January 2021 meeting see [here](#) and the May 2021 meeting, see [here](#)).

[Military Committee Enthusiastically Welcomes NATO 2030 Proposals](#), US Department of Defense, 18 May 2021

[NATO Chiefs of Defence ensure military adaptability](#), NATO News Release, 19 May 2021

[NATO Secretary General: Summit to future-proof Alliance](#), NATO News Release, 18 May 2021

[NATO Chiefs of Defence future proof the Alliance's Military might](#), NATO News Release, 28 January 2021

[NATO Secretary General: NATO must remain fit to face any challenge](#), NATO News Release, 27 January 2021

[185th Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence session](#), NATO News Release, 25 January 2021

## NATO Parliamentary Assembly

Since being formed in 1965, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly has provided a forum for parliamentarians from the NATO member states to promote debate on key security challenges, facilitate mutual understanding and support national parliamentary oversight of defence matters. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly consists of 269 delegates from the 30 NATO member states. Each delegation is based on the country's size. In addition to delegations from NATO member states, delegates from associate countries and parliamentary observer



delegations take part in Assembly activities and bring the total number of delegates to approximately 360.

The Assembly has five Committees: the Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security; Defence and Security Committee; Economics and Security Committee; Political Committee; and the Science and Technology Committee; and eight sub-committees.

In May 2021 the Assembly's [Spring Session](#) took place online. Video recordings of the meetings are available [here](#). The following draft committee reports were considered:

- [Preliminary Draft General Report - Confronting Russia's Continuing Geopolitical and Ideological Challenge](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Report - China's Defence Posture: Implications for NATO](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Report - International Arms Control: Challenges Ahead](#)
- [Preliminary Draft General Report - Enhancing NATO S&T Cooperation with Asian Partners](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Report - Belarus: Political, Economic and Diplomatic Challenges](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Report - Security Challenges in The High North](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Special Report - Bolstering the Democratic Resilience of the Alliance against Disinformation and Propaganda](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Report - The Transatlantic Link and Burden Sharing in the Changing Strategic Environment](#)
- [Preliminary Draft General Report - Allied Defence Spending: Enduring Threats and New Constraints](#)
- [Preliminary Draft Report - Ten Years After the Arab Spring: Democratic Expectations and Disillusions](#)

[In a world of "systemic competition", NATO Summit must reaffirm unity and commitment to democratic values](#), NATO PA News Release, 17 May 2021

[Assembly lawmakers examine COVID-19 lessons for bioweapon defence, urge to boost space defences](#), NATO PA News Release, 17 May 2021

[NATO PA debates implications of China's military ambitions, Beijing's and Moscow's challenge to arms control and to Arctic security](#), NATO PA News Release, 17 May 2021

[Lawmakers stress NATO defence spending commitments amid COVID-19 economic challenges, urge support for the democratic aspirations of the Belarusian people](#), NATO PA News Release, 16 May 2021

[Lawmakers urge NATO Allies to reinforce societal and democratic resilience](#), NATO PA News Release, 16 May 2021

[NATO urged to maintain strong, united stance on Russia, and increase focus on Mediterranean security](#), NATO PA News Release, 15 May 2021

[NATO must strengthen democratic resilience in global "contest of values"](#), NATO PA News Release, 14 May 2021

[Democratic resilience, tensions with Russia and China top agenda as parliamentarians meet ahead of NATO summit](#), NATO PA News Release, 13 May 2021

## NATO Summit

The next Summit of Allied leaders will take place on 14 June 2021 at NATO HQ in Brussels, Belgium.

[NATO Secretary General announces date of the 2021 Brussels Summit](#), NATO Press Release, 22 April 2021

## Nuclear Weapons

NATO's collective defence strategy is based on a mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities. The alliance continues to argue that its nuclear arrangements are fully consistent with the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), while rejecting the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as being "inconsistent with the alliance's nuclear deterrence policy". Both are questionable claims.

### *Newly released documents shed light on 1983 nuclear war scare*

- Signals intelligence showed Soviet 4th Air Army alert "included preparations for immediate use of nuclear weapons" in response to NATO exercise;

- Key “End of Tour Report Addendum” by Lt. Gen. Leonard Perroots who oversaw Able Archer 83, subject of National Security Archive lawsuit, declassified by State Department Historian’s Office;
- Perroots described “ominous picture” of War Scare, the Soviet alert, and his decision not to escalate;
- CIA response admitted intelligence failures and possibility of “serious escalatory consequences”.

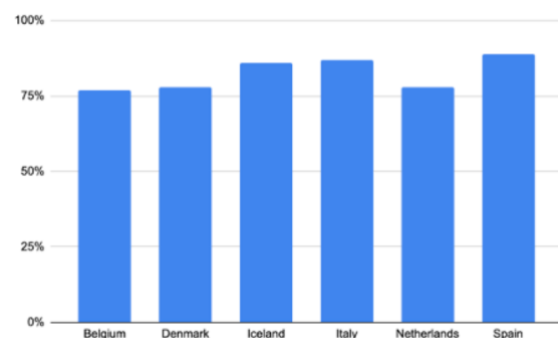
The FRUS volume, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1981–1988, Volume IV, Soviet Union, January 1983–March 1985, is a collection of more than 380 declassified records documenting the beginning of the end of the Cold War. The volume includes a trove of revelations about the 1983 War Scare, including the almost completely unredacted text of Lt. Gen. Perroots’s “parting shot before retirement” (Document 2). In January 1989, Perroots sent senior intelligence officials a classified “letter outlining his disquiet over the inadequate treatment of the Soviet war scare” before retiring from government service. Perroots’s letter sparked a full, all-source investigation by the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, culminating in its highly secret 1990 report “The Soviet ‘War Scare’” (Document 4). The National Security Archive won declassification of the PFIAB report in 2015 through an interagency appeals panel decision after a 12-year struggle. The detailed PFIAB report concluded that the US “may have inadvertently placed our relations with the Soviet Union on a hair trigger” during Able Archer, and commended Perroots for having avoided any escalation.

[Able Archer War Scare “Potentially Disastrous”](#), National Security Archive, 17 February 2021

### ***Nuclear ban treaty to enter into force; support for it increases in NATO member states***

Despite opposition from NATO, the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty in more than two decades, came into force on 22 January 2021. It was hailed by the UN Secretary-General as “an important step towards a world free of nuclear weapons”. The TPNW [secured the](#) 50 ratifications it needed to then enter into force, at the end of October 2020.

Support for the treaty from both [the public](#) and an increasing number of major political parties appears to be rising in some NATO member states. In Germany, both the [Green Party](#) (the strongest party according to recent polls for general elections in September) and the [Social Democratic Party](#) have expressed their support for the TPNW in their election manifesto. In Canada, a [recent poll](#) found that 74 per cent of the public expressed support for Canada adhering to the Treaty.



*Percentage of respondents who answered “yes” to the question. “Do you think your country should be among the first members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, even if it might come under pressure from the United States of America not to do so?”*

Similarly, YouGov polls conducted in late 2020 in six NATO countries—Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain—showed very high levels of public support for their countries to join the TPNW. In Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands, the polls also found popular support for removing US nuclear weapons from their territory. ICAN commissioned YouGov to carry

out the polls, which surveyed about 1000 people in each country. More information about the polls and methodology are available in [this briefing paper](#)

Oliver Meier, [Debating the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe: What Germany expects from Russia](#), Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations, 2021, vol. 14, issue 1, pp. 82–96

Michael Rühle, [Book review: Deterrence in the 21st Century – Insights from Theory and Practice](#), NATO Review, 29 April 2021

Moritz Kütt, Jan Hoekema and Tom Sauer, [Banning Nuclear Weapons: A Role for Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium?](#) Toda Peace Institute, 28 February 2021

Thomas Newdick, [New Docs Show 1983 NATO Exercise Led To The Soviets Arming 100 Jets For Nuclear War](#), The Drive, 18 February 2021

A February 2021 report by a task force chaired by Chuck Hagel, Malcolm Rifkind and Kevin Rudd, and convened by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, argues fraying US alliances and a rapidly changing security environment have begun to call into question America's nuclear security guarantees and threaten the long-term viability of the 50-year-old nuclear nonproliferation regime. The report offers specific recommendations and a framework to ensure America's allies will continue to feel secure without requiring their own nuclear weapons.

**NATO Watch Comment:** The usual suspects ignore the nuclear ban treaty, urge US and its European and Asian allies to bolster deterrence and defence and bring those allies into US nuclear planning processes, while simultaneously calling for an expansion of arms control to involve Russia and China. Is it only Russia and China that are nuclear proliferators?

[Preventing Nuclear Proliferation and Reassuring America's Allies](#), Report from the Task Force on US Allies and Nuclear Weapons Proliferation, February 2021

Eli Clifton, [Weapons biz bankrolls experts pushing to extend Afghan War](#), Responsible Statecraft, 16 February 2021

Various authors, [Special forum on transnational nuclear imperialisms](#), Anaïs Maurer and Rebecca H. Hogue (eds.), *The Journal of Transnational American Studies*, 2020

Elisabeth Eaves, [Why is America getting a new \\$100 billion nuclear weapon?](#) Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 8 February 2021

Jayita Sarkar, [How to Support the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Without Signing It](#), Lawfare, 7 February 2021

Amelia Morgan and Anna Péczeli (eds), [Europe's Evolving Deterrence Discourse](#), Center for Global Security Research, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, King's College London and Science Applications International Corporation, February 2021

Carl Robichaud and Karim Kamel, [The real value of the nuclear ban treaty](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 4 February 2021

[Afghanistan Study Group Final Report: A Pathway for Peace in Afghanistan](#), 3 February 2021

Kjølvg Egeland, [NATO and the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty: Options for the Biden Administration](#), Just Security, 28 January 2021

Various authors, Special section: Addressing the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons, Elizabeth Minor and Matthew B. Bolton (eds.), *Global Policy*, February 2021. Articles include:

Matthew B. Bolton and Elizabeth Minor, [Addressing the ongoing humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons: an introductory review](#);

Becky Alexis-Martin et al., [Addressing the humanitarian and environmental consequences of atmospheric nuclear weapons tests: A case study of UK and US test programs at Kiritimati \(Christmas\) and Malden Islands, Republic of Kiribati](#); and

Nate Van Duzer and Alicia Sanders-Zakre, [Policy approaches addressing the ongoing humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons: A commentary](#).

The controversial deployments of U.S. nuclear weapons in NATO countries had their roots in the policies of the allies that associated with U.S. government plans to deploy the weapons on their territories for use in the event of war. From the beginning, according to documents published today by the National Security Archive, the government of the Netherlands has been a partner in the nuclear weapons enterprise. Since 1960, Washington and the Hague have had an agreement governing the deployments of U.S. nuclear weapons in the Netherlands, one of several documents published here for the first time. Since they began in 1960, the deployments have varied, from Honest John missiles to nuclear bombs for Dutch fighters and nuclear mines for anti-submarine war aircraft. Now, only nuclear bombs are deployed.

The fact of the agreement and the nuclear deployments remains an official secret from the standpoints of both the U.S. and the Dutch governments. Yet, over the years, archives in both countries have released, mostly inadvertently, significant documents that shed light on the interesting history of the Dutch-U.S. nuclear relationship. In the Netherlands, Cees Wiebes tested the secrecy in court proceedings and the courts ruled against him. Horrified by the archival releases and supported by U.S. importuning, the ministries and the courts united to defend the secrecy of the nuclear agreements with Washington and tried to reclassify the documents. Such incidents may reoccur until such time as Washington and its NATO partners develop a more reasonable policy governing disclosure of the history of a truly open secret

**Must Read:** [US Nuclear Weapons in the Netherlands: A First Appraisal](#), Edited by Cees Wiebes and William Burr, Briefing Book #736, US National Security Archive, 15 January 2021

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## Operations and Missions

### *Afghanistan*

In a televised [speech](#) on the 14 April President Biden announced a complete US troop withdrawal from what he called the “forever war” in Afghanistan by 11 September 2021—the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, when al-Qaeda extremists, based in Afghanistan and protected by the Taliban government, successfully attacked New York and Washington. President George W. Bush announced the US invasion of Afghanistan in October, 2001, and in the two decades since, over [47,000 Afghan civilians](#) have been killed, along with 45,000 members of the Afghan army and police and at least 3,500 US and coalition troops. The [financial cost](#) to the US of the war in Afghanistan has been estimated at \$2.3 trillion.

During his speech, Biden argued that the United States cannot “continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan

hoping to create the ideal conditions for our withdrawal, expecting a different result". "We delivered justice to bin Laden a decade ago," Biden said, "and we've stayed in Afghanistan for a decade since". Biden is not the first US president to call for a full withdrawal; both Barack Obama and Donald Trump did so. Yet, as opposed to previous announcements, the Biden administration emphasized that this time the US military's withdrawal will not be "conditions based". However, he warned the Taliban that if US forces are attacked during withdrawal, "we're going to defend ourselves and our partners with all the tools at our disposal".

Following an [agreement](#) between the United States and the Taliban in February 2020 both the United States and NATO have been gradually reducing their troop presence as part of the peace process. Under that process a deadline of 1 May 2021 had been agreed for a full troop withdrawal. Currently, the United States has about 2,500 troops (plus perhaps [another 1,000 "off-the books" special forces](#)) remaining in Afghanistan, while international partner troops in the NATO Resolute Support Mission (RSM) number about 7,000. There had been growing speculation that a delay was likely, but it remained unclear whether such a delay would be negotiated with and accepted by the Taliban. It now appears that the US decision was unilateral, though Biden in his remarks claimed it was consistent with the US-Taliban deal.

*NATO announces a simultaneous withdrawal*

Late the same day, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin joined a closed-door meeting with the NATO foreign and defence ministers to begin coordinating a collective withdrawal of the RSM forces in Afghanistan. Blinken spoke from the NATO headquarters in Belgium in a [joint press conference](#) with

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. "I am here to work closely with our allies, with the Secretary General, on the principle that we have established from the start, 'In together, adapt together and out together,'" he said. The RSM forces will also be withdrawn by the 11 September deadline, as confirmed in a [North Atlantic Council Ministerial Statement on Afghanistan](#). Stoltenberg said the decision to withdraw was "unanimous" and that "This is not an easy decision and it entails risks. ... We've said for many months we face a dilemma, because the alternative to leaving in an orderly fashion is to be prepared for a long-term, open-ended military commitment with potentially more NATO troops".

During the press conference the NATO Secretary General attempted to highlight a number of achievements in the campaign: "Together, we have prevented Afghanistan from serving as a safe haven for terrorist attacks against our own countries. Since 9/11, there have been no terrorist attacks on allied soil organized from Afghanistan. We also helped to build the Afghan Security Forces from scratch. With great bravery and professionalism, they have provided security across the country over the last years. And in the almost two decades of international military presence, we have helped the Afghan people achieve social progress". It is true that there has been some social progress in education especially for girls, and increased [life expectancy](#). But these gains remain [fragile](#) despite the continuing peace talks. Overall, however, the initial US military successes in Afghanistan were followed by long attritional years of conflict in what was generally regarded as an unwinnable war. One British commentator [describes](#) it as the "most pointless and unsuccessful war that Britain has fought in the past 70 years". (For selected NATO Watch commentaries on the conflict, see box).



### Box 1. Selected NATO Watch Commentary on the Afghan Conflict

NATO's new counterinsurgency guidance for Afghanistan: from kinetic to human security? [September 2009](#)

Afghanistan: The Runaway War, [July 2010](#)

Afghanistan: the exit strategy and beyond to 2024, [May 2012](#)

NATO's departure from Afghanistan: an orderly rush to the blocked exits? [January 2013](#)

The endless war in Afghanistan and the departure of another US general claiming a winning strategy, [September 2018](#)

Political turmoil in Afghanistan threatens US-Taliban peace deal, [March 2020](#)

Blinken then travelled to Afghanistan where he met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to reiterate the US commitment to an ongoing relationship between the two nations. According to a statement by the US State Department, the two leaders discussed the importance of preserving gains made over the past 20 years and continual counter-terrorism cooperation. Ghani expressed support for the US troop withdrawal, [stating](#) "Afghanistan's proud security and defence forces are fully capable of defending its people and country, which they have been doing all along".

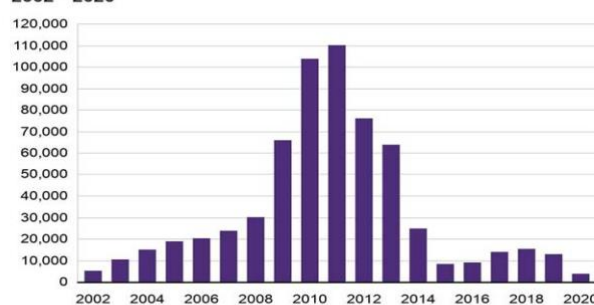
*Will the US-NATO intervention continue remotely?*

"We will not take our eye off the terrorist threat," Mr. Biden said in his televised address. "We will reorganize our counterterrorism capabilities and the substantial assets in the region to prevent re-emergence of terrorist threat to

our homeland". However, the scope and nature of future US and NATO security assistance to Afghanistan remains unclear. NATO and other international partners remain committed to providing funding at similar levels for the coming years, and this may be sufficient to allow the Afghan government to continue to function and to defend itself in the short-term. US remote or "over-the-horizon" military support to Afghan forces, ranging from strategic advice to intelligence sharing to training (presumably outside Afghanistan) to airstrikes, are also apparent possibilities. For example, there are more than 16,000 [civilian contractors](#), including over 6,000 Americans, currently providing security, logistics and other support in Afghanistan, and these might continue to be used to train Afghan security forces.

According to the [New York Times](#), other potential remote military options are being considered. For example, the Pentagon is said to be discussing with allies where to reposition forces, possibly to neighbouring Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In addition, combat aircraft on aircraft carriers and long-range bombers flying from land bases along the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and even in the United States could strike insurgent fighters spotted by armed surveillance drones. This would be in keeping with current US counterterrorism practice (e.g., in Libya, Somalia and Yemen), where every effort is made to minimize boots on the ground and replace them with remote forces. US Defense Secretary Austin [told](#) reporters after the NATO meeting "There's probably not a space on the globe that the United States and its allies can't reach". This will

US troop levels in Afghanistan  
2002 - 2020



2020 figure as of December

Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Congressional Research Service

certainly continue to include Afghanistan.

In May it was confirmed that NATO would continue to train Afghan Special Forces outside the country after the withdrawal in September. “As we end our military presence, we are opening a new chapter,” Jens Stoltenberg [said](#) in Paris after talks with French President Emmanuel Macron on 21 May. In addition to giving “advice and capacity-building support to Afghan security institutions, as well as continued financial support”, he added that NATO also plans “to provide military education and training outside Afghanistan, focusing on Special Operations Forces”. This decision came amid intensifying Taliban attacks against Afghan forces.

#### *The Taliban’s control is growing*

The Taliban are negotiating Afghan troop surrenders as US troops withdraw from the country, [reports](#) the New York Times. Since 1 May, at least 26 bases and outposts in four Afghan provinces have reportedly been surrendered to the Taliban. These surrenders are obtained by Taliban Invitation and Guidance Committees—which step in after insurgents cut off outposts’ access to roads and supplies. These negotiated surrenders are one piece of a broader offensive effort this spring in which Taliban forces have surrounded at least five provincial capitals, according to a US Defense Department inspector general report released on 18 May.

#### *Coalition fatalities*

British and Canadian troops were more than twice as likely to get killed in Afghanistan as their US counterparts, according to a May 2021 [study](#) by the Costs of War project at Brown University in the United States. The UK also gave more to Afghanistan than the US in the form of economic and humanitarian assistance the study found. Although the US suffered by far the greatest number of fatalities in

absolute terms compared with other members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – 2,316 American troops were killed between 2001 and 2017, the period of the study – Canadians and British soldiers sent to Afghanistan were more likely to die.

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## *Iraq*

At the NATO Summit in Brussels in July 2018, the NATO Mission Iraq was launched following a request from the Iraqi government. The new, non-combat training and advisory mission was established in Baghdad in October 2018. In February, the NATO Defence Ministers agreed to scale up the NATO noncombat training and advisory mission in Iraq with thousands of new personnel. The NATO Secretary General confirmed then that the size of the mission would increase from 500 personnel to around 4,000.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in January that killed at least 32 people and wounded more than one hundred others. This attack marked the biggest suicide

attack in Iraq's capital since the military defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq in 2017.

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## **Kosovo**

Two decades after the withdrawal of Serbian forces, Kosovo's security is still guaranteed by 4,000 NATO troops, known as KFOR.

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[NATO chief confirms KFOR to remain in Kosovo](#), Euractiv, 17 May 2021

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[New air routes established over Kosovo with NATO support](#), NATO News Release, 11 February 2021

## **Russia-NATO relations**

Relations between Russia and NATO have deteriorated to record post-Cold War lows. Both sides have competing explanations for this. Within the alliance, there remain disagreements about the nature of the Russian threat and how to respond to it. The poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny and his subsequent arrest on 17 January 2021 added to the tensions. Both the NATO Defence Ministers meeting in January 2021 and the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in March 2021 addressed NATO's relations with Russia.

During the March meeting, the NATO Secretary General gave further warnings of the dangers facing the alliance from Russia, which "undermines and destabilizes its neighbours, including Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. It supports the crackdown on Belarus and tries to interfere in the Western Balkans region. "We see that Russia continues to deploy new and destabilizing nuclear weapons".

He also stressed that the alliance remained committed to a dual-track approach to Russia: strong deterrence and defence, combined with openness to meaningful dialogue. Stoltenberg welcomed the recent decision to extend the New START Treaty, but stressed the need to further strengthen international arms control.

Since the summer of 2019 there have been no meetings of the NATO-Russia Council. Stoltenberg [stated](#) that this was because Russia "has not responded positively to our invitation" to convene the NRC. The Secretary General solely put the blame on Russian behaviour that "triggered the biggest adaptation of our alliance, since the end of the cold war".



Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko responded by [saying](#) "it is very clear that NATO is following a path of confrontation with Russia. NATO is unable to get rid of the habit of using a 'threat from the East' in attempts to formulate its mission in the new security situation" he said. He also [claimed](#) that Russia's proposals for a reciprocal moratorium on deploying intermediate-and shorter-range missiles in Europe to follow Moscow's example remain unanswered.

**Abstract:** The Russian government has claimed that the Western powers promised at the end of the Cold War not to expand NATO, but later reneged on that promise. Most former officials in the West, and many scholars as well, have denied that this was the case; but other scholars, along with a handful of former officials, believe that promises to that effect were, in fact, made in 1990. So who is right? The question still has political importance: how it is answered has bearing on how we should feel about NATO expansion and, indeed, about the United States' post-Cold War policy more generally. So it makes sense to stand back and try to see where the truth lies. An examination of the debate in light of the evidence—especially evidence that the participants themselves have presented—leads to the conclusion that the Russian allegations are by no means baseless, which affects how the US-Russian relationship today is to be understood.

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### ***US-Russian relations***

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entities and individuals for their involvement in the spread of disinformation and for carrying out the Russian government's interference in the 2020 election. Additionally, 10 Russian diplomats were expelled from the Russian embassy in Washington, D.C., many of them believed to be intelligence operatives. The US actions were backed by a [statement](#) issued by the North Atlantic Council on 15 April.

In response, Maria Zakharova, spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, [said](#) [w]e have repeatedly warned the United States about the consequences of their hostile steps which dangerous raise the temperature of confrontation between our two countries. ... Such aggressive behaviour will without doubt receive a decisive rebuff. Responsibility for what is happening lies wholly with the United States"

Despite ongoing US-Russian differences, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed their desire to cooperate where possible, during their meeting on 19 May. This was the first high-level, in-person conversation between the Biden administration and Russia. Blinken said the US and Russia could collaborate on combating the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, the nuclear programmes in North Korea and Iran and the Afghanistan war. Blinken also urged Russia to release US citizens Paul Whelan and Trevor Reed and discussed the health of Alexei Navalny. The discussion also covered cybersecurity and the deployment of Russian troops to its border with Ukraine.

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## Secretary General's Annual Report 2020

On 16 March 2021, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg released his [Annual Report for 2020](#). It covers NATO's work and achievements throughout the year, and includes the results of new polls on the public perception of the alliance.

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For all who serve

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Investing in Defence

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['Newly assertive' Russia and 'rise' of China pose biggest security threats to West, says NATO chief](#), Parliament Magazine, 17 March 2021

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## Special Forces

In November 2020 the Greek Government announced the creation of the Special Warfare Command, which is a new military formation to include Special Forces and guided by US and NATO standards. In January 2021 Special forces from Greece, Cyprus and the United States held a joint exercise in the sea area off the naval base at Souda Bay on the southern Greek island of Crete. Another joint interoperability training exercise involving special forces from NATO member states took place in Romania in May.

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## Space Policy

In June 2019 a new policy or “a common NATO framework” was agreed to “guide” the alliance’s approach to space. While the substance of the policy remains secret, the NATO Secretary General argued that it was “not about militarizing space”, but rather NATO playing an important role “as a forum to share information, increase interoperability, and ensure that our

missions and operations can call on the support they need". No further details emerged at the NATO Leaders' Meeting in London in December 2019, although space was declared as an operational domain alongside land, air and sea. This allows space to be used for military operations during times of war.

In February 2021 it was announced that Toulouse, France, is to host NATO's new centre for excellence in military space. Germany had also lobbied to host the centre, which will be set up at the CST (Centre Spatial de Toulouse), which is also to be the headquarters of France's Military Space Command, on the site of France's national space studies centre known as CNES.

[#SpaceWatchGL Opinion: Shortfalls in NATO's Space Education](#), April 2020

[NATO Multimedia's Science Series Looks at High-Altitude Balloons](#), The Science Times, 13 February 2021

[France hails NATO's choice of Toulouse to host space centre](#), French Embassy, London, 5 February 2021

[NATO names location for new military space center](#), Defense News, 5 February 2021

[NATO to found Space centre of excellence](#), Jane's, 5 February 2021

Almudena Azcárate Ortega, [Placement of Weapons in Outer Space: The Dichotomy Between Word and Deed](#), Lawfare, 28 January 2021

[NATO to grow pooled Space Centre in 2021](#), Jane's, 11 January 2021

## Transatlantic Cooperation

At a keynote speech in March the NATO Secretary General highlighted the importance of transatlantic cooperation. The Secretary General told students: "As a committed European, I do not just believe in European integration. I also believe in transatlantic cooperation. Because a strong transatlantic bond is the bedrock of Europe's security. For more than 70 years, NATO has embodied this

unique relationship. Our Alliance is the only place that brings North America and Europe together every day to discuss common security challenges, to preserve peace and prevent war."

Daniel Hegedus, [Why the US should meddle in Europe to stop autocratizing NATO allies](#), The Hill, 12 May 2021

Rachel Ellehus and Pierre Morcos, ['Lifting Up Our Values at Home': How to Revitalize NATO's Political Cohesion](#), CSIS, 12 March 2021

[NATO Secretary General: A strong transatlantic bond is the bedrock of Europe's security](#), NATO News Release, 4 March 2021

[NATO Secretary General and the Belgian Prime Minister discussed strengthening the transatlantic bond](#), NATO News Release, 4 February 2021

Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, Martin Quencez, and Gesine Weber, [Seizing Biden's Pivot to Europe: Time for Responsibility-Sharing](#), GMF Policy Brief, February 2021

[A Thirteen-Point Plan to Launch a New and Improved Transatlantic Alliance](#), GMF Experts, Transatlantic Take, 26 January 2021

Bruce Stokes, [A Transatlantic Agenda for the Biden Era](#), GMF Blog, 14 January 2021

Ali Ashmawi, [Challenging NATO's cohesion](#), Ahran online, 12 January 2021

Stewart M. Patrick, [What Are Biden's Actual Prospects for Reviving Trans-Atlantic Relations?](#) World Politics Review, 11 January 2021

[NATO Secretary General: 2021 will be a pivotal year](#), NATO News Release, 7 January 2021

[NATO chief outlines key areas for alliance in 2021](#), Anadolu Agency, 6 January 2021

## Transparency and Accountability

According to Transparency International's [Defence Companies Index on Anti-Corruption and Corporate Transparency](#), nearly three-quarters of the world's largest defence companies show little to no commitment to tackling corruption.

The index assesses 134 of the world's leading arms companies, ranking their policies and approach to fighting corruption from A to F. Reducing corruption in the defence sector is imperative to guarantee safety and security. Yet, a veil of secrecy, invoked ostensibly in the interests of national security, shrouds the defence sector's activities making it especially vulnerable.

James Pooley, [Who Needs to Know? The Hidden Value of Transparency](#), IP Watchdog, 29 April 2021

Sun-ha Hong, [Why Transparency Won't Save Us](#), CIGI Commentary, 18 February 2021

Ara Marcen Naval, [Defence companies are not doing enough to stop corruption. Only a commitment to transparency will turn things around](#), Transparency International, 9 February 2021

## Women, Peace and Security

NATO first published an action plan in 2007 to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda. In July 2018 a new NATO/EAPC Policy and Action Plan was agreed at the NATO Summit, and in September 2018 the [plan](#) was made public. In January 2020 NATO adopted its first policy on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse. The policy, which applies to all NATO personnel, sets out a zero-tolerance approach.

The [Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security](#) was the NATO Library's most popular book in 2020.

The handbook was published in 2019 and has 93 contributors from all over the world.

[NATO stands with the international community to address sexual violence in conflict](#), NATO News Release, 23 April 2021

Joana Cook and Vanessa Newby, [An interview with NATO on gender and counter-terrorism](#), ICCT, 9 April 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General advocates for gender equality and women's leadership](#), NATO News Release, 18 March 2021

**Must Read:** Gabriela R. A. Doyle, Madeline Olden, Leah Sheunemann and Christopher Skaluba, [Why NATO should adopt a feminist foreign policy](#), New Atlanticist, 9 March 2021

[NATO International Military Staff marks International Women's Day](#), NATO News Release, 9 March 2021

[Women are vital to a stronger NATO](#), NATO News Release, 8 March 2021

[At International Women's Day, discussion with three scientists](#), NATO News Release, 8 March 2021

[The NATO Library's Most Popular Book in 2020](#), PRIO, 12 February 2021

[NATO supports women and girls in science](#), NATO News Release, 11 February 2021

[NATO scientists study the role of women in combat units](#), NATO News Release, 2 February 2021

[Integration of Women Into Ground Combat Units](#), Pre-Released STO Technical Report, NATO's Science and Technology Organization (STO) (undated)





## Security News from NATO Member States:

### Belgium

In February, Belgium joined 11 other member states as part of the NATO Flight Training Europe (NFTE) High Visibility Project which aims to establish a network of pilot training facilities across Europe.

[Belgium joins the NATO Flight Training Europe initiative](#), NATO News Release, 19 February 2021

[NATO Secretary General and the Belgian Defence Minister discuss Afghanistan and NATO priorities](#), NATO News Release, 11 February 2021

### Bulgaria

In April, experts at two leading US-based think tanks urged Bulgaria to ratify a treaty signed with neighbouring Romania on 18 March 2021 that would permit NATO cross-border air policing operations.

[Bulgaria Pressed to Ratify NATO Cross-Border Patrols Protocol](#), Balkan Insight, 28 April 2021

[Bulgarian Military Contingent to Take Part in Resolute Support NATO Mission in Afghanistan](#), Novinite, 2 March 2021

### Canada

Under the government of Justin Trudeau, Canada has embraced a feminist foreign policy—key components are the Feminist International Assistance Policy; the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan; the 'progressive' trade agenda; and the Defence Policy (Strong, Secure, Engaged). In April, the government released what they framed as a feminist federal budget. In a [press release](#), the Canadian Foreign Policy Institute noted that the budget commits up to \$30 billion over five years to getting an affordable childcare programme off the ground while moving forward with plans to spend

\$95 billion on 15 Surface Combatant vessels and 88 fighter jets. The full life-cycle cost of these weapons designed for US and NATO-led missions, is expected to [exceed](#) \$350 billion.

In February, Canada formally designated the US-based Proud Boys as a terrorist group. The Canadian government explained its decision [stating](#) that the members “espouse misogynistic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and/or white supremacist ideologies and associate with white supremacist groups”.

An [opinion poll](#) published in April by the Hiroshima Nagasaki Day Coalition, the Simons Foundation, and le Collectif Échec à la Guerre [found](#) that a large majority (74 per cent) of Canadians want the government to join the nuclear ban treaty. It is the first poll to be conducted in Canada since the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force. The poll finds that 73 per cent of those surveyed thought that Canada should join the TPNW even if there was pressure from the United States not to do so, and only 9 per cent believed it is acceptable for countries to have nuclear weapons.

Also in April, Canada [cancelled](#) export permits to Turkey for drone technology after a government review found that Canadian-made systems had been used by Azerbaijan in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The foreign affairs department said that the review “found credible evidence” that Canadian airstrike-targeting gear was [diverted](#) to the disputed territory during six weeks of fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia in October 2020.

Adnan Khan, [Why Canada's special forces 'shadow army' is still fighting ISIS](#), Macleans, 11 May 2021

Tamara Lorincz v Christian Leuprecht and Joel J. Sokolsky, [The Saturday Debate: Should Canada leave NATO?](#) Toronto Star, 1 May 2021

[Canadian special forces supported major Iraqi military assault on ISIL last month](#), News Optimist, 11 April 2021

[Reflections on Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security: Gains, Gaps & Goals](#), Women, Peace and Security Network, Canada, March 2021

[Canada set to benefit as NATO considers compensation for military deployments](#), North Shore News, 15 February 2021

[Canada's new top military commander marks international debut in virtual NATO meeting](#), CBC, 28 January 2021

Wesley Wark, [Canada Made a Commitment to National Security Transparency. What Did It Change?](#) Centre for International Governance Innovation, 25 January 2021

**Must Read:** [Be Brave, Be Bold: Recommendations for Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy](#), The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, January 2021

[What we Heard: Feedback from discussions on Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy](#), The Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, January 2021

## Czech Republic

In April, the Czech Republic expelled 18 Russian diplomatic staff who were identified as intelligence officers. Russia responded by expelling 20 Czech embassy staff members from Moscow. At a meeting of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) on 22 April, the Czech Republic informed its NATO allies about the reasons for the expulsion. The NAC issued a [statement](#) in solidarity with the Czech Republic.

In May, Czech President Milos Zeman apologized for his backing of the NATO bombings of Yugoslavia in 1999. "I would like to take this opportunity to apologize for the bombing of the former Yugoslavia", Zeman [said](#) during a meeting with visiting Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. At the time of the decision, the Czech Republic was only in NATO for several weeks, said Zeman. As prime minister at the time, he approved Czech military action alongside NATO. The Serbian president thanked Zeman for his gesture, saying

no one else had made a similar statement about the bombings.

[Czech president apologizes for backing 1999 NATO bombings of Yugoslavia](#), Xinhuanet, 19 May 2021

[Chairman of the Military Committee affirms NATO solidarity with Czech Republic during visit to Prague](#), NATO News, 7 May 2021

Adéla Klečková, [Russian State Terrorism Has Triggered the Biggest Fallout with the Czech Republic since 1989](#), GMF Commentary, 26 April 2021

[North Atlantic Council statement in solidarity with the Czech Republic](#), NATO Press Release, 22 April 2021

[Czech Republic informs NATO allies why it expelled Russian embassy staff](#), Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21 April 2021

Ondřej Ditrych, [Bohemian Forest Dark Tales: The Czech Republic, Russia's Dirty War Machine and Western Solidarity](#), RUSI Commentary, 21 April 2021

## Denmark

In April it was announced that Denmark would deploy a special forces unit to Mali, consisting of surgeons and staff officers, to assist the French-led Task Force Takuba.

[Denmark deploying special forces to Mali](#), Copenhagen Post, 9 April 2021

[NATO F-35 Milestone: First F-35A for Denmark Takes Flight](#), Lockheed Martin News Release, 10 March 2021

## Estonia

A survey in March 2021 found that 90 per cent of Estonia's polled consider military conscription necessary and 79 per cent support a national defence model consisting of professional service personnel and a reserve force. Over three quarters polled (77%) believe Estonia must provide armed resistance in the event of an attack, according to a statement by the Estonian defence ministry. In addition, over half of the Estonian population is prepared to personally defend the country, should it be attacked.

According to the survey, Estonians believe the country's security will continue to be ensured by membership in NATO, the defensive will of residents and the development of Estonia's independent defence capability. NATO's presence in Estonia was supported by 75% of those polled. "NATO's role in ensuring Estonia's security continues to be considered important – 52 per cent believe that if a conflict breaks out, NATO will provide direct military assistance, and forty-five per cent believe that NATO membership will prevent military conflict", the Estonian defence minister, Kalle Laanet, [said](#).

[Prime minister to NATO Secretary General: Alliance remains solid](#), ERR News, 25 May 2021

[Secretary General discusses NATO Summit, Belarus, Ukraine with Estonian Prime Minister](#), NATO News Release, 25 May 2021

[Estonian Special Operations Forces platoon in Mali](#), ERR News, 14 April 2021

[Estonian personnel take part in major NATO multinational exercise](#), ERR News, 9 March 2021

[Survey: Almost all](#) Estonians consider conscription necessary, Estonian World, 7 March 2021

[Report: Estonian commandos to receive new small arms](#), Israel Defense, 25 February 2021

[Chief of NATO's transformation command visits Estonia](#), Baltic Times, 14 February 2021

[Estonian defmin, defense chief talk with SACEUR about security of Baltic Sea region](#), Baltic Times, 17 January 2021

[Defense minister: NATO alliance remains strong, 2020 a success](#), ERR News, 16 January 2021

[Estonian Defence Minister Luik discussed European security with NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe](#), Estonia Ministry of Defence, 16 January 2021

[Estonia's defense minister: Overcoming the challenges of the next decade](#), Defense News, 11 January 2021

## France

In December 2020, and just as the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier had passed its mid-life, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, [decided](#) that the only non-US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the world in service will have a successor, expected to be commissioned in 2038. Called until now the 'Porte-Avions de Nouvelle Generation' (PANG), this capital ship will be much larger than its predecessor with a displacement of approximately 75,000 tons. It will be designed to operate the naval version of the Next Generation Fighter (NGF), part of the Future Air Combat System (FCAS). At least 30 Rafale fighters or NGFs could be taken onboard.

In February, President Macron [said](#) his concept of "European strategic autonomy" in the defence sector did not mean he wanted to drift apart from the United States but that it would make Europe a more reliable partner and strengthen NATO. "I do believe in NATO", Macron said during the Munich Security Conference, more than a year after causing confusion among other members of the transatlantic military alliance by saying NATO was "experiencing brain death". "I do believe NATO needs a new political momentum and clarification of its strategic concept. NATO needs a more political approach," he added.

A [report](#) in March found that France [concealed](#) the levels of radioactivity that French Polynesia was exposed to during French nuclear tests in the Pacific from 1966-1996, with almost the "entire population" of the overseas territory infected. The investigation was carried out by Disclose, Interprt, and Princeton University's Program on Science and Global Security, which for over two years analysed some 2,000 pages of French military documents declassified in 2013.

In April it was reported that French armed forces are beginning to prepare for the return of a major conflict. After a decade of counter-insurgency strategies, [plans are changing](#). The

spectre of high-end war is now so widespread in French military thinking, that the scenario has its own acronym: HEM, or hypothèse d'engagement majeur (hypothesis of major engagement).

In May it was [reported](#) that France was opposed to NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg's NATO 2030 initiative proposal that allies put more money directly into existing common NATO budgets, rather than rely on the current system that each government pays for its own military operations. French officials are apparently concerned that the move could undermine its own defence priorities.

[France resists more joint funding of 'brain dead' NATO](#), WHBL, 28 May 2021

[Secretary General praises France, discusses NATO summit with President Macron](#), NATO News Release, 21 May 2021

[The French armed forces are planning for high-intensity war](#), The Economist, 3 April 2021

Justin Bronk, [FCAS: Is the Franco-German-Spanish Combat Air Programme Really in Trouble?](#) RUSI Commentary, 1 March 2021

Austin R. Cooper, [French report grapples with nuclear fallout from Algerian War](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 4 March 2021

[France's Macron: 'I do believe in NATO'](#), Reuters, 19 February 2021

[France touts military successes to win allies in G5 Sahel operations](#), France 24, 16 February 2021

Dov S. Zakheim, [Macron's 'strategic autonomy' will not happen anytime soon](#), The Hill, 12 February 2021

[France struggling in Sahel 'information war'](#), France 24, 11 February 2021

Omer Ozkizilcik, [Is France a Trojan horse within NATO?](#), TRT World, 10 February 2021

Thibaut Trinquet, [With a New U.S. Administration, What Is Next for Macron's Middle East Ambitions?](#) GMF Transatlantic Take, 10 February 2021

[French forces get new batch of micro-drones for recon missions](#), Defense News, 15 January 2021

Patrick Chevallereau, [Sea Control and Power Projection: France's Choice of a Nuclear-Powered Aircraft Carrier](#), RUSI Commentary, 4 January 2021

## Germany

Germany reported a record high in NATO defence spending for 2021, submitting a budget of €53 billion (\$63.8 billion) for the current year. That figure marks a 3.2% increase [over the year before](#). In 2020, spending was capped at an estimated €51.4 billion.

In March, Germany [placed](#) its main opposition party, the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD), under domestic surveillance. This decision allows the domestic intelligence agency, known as the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, to tap into the communications and monitor movements of AfD members.

At the end of March, Germany's Federal Court of Justice [upheld](#) a 2019 lower court decision, finding that employees at German arms manufacturer Heckler & Koch knowingly falsified information as to the nature and destination of arms sold by the company in order to attain federal export licences. Heckler & Koch was ordered to pay over €3 million for the illegal arms sales to Mexico. End-use declarations were judged not to be part of export licences under the War Weapons Control Act. This is a landmark ruling with far-reaching implications for the German arms export control system.

Plans to significantly reduce the US footprint in Germany previously announced by former President Trump have been reversed by the new US administration. In July 2020 it was [announced](#) that nearly 12,000 US troops would be removed from Germany among a series of other changes. However, planning for the withdrawal immediately stopped once

new Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III took charge, and instead it was [announced](#) in April that an additional 500 US troops would be sent to Germany.

In its [2020 sustainability report](#), the second largest German bank (DZ bank) has included new regulations on its investment policy, stating that it will not invest in the development of autonomous weapons, as it will not fund controversial weapons, including weapons that have indiscriminate effects, cause excessive suffering, have devastating effects on civilians, or are internationally outlawed. It is the third bank in Germany to exclude autonomous weapons from its investment policy.

[U.S. Secretary of Defense and German Defense Minister Joint Press Conference](#), Germany, 13 April 2021

Lydia Wachs and Paula Köhler, [Germany's Greens Go Government: Winds of Change for Germany's Foreign and Security Policy?](#) RUSI Commentary, 7 April 2021

Kori Schake, [The U.S. Doesn't Know How to Treat Its Allies](#), The Atlantic, 28 March 2021

Oliver Meier, [Between rejection and accession: Germany and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy, 8 March 2021

[Germany's special forces look the other way on missing weapons](#), Deutsche Welle, 2 March 2021

[Germany reports record €53 billion in NATO defense spending](#), Deutsche Welle, 7 February 2021

Beryl Thomas, [What Germany's new cyber security law means for Huawei, Europe, and NATO](#). European Council on Foreign Relations, 5 February 2021

[The Post-Trump Reset With NATO Starts in Germany](#), Foreign Policy, 4 February 2021

[Plans to Draw Down in Germany on Hold as New Administration Considers Options](#), Air Force Magazine, 3 February 2021

[German Greens go nuclear over call to renew NATO vows](#), Politico, 23 January 2021

[More Ambition, Please! Toward a New Agreement between Germany and the United States](#), German Transatlanticists Group, GMF Policy Essay, January 2021

Zlatko Hadžidedić and Adnan Idrizbegović, [Has Germany Lost its NATO Compass?](#) Modern Diplomacy, 9 January 2021

## Greece

In April, in the first visit by a Greek minister in over two years, Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias held [talks](#) in Ankara with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu. They discussed contentious issues, including Cyprus and their maritime dispute. Dendias invited Cavusoglu for a follow-on meeting in Athens and the pair discussed possible talks on confidence building measures.

Also in April, the Greek Government Council for Foreign Affairs and Defence approved the creation of a Special Warfare Command as part of an effort to modernize the country's special forces, which will acquire an interdisciplinary role.

[Special Warfare Command to be created for special forces](#), Ekathimerini, 28 April 2021

[Greece to take final six NH90s including special forces variant](#), Flight Global, 19 April 2021

[Greece Slams Turkey Over PKK Terror Claims](#), VoA, 11 April 2021

[Twenty five years since Greece and Turkey almost went to war over Imia](#), Greek City Times, 31 January 2021

[NATO Secretary General shares views on euro-atlantic security with Greek Foreign Minister](#), NATO News Release, 27 January 2021

[Greek special forces team up with US army for first-of-its-kind military exercise](#), Greek Herald, 24 January 2021

## Italy

In February, a preliminary investigations judge in Rome [ruled](#) that the public prosecutor must continue a criminal investigation, filed by three non-governmental organisations, into



managers of RWM Italia SpA, a German arms manufacturer Rheinmetall AG's Italian subsidiary, and senior officials of Italy's National Authority for the Export of Armament (UAMA) for their role in a deadly Saudi/United Arab Emirates-led military coalition airstrike in Deir al-Hajari in northwest Yemen. The Italian Public Prosecutor's Office had requested the dismissal of the 2018 criminal complaint but was opposed by the NGOs.

In March Italy expelled two Russian officials over connection with an espionage case, one day after the arrest of an Italian navy captain and the detention of a Russia military officer stationed in Rome on espionage charges.

[Defence industry influence in Italy: Analysing defence industry influence in the Italian policy agenda](#), Transparency International, 28 April 2021

[Italy expels two Russian officials over espionage case](#), CNN, 31 March 2021

## Latvia

It was reported that Latvia is aiming to market itself as a hub for 5G military testing in Europe, with a successful technology test in late 2020 leading to an expanded effort planned for 2021.

[Could Latvia become NATO's 5G military test hub?](#) C4isrnet, 1 April 2021

[Secretary General discusses NATO agenda with Latvian Foreign Minister](#), NATO News Release, 27 January 2021

## Lithuania

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda urged NATO to respond after a passenger aircraft en route to Lithuania was forcibly landed in Belarus, resulting in the arrest of opposition journalist Roman Protasevich based in Lithuania. "I call on NATO and EU allies to immediately react to the threat posed to international civil aviation by the Belarus regime", Nausėda said.

[Lithuania Urges NATO Response to Belarus Plane 'Hijacking'](#), Newsweek, 24 May 2021

[Lithuanian president: NATO must maintain credible deterrence and defense posture](#), Baltic Times, 10 February 2021

[In the meetings with NATO leaders, Lithuania's Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis stressed that NATO was a key guarantor of the Baltic region and Euro-Atlantic space's security](#), Lithuania Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 26 January 2021

[NATO Secretary General and the Lithuanian Foreign Minister shared views on NATO's future](#), NATO News Release, 26 January 2021

## Netherlands

In January the city council of Amsterdam supported a [motion](#) calling on the Dutch government to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Deputy Mayor Rutger Groot Wassink signed the ICAN City appeal on the day the TPNW entered into force. In addition, people in the Netherlands (and five other NATO states) overwhelmingly reject the presence of US nuclear weapons and support the TPNW, according to polls. In the latest YouGov poll 78% of respondents wanted the government to join the TPNW; 68% said the Netherlands should be among the first members of NATO to join, even if the country were pressured by the United States not to do so. A similar poll was conducted in 2019, at which time only 62% of people wanted the Dutch government to join the ban.

[Majority of the Dutch say that The Netherlands must join the Ban Treaty](#), Pressenza, 30 January 2021

Susi Snyder, [The people have spoken: join the ban treaty!](#), PAX, 22 January 2021

Susi Snyder, [Ban the bomb and ban the bombmakers, starting in Amsterdam!](#), PAX, 22 January 2021

## North Macedonia

In March North Macedonia's Prime Minister Zoran Zaev [claimed](#) that NATO commitments had stopped his country

from acquiring Russian or Chinese-made Covid-19 vaccines sooner, as neighbouring non-NATO member Serbia had done. “We won’t comment on remarks attributed to the Prime Minister of North Macedonia”, an unnamed NATO official is reported as saying. “NATO takes no position on national vaccination strategies. This remains a national, sovereign prerogative”, the official added.

[NATO and North Macedonia take stock of achievements, following one year of NATO membership](#), NATO News Release, 28 April 2021

[NATO Secretary General marks first year anniversary of North Macedonia’s NATO membership](#), NATO News Release, 28 March 2021

[North Macedonia PM Blames ‘NATO Commitments’ For Vaccine Fiasco](#), Balkan Insights, 10 March 2021

[NATO and North Macedonia strengthen responses to cyber threats](#), NATO News Release, 19 February 2021

[Secretary General praises North Macedonia for contributions to NATO](#), NATO News Release, 12 February 2021

[Coronavirus response: NATO and Slovakia support to North Macedonia](#), NATO News Release, 8 February 2021

[North Macedonia requests international assistance in its response to COVID-19](#), NATO News Release, 12 January 2021

## Norway

The first-ever deployment of US B-1 Lancer bombers to Norway was reported in March, allowing the US airforce to train in Arctic conditions and for Norway to test its defences according to military officials from both countries.

[B-1 Bomber Deployment to Norway Shows ‘The Alliance is Working’](#), Military.com, 5 March 2021

[Norway cancels manoeuvres with Nato allies over virus fears](#), The Local, 27 January 2021

## Poland

Poland will buy 24 armed drones from Turkey, the Polish defence minister said in May, becoming the first NATO member to buy Turkish-made unmanned aerial vehicles. The Bayraktar TB2 drones, the first of which are due to be delivered next year, will be armed with anti-tank projectiles. Poland will also buy a logistics and training package, said Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak.

[Poland, Turkey bound by Nato goals](#), The First News, 24 May 2021

[Poland to Become First NATO Country to Buy Turkish Drones](#), US News, 22 May 2021

[Poland joins NATO assurance mission for Turkey](#), NATO News Release, 20 April 2021

[NATO invites Poland to vaccinate HQ staff](#), The First News, 21 March 2021

Scott Ritter, [How Polish wargame where it loses to Russia could become a self-fulfilling prophecy](#), RT, 23 February 2021

[Poland to take part in review of US forces abroad - presidential aide](#), The First News, 6 February 2021

[President, head of NATO discuss transatlantic relations](#), The First News, 29 January 2021

[NATO: U.S. and Polish Army Generals Set Objectives for 2021 Combat Readiness Evaluation](#), DVIDS, 25 January 2021

Michal Baranowski and Kai-Olaf Lang, [The Biden Administration: Opportunity or Stress for German-Polish Relations?](#) GMF Transatlantic Take, 21 January 2021

## Portugal

Sixty Portuguese Special Forces personnel will be deployed to Mozambique to help train their local counterparts in combating the jihadist insurgency that is ravaging the gas-rich province of Cabo Delgado.

[Secretary General visits Portugal to prepare NATO Summit, inaugurate new cyber academy](#), NATO News Release, 26 May 2021

[Portugal to Deploy Special Forces after Mozambique Attack](#), Future Directions, 1 April 2021

## Romania

The US has reportedly established a permanent military base in Romania and starting operating MQ-9 Reaper (Predator-B) UAVs to gather intelligence as part of NATO operations. The Reaper UAVs would perform ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) roles from the Câmpia Turzii Air Base, which is also the home to MiG-21 LanceRs of the Romanian Air Force. Approximately 90 US airmen in addition to the Reapers will support the NATO operations. A \$152 million US-funded construction project will turn the former Soviet base in central Romania into new major hub for NATO aircraft in the Black Sea region. In May the US Air Force started awarding contracts for construction work to upgrade the base, enabling it to support heavy cargo aircraft and host combat aircraft.

[USAF to turn Romania's Câmpia Turzii air base into regional NATO hub](#), Emerging Europe, 20 May 2021

[US to Turn Romanian Airbase into NATO Black Sea Hub](#), Balkan Insight, 18 May 2021

[Romanian president says more NATO presence needed in Eastern Europe](#), Reuters, 10 May 2021

[US Air Force sets up permanent base of MQ-9 Reaper \(Predator-B\) drones in Romania to support NATO ops](#), Eurasian Times, 8 January 2021

## Turkey

A more aggressive, nationalist and religious Turkey is increasingly at odds with its Western allies over Libya, Syria, Iraq, Russia and the energy resources of the eastern Mediterranean (see above). Turkey's tilt towards authoritarianism and coercive diplomacy after 17 years with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the helm has also unsettled other NATO members.

In February President Erdogan criticized Washington for failing to adequately confront the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) after the executions of 13 kidnapped Turks in northern Iraq. Erdogan [called](#) an earlier US statement on the killings "a joke", alleging that US officials "clearly support [the PKK] and stand behind them". US Secretary of State Antony Blinken assured Turkey that Washington blames the PKK for the executions.

Poland became the first NATO member to purchase Turkish UAVs, which have been used in several high-intensity conflicts. The deal poses a challenge to the US monopoly over the sale of combat UAVs at a global level and within NATO.

[Can Turkey break the US drone monopoly in NATO?](#) TRT World, 25 May 2021

[Erdogan slams Biden's recognition of Armenian 'genocide'](#), Al Jazeera, 26 April 2021

Aron Lund, [An Unconventional Canal: Will Turkey Rewrite the Rules for Black Sea Access?](#) FOI Memo 7528, April 2021

Tarik Oğuzlu, [Turkey's NATO seat: Win-win situation for both sides](#), Daily Sabah, 30 March 2021

Şaban Kardaş and Özgür Ünlühisarcıklı, [A Dual Framework for the Turkey-U.S. Security Relationship](#), GMF Policy Paper, March 2021

[NATO chief underlines important role of bloc, Turkey in EU security](#), Daily Sabah, 5 March 2021

[Erdogan tells Macron cooperation has 'very serious potential'](#), Al Jazeera, 2 March 2021

[Turkey buying S-400s no threat to NATO: Rostec CEO](#), Daily Sabah, 25 February 2021

[Turkish navy to conduct massive military drills in Aegean Sea](#), Hurriyet Daily News, 23 February 2021

Burhanettin Duran, [Turkey's position in NATO and terror concerns](#), Daily Sabah, 22 February 2021

[NATO condemns terrorist PKK's Iraq cave massacre: Stoltenberg](#), Daily Sabah, 17 February 2021

[Turkish operation to rescue intelligence operatives in Iraq ends in catastrophic failure](#), Arab Weekly, 15 February 2021

[U.S. stands with NATO ally Turkey over killing of 13 Turks in northern Iraq](#), Ahval, 15 February 2021

Nicholas Velazquez, [Rise of a “Drone Superpower?” Turkish Drones Upending Russia’s Near Abroad](#), Geopolitical Monitor Situation Reports, 9 February 2021

Galip Dalay, [Turkish-Iranian Relations Are Set to Become More Turbulent](#), GMF, 9 February 2021

[Turkey an important NATO ally: German defense chief](#), Anadolu Agency, 2 February 2021

[Erdoğan furious at NATO allies for not selling Turkey drone cameras](#), Armenia Radio, 25 January 2021

[NATO Secretary General discusses security issues with Turkish Foreign Minister](#), NATO News, 22 January 2021

Haldun Yalçinkaya, [Turkey’s Overlooked Role in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War](#), GMF On Turkey, 21 January 2021

[Erdoğan hopes for positive steps on F-35 jet programme in Biden term](#), Reuters, 15 January 2021

Kerem Alkin, [Priceless value of Turkey’s partnership](#), 9 January 2021

[Increasingly isolated, Turkey seeks to improve relations with France](#), Arab Weekly, 8 January 2021

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## United Kingdom

The UK Government published its long-awaited [Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy: Global Britain in a Competitive Age](#) on 16 March 2021. That document was followed by a Defence Command Paper, [Defence in a Competitive Age](#), on 22 March 2021, and a [Defence and Security Industrial Strategy](#) on 23 March 2021. The Integrated Review lays out the Government’s vision for the UK to 2030. It provides a strategic threat assessment and identifies the UK’s foreign policy priorities for the next decade. The Defence Command Paper focuses on the defence aspects and outlines plans to modernise the armed forces. The industrial strategy sets out a path for innovation for the UK’s defence and security industrial sectors.

The Integrated review was billed as the biggest overhaul of Britain’s security, defence and foreign policy since the Cold War. Crafted over the past 12 months as London’s post-Brexit foreign policy, it outlines a pivot in strategic focus towards Asia, labelling China a “systemic competitor”, and also prioritises ongoing efforts to counter Russian threats.

### *Changes to the UK’s nuclear posture*

Most controversially the Integrated Review made the most significant change in the UK’s nuclear posture in decades without any prior parliamentary debate: the raising of a self-imposed limit on its overall nuclear warhead stockpile, abandoning a [previous cap](#) of 225 warheads as well as the [current reduction target](#) of 180 by the mid-2020s, and replacing it with a new cap of 260 warheads. In addition, the UK will no longer place a public limit on the proportion of that stockpile that is operational at any given time (which had previously been set at 120 warheads), nor will it give any public information on the number of warheads and missiles deployed on its ballistic missile submarines (which had

previously been set at no more than 40 and 8 respectively). The review also stated that the UK reserves the right to withdraw assurances that it will not use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear armed state “if the future threat of weapons of mass destruction ... or emerging technologies that could have a comparable impact makes it necessary”.

The plans to increase the nuclear weapon stockpile cap by 40 per cent, would be a violation of international law, campaigners and experts have warned, pointing to the UK commitments to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. There has been strong opposition to the proposals from [civil society](#), prominent [public figures](#), and the [office of the UN Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres, amongst others. [Iran](#) and [Russia](#) also condemned the decision, with the latter saying it will harm international stability.

These decisions on the UK nuclear posture in the Integrated Review followed the earlier release in December 2020 of the Ministry of Defence’s [annual update to Parliament](#) on the future of the UK’s nuclear ‘deterrent’, which confirmed that the UK is embarking on the complicated and sensitive task of building a new nuclear warhead – something it has not done for 30 years, and has never done without nuclear-explosive testing, which it has now renounced.

When the NATO Secretary General was asked during his [press conference](#) at the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in March about the decision by the UK Government to increase its nuclear weapon stockpile cap, he [ignored the question](#) (despite his advocacy in support of international agreements on the limitation of nuclear warheads) and reiterated this tired refrain: “NATO’s goal is a world without nuclear weapons. But as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance”. He also emphasized that the challenge of nuclear

modernization lies with Russia and China. (Note: The United States is planning to spend [up to \\$1.5 trillion](#) to overhaul its nuclear arsenal by rebuilding each leg of the [nuclear triad](#) and its accompanying infrastructure).

### ***Other key announcements in the Integrated Review***

The Integrated Review also proposes to enhance the country’s navy, special forces and global focus while cutting the size of the army from 82,000 to 72,500 (reducing it to the smallest since 1714). New investment is promised for ships (increasing the number of navy frigates and destroyers to 20 by the start of the next decade), submarines, as well as robots, drones and cyber warfare. It also announced that the UK will expand its fleet of US-made F35 fighter jets only to 48, the minimum number it had previously committed to buy.

£200 million is earmarked over the next decade to transform the Royal Marines into a new unit called the Future Commando Force, which will conduct roles traditionally carried out by UK special forces and be deployed on “an enduring basis” to help secure shipping lanes and uphold freedom of navigation. A further £120 million is pledged to establish an army special operations brigade and a new Ranger Regiment to “operate discreetly in high-risk environments and be rapidly deployable across the world” and involved in “collective deterrence” with partner forces.

### ***UK arms exports***

In January 2021 it was [disclosed](#) that the UK spent £2.4 million over the last four years to help Saudi Arabia’s military comply with international humanitarian law – during which time the Gulf state has been accused of indiscriminately bombing and killing Yemeni civilians. Also in January, a [report](#) by Action on Armed Violence revealed that the UK was approving military exports to 80 per cent of



countries on its own restricted export control list.

In April, it was agreed that a [legal challenge](#) over the supply of UK weapons for the war in Yemen will proceed to the High Court for a judicial review later this year.

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## United States

### *The storming of the Capitol and domestic violent extremism*

As a pro-Trump mob stormed the US Capitol on 6 January, the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed shock at the images coming out of Washington, [tweeting](#): "Shocking scenes in Washington, D.C. The outcome of this democratic election must be respected". The BBC's diplomatic analyst, Jonathon Marcus, [commented](#) "Who could ever have imagined such a comment, coming from the alliance's top official addressed to its leading member state? It is the sort of thing you would expect Mr Stoltenberg to be sending to a

Belarus or a Venezuela". The government reform group Public Citizen [tweeted](#), "If you're spending \$740,000,000,000 annually on 'defence' but fascists dressed for the renaissance fair can still storm the Capitol as they please, maybe it's time to rethink national security?".

For President Biden's inauguration an additional 5,000 National Guard troops were [deployed](#) to Washington DC to support local law enforcement, bringing the [total number of Guard personnel](#) to 20,000—roughly three times the total number of US troops then deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria.

In the wake of the 6 January riots, US national security officials began to shift their focus to a broad crackdown on domestic extremism. On 22 January, President Biden ordered the Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines to work with the FBI and Department of Homeland Security to compile a comprehensive threat assessment on violent domestic extremism. Further, the White House has instructed its National Security Council to review policies in order to determine whether and how the government can improve information-sharing among federal agencies about the threat posed by domestic extremists.

In February, it was disclosed that military officials overseeing the authorization process to launch nuclear weapons were [unaware](#) that then-Vice President Mike Pence's military aide carrying the '[nuclear football](#)' (which contains the equipment to carry out orders to launch a nuclear strike) was potentially in danger as rioters got close during the insurrection. US Strategic Command became aware of the gravity of the incident after seeing a [video](#) played at the Senate impeachment trial showing Pence, his Secret Service agents, and a military officer carrying the briefcase with classified nuclear launch information

running down a flight of stairs inside the Capitol to get to safety.

An unclassified [report](#) on domestic violent extremism in the United States released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in March said domestic violent extremism poses an "elevated threat" to the United States and that lone offenders or small, self-organized cells are more likely to carry out attacks than organizations. The report also confirmed previous statements made by US intelligence officials that racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism presents the most dangerous threat to the country. "While we remain vigilant about the threat of foreign terrorism, ideologically motivated domestic violent extremism now poses the most lethal and persistent terrorism-related threat to the homeland today", said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas at a hearing before the House Homeland Security Committee

### ***The second impeachment of Donald Trump***

In January, the House [impeached](#) President Trump in a 232-197 vote, making him the first US president to ever be impeached twice. Ten members of the Republican party broke party ranks to charge Trump with "incitement of insurrection" for instigating the 6 January assault on the Capitol by repetitively and falsely claiming that the 2020 election was stolen. However, in the Senate on 13 February, 57 senators voted "guilty" and 43 senators voted "not guilty", resulting in Trump being acquitted of the charge.

### ***Great Power competition***

As the US Department of Defense turns its strategic focus to "great power competition" the Pentagon is investing in different military technologies and revamping some old capabilities including the B-52 bomber. New US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [told](#) the Senate in January that China is "the most significant threat going forward"

and called for new American strides in building “space-based platforms”.

During an address at the Munich Security Conference in February President Biden called for multilateral cooperation on countering China. “We have to push back against the Chinese government’s economic abuses and coercion that undercut the foundations of the international economic system,” Biden said. “Everyone must play by the same rules”, he said.

In March, the US National Intelligence Council released its ‘[Global Trends](#)’ report—a document published every four years that “assesses the key trends and uncertainties that will shape the strategic environment” in the United States for the next 20 years. The report projects an international order dominated by the US-China rivalry, which the authors predict will lead to “a more conflict-prone and volatile geopolitical environment”. The document also forecasts critical issues propelled by climate change, such as mass migration and rising inequality. And it warns that the coronavirus pandemic could have profound implications for the future, calling it “the most significant, singular global disruption since World War II”.

In April the US intelligence community’s unclassified [2021 Annual Threat Assessment](#) was released. The 27-page document details “the most direct, serious threats to the United States during the next year”, and identifies China, North Korea, Russia and Iran as countries that have “demonstrated the capability and intent to advance their interests at the expense of the United States and its allies”. The threat assessment also notes that “the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic will continue to strain governments and societies, fueling humanitarian and economic crises, political unrest, and geopolitical competition”.

### ***‘Forever wars’ and the authorisation of military force***

In February, the Biden administration [announced](#) it will conduct a formal review of the future of the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, with the goal of closing it. The detention camp, which once held around 800 prisoners, now holds 40.

On 25 February, President Biden ordered [airstrikes](#) against Iran-backed militia groups in eastern Syria, apparently his first use of military force as president. The president directed the strikes in response to rocket [attacks](#) against US forces in Iraq. On 27 February, the president reported the military action to Congress in the [first report of his presidency submitted under the War Powers Resolution](#), which requires the president to report to Congress within 48 hours of introducing US armed forces into hostilities. President Trump’s [first war powers report](#) also related to Syria, after he ordered missile strikes against Syrian chemical weapons targets in April 2017. In the fallout over Biden’s decision to launch airstrikes in Syria without prior congressional approval, US lawmakers [plan legislation](#) to overhaul the authorisation of military force that presidents from both parties have used to justify decades of attacks on overseas targets.

In late April, the Biden administration [disclosed](#) the Defense Department’s “Principles, Standards and Procedures for U.S. Direct Action Against Terrorist Targets”—a set of rules former President Trump issued in 2017. The Biden administration is conducting a review to determine whether the White House will keep the rules in place or issue new guidance.

### ***US military spending***

The White House plans to [request](#) \$715 billion for the Pentagon in 2022, marking a 1.5 per cent increase from the current level of the more than \$704 billion that lawmakers allocated for the

2021 fiscal year. The plan is likely to face backlash from some Republican lawmakers who have pushed for a three to five per cent increase, arguing that a higher budget is needed to adequately counter threats from China and Russia. Some Democrats are also likely to be disappointed—in a [letter](#) in March, 50 House Democrats urged Biden to request a “significantly reduced” Pentagon budget and redirect money towards diplomacy and domestic issues.

"Mr. [William] Perry has proposed phasing out America's land-based nuclear weapons and relying on a safer air- and sea-based deterrent. If Mr. Biden followed Mr. Perry's advice, he could save more than enough money to prepare vaccines for the 50 to 100 viruses most likely to cause the next pandemic".

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- Ending enlargement
- Cutting troop commitments
- Rebalancing transatlantic politics
- Reengaging with Russia

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“...the views we have expressed previously in these pages—that global leadership is [not an American entitlement](#) and Biden’s plan to host a global [“Summit for Democracy”](#) will create more problems than benefits—have been profoundly reinforced by this week’s Battle of Capitol Hill..... The Biden team should hold not an international summit for democracy but a domestic one that recommits the nation’s political leadership to the system’s institutions and to the effort to overcome injustice and inequality.

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