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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 Comment:

### Are we all complicit in NATO's whitewashing of two decades of failure in Afghanistan?

Seemingly, NATO has successfully whitewashed its 18-year “engagement” in Afghanistan with barely a whimper from politicians, think tanks and the media. On 1 December 2021 at a [closed session](#) in Riga, the 30 NATO Foreign Ministers discussed the alliance’s internal ‘lessons learned process’ in Afghanistan. The main findings were published in a 730-word NATO [Factsheet](#), with the conclusions and recommendations barely detailed enough to fit on the back of a proverbial envelope.

Did any of the Foreign Ministers raise any concerns? These NATO meetings are closed to the public and press, never minuted and rarely provide a readout or summary of the main discussions. This is partly to mask the inevitable disagreements among 30 national positions. Clearly, the United States has already moved on and is focused on Great Power competition with Russia and China. Counterterrorism is now old currency in Washington. And most European governments are too traumatised by the Trump years and focused on challenges closer to home in Ukraine and Belarus, to want to rock the boat over what was always a US-led mission.

The UK’s Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, was preoccupied with [channelling her inner Iron Lady](#) while posing in a tank in Estonia and, in any case, is probably unconcerned about ceding sovereignty to an unaccountable Brussels-based institution, so long as it is not the EU. And with one notable exception—a shout out here to Lorne Cook at Associated Press, who challenged the NATO Secretary General on the

inadequacy of this process during his [press conference](#)—journalists have also largely shirked their responsibility as watchdogs.

The ‘lessons learned process’ was launched in September, following the rapid collapse of the Afghan Government and forces in August. By then, the Western security effort in Afghanistan had [cost](#) the United States alone \$2.3 trillion, and the price in lives included 2,324 US troops and 1,144 personnel among NATO partners. Afghan losses included more than 46,000 civilians, about 69,000 members of the national armed forces and police, and over 52,000 opposition fighters. NATO insists that it helped to prevent the launch of international extremist attacks from Afghan soil for almost two decades, but that is a low bar for such costs.

The NATO review process included both “operational-military and political reviews”, each covering the full timeline of NATO’s involvement and included the views of allies and partners, as well as the “participation of 19 experts providing historical, political, operational, and cultural perspectives on NATO’s involvement”. NATO also held seven meetings of the [Deputy Permanent Representative Committee](#)—a trouble-shooting committee for non-consensual issues—with sessions dedicated to key events and drivers in NATO’s engagement. It was a summary report by the Chair of that committee that was discussed by the Foreign Ministers. None of the various internal and expert reviews that contributed to this assessment, nor the summary report itself have been made public.

So, what are the main findings? First, an increasingly complex security environment demands that “crisis management should remain a core task for NATO”. Second, it blames the “international community” for having a level of ambition in Afghanistan that extended far beyond degrading

terrorist safe havens, and ultimately building a stable country proved “extremely challenging”. Thus, to avoid future mission creep, allies should “continuously assess strategic interests” and seek to “avoid taking on commitments that go well beyond assigned tasks”.

Of course, many Afghans put their faith in the promises of democracy and freedom for all. They cast their votes in elections which they believed would herald this new era of freedom. But there is no mention of human rights and the [rights of women](#) in the NATO Factsheet, nor recognition that the war and occupation failed to make Afghans safer, more secure or more prosperous.

Moreover, the findings appear to be suggesting that NATO’s mission was undermined by the non-military nation-building, whereas the evidence suggests it was probably the other way around. US and NATO forces formed relationships with [abusive warlords](#), relied on US and Afghan airstrikes with [devastating impacts](#) on civilians. And they were apparently prepared to turn a blind eye to the deployment of CIA [death squads](#), other [war crimes](#) by Western forces and US-backed [anti-Taliban forces](#), as well as the [widespread torture](#) of detainees in Afghan prisons.

If the true cost of the war would had been spent providing education, development and infrastructure in Afghanistan, could more have been achieved in the past 20 years under a Taliban-led administration rather than under military occupation?

Another conclusion is that “Reporting from the field during the ISAF and Resolute Support eras was frequently delayed and encumbered by procedures, thus making it difficult for allies to effectively evaluate and provide relevant direction for the mission”. But there was more than just a failure of timely reporting in Afghanistan. [Evidence](#) was available for

years that the occupation was failing. But throughout the nearly two decades of NATO’s presence in Afghanistan, many of the military and intelligence assessments on progress in the country were [deliberately misleading](#) or hid inconvenient facts about ongoing failures inside confidential channels.

Did the assessment consider the extent to which officials contributed to these misleading assessments? What will NATO do to improve the transparency of operational metrics for future missions? How might parliamentary oversight of NATO decision-making be improved in member states? Unsurprisingly, NATO has nothing to say on these crucial questions.

Holding intergovernmental bodies like NATO to account is difficult due to their size and unclear chains of responsibility. The NATO website claims that the alliance is “accountable to its member governments and their taxpayers”, but the reality is that NATO has never adequately considered, let alone sought to address, questions of accountability. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this lessons learned process was designed to bury the Afghanistan experience as quickly as possible.

It is to be hoped that the national review processes underway within several NATO member states have more integrity. In the UK, for example, parliamentary inquiries on Afghanistan by the [defence](#) and [foreign affairs](#) committees are ongoing, while in the United States a provision in the draft [national defence budget for 2022](#) calls for the creation of an ‘Afghanistan War Commission’. The commission is expected to examine the legacy and mistakes of the war in Afghanistan. But if it is to challenge some of the war’s [uncomfortable truths](#), much will [depend](#) on its subsequent make-up. Otherwise, it is likely to replicate the near-total absence of political and military accountability within NATO.

## Book Review:

### Glenn Diesen's latest book, 'Europe as the Western Peninsula of Greater Eurasia: Geoeconomic Regions in a Multipolar World'

by Paul Lookman

*This article first appeared in Dutch in ['Geopolitiek in context'](#).*

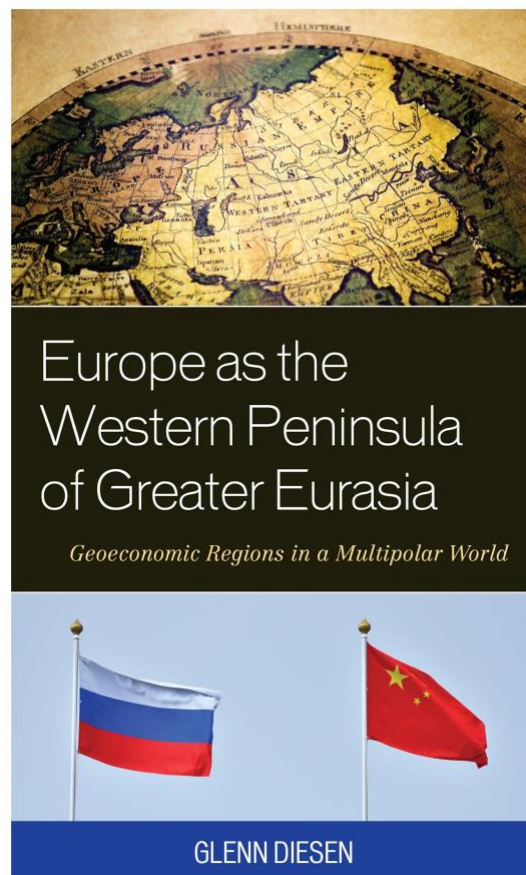
Europe's reliance on the US is no longer sustainable. Glenn Diesen introduces an alternative. If the Russian-Chinese partnership gains sufficient geo-economic power, it can integrate Europe with Asia into a Eurasian supercontinent. In this scenario the EU can diversify its partners and avoid excessive dependence on one player or region.

In December 2017, more than a year after the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, the Brussels branch of the Spanish think tank [Real Instituto Elcano](#) published a [Policy Paper](#) in which it presents four scenarios for Europe's long-term future, both in terms of interaction between EU member states as well as in the relationship with great powers America, China and Russia. The underlying question was whether Europe will remain a geopolitical subordinate, or develop into an independent player among the great

powers. Elcano had four foreign policy experts draw up a vision of how the future might unfold. The first scenario depicts a Europe prey to external actors and internal competition. The special relationship with the US is history, NATO passé, and the EU irrelevant. The second scenario, by ULB professor and Senior Research Fellow at Egmont Institute Alexander Mattelaer, envisions a European Union that will rule Europe and have a significant hand in determining world events. In the third scenario, the West is experiencing a rebirth. The transatlantic framework led by the US and UK determines the course of events in Europe and how Europe positions itself in the world. Finally, the fourth scenario shows how the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative has brought Europe closer together economically, politically and militarily-strategically.

#### Europe as western peninsula of Greater Eurasia

In his book 'Europe as the Western Peninsula of Greater Eurasia' Norwegian professor Glenn Diesen sees an interesting alternative for Europe. He departs from his theory<sup>1</sup> of the balance of dependency: integration projects can only deliver sustainable mutual economic benefits under a 'balance of dependence'. While realism, one of the frames of thought in international politics, suggests that peace requires a balance of power and incentives to maintain the status quo, peace in its geoeconomic equivalent [of realism] requires a





balance of dependence. The nation that has strategic industries, transport corridors and financial instruments can use geoeconomic power to gain hegemony or to strengthen sovereignty. Geo-economic regions with these three pillars acquire collective power.

Diesen outlines how the contemporary West as a region is actually an accident of history. After the devastating World War II, the US was able to strengthen primacy over Western Europe and East Asia through security reliance and geoeconomic control over strategic industries, transportation corridors, and financial instruments. The confrontation with communist rivals softened the geoeconomic rivalry between the US and its dependent allies. Today, however, Europe faces a dilemma: in a multipolar world, over-reliance on the US is no longer tenable. The US will demand great geoeconomic loyalty in its rivalry with China and Russia, to the detriment of the national interests of individual member states.

### **Global economic power as a geo-economic region**

Diesen's theoretical introduction leads right to his analysis of developments in the European Union and Eurasia. The world has changed geopolitically and geoeconomically. China is ending the unipolar era and is warming up to geo-economic leadership. It is making efforts with Russia to integrate Europe and Asia into one Eurasian geoeconomic region. Diesen's ideas are at odds with traditional thinking in the West. Unlike the fourth Elcano scenario in which China settles into the center of Europe via a divide-and-rule policy and member states become increasingly dependent, there is no dominant economic power in Diesen's perspective. Greater Eurasia collectively acquires global economic power as a geo-economic region.

In Diesen's book, the Russian-Chinese strategic partnership is at the heart of that Greater Eurasia. Should that

partnership acquire sufficient geoeconomic power, it can effectively integrate Europe and Asia into a Eurasian supercontinent. In such a scenario, Europe will be torn between two geoeconomic regions: on the one hand as a subregion of the transatlantic region, on the other as part of Greater Eurasia. In order to survive as a geoeconomic region in a multipolar world, the EU, geographically the western peninsula of a future Greater Eurasia, must assert its strategic autonomy and diversify its partners. By doing so, it will avoid excessive dependence on a single state or region.

### **Positioning between the transatlantic partnership and Greater Eurasia**

A region with an integrated economy, equipped with impressive weapons, can quickly shift to competition with economic means. The EU has already taken steps to decouple security from geoeconomics. A majority within the Union has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and some members have also signed up to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. A simultaneous partnership with the US and an independent Russia and China policy does not preclude sustainable EU strategic autonomy. Following India's and Turkey's template, the best approach for the EU is for it to seek an independent role between the transatlantic partnership and Greater Eurasia. In a scenario in which a European army provides European security, the EU will take the wind out of the sails of the security guarantee and corresponding geoeconomic power of the US.

Diesen's book offers Europe new opportunities in a changing world order. The European army he proposes perhaps best limits itself strictly to defence. It should neither be able nor willing to replace NATO. In Diesen's future political landscape, the transatlantic alliance will gradually lose its relevance, unless the [military tug-of-war](#) between the major powers ends in

armed conflict. Diesen's concept assumes that Brussels will get every EU-member on the same page, and that the West will moderate its toxic propaganda against [China](#) and [Rusland](#). Geopolitics is not about noble ideals like democracy, human rights, or "our way of life", but about national interests. As far as Europe is concerned, those interests are no longer adequately served in an exclusive Western partnership.

#### Endnote:

1. Diesen's theory of the balance of dependence should not be confused with Immanuel Wallerstein's [dependency theory](#) which explains the failure of non-industrialized countries to develop economically. There is some relationship though with the [concept of interdependence](#) developed by Norbert Elias.

*Europe as the Western Peninsula of Greater Eurasia: Geoeconomic Regions in a Multipolar World*, by Glenn Diesen, Rowman & Littlefield, 252 pages, ISBN 978-1-5381-6176-0 (hardback), 978-1-5381-6177-7 (eBook). Glenn Diesen is professor at the University of South-Eastern Norway and an editor at the *Russia in Global Affairs* journal.

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## News, Commentary and Reports:

### Afghanistan – after NATO

In August 2021, the Afghan Taliban retook control of Afghanistan, after an almost 20-year US and NATO military intervention. The country is now in the grip of a major economic and humanitarian crisis, a situation exacerbated by many international donors suspending aid.

Since the Taliban takeover there has also been a rise in Islamic State (IS-KP) [attacks](#) across the country. The Taliban have raided IS-KP refuges, arrested hundreds of suspected members in the east and limited freedom of movement between provinces, but with little success in blunting the threat from IS-KP. US intelligence agencies have also expressed [concerns](#) about the potential for al-Qaeda to regain a foothold in Afghanistan.

All 24 female US senators sent a [letter](#) to President Biden in November urging his administration to develop an "interagency plan" that preserves the human rights of Afghan women and girls. The letter stated that US disengagement from Afghanistan risks "hard-won gains" for Afghan women and girls' participation in public life. The senators added that Taliban leaders are not upholding their promises to ensure the safety of women under their government.

Reasons for the rapid collapse of Afghanistan's military and government following the US and NATO troop withdrawal continue to be hotly debated. In late October, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, the US government's Afghanistan watchdog, [accused](#) the State and Defense Departments of suppressing information that lawmakers need to make a comprehensive assessment of it. In November, the *Wall Street Journal*

[reported](#) that an undercover network of Taliban operatives infiltrated government ministries, universities, businesses and aid organizations years before the Afghan government's collapse. These undercover agents allegedly played a role in the Taliban's seizure of Kabul in August.

A US military investigation into a US drone strike in Kabul in August that killed 10 Afghan civilians concluded that it was a tragic mistake but did not violate any laws. "The investigation found no violation of law, including the law of war. Execution errors combined with confirmation bias and communication breakdowns led to regrettable civilian casualties", Lieutenant General Sami Said, the inspector general for the US Air Force, said in the November [report](#). In December, the Pentagon announced that it would take no disciplinary action against personnel involved in the drone strike. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby [acknowledged](#) a "breakdown in process" in the errant strike but nothing that called for "personal accountability".

Meeting in Riga on 1 December 2021, NATO Foreign Ministers discussed the lessons learned from the alliance's engagement in Afghanistan. NATO conducted a "a comprehensive political and military assessment" over the autumn, with the active involvement of allies and experts. The [assessment](#) found that NATO's engagement in Afghanistan demonstrated immense capacity and military capabilities, and that in an increasingly complex security environment, crisis management should remain a core task for NATO. It also concluded that the international community's level of ambition in Afghanistan extended far beyond degrading terrorist safe havens, and that in future, allies should continuously assess strategic interests, set achievable goals, and remain aware of the dangers of mission expansion. The assessment makes several other

recommendations, including on maintaining interoperability with operational partners; considering the political and cultural norms of host nations, as well as their ability to absorb capacity-building and training; and ensuring timely reporting and meaningful consultations. It also suggests that NATO should consider how to strengthen its capabilities to conduct short-notice, large-scale evacuation operations in the future. For a critique of this assessment, see the NATO Watch comment above.

Fred Kaplan, [The End of the Afghanistan War Was Even Worse Than Anyone Realized](#), Slate, 17 December 2021

Charli Carpenter, [Western Sanctions Are Condemning Afghanistan to Famine](#), World Politics Review, 10 December 2021

Andrew Bacevich, [With Afghanistan War Commission, a chance for accountability at last](#), Boston Globe, 16 December 2021

**Must Read:** Steve Coll and Adam Entous, [The Secret History of the U.S. Diplomatic Failure in Afghanistan](#), New Yorker, 10 December 2021

[West condemns Taliban over 'summary killings' of ex-soldiers and police](#), The Guardian, 5 December 2021

[NATO chief says mission creep, corruption hurt Afghan effort](#), Associated Press, 1 December 2021

[Afghanistan Lessons Learned Process](#), NATO Factsheet, November 2021

[Dozens of Former Afghan Security Forces Dead or Missing Under Taliban, Report Says](#), New York Times, 30 November 2021

[More Afghans who worked with NATO are settling in Allied countries](#), NATO News Release, 23 November 2021

Brian Hausle and Matt Montazzoli, [Finding the Appropriate Balance of Risk in Over-the-Horizon Strikes](#), Lawfare, 21 November 2021

Rory Stewart, [The Last Days of Intervention: Afghanistan and the Delusions of Maximalism](#), Foreign Affairs, November/December 2021



[After Afghanistan, US trying to mend trust gap with NATO](#), Jerusalem Post, 11 November 2021

Tim Willasey-Wilsey, [What Stands Between the Taliban and Recognition?](#) RUSI Commentary, 11 November 2021

Stacie Pettyjohn, [Over-the-Horizon Does Not Have to Mean Next Door](#), Lawfare, 7 November 2021

**Must Read:** Nick Turse, [Was the Afghan War a Schell Game? Getting It Right Is Always the Wrong Approach When It Comes to America's Wars](#), TomDispatch, 4 November 2021

[Afghans who worked with NATO start new life in Canada](#), NATO News Release, 4 November 2021

[‘Honest mistake’: US strike that killed 10 Afghan civilians was legal, says Pentagon](#), The Guardian, 4 November 2021

**Must Read:** Brianna Rosen, [The Longest War is Over the Horizon](#), Just Security, 1 November 2021

Barnett Rubin, [The Once and Future Defeat in Afghanistan](#), War on the Rocks, 1 November 2021

Haroro J. Ingram, Andrew Mines and Omar Mohammed, [The Taliban Haven't Changed, But U.S. Policy Must](#), Lawfare, 31 October 2021

**Must read:** Ann Jones, [“Now Is the Time to Be Angry”: Remembering Forgotten Afghanistan](#), TomDispatch, 31 October 2021

Adam Weinstein, [How to prevent tens of thousands of Afghans from starving to death](#), Task and Purpose, 29 October 2021

[NATO's Afghan mission hit by ‘mission creep,’ official says](#), Associated Press, 27 October 2021

[Afghanistan: Defence committee chair says NATO 'gave up' on country and did not have 'resolve and commitment' to see mission through](#), Sky News, 27 October 2021

[Nato was a political failure in Afghanistan, says defence secretary](#), The Guardian, 26 October 2021

[Islamic State in Afghanistan could have capacity to strike US next year](#), The Guardian, 26 October 2021

[US nearing a formal agreement to use Pakistan's airspace to carry out military operations in Afghanistan](#), CNN, 23 October 2021

[NATO Thanks Pakistan for Aid in Evacuation of Foreigners from Afghanistan](#), Newsweek Pakistan, 21 October 2021

[More Afghans who worked with NATO being resettled in Allied countries](#), NATO News Release, 14 October 2021

[Afghanistan: What will the Taliban do without an enemy to fight?](#) Deutsche Welle, 11 October 2021

[Afghan NATO forces flee to Istanbul to seek refuge](#), RFI, 10 October 2021

[Afghanistan: US and Taliban meet for their first talks since NATO withdrawal](#), INews, 9 October 2021

[Allies continue their joint efforts to resettle Afghans who worked with NATO](#), NATO News Release, 7 October 2021

This book examines the first two years of the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM-A) between 2009–2011. It portrays the role that NTM-A played in the war in Afghanistan and explains the achievements and difficulties associated with developing the Afghan Army and police forces. One of the preliminary conclusions was that US policy makers “should think through the implications of war with and against people whose cultures, traditions, customs, and histories are completely alien to the West”.

Craig C. Felker and Martin Loicano, [No Moment of Victory: The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan, 2009–2011](#), Air University Press, September 2021

## 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. Several members of the Arctic Council have announced a significant strengthening of defence capabilities in the Arctic.

#### Abstract (abridged)

After the Cold War, international relations in the Arctic were characterised by cooperation and diplomacy. However, since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, largely peaceful relations in the High North have been endangered by growing military competition between Russia and Western Arctic powers. The lack of military to military dialogue between Russia and the West has exacerbated the situation. This article examines the developing Arctic security dilemma and the chances of its mitigation. Two recent developments provide potential grounds for optimism. The new US administration has pledged to return America to global engagement and multilateralism. In 2021, the Russian Federation is scheduled to become chair of the Arctic Council and the Arctic Coastguard Forum, the main intergovernmental institutions in the region. These events provide an opportunity to rebuild greater trust and confidence in relations between Russia and its Arctic neighbours.

James Kenneth Wither, [An Arctic security dilemma: assessing and mitigating the risk of unintended armed conflict in the High North](#), *European Security*, vol.30 no4, 2021, pp. 649-666

[US and Norwegian Defense Leaders Discuss Coordination of Allied Activity in the High North](#), High North News, 17 November 2021

Simon Dalby, [It's Time to Put Arctic Peoples at the Heart of Arctic Security](#), CIGI Commentary, 22 October 2021

[Defense Chief: U.K. Needs to Develop 'Capability and Deterrence' in the High North](#), USNI News, 19 October 2021

## Arms Control and Disarmament

The global arms control and disarmament process, despite earlier achievements, has reached a critical point. The [extension](#) of New START in February by the United States and Russia brought with it some optimism, but overall the picture remains gloomy. The demise of key arms control treaties (such as the ABM Treaty, the CFE Treaty, and the INF Treaty) has left a void in the arms control architecture.

The Open Skies Treaty is also close to a de facto demise following the withdrawal of both the United States and Russia. The Chemical Weapons Convention is also in difficulty in relation to allegations of use in Syria and Novichok attacks on individuals by Russia. The CTBT, concluded 25 years ago, is still not yet in force. Within NATO, debates continue about when arms control is possible, why states pursue it, and the nature of the benefits and drawbacks of various proposals.

Michael Krepon, [The rise and demise of arms control](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 15 November 2021

Judy Dempsey, [The West Cannot Rescue Arms Control Alone](#), Carnegie Europe, 2 November 2021

Harry Tarpey, [U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Talks: The View from Europe](#), National Interest, 19 October 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 largely being driven by the United States (which announced [two key AI strategy documents](#) in 2019). In January 2021, the US Congress [backed](#) the creation of a national AI strategy as part of the country's annual defence authorization bill.

In October 2021, NATO Defence Ministers agreed the alliance's first AI strategy. According to the NATO Secretary General, it [will](#) "set standards for responsible use of artificial intelligence, in accordance with international law; Outline how we will accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence in what we do; Set out how we will protect this technology; and address the threats posed by the use of artificial intelligence by adversaries". The strategy is expected to allow AI to be integrated in areas such as data analysis, imagery and cyber defence.

An official summary of the strategy is available [here](#). A critique of the strategy is available [here](#).

Also in October, NATO carried out a two-week exercise, [REPMUS](#), in Portugal, which aimed to test the integration of NATO systems and explore existing and new military roles for autonomy. More than 900 personnel, 70 autonomous uncrewed systems and 11 navy vessels took part in REPMUS.

For nearly a decade, a coalition of non-governmental organisations has pushed for a treaty banning lethal autonomous weapons systems, 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. Exactly where the alliance falls on the spectrum between permitting AI-powered military

technology in some applications and regulating or banning it in others is expected to be part of the Strategic Concept debate. It is imperative that this debate 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.

In November, all 193 member states of UNESCO [adopted a historical text](#) that defines the common values and principles needed to ensure the healthy development of AI.

Ulf Ehlert, [Why our values should drive our technology choices](#), NATO Review, 16 December 2021

[US rejects calls for regulating or banning 'killer robots'](#), The Guardian, 2 December 2021

**Must Read:** Peter Burt, NATO's new AI strategy: lacking in substance and lacking in leadership, NATO Watch [Briefing Paper No.88](#), 8 November 2021

[NATO ups the ante on disruptive tech, artificial intelligence](#), Defense News, 3 November 2021

[Nato defence ministers agree to artificial intelligence strategy](#), Airforce Technology, 25 October 2021

Zoe Stanley-Lockman and Edward Hunter Christie, [An Artificial Intelligence Strategy for NATO](#), NATO Review, 25 October 2021

[Summary of the NATO Artificial Intelligence Strategy](#), NATO Official Text, 22 October 2021

[Royal Navy launches missile from autonomous vessel in NATO exercise](#), Naval Today, 15 October 2021

## 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 in August 2020, for months protesters across the country turned out in large numbers, only to be met with a fierce police crackdown. The Belarus authorities continued to crackdown on dissidents throughout 2021, sparking sanctions from the United States and European Union.

In November NATO and EU officials blamed President Lukashenko for encouraging Iraqis and other nationals to cross over into Europe through their country. With a growing humanitarian crisis on the Belarus-Poland border, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees [called](#) the “instrumentalization of migrants and refugees” to achieve political goals “deplorable”. The NATO Secretary General [described](#) the Lukashenko regime’s use of vulnerable people to put pressure on Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania as “cynical and inhumane”. In addition to standing in “full solidarity with the allies affected”, NATO was also cooperating closely with the EU to counter this “hybrid campaign”. Polish authorities [used](#) water cannons and tear gas against migrants trying to cross the country’s border with Belarus. By the end of December, although the border situation had eased somewhat, the underlying issues remained unresolved.

David Saveliev, [The Poland-Belarus migrant crisis is not a ‘hybrid attack’ on Europe](#), Responsible Statecraft, 10 December 2021

[Minsk, Moscow Announce Joint Military Drills As NATO Prepares To Discuss Russian Troop Buildup](#), RFE/RL, 29 November 2021

[EU, NATO stress unity on Belarus](#), Politico, 28 November 2021

Oleg Ignatov, [Behind the Frictions at the Belarus-Poland Border](#), International Crisis Group, 22 November 2021

[NATO restates support for Poland over Belarus migrant crisis](#), Reuters, 16 November 2021

[Polish PM suggests asking NATO to hold talks on migrant crisis](#), Euronews, 15 November 2021

[Statement](#) by the North Atlantic Council on the situation at the Poland-Belarus border, NATO News Release, 12 November 2021

[Belarus, Russia worried by NATO buildup near their borders — Minsk](#), Tass, 10 November 2021

[Nato says it ‘stands ready’ to step in as Belarus sends thousands of migrants to EU border](#), The Telegraph, 9 November 2021

[Time to ask Nato for help, opposition leader says of migrant crisis](#), The First News, 8 November 2021

[NATO: Belarus’s use of migrants on Poland border a ‘hybrid attack’](#), CGTN, 8 November 2021

Tijs van de Vijver, [Belarus: The Next Crimea?](#) RUSI Commentary, 8 November 2021

Brian Whitmore, [Has Lukashenko’s anti-NATO gambit paid off with Putin?](#) Atlantic Council, 27 October 2021

Matthew Anderson, [Belarus’s Lawfare Against Latvia, Lithuania and Poland](#), Lawfare, 25 October 2021

## China-NATO relations

### *NATO policy towards China*

The first minor reference to China in a NATO [statement](#) was at the London summit in 2019, but transatlantic concerns have accelerated since then, driven largely by current US administration perceptions that democracies are in an existential confrontation with autocracies. The June 2021 NATO summit communiqué stopped short of labelling China a threat, but it did state that Beijing presents “systemic challenges” (para. 55), citing China’s increasingly assertive actions in building a nuclear arsenal, space and cyber warfare capabilities, as well as joining Russia in military training exercises. In a gesture toward diplomacy and engagement, the

communiqué also stated that the alliance will maintain “a constructive dialogue with China where possible”, including on the issue of climate change, and calls for China to become more transparent about its military and especially its “nuclear capabilities and doctrine” (para 56).

Details on a specific NATO policy towards China in the communiqué were sparse (China is mentioned in only three paragraphs), but will likely be more prominent in the new Strategic Concept to be approved in 2022. The increased emphasis on the rise of China is in part the realization of President Biden’s [strategy](#) to build a coalition of like-minded nations to confront China over its activities. The Pentagon has been publishing [annual reports](#) on China’s growing military capabilities since 2000 and the latest version asserts that in some areas, China has already surpassed the US military. For the United States, China in the longer term poses a greater strategic threat than Russia. Much of Europe, however, seems to be seeking an alternative approach and many European NATO allies already have strong economic ties with Beijing that influence their foreign policy. However, there is clearly a growing transatlantic convergence in attitudes towards China.

Chinese officials argue that their country remains committed to peaceful development and international cooperation through the United Nations and blame the United States and others for trying to thwart its inevitable rise as a global power. The main immediate policy implications of NATO’s tilt towards China are likely to be: a strengthening of alliance partnerships in the region, namely with Japan, South Korea and Australia (with increased exchanges of information and more interoperability of the armed forces); and greater intelligence sharing within NATO about Chinese capabilities and to detect and defend against cyber intrusions.

NATO will not label China as an adversary in its next Strategic Concept in part because it is too far away from the alliance’s sphere of interest, but members must still try to match its technological progress, according to the chair of NATO’s Military Committee, Adm. Rob Bauer, of the Royal Netherlands Navy, in [discussions](#) with reporters in November.

### ***Chinese nuclear proliferation***

In October, Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, [warned](#) that China’s test of a hypersonic weapons system was “very close” to the kind of Sputnik moment that triggered the space race, while a new US Department of Defense [report](#) claimed that China has accelerated its production of nuclear warheads, and could develop over 1,000 warheads by 2030. This significantly exceeds the pace and size the Pentagon projected in 2020, which estimated China would only have over 400 warheads by 2030 – it is currently [estimated](#) to have around 350 nuclear warheads, while the United States and Russia each have about [4,000 in their military stockpile](#). Additionally, the report said that China would increase its annual military budget by 6.8 percent. China is currently the world’s second-largest military spender, after the United States.

While Chinese nuclear proliferation is undoubtedly a growing concern, it needs to be set in the context of wider nuclear proliferation, including by NATO’s own three nuclear-armed states. For example, US [spending on nuclear weapons](#) is expected to climb by \$140 billion over the next ten years, while the UK has just [lifted the ceiling](#) on its nuclear weapons arsenal.

### ***Biden-Xi Jinping virtual summit***

President Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in November in a [virtual summit](#) aimed at preventing the two countries from escalating into a broader conflict. The conversation produced no breakthroughs or a joint



statement, but US administration officials insisted that was not the intent of the meeting. The leaders also did not reach an agreement to hold further talks on strategic nuclear issues and conflicts in cyberspace. Some analysts think that China and the United States are entering a period of détente.

In December President Xi Jinping and Russian President Putin met over a [video conference](#) in a show of solidarity between the two leaders. Putin pledged that he would attend the Beijing winter Olympics, which Biden and other leaders are boycotting. The two leaders talked about building independent financial infrastructure to reduce their reliance on Western banks and vulnerability to punitive measures, and they also discussed the possibility of a three-way summit with India.

David Tobin, [Peering into China's Decision-Making: What are the 'Xinjiang Papers'?](#) RUSI Commentary, 16 December 2021

Michael Klare, [Countdown to World War III? It May Arrive Sooner Than You Think](#), Tom Dispatch, 2 December 2021

[China is too far away from NATO to be called an adversary, says top alliance general](#), Defense News, 19 November 2021

Ananmay Agarwal and Ryan J A Harden, [China's Hypersonic Missile Test Does Not Change the Nuclear Calculus](#), RUSI Commentary 18 November 2021

John J. Mearsheimer, [The Inevitable Rivalry: America, China, and the Tragedy of Great-Power Politics](#), *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021

Hal Brands and John Lewis Gaddis, [The New Cold War: America, China, and the Echoes of History](#), *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2021

Tong Zhao, [China's silence on nuclear arms buildup fuels speculation on motives](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 12 November 2021

Guy-Philippe Goldstein, [A 'Cold War 2.0' Between the US and China](#), RUSI Commentary, 10 November 2021

Jan Gerber, [Don't Make NATO into an Instrument of Containing China](#), Newsweek, 6 November 2021

Nadia Helmy, [NATO's "new containment strategy" to contain China in the areas of influence of its member states](#), Modern Diplomacy, 6 November 2021

Noah Barkin, [Closing Window: Transatlantic Cooperation on China Under Biden](#), GMF Policy Brief, 3 November 2021

Noah Barkin, [Watching China in Europe - November 2021](#), GMF Insights, 2 November 2021

Julia Pallanch and Amy Yanan Zhang, [China, 5G, and NATO Security](#), GMF Analysis, 27 October 2021

Fiona Edwards, [Europe should avoid being drawn into the US's cold war on China](#), Public Reading Rooms, October 2021

David Vine, [Do You Want a New Cold War? The AUKUS Alliance Takes the World to the Brink](#), TomDispatch, 21 October 2021

## 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.

According to the June 2021 [summit communiqué](#), NATO aims to "become the leading international organisation when it comes to understanding and adapting to the impact of climate change on security" and pledges to "significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from military activities" (paragraph 6g). The NATO Secretary General is tasked with formulating "a realistic, ambitious and concrete target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by the NATO political and military structures and facilities and

assess the feasibility of reaching net zero emissions by 2050”.

It is unclear whether these commitments will be enough to satisfy climate activists—especially considering the August [report](#) by the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that warned that climate change is proceeding at an “unprecedented” pace. Close to 100 non-governmental organisations from around the globe [signed a petition](#) that calls on governments to pledge to reduce military greenhouse gas emissions at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), which took place in November 2021 in Glasgow. Similarly, over 12,000 individuals and organisations [signed a petition](#) to stop excluding military pollution from climate agreements.

The NATO leaders at their summit also endorsed a separate [Action Plan](#) to implement the NATO Agenda on Climate Change and Security, which includes four key commitments: an annual Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment; an adaptation strategy; a mitigation strategy; and an outreach strategy. To track the progress made, re-assess the level of ambition, and inform the way ahead, the first Climate Change and Security Progress Report will be delivered at the 2022 NATO Summit.

While all these are worthy aims, they are likely to be undermined by the twin pressures of raising military spending (see section on defence spending below) to hit NATO targets and the increases in military exercises as part of efforts to contain China and Russia. Moreover, 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 member states to carry out similar climate and carbon

reduction actions when climate policies are not equally prioritised within NATO.

While the NATO Action Plan does encourage cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation, the focus up until now has primarily been on the resulting security risks and the promotion of energy saving in member states’ armed forces. 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.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg participated in COP26 and addressed the high-level roundtable Climate, Peace and Stability: Weathering Risk Through COP and Beyond. Stoltenberg [said](#) that climate change is now at the heart of NATO’s agenda, because: “climate change is a crisis multiplier, climate change is making our world more dangerous”.

Alfred McCoy, [To Govern the Globe: Washington's World Order and Catastrophic Climate Change](#), TomDispatch, 18 November 2021

Mark Nevitt, [Key Takeaways From the Glasgow Climate Pact](#), Lawfare, 17 November 2021

**Must Read:** Jacob Parakilas, [Can a Military Be Both Accountable and Environmental?](#) Militaries can be made greener or they can have more human control. They probably can’t be both, The Diplomat, 16 November 2021

[World’s militaries avoiding scrutiny over emissions, scientists say](#), The Guardian, 11 November 2021

[NATO Secretary General attends United Nations “COP26” Climate Change Conference](#), NATO News Release, 2 November 2021

[Remarks](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the high-level roundtable “Climate, Peace and Stability: Weathering Risk Through COP and Beyond” in Glasgow, UK, 2 November 2021

[Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte supports Canada's plan to establish NATO centre for climate security](#), The Globe and Mail, 29 October 2021

Anatol Lieven, [Climate chaos: the global threat multiplier of our time](#), Responsible Statecraft, 26 October 2021

This report by NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence in Lithuania provides a comprehensive overview of the best examples of implemented and planned solutions of energy efficiency and renewable energy performance within the military land, naval and air operations of NATO and several PfP countries. The paper aims to support NATO and PfP nations in improving their knowledge about energy efficiency and renewable energy matters in the military field to reduce negative environmental impacts and defence expenditures, as well as to improve the resilience and security of the military forces.

[Energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions in NATO and PfP countries' military operations](#), NATO Energy Security Centre of Excellence, Final Report of the Study, July 2021

## Collective Defence

To fulfil NATO's three core tasks of collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, the alliance employs a mix of conventional military capabilities, cyber defences, missile defences and a nuclear dimension. 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 relatively small multinational forces to be underpinned by a robust reinforcement strategy.

At the NATO June 2021 Summit, the alliance committed “to the full and

speedy implementation of ongoing work to further strengthen our deterrence and defence posture, and we pledge to continue to improve the readiness of our forces and to strengthen and modernise the NATO Force Structure to meet current and future defence needs” (para.6b, summit communique). Of course, a key question is deterrence and defence against whom or what? The communiqué sets out arguments that NATO faces threats and/or challenges from both states—Russia (paras 3, 9-15, 26, 44, 46 and 50), China (paras 3 and 55-56), Syria (paras 49 and 52-53), North Korea (para 51), Iran (para 52), Belarus (para 54)—and non-state actors, the latter (sometimes in collaboration with one or more of the aforementioned states) manifesting themselves through international terrorism (paras 17-18), hybrid threats (para 31) and cyber threats (para 32).

Most of the communiqué language on strengthening deterrence and defence refers to progress on implementing previous decisions, including “taking forward a new military strategy through the implementation of two significant military concepts that will further strengthen our ability to deter and defend against any potential adversary and to maintain and develop our military advantage now and in the future. The deterrence and defence concept provides a single, coherent framework to contest and deter and defend against the Alliance's main threats in a multi-domain environment, and will strengthen our preparedness to address challenges, particularly pervasive instability and strategic shocks. The [warfighting concept](#) provides a long-term vision for maintaining and developing NATO's decisive military edge” (para 22).

There is also a commitment to “further strengthening and modernising the NATO Force Structure”, including organising and training the combat forces of the NATO Readiness Initiative (30 major naval combatants, 30 heavy

or medium manoeuvre battalions, and 30 kinetic air squadrons) “as larger combat formations for reinforcement and high-intensity warfighting, or for rapid military crisis intervention” (para 23).

[Secretary General and top commanders discuss NATO’s military adaptation at annual conference](#), NATO News Release, 25 November 2021

Hans Binnendijk and Julian Lindley-French, [Prioritize NATO’s core task: collective defense](#), Defense News, 23 November 2021

[NATO naval presence outnumbers competitors ‘two to one’, says alliance maritime commander](#), Jane’s, 5 November 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.

The NATO June 2021 summit communiqué describes cyber threats to the security of the alliance as “complex, destructive, coercive, and becoming ever more frequent” (para 32). In response, the leaders endorsed a new “Comprehensive Cyber Defence Policy”. The policy document remains classified, but the communiqué reaffirms “NATO’s defensive mandate” and “that a decision as to when a cyber attack would lead to the invocation of Article 5 would be taken by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis”. The possibility of military action against hackers is set out further in the paragraph: “Allies recognise that the impact of significant malicious cumulative cyber activities might, in certain circumstances, be considered as amounting to an armed attack”. And “If necessary, we will impose costs on

those who harm us. Our response need not be restricted to the cyber domain”. One of the most important changes is the insertion of the word “cumulative”, which was deliberately added in recognition that the cyber threat landscape is evolving, and that several low impact cyber incidents by the same threat actor can have the same impact as a single destructive cyberattack.

Russia is identified as the main source of cyber threats, because of the country’s “attempted interference in Allied elections and democratic processes; political and economic pressure and intimidation; widespread disinformation campaigns; malicious cyber activities; and turning a blind eye to cyber criminals operating from its territory, including those who target and disrupt critical infrastructure in NATO countries” (para 12).

Cyber Coalition 21, one of the world’s largest annual exercises in cyber defence, took place in Tallinn, Estonia (and remotely in other locations), in late November-early December. Participants from all NATO allies, as well as partners Finland, Ireland, Sweden and Switzerland, took part, alongside those from industry and academia – over 1,000 people in total.

[NATO’s flagship cyber defence exercise kicks off in Estonia](#), NATO News Release, 30 November 2021

Sidharth Kaushal, [Operationalising the Constrain Concept: Competing Below the Threshold](#), RUSI Whitehall Report, December 2021

Arsalan Bilal, [Hybrid Warfare – New Threats, Complexity, and ‘Trust’ as the Antidote](#), NATO Review, 30 November 2021

[NATO’s Deputy Secretary General: Allies are committed to a free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace](#), NATO News Release, 17 November 2021

[Deputy Secretary General participates in the 2021 GoTech World Conference](#), NATO News Release, 11 November 2021



[Technological Advancements Key to Combating Modern Issues, NATO Secretary General Says](#), The Hoya, 8 October 2021

Stefan Soesanto, [The 19th of July: divided or united in cyberspace? From the EU and NATO to Five Eyes and Japan](#), Elcano Working Paper 11/2021, 4 October 2021

## **Defence Budgets, Procurement and Burden Sharing**

The burden-sharing debate has been a long-standing issue within NATO. The reluctance of many European member states to spend more on defence has been a major grievance of most US presidents.

The June 2021 NATO summit communiqué reiterated the alliance's commitment to the 2014 Defence Investment Pledge, "in its entirety" (para 6b and 35), but "specific requirements for additional funding up to 2030 and the resource implications across the NATO Military Budget, the NATO Security Investment Programme and the Civil Budget", as well as identifying "potential efficiency measures" were pushed down the road to be agreed at the 2022 NATO summit (para 7).

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.

The Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD) met in October for its Autumn Plenary. The CNAD's mission is to enable cooperation in the delivery of interoperable military capabilities to improve NATO forces' effectiveness across the spectrum of NATO's core tasks. Several key topics were addressed, including innovation, climate, emerging and disruptive technologies and NATO's major programmes. According to the [NATO news release](#), the CNADs "provided guidance on the best way to deliver capabilities critical for deterrence and defence as quickly as possible, through reinforced cooperation between Allies and with the NATO Science and Technology Organisation and the Strategic Commands".

In December the NAC agreed NATO's civil and military budgets for 2022. The civil budget is set at €289.1 million and the military budget is set at €1.56 billion. The civil budget provides funds for civilian personnel, operating costs, and civilian programme expenditures, and has risen by 8.9% from the 2021 level (mainly due to cyber-related costs). The military budget covers the operating costs of NATO Command Structure headquarters and programmes, missions and operations around the world, and has reduced 3% from the 2021 level. For NATO's third principal common funded element, the NATO Security Investment Programme (NSIP), covering major construction and command and control system investments, the 2022 ceiling is €790 million.

[NATO agrees 2022 civil and military budgets](#), NATO News Release, 16 December 2021

[Missile contract with NATO allies at risk over House spending cuts: Navy](#), Breaking Defense, 3 December 2021

[Allies select initial two Pilot Training Campuses for NATO Flight Training Europe](#), NATO News Release, 2 December 2021

[NATO Extends Military Cargo Contract](#), Aviation Week, 19 November 2021



[NATO expands international partnerships on aviation matters](#), NATO News Release, 19 November 2021

[NATO Secretary General addresses the NATO Industry Forum](#), NATO News Release, 19 November 2021

[Nine Firms to Study NATO's AWACS Replacement](#), Defense Post, 9 November 2021

[Seeking To Shape NATO's Future Surveillance + Control Are Northrop Grumman + Airbus](#), SatNews, 8 November 2021

[Conference of National Armaments Directors meets](#), NATO News Release, 27 October 2021

## Enlargement & Partnerships

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 summits routinely reaffirm the alliance's Open Door Policy and the June 2021 summit communiqué did so again, emphasising the right of all states to seek their own security arrangements, and only NATO (and no third party) having a say in the membership process (para. 66). With regard to possible membership for Ukraine and Georgia, however, a group of mainly West European NATO countries have, since 2008, blocked even the path towards a Membership Action Plan (MAP). Aspirant countries are required to go through the MAP process, but the MAP process for both

Georgia and Ukraine continues to be blocked for lack of consensus.

The United States [signalled](#) in advance of the NATO summit that it would not support a MAP for Ukraine and Georgia. The communiqué used identical language for both countries (carried forward from earlier summits): "We reiterate the decision made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that [Georgia/Ukraine] will become a member of the Alliance with the MAP as an integral part of the process; we reaffirm all elements of that decision... We stand firm in our support for [Georgia's/Ukraine's] right to decide its own future and foreign policy course free from outside interference". Furthermore, the two countries "should make full use" of the Georgia-NATO Commission and Ukraine-NATO Commission, and their respective Annual National Plans to advance their membership aspirations (paras. 68 and 69).

[NATO Expansion: The Budapest Blow Up 1994](#) - What Yeltsin Heard: From Cold War to "Cold Peace"; Clinton's Two Tracks Collide - NATO Enlargement and Russia Engagement, National Security Archive, Georgetown University, Briefing Book #780, 24 November 2021

James Jay Carafano, [How NATO Can Avoid the Death Spiral on Europe's Frontier](#), The National Interest, 8 November 2021

## Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan contributes to NATO-led operations and cooperates with the allies and other partner countries in many other areas. NATO supports the country's reform efforts.

[President of Azerbaijan visits NATO HQ](#), NATO News Release, 14 December 2021

[Azerbaijan, NATO mull post-war regional situation](#), Azer News, 25 October 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.

In October the Republika Srpska leadership took steps to undermine federal institutions, sparking the worst political crisis in twenty years. The chief international peace envoy in Bosnia [warned](#) that country could face the biggest “existential threat of the post-war period” if the international community did not curb threats of separatist actions by Bosnian Serbs.

[NATO reaffirms its commitment to Bosnia and Herzegovina at change of command ceremony](#), NATO News Release, 8 December 2021

[Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina enhance their operational standards through training equipment donated by the United Kingdom](#), NATO News Release, 17 November 2021

Harun Karčić, [Why is Bosnia on the Brink Again?](#) RUSI Commentary, 9 November 2021

[Bosnia Must Join NATO 'Soon as Possible' Minister Says as Russia Looms Over Serb Crisis](#), Newsweek, 5 November 2021

Hamza Karčić, [NATO should redeploy to Bosnia](#), Newsweek, 5 November 2021

## **Colombia**

Colombia has been a NATO partner since 2017 – the alliance's first in Latin America. In recent years, NATO and Colombia have strengthened dialogue and cooperation in several areas, including cyber security, terrorism, the fight against corruption and maritime security. In October 2021 the two sides committed to deepening political dialogue and intensifying practical cooperation on good governance, military training, interoperability, demining and maritime security.

After a series of high-level meetings and staff talks throughout 2021, Colombia and NATO agreed in December a new framework of cooperation, the Individually Tailored Partnership Programme – the first partner to transition into such a new programme. In addition to the ongoing practical cooperation in areas such as good governance, military training, interoperability, demining and maritime security, views were exchanged on security implications of climate change, disinformation, strategic communications and ways to address cyber threats.

[NATO and Colombia agree on a new partnership](#), NATO News, 8 December 2021

## **EU-NATO relations**

NATO and the EU signed a Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation in July 2016. 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.

Ed Arnold, Editor, [Ad-Hoc European Military Cooperation Outside Europe](#), RUSI Occasional Paper, December 2021

Giovanna De Maio, [Opportunities to deepen NATO-EU cooperation](#), Foreign Policy at Brookings, Report, December 2021

[The NATO International Military Staff hosts the EU Military Staff for second edition of joint meeting](#), NATO News Release, 16 November 2021

[Doorstep statement](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Council of the EU, 16 November 2021

[NATO Secretary General meets with European Union Defence Ministers](#), NATO News Release, 16 November 2021

[US defense chief says EU must choose own new military capabilities](#), Politico, 22 October 2021

Hans Binnendijk and Alexander Vershbow, [Needed: A transatlantic agreement on European strategic autonomy](#), Defense News, 10 October 2021

[EU leaders discuss EU-NATO declaration](#), Helsinki Times, 7 October 2021

## ***Finland***

Finland, while formally non-aligned, has in recent years been drawn closer to NATO, having stepped up cooperation with the United States as well. This situation has been described as “post-neutral” and “pre-allied”. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and ambassadors of the North Atlantic Council met with Finnish President Sauli Niinistö in Helsinki in October at the start of a three-day visit to Finland and Sweden.

[Finland, in \\$11B Deal, Opts to Buy Lockheed-Martin F-35A Fighters](#), SOFREP, 12 December 2021

[Doors of Nato remain open to Finland, assures secretary general](#), Helsinki Times, 26 October 2021

[Nato chief visits Helsinki, leaves door open for Finnish membership](#), YLE, 25 October 2021

[Secretary General welcomes NATO's close cooperation with Finland](#), NATO News Release, 25 October 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.

[Press statements](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Georgia, Irakli Garibashvili, 15 December 2021

[NATO Secretary General and Prime Minister of Georgia discussed the security situation in the region](#), NATO News Release, 15 December 2021

[Russia Threatens NATO Regarding Accession of Georgia and Ukraine](#), Georgian Journal, 3 December 2021

[Substantial NATO-Georgia Package \(SNGP\) and Georgian Ministry of Defence host “Intermarium Cyber Security Forum 2021”](#), NATO News Release, 5 November 2021

[New NATO Envoy Concludes Georgia Visit](#), Civil.ge, 21 October 2021

[NATO Sec-Gen's Special Representative for Caucasus, Central Asia: Georgia NATO's key partner](#), Agenda.ge, 20 October 2021

[Georgia, Not Russia, to Decide Georgia's NATO Membership -Stoltenberg](#), Civil.ge, 11 October 2021

[In show of continued support, the NATO Military Committee visits Georgia](#), NATO News Release, 8 October 2021

## ***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.

[Israeli navy joined drill with NATO task force ships](#), Israel Defense, 28 November 2021

[Bennett meets NATO secretary-general on sidelines of COP26](#), Times of Israel, 2 November 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.

Andrew Strahan, [To End the Smuggling and Trafficking Crisis NATO Needs to Aid Libya](#), International Policy Digest, 5 December 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.

[Coronavirus Response: NATO donates ventilators to Tunisia](#), NATO News Release, 15 December 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.

Vuk Vuksanovic, [Aligning with the Non-Aligned: Serbia Follows in the Footsteps of Old Yugoslavia](#), RUSI Commentary, 19 October 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.

[NATO Secretary General welcomes deepened cooperation with Finland and Sweden](#), NATO News Release, 27 October 2021

[Secretary General stresses strength of NATO's partnership with Sweden](#), NATO News Release, 26 October 2021

### ***Ukraine***

Ukraine has become the main [flashpoint](#) between Russia and the West as relations have soured to their worst level in the three decades since the Cold War ended. In 2014, Russia invaded, occupied and illegally annexed Crimea. Russia also provides military support to armed separatists in the Donbas in eastern Ukraine, while individual NATO member states—including the United States—provide military aid to the Ukrainian Government, and NATO itself provides military training and advice as part of a long-standing partnership programme with the country. The conflict in Donbas has led to more than 14,000 people being killed since 2014.

Ukraine is considered a [close partner](#) of NATO but is not yet a member, although it has aspired to join since applying to begin a NATO Membership Action Plan in 2008. However, there is little chance that Ukraine will join NATO in the foreseeable future, because there is no consensus in the alliance about the degree of confrontation with Russia

that its members are prepared to risk. Nonetheless, Moscow sees potential Ukrainian membership as the latest chapter in NATO's historical expansion to Russia's borders.

Since 2017, NATO has deployed four international battalion groups to Poland and to the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in order to deter Russia from launching an attack on a NATO member state. As a non-member state, no such security guarantees extend to Ukraine.

International tensions have been rising in recent weeks over Ukraine and the Black Sea region. Ukraine and Western states accuse Russia of building up nearly 100,000 troops, as well as tanks, artillery and short-range ballistic missiles near Ukraine, sparking fears of a possible attack. Other than some [satellite photos](#) little other information has been made public to back up the intelligence allegations of an increased threat. US media has reported that intelligence officials fear a Russian invasion of Ukraine could begin in early 2022. Russia denies any such plan and accuses Ukraine of building up its own forces in preparation for an attempt to retake the Donbas region, an allegation Ukraine has denied. A [similar crisis](#) played out over a Russian troop buildup in April this year, but US and Ukrainian officials have warned that the threat of a Russian offensive this winter is more likely because of a failing ceasefire agreement in the Donbas and a worsening political climate.

After the NATO Foreign Ministers meeting in December, the NATO Secretary General [called](#) on Russia "to be transparent, de-escalate and reduce tensions". He added that "Any future Russian aggression against Ukraine would come at a high price and have serious political and economic consequences for Russia". of Ukraine". President Biden [said](#) that sending US troops to defend Ukraine in response to a Russian military buildup on the country's borders "[i]s not on the table".

Rather, in lieu of US troop deployment to Ukraine, Biden said his administration would work to reinforce the US military presence in NATO countries. The G7 group also [warned](#) Russia of massive consequences and severe costs if it pursues further military aggression against Ukraine. In a joint statement, the G7 countries condemned the Russian military buildup on the Ukrainian border and called on Russia "[t]o de-escalate, pursue diplomatic channels, and abide by its international commitments on transparency of military activities".

### **Outlook**

The situation in and around Ukraine remains fluid and unpredictable. There is no certainty about Russia's intentions, and there is heightened rhetoric and disinformation from all sides. A full-scale attack by Russia seems improbable and Russia's political aim is most likely to neutralise Ukraine and turn it into a buffer state. It would be optimal, from its point of view, to have Donbas recognised as autonomous with a leadership elected that is sympathetic to Moscow. On this basis, as Anatol Lieven of the Quincy Institute has [argued](#), it still ought to be possible to find a reasonable compromise in accordance with the 2015 Minsk II protocol: full autonomy for the Donbas within Ukraine, under Ukrainian sovereignty but without Ukrainian troops, and guaranteed by a UN peacekeeping force.

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[Responding to Russia's New Military Buildup Near Ukraine](#), International Crisis Group Europe Briefing N°92, 8 December 2021

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David Cortright, [Biden threatened harsh sanctions should Russia invade Ukraine. Putin may not be deterred](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 7 December 2021

[NATO defense chiefs discuss situation around Ukraine in broader context](#), Ukrinform, 7 December 2021

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[Kremlin denies plans to invade Ukraine, alleges NATO threats](#), ABC News, 12 November 2021

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[Coronavirus response: NATO support to Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 14 October 2021

[Ukraine demands strategic clarity from NATO on membership prospects — Stefanishyna](#), Ukrinform, 11 October 2021

## **NATO Defence Ministers Meeting, 21-22 October 2021**

The NATO Defence Ministers Meeting took place on the 21-22 October 2021 at the NATO HQ in Brussels. The meeting took forward some of the key decisions taken at the June 2021 summit meeting (see NATO Watch [briefing No.85](#)), with a focus on three main issues: NATO's deterrence and defence posture, especially in relation to Russia; the situation in Afghanistan; and NATO-EU cooperation. The key activities and decisions taken were as follows:

- ⇒ Ministers endorsed a confidential new overarching military plan and a new set of capability targets (also secret) designed to counter simultaneous threats ranging from ground forces to cyber-attacks across the Euro-Atlantic area.
- ⇒ Ministers reviewed progress in implementing a package of political and military measures introduced in June 2020 in response to a perceived growing threat from Russia's missile systems (see NATO Watch [Briefing no. 78](#)).
- ⇒ Ministers discussed the lessons learned process in Afghanistan and some of the first reports from that process (none of which have been made public). They also agreed to monitor any attempts by international terrorist groups to regroup in Afghanistan.

⇒ A NATO Innovation Fund was launched with 17 member states (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK) in the lead, which is intended to invest 1 billion Euros in cutting-edge “emerging and disruptive” technologies. NATO is also creating a Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA), which will provide a network of technology test centres and accelerator sites to harness civilian innovation for security purposes.

- ⇒ Ministers agreed NATO's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) [strategy](#), which it was claimed includes standards of responsible use of AI, in accordance with international law. It also outlines how NATO will accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence, protect this technology and address the threats posed by the use of AI by adversaries.
- ⇒ The Nuclear Planning Group discussed NATO's nuclear posture and the nuclear ban treaty, but no details were disclosed.
- ⇒ Ministers endorsed NATO's 2021-2025 Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- ⇒ Ministers from 11 member states (Albania, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Spain, Poland, the UK and USA) launched three multinational projects to provide CBRN protection equipment, develop and procure CBRN detection and identification systems, as well as potentially establish a network of CBRN defence facilities.
- ⇒ Ministers from 15 member states (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and the UK and USA) reaffirmed their commitment to collaboratively

procure Ground Based Air Defence capabilities

Bradley Blankenship, [NATO's existential crisis](#), CGTN, 23 October 2021

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[NATO Defence Ministers Address Key Issues for Allied Security](#), NATO Act, 22 October 2021

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[NATO Defence Ministers lay ground for Madrid Summit](#), NATO News Release, 21 October 2021

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[Fifteen Allies deepen cooperation on Ground Based Air Defence](#), NATO News Release, 21 October 2021

[NATO to boost air and missile defense investments to counter Russia](#), Defense News, 21 October 2021

[Eleven Allies launch multinational projects to boost CBRN defence](#), NATO News Release, 21 October 2021

[Doorstep statement](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers on 21 and 22 October at NATO Headquarters, 21 October 2021

[Secretary General welcomes US Secretary of Defense to NATO](#), NATO News Release, 21 October 2021

[Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Opening Remarks at Bilateral Meeting](#), US Department of Defense, 21 October 2021

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## **NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting, November-December 2021**

The NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting took place on the 30 November-1 December 2021 in Riga, Latvia. The meeting focused on six main issues: The situation in and around Ukraine; the situation on the border with Belarus; NATO's role in arms control; NATO's next Strategic Concept; the lessons learned in Afghanistan; and the situation in the Western Balkans. The key activities and decisions taken were as follows:

- ⇒ Ministers expressed concerns that Russia is on the verge of invading Ukraine. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned that aggression against Ukraine "would come at a high price and have serious political and economic consequences for Russia".
- ⇒ Ministers discussed the results of a "comprehensive political and

military assessment” of the lessons learned from NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan. None of the various internal and expert reviews that contributed to this assessment, nor the assessment itself have been made public. NATO published a short 730-word [Factsheet](#) on the Afghanistan Lessons Learned Process containing a handful of broad conclusions and recommendations.

⇒ Ministers also discussed the situation in Belarus, the Western Balkans, arms control and the nuclear ban treaty, and NATO’s next Strategic Concept. No new significant developments were disclosed in any of these issues.

[NATO Secretary General discusses Russia's military build-up near Ukraine, Belarus' hybrid campaign against Allies](#), NATO News Release, 2 December 2021

[Closing press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Foreign Ministers in Riga, Latvia, 2 December 2021

[Foreign Ministers address lessons learned from NATO's engagement in Afghanistan](#), NATO News Release, 1 December 2021

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[NATO Foreign Ministers discuss Black Sea security, Afghanistan, Western Balkans](#), NATO News Release, 1 December 2021

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## NATO Military Committee

On 6 December, the 30 Allied Chiefs of Defence came together in a virtual meeting of the Military Committee to discuss the security challenges facing the alliance.

[NATO Chiefs of Defence meet virtually to address the current security challenges facing the Alliance](#), NATO News Release, 6 December 2021

[Military Intelligence Committee Chair Visit](#), NATO ACT News Release, 15 October 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.

The Assembly's [Declaration 460](#), adopted in November 2020, laid out the Assembly's main recommendations on how to adapt NATO for the next decade. Policy recommendations adopted by the Plenary Assembly in Lisbon, Portugal on 11 October 2021 were as follows:

[RESOLUTION 466](#) - DEVELOPING A WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY, INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED APPROACH TO RESILIENCE FOR ALLIED DEMOCRACIES - resolution presented by the Committee on Democracy and Security

[RESOLUTION 467](#) - SUPPORTING NATO'S COMMITMENT TO STRONGER DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE TOWARDS 2030 - resolution presented by the Defence and Security Committee

[RESOLUTION 468](#) - LEARNING THE LESSONS OF NATO'S ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN - resolution presented by the Defence and Security Committee

[RESOLUTION 469](#) - ALLIED DEFENCE SPENDING AND CAPABILITIES DEVELOPMENT - resolution presented by the Economics and Security Committee

[RESOLUTION 470](#) - MAINTAINING NATO'S FOCUS ON THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE - resolution presented by the Political Committee

[RESOLUTION 471](#) - REAFFIRMING TRANSATLANTIC COHESION AND IMPLEMENTING 2021 NATO BRUSSELS SUMMIT DECISIONS - resolution presented by the Political Committee

[RESOLUTION 472](#) - REVIVING ARMS CONTROL IN A DYNAMIC STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT - resolution presented by the Science and Technology Committee

[NATO PA wraps up Annual Session with focus on update of Alliance Strategic Concept](#), NATO PA News Release, 12 October 2021

[NATO Secretary General takes part in the 67th Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly](#), NATO News Release, 11 October 2021

[Legislators urge NATO to put democratic values at heart of the Alliance](#), NATO PA News Release, 11 October 2021

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[NATO PA urges greater engagement in the Middle East and North Africa](#), NATO News Release, 10 October 2021

[NATO urged to draw China into arms control talks, press Russia to respect obligations](#), NATO PA News Release, 10 October 2021

[NATO warned of Russia, China attempts to undermine rules-based order and Western values](#), NATO PA News Release, 10 October 2021

[Pandemic must not derail defence spending ambitions, NATO governments told](#), NATO PA News Release, 10 October 2021

[Covid, Afghanistan are NATO Parliamentary Assembly's top agenda](#), DTNNext, 9 October 2021

[Pandemic underscores the need for NATO to reinforce resilience against wide range of threats](#), NATO PA News Release, 9 October 2021

[NATO PA's Connolly: Commitment to democratic values essential in NATO Strategic Concept review](#), NATO PA News Release, 9 October 2021

[NATO PA weighs inputs to Strategic Concept revamp](#), NATO PA News Release, 7 October 2021

## Nordic Security

This year the Nordic Council asked NATO's Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, to address the annual parliamentary assembly (2-4 November) in Copenhagen. The

invitation marks another discreet step towards more security cooperation among the Nordic countries.

[Secretary General: NATO, Finland And Sweden Share Same Security Interests](#), Eurasia Review, 25 October 2021

[Nato invite sees Nordic states stepping up security cooperation](#), EU Observer, 25 October 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). A total of 86 countries are now [state parties or signatories to the TPNW](#), but none are NATO member states.

NATO's three nuclear-armed member states are clearly part of the nuclear proliferation problem: US [spending on nuclear weapons](#) is expected to climb by \$140 billion over the next ten years, while the UK recently [lifted the ceiling](#) on its nuclear weapons arsenal. The NATO June 2021 summit communiqué contained the very welcome statement that "We have no intention to deploy land-based nuclear missiles in Europe" (para 26). The communiqué also reiterates a longstanding commitment "to the full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects" and support for "the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons" (para 47), while reasserting that "as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance" (para 40). If the "strongest and most successful alliance in history" (para 2) is unable to break this nuclear Catch 22 then the long-term prospects for the NPT are not promising. Moreover, while continuing to argue that its nuclear arrangements are "fully consistent with the NPT" ([they are not](#)), the

communiqué "reiterates our opposition" to the TPNW as being "inconsistent with the alliance's nuclear deterrence policy, is at odds with the existing non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, risks undermining the NPT, and does not take into account the current security environment". Apart from the fact that the TPNW is clearly inconsistent with NATO's nuclear deterrence posture, the rest of the arguments are very [questionable](#).

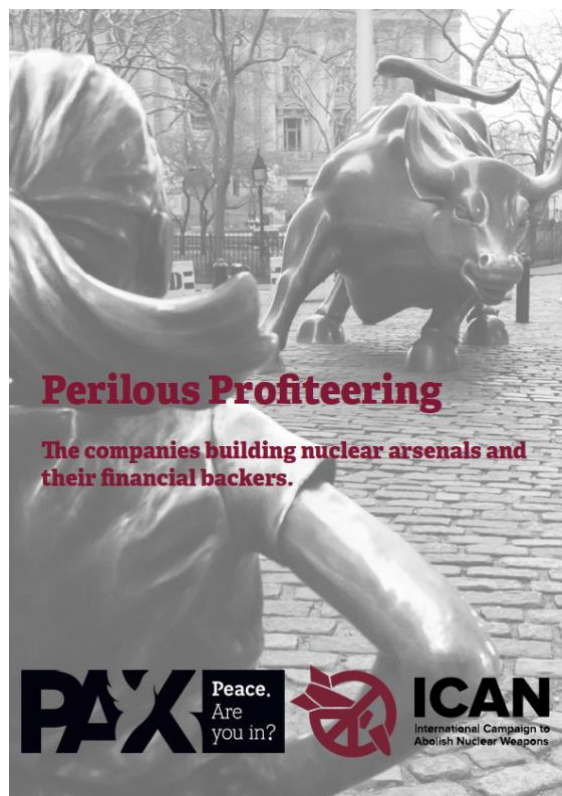
Despite attempting to present a united front about its status as a "nuclear alliance" cracks are becoming visible, with growing support for the TPNW by constituencies [within the alliance](#) and growing pressure from former world leaders. First, in September 2020, fifty-six former presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers and defence ministers from 20 NATO member states, as well as Japan and South Korea, issued an [open letter](#) calling on current leaders to join the TPNW. The former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and two former NATO Secretaries General, Javier Solana and Willy Claes, were among the co-signers.

Second, two NATO member states—Germany and Norway—have announced that they will be observer states at the first Conference of States Parties to the TPNW, which will take place at the UN in Vienna on 22-24 March 2022. Norway was the first NATO state to [announce](#) its participation, following the election of a new government in September. The new government's platform also says that it will increase Norway's efforts for nuclear disarmament. These decisions led to vigorous exchanges of views within the Norwegian media, including an [interview](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and an [opinion piece](#) by his Chief of Staff (in Norwegian) that attempted to sway public opinion against attendance. However, support for the TPNW within the country is high: several Norwegian

political parties support Norway's accession to the treaty.

NATO's unity on this issue was further fractured when Germany's new coalition government also agreed to attend as an observer state. Under a [coalition agreement](#) signed by the Social Democrats, the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats on 24 November, Germany's participation as an observer will be based on the results of the upcoming nuclear NPT review conference in January 2022, and the agreement also commits Germany to closely consult with its allies.

By attending the nuclear ban conference as observers, Germany and Norway will send a strong positive signal that at a minimum there is respect for differing positions on nuclear weapons possession within NATO.



A new Don't Bank on the Bomb report [Perilous profiteering: The companies building nuclear arsenals and their financial backers](#) details how 338 financial institutions made \$685 billion available to 25 nuclear weapon producing companies from China,

France, India, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The joint report by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and PAX finds that fewer banks are investing in the companies behind nuclear weapons, although more money is getting invested in total.

Oliver Meier and Maren Vieluf, [From Division to Constructive Engagement: Europe and the TPNW](#), Arms Control Today, December 2021

Michal Onderco and Miles A. Pomper, [NATO's Nuclear Deterrent Gets a Reprieve—for Now](#), World Politics Review, 8 December 2021

Peter Jenkins, [The British public wants NATO to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 18 November 2021

Constanze Stelzenmüller, [Nuclear weapons debate in Germany touches a raw Nato nerve](#), Financial Times, 16 November 2021

Carlo Trezza, [The environmental dimension of the use of nuclear weapons](#), ELN Commentary, 12 November 2021

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Joe Cirincione, [How the nuclear game is rigged to maintain the status quo](#), Responsible Statecraft, 9 November 2021

Stian Jenssen, [The road to a world without nuclear weapons](#), VG, 27 October 2021 (in Norwegian)

Sebastian Brixey-Williams, [The 'Responsibility Turn' in Nuclear Diplomacy](#), BASIC, 26 October 2021

[Germans clash over nuclear deterrence against Russia](#), Euractiv, 25 October 2021

[German Defence Chief: NATO must be ready to use nukes to deter Russia](#), RT, YouTube, 22 October 2021

[Norway first Nato state to commit to participating at the MSP](#), ICAN, 21 October 2021

[Restoring Confidence Across Today's Nuclear Divides: Symposium Report](#), UNIDIR, 2021

#### Abstract

Stationing of US nuclear weapons in Europe is a pillar of NATO deterrence. Despite their growing contestation, scholarly research on contemporary attitudes of both voters and political elites to the continued stationing of these weapons on their soil is lacking. We conducted original surveys of 2020 Germans and of 101 Bundestag members. Our results show scepticism about the military utility of US nuclear weapons in Germany, and aversion towards their use. At the same time, the results show a sizable support among both politicians and citizens for their removal from German territory as part of new nuclear arms control initiatives.

Michal Onderco and Michal Smetana, [German views on US nuclear weapons in Europe: public and elite perspectives](#), *European Security*, vol.30 no.4, 2021, pp.630-648

## Operations and Missions

### *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 2021, 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.

As was the case in Afghanistan, the United States operates a parallel deployment in Iraq of about 2,500 troops as part of a global coalition supporting local security forces in their fight against the Islamic State. For years, Iraqi militias, some linked to Iran, have carried out periodic attacks on facilities housing US soldiers with the declared aim of expelling them

from the country. In July President Biden [announced](#) that the US combat mission in Iraq would close by the end of the year (a decision reiterated by the Pentagon in December), with the mission shifting to advisory and training roles. This was a largely symbolic statement since US troops have not been involved in major fighting in Iraq for some time. It seems likely, however, that Iraqi militias will persist in attacking US forces, raising questions about the mission's sustainability and whether pressure to terminate the deployment will grow in Washington.

[U.S. Announces End to Combat Mission in Iraq, but Troops Will Not Leave](#), New York Times, 9 December 2021

### *Kosovo*

Two decades after the withdrawal of Serbian forces, Kosovo's security is still guaranteed by 4,000 NATO troops, known as KFOR. In late September tensions escalated on the Serbia-Kosovo border triggered by a dispute over vehicle license plates. Kosovo's government deployed special police forces to the border crossings to impose a new rule of removing Serb license plates from cars coming into the country, saying that a 10-year-old deal had expired. Pristina said they were replicating what Serbia had done for the past decade. Protesting the new rule, Kosovo Serbs blocked the border with trucks, and people could only cross on foot. Serbian military jets and helicopters also flew close to the border in an apparent show of force. However, an agreement was reached in early October to deescalate tensions.

## 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. Since the summer of 2019 there have been no meetings of the NATO-Russia Council.

The June 2021 NATO Summit reaffirmed Russia as the key “threat” to NATO. The communiqué, mirroring language from earlier summit declarations, describes Russia’s “aggressive actions” as constituting a threat to Euroatlantic security (para. 3). It then goes on to criticize in some detail (over seven consecutive paragraphs) the build-up in Russian weaponry, its “widespread disinformation campaigns”, “malicious cyber activities”, the 2014 annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, and other aggressive acts, before concluding that Moscow has “intensified its hybrid actions against NATO Allies and partners, including through proxies” (para. 12).

The NATO Secretary General has confirmed that the alliance remains committed to the so-called dual-track approach of defence and dialogue; while Stoltenberg reiterated that NATO remains “ready to talk” the summit communiqué adds the rider that this will only happen when Russia’s “actions make that possible” (para 15). Since the illegal annexation of Crimea, NATO has suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, while leaving some channels open for dialogue on the situation in Ukraine and other matters.

In November, former NATO Secretary General (1999-2004) George Robertson claimed that Vladimir Putin had wanted Russia to join NATO but did not want his country to have to go through the usual application process and stand in line “with a lot of countries that don’t matter”. Robertson said Putin made it clear at their first meeting that he wanted Russia to be part of western Europe.

In December, amid heightened tensions between Russia and the West over allegations that Russia was building up its troops on its Ukrainian

border, Russia surprised the West with some sweeping proposals. The Russian proposals took the form of two draft treaties - one with [NATO](#) and the other with the [United States](#) - and were immediately dismissed by US and NATO officials as unrealistic. The proposals suggested NATO should offer written guarantees that it would not expand further east toward Russia and halt all military activities in the former Soviet republics, a collection of now-independent states extending from Eastern Europe to Central Asia.

Nonetheless, negotiations between Russia and the United States and NATO will begin in January, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [said](#) on 22 December. [Reports](#) suggests that NATO is looking to convene a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council on 12 January.

[NATO jets scrambled hundreds of times in 2021 to guard Allied airspace](#), NATO News Release, 28 December 2021

[NATO provocations may trigger armed conflict — Russian Defense Ministry](#), TASS, 27 December 2021

[Nato seeks Russia meeting in January](#), EU Observer, 27 December 2021

Vladimir Frolov, [Can Russia and NATO Come to an Agreement? Is there a realistic format for a political undertaking not to expand NATO to Russia’s borders?](#) Moscow Times, 22 December 2021

[Russian FM: Security talks with US, NATO to start next month](#), Associated Press, 22 December 2021

[Russia claims it will begin talks with US and Nato](#), The Guardian, 22 December 2021

Steven Pifer, [Russia’s draft agreements with NATO and the United States: Intended for rejection?](#) Brookings, 21 December 2021

Benjamin Arbuter and Kurt Carlson, [The Changing Face of Russian Counter-Irregular Warfare](#), War on the Rocks, 21 December 2021

[Putin warns of possible military response over ‘aggressive’ Nato](#), The Guardian, 21 December 2021



[How the Kremlin Is Militarizing Russian Society](#), New York Times, 21 December 2021

[The Guardian view on Russia's Nato demands: upping the ante](#), The Guardian, Editorial, 20 December 2021

[Russia Demands 'Urgent' U.S. Talks, Warning of 'Military Response' to NATO Activity](#), Moscow Times, 20 December 2021

Doyle McManus, [Russia feels threatened by NATO. There's history behind that](#), Los Angeles Times, 19 December 2021

[Moscow demands NATO pulls back as fears of Russia invading Ukraine rise](#), Euro News, 18 December 2021

[Russia Lays Out Demands for a Sweeping New Security Deal With NATO](#), New York Times, 17 December 2021

[Russia sets out tough demands for security pact with NATO](#), Associated Press, 17 December 2021

[Russia issues list of demands it says must be met to lower tensions in Europe](#), The Guardian, 17 December 2021

Draft, [Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia, Unofficial translation, 17 December 2021

Draft, [Agreement on measures to ensure the security of The Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization](#), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russia, Unofficial translation, 17 December 2021

**Must Read:** Katrina vanden Heuvel and James Carden, [Hang up the magical thinking and try strategic empathy on for size](#), Responsible Statecraft, 17 December 2021

Tom Keatinge, [Sanctioning Russian Aggression: The West Must Accept Economic Self-Harm](#), RUSI Commentary, 15 December 2021

Lauren Sukin, [Is Russia preparing for war?](#) Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 9 December 2021

[Putin Says Russia Has 'Right to Defend its Security' Amid NATO Tensions](#). Moscow Times, 8 December 2021

[Russia to unveil security pact proposals in bid to restrain NATO](#), Reuters, 2 December 2021

Alina Inayeh, Michael Kimmage and Michal Baranowski, [Disquiet on the Eastern Front: A Conversation among Bucharest, Warsaw, and Washington on Russia's Multifaceted Offensive and Options for the West](#), GMF, 1 December 2021

[Putin demands NATO guarantees not to expand eastward](#), Associated Press, 1 December 2021

In the very early years of the post-Cold War era, many analysts and observers had hoped that Russia would slowly but surely converge in some ways with the United States. They predicted that Russia would move toward a form of liberal democracy. By the late 1990s, it was clear that such an outcome was not on the horizon. And in more recent years, quite the opposite has happened: the United States has begun to move closer to Russia, as populism, cronyism, and corruption have sapped the strength of US democracy. This is a development that few would have foreseen 20 years ago, but one that US leaders should be doing everything in their power to halt and reverse.

Fiona Hill, [The Kremlin's Strange Victory: How Putin Exploits American Dysfunction and Fuels American Decline](#), Foreign Affairs, November/December 2021

Why did relations between Washington and Moscow deteriorate so badly? History is rarely monocausal, and the decay was the cumulative product of US and Russian policies and politics over time. But it is hard to escape the fact that one particular US policy added to the burdens on Russia's fragile young democracy when it was most in need of friends: the way that Washington expanded NATO.

M. E. Sarotte, [Containment Beyond the Cold War: How Washington Lost the Post-Soviet Peace](#), Foreign Affairs, November/December 2021

[Russia to Boost Military in Face of 'Increased NATO Activity'](#), Moscow Times, 24 November 2021

[Russian Admiral Again Alleges NATO Submarine Responsible for 2000 Kursk Explosion](#), Newsweek, 22 November 2021

Mark Episkopos, [S-550: Should NATO and America Fear Russia's New Missile Defense System?](#) National Interest, 18 November 2021

[NATO brainwashing Europe's population, blaming Russia for everything — diplomat](#), Tass, 17 November 2021

[Putin Is Not Happy About U.S. and NATO Naval Activity in the Black Sea](#), Newsweek, 13 November 2021

Mark Galeotti, [Inside-out: what changing Russian domestic politics mean for NATO](#), NATO Review, 12 November 2021

Brian Harrington, [The US and NATO must counter Russia's dominance in the Black Sea](#), The Hill, 4 November 2021

[Ex-Nato head says Putin wanted to join alliance early on in his rule](#), The Guardian, 4 November 2021

[Russia Must Strengthen Its Air Defences To Counter NATO Threat, Says President Putin](#), Republican World, 2 November 2021

[Putin: Russia must build up defenses in view of NATO moves](#), ABC News, 1 November 2021

James Stavridis, [NATO Should Mend Its Rift With Russia — With Conditions](#), Bloomberg, 30 October 2021

Emmet McGeown, [The Russia-NATO Split, Explained](#), The Organization for World Peace, 29 October 2021

Andrey Kortunov, [NATO decision on Russian diplomats was seen in Moscow as the last straw to break the camel's back](#), Modern Diplomacy, 29 October 2021

[Moscow's rejection of relations with NATO is not big deal – Kremlin](#), Tass, 24 October 2021

[Putin Says NATO's Military Presence in Ukraine Poses Threat to Russia](#), Caspian News, 24 October 2021

[NATO agrees master plan to deter growing Russian threat](#), Satltwire, 21 October 2021

[Russia to suspend Nato diplomatic mission amid tension](#), BBC News, 19 October 2021

[Russia suspending mission to NATO in response to staff expulsions](#), CNN, 18 October 2021

[Russia to respond to expulsion of its diplomats by NATO - Foreign Ministry](#), Interfax, 7 October 2021

[Moscow pledges retaliation for NATO's expulsion of Russian diplomats](#), Xinhuanet, 7 October 2021

[Eight Russians expelled at NATO amid tensions](#), Associated Press, 7 October 2021

[NATO chief hits out at Russia's 'malign activities'](#), Associated Press, 7 October 2021

Robert Dalsjö and Michael Jonsson, [More than Decorative, Less than Decisive: Russian A2/AD Capabilities and NATO](#), *Survival*, vol.63 no.5, 2021, pp.169-190

## Secretary General

The search for a successor to Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has begun. Stoltenberg, a former prime minister of Norway, has served in NATO's top civilian post since October 2014. Member states extended his contract until September 2022, leaving little more than a year to install a replacement. Stoltenberg's successor is expected to be introduced at a NATO leaders' summit in Madrid in late spring or early summer in 2022. There is speculation that, after 72 years, the alliance might appoint its first woman to the job, while others suggest that given the continuing face-off with Russia, selecting an Eastern European would send an important signal to Moscow. Based on these two imperatives, three names have been cited as prospective candidates: former presidents Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović of Croatia and Dalia Grybauskaitė of Lithuania; and current Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid.

Leonard August Schuette, [Why NATO survived Trump: the neglected role of Secretary-General Stoltenberg](#), *International Affairs*, Volume 97, Issue 6, November 2021, pp 1863-1881

[NATO Secretary General joins Summit for Democracy](#), NATO News Release, 9 December 2021

[Speech](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the 67th Annual Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 11 October 2021

## Space Policy

While NATO owns ground-based infrastructure, it does not have its own space-based assets. Instead, it requires permission to access member states' satellites (which make up about 65 per cent of the global total of around 2,000 satellites) before they can be used. 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". At the NATO Leaders' Meeting in London in December 2019 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.

At the June 2021 NATO summit, the communiqué expanded the use of the mutual defence clause to include a collective response to attacks in space: "...attacks to, from, or within space" could be a challenge to NATO that threatens "national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security, and stability, and could be as harmful to modern societies as a conventional attack. Such attacks could lead to the invocation of Article 5. A decision as to when such attacks would lead to the invocation of Article 5 would be taken by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis," (para 33).

**NATO Watch comment:** Previously, Article 5 was only applied to more traditional military attacks on land, sea or in the air, and more recently in cyberspace. The extent to which NATO becomes an independent actor in space and the policy framework for addressing space challenges (and cyber warfare) are issues that should be more widely debated within member states' parliaments and by independent experts in the public domain. To this end, NATO should publish its space policy documents. It may only be a matter of time before weaponized systems are deployed in orbit, so to prevent this NATO should see space as an arms control opportunity. Again, greater transparency in NATO's policy-making process in the space domain is essential.

Russia conducted an anti-satellite missile [test](#) in November that generated a cloud of debris in low-Earth orbit, endangering the International Space Station. The US Space Command said in a statement that the debris will potentially pose a hazard to spaceflight activities for decades. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the test was 'reckless'.

[Statement by the North Atlantic Council on the recent anti-satellite missile test conducted by the Russian Federation](#), NATO Press Release, 19 November 2021

[Russian anti-satellite missile test was 'reckless,' says NATO](#), YouTube, 16 November 2021

[US accuses Russia of 'dangerous' behavior after anti-satellite weapons test](#), The Guardian, 15 November 2021

## Special Forces

A new report by RAND assesses the role of US Army special operations forces (ARSOF) in great-power competition, with a focus on competition with Russia. Among the key findings are that to successfully compete with Russia

and other great powers, the United States requires the ability to mitigate adversarial messaging efforts, engage key populations, support decisionmakers against influence efforts by malign actors, improve the resilience of partner institutions, assure foreign partners of US resolve, deter adversaries, and illuminate and disrupt adversary networks.

The report recommends that (a) the US Army revise future iterations of its multi-domain operations concept and other formal publications to provide more-concrete guidance for competition and the employment of ARSOF; (b) In cooperation with US Special Operations Command and other key stakeholders in the US government, US Army Special Operations Command should periodically review allocations of ARSOF against the evidence of utility in strategic competition to ensure optimal employment; (c) Given the high levels of risk and the other instruments available to it, the US government should use ARSOF for cost-imposing strategies only in relatively rare circumstances; and (d) Because the gains achieved through special operations tend to be incremental and are realized through local partners with their own objectives, it is imperative that the US government embed special operations in a broader, long-term political-military strategy.

Stephen Watts, Sean M. Zeigler, Kimberly Jackson, Caitlin McCulloch, Joe Cheravitch and Marta Kepe, [Countering Russia: The Role of Special Operations Forces in Strategic Competition](#), RAND Corporation, 2021

## Strategic Concept

At their summit in Brussels in June 2021, NATO leaders invited Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to lead the process of drafting a new [Strategic Concept](#), expected to be agreed at their next meeting in Spain in 2022. The current concept was published in 2010.

The new version is expected to prioritise and determine responses to the various geographic challenges and threats to Euro-Atlantic security: principally those from Russia, China, and the regions to NATO's south and south-east. NATO member states have not always agreed on the magnitude of these threats and challenges, or on what NATO's role in dealing with them should be, resulting in intra-NATO tensions. However, the [NATO 2030 process](#) has highlighted the likely direction of the next concept (see box).

### *The NATO 2030 process*

A NATO expert group report, [NATO 2030: United for a New Era](#), was published in December 2020 (see a NATO Watch [critique](#) of that report published in February 2021). The report's proposals were further elaborated by the NATO Secretary General in February 2021 (see [NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.81](#)). At the NATO Summit in June 2021 the NATO leaders affirmed an extraordinarily extensive global mission for NATO, as developed within the NATO 2030 process (see [NATO Watch Briefing Paper No.85](#)).

National Security Advisers from across the Alliance met in Brussels in October 2021 to review progress in key areas of the Strategic Concept, including enhancing deterrence and defence, technological innovation and responding to climate change.

Daniel S. Hamilton, [One Plus Four: what NATO's new Strategic Concept should say, and how to achieve it](#), Real Instituto Elcano, 17 December 2021

[NATO Secretary General underlines need for strong deterrence and defence](#), NATO News Release, 13 December 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General: our next strategic concept will not be gender blind](#), NATO News Release, 7 December 2021

[Secretary General shares ideas on NATO's next Strategic Concept](#), NATO News Release, 30 November 2021

[Speech](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the event: NATO's outlook towards 2030 and beyond, Riga, 30 November 2021

[NATO Partners invited to discuss the upcoming Strategic Concept](#), NATO News Release, 15 October 2021

[NATO Secretary General: Europe and North America must stand strong together](#), NATO News Release, 7 October 2021

Barbara Kunz, [European allies and the forthcoming NATO strategic concept](#), NATO Defence College Policy Brief no.15, September 2021

Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning, [NATO's Next Strategic Concept: Prioritise or Perish](#), *Survival*, vol. 63 no.5, 2021, pp.147-168

## Transatlantic Cooperation

At a keynote speech in October 2021 in Washington the NATO Secretary General highlighted the importance of transatlantic cooperation. The Secretary General [said](#): “The need for transatlantic unity is greater today than at any time since the end of the Cold War”. “We must always take our differences seriously and address them, but they do not change the big picture: the importance of Europe and North America standing together in NATO”, he added.

The change of the US administration as well as the socio-political implications of the coronavirus pandemic have redefined transatlantic policy dialogues and created new priorities, such as calls for increased cooperation around climate change and common values.

Lauren Sukin, [How Biden can improve European relations while pivoting to Asia](#), Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 18 November 2021

Nathalie Loiseau, [NATO's Weakness is Not Good News for Europe. We Need a Strong Transatlantic Link](#), RUSI Commentary, 14 October 2021

Nick Lokker, [Band-Aid Solution: How to Repair Transatlantic Security Communications](#), National Interest, 11 October 2021

## Transparency and Accountability

NATO decision-making suffers from a democratic deficit. Transparency weaknesses in NATO include a lack of basic organizational information, making it hard to know even who's involved; a lack of information about what the committees and working groups are doing as they develop the commitments for leaders to endorse; and weak measurement about how the member states are doing in fulfilling their commitments. In general, the process of policy formulation—the discussions, debates, arguments, meetings, research, back-and-forth—largely remains out of view and behind closed doors. Even when the NATO policy development process moves to an agreed course of action across the alliance, the default position remains to withhold information—largely because of NATO's long-standing secrecy and classification rules.

Despite this democratic deficit, the issue of transparency and accountability in NATO is largely a non-issue, as indicated by the scant literature on the topic and its omission from the NATO 2030 process. At the June 2021 NATO summit the member states made a commitment to “strengthen public communication as part of our overall approach”, but with no mention of improving transparency or of making the process more inclusive, except for a pledge to integrate gender perspectives.

Jeff Schogol, [The military keeps finding it did nothing wrong when it investigates itself](#), Task and Purpose, 15 November 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.

In October NATO released a revised [Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#). The new Action Plan supports NATO's commitment, reaffirmed at the 2021 Brussels summit, to further advance gender equality and integrate gender perspectives in all that NATO does, across political, civilian and military structures, from policies and planning, training and education, to missions and operations. Under the new Action Plan, cooperation with partners, international organisations and civil society will be further broadened and enhanced.

In November, Irene Fellin was appointed as the new NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. Fellin succeeds Clare Hutchinson, who held the job since 2018.

[NATO Secretary General's new Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security appointed](#), NATO News Release, 11 November 2021

[NATO releases new Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#), NATO News Release, 22 October 2021

## Security News from NATO Member States:

### Bulgaria

Commenting in a Facebook post in December about a possible NATO response to Russia's military build-up near the border with Ukraine, Defence Minister Stefan Yanev said that a deployment of NATO troops on its territory was not justified. "Such a decision would not match the allies' interests or the national interests of Bulgaria" he wrote. Yanev confirmed reports that various scenarios responding to Russia's actions are being considered by NATO, including the deployment of additional troops in Bulgaria and Romania under NATO's "Enhanced Forward Presence" mission, but added that "these are technical discussions and no decisions have been made".

[Bulgarian defense minister rejects possible NATO deployment](#), ABC News, 21 December 2021

[NATO general wants alliance troops in Bulgaria, Romania - Der Spiegel](#), Reuters, 18 December 2021

[NATO Secretary General welcomes Bulgaria's Prime Minister at NATO headquarters](#), NATO News Release, 17 December 2021

### Canada

In September Justin Trudeau won a third term as Canada's prime minister, with his Liberal party capturing the most seats in the snap election, a result he called a "clear mandate" to get the country through the pandemic. However, Trudeau will lead another minority government, meaning he will once again need to work with other parties to pass legislation.

Previously, Trudeau's administration embraced a feminist foreign policy—key components were 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 2021, the government released what they framed as a feminist federal budget, although it [included](#) a commitment to spend \$95 billion on 15 Surface Combatant vessels and 88 fighter jets (the cost of the latter is [estimated](#) at \$76.8 billion). The full life-cycle cost of these weapons is expected to [exceed](#) \$350 billion. More than 100 authors, academics and celebrities have [urged](#) Trudeau to scrap the new fighter jets. Canada's [stated rationale](#) for buying the jets is that: "A modern fighter jet fleet is essential for defending Canada and Canadian sovereignty and contribute to our NORAD and NATO commitments, now and in the future". The new fighter jet is expected to be chosen [early in 2022](#).

[Canada apologises for 'scourge' of military sexual misconduct](#), BBC News, 13 December 2021

Greg Fyffe, [Prepared: Canadian Intelligence for the Dangerous Decades](#), Reimagining a Canadian National Security Strategy Report No. 6, 15 November 2021

[Canada eyeing Kabul trip to restart consular ties — protected by special forces](#), Global News, 10 December 2021

Thomas Juneau and Stephanie Carvin, [Canadian Foreign Intelligence and the Future of Canada-U.S. Relations](#), Lawfare, 14 November 2021

Adrian Levy, [After COVID: Global pandemics and Canada's biosecurity strategy](#), Reimagining a Canadian National Security Strategy no.5, 8 November 2021

Bessma Momani [International Security: Canada's Role in Meeting Global Threats](#), CIGI, Reimagining a Canadian National Security Strategy no.4, 1 November 2021

Wesley Wark, [Pandemic Warnings: Taking Stock of the Canadian Military's Flawed Early Intelligence](#), CIGI Commentary, 27 October 2021

Stephanie Carvin, [Beyond AUKUS: Canada May Not Need Nuclear Subs — but It Is in Dire Need of a Strategy](#), CIGI Commentary, 18 October 2021

Simon Dalby and Leah Lawrence, [Climate Change Impacts on Canadian National Security](#), CIGI, Reimagining a Canadian National Security Strategy Report No. 2, 12 October 2021

## Denmark

In November a Danish frigate killed four pirates in waters south of Nigeria in an operation to protect shipping in the Gulf of Guinea.

[Danish frigate kills four pirates in Gulf of Guinea](#), Reuters, 25 November 2021

[Embassy of China in Denmark condemn NATO Secretary's speech on China](#), ScandAsia, 8 November 2021

[Secretary General thanks Denmark for its strong contributions to NATO](#), NATO News Release, 3 November 2021

## Estonia

The Estonian military is buying a 200-mile-range anti-ship cruise missile from Israel. The Blue Spear missile is Estonia's first anti-ship missile. "The chosen weapon system will form the cornerstone of Estonian naval defence for decades to come", said Jüri Saska, commander of the Estonian navy, which has just 300 sailors and six small, very lightly armed vessels.

[President Karis: Belarus shows NATO collective security as crucial as ever](#), ERR News, 10 November 2021

[Baltic Conference on Defense to focus on future of NATO, threats on northeastern flank](#), Baltic Times, 9 November 2021

David Axe, [Estonia is about to aim missiles at a key Russian weak](#)ness, Forbes, 11 October 2021

## France

In September France recalled its ambassadors to the US and Australia after "a stab in the back" as Canberra decided to rip up a submarine deal with Paris under the guise of AUKUS, a newly formed trilateral security partnership

between the US, UK, and Australia. The commercial dispute quickly morphed into a crisis of trust between Western allies. Calling the behaviour “unacceptable between allies and partners”, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian [said](#) the decision to return diplomats to Paris was made by President Emmanuel Macron. In October France and Greece announced a defence and security deal worth around 3 billion euros (\$3.5 billion), which includes the Greek purchase of three French warships.

[France takes the lead of NATO's highest readiness force](#), NATO News Release, 29 December 2021

[NATO Secretary General praises France's contributions to Euro-Atlantic security](#), NATO News Release, 10 December 2021

Jose Mikhail Perez & Christian Vicedo, [AUKUS and France as an Indo-Pacific Power](#), Geopolitical Monitor, 17 November 2021

[France and the United States Seek an Elusive Reconciliation](#), New York Times, 28 October 2021

Con Coughlin, Petulant Macron is pushing Nato to breaking point, Telegraph, 7 October 2021 (paywall)

## Germany

Federal elections were held in Germany on 26 September 2021 to elect the members of the 20th Bundestag. The centre-left Social Democrat SPD party won the election and formed a coalition with the Greens and liberal FDP. Germany's parliament formally elected Olaf Scholz as the country's next chancellor in December, ending Angela Merkel's 16-year tenure. The coalition's policy focus includes revamping Germany's economy, investing in infrastructure and combating climate change.

Germany will remain part of NATO's nuclear sharing agreement under its new government, according to the [coalition deal](#) agreed on 24 November. Germany does not possess nuclear weapons but hosts US nuclear bombs

that German Tornado fighter-bombers are meant to carry to target during a conflict.

The policy agreement also says the incoming government plans to observe the meeting of states parties to the nuclear ban treaty - Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) - to be held in Vienna in March 2022. It says Germany's participation as an observer will be based on the results of the upcoming review conference of the parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in January 2022. It also says Germany will closely consult with its allies.

Some parliamentarians in the new coalition oppose Berlin's participation in the nuclear sharing deal. The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had called the alliance's nuclear sharing "our ultimate security guarantee" on a visit to Berlin in November, and added he counted on Germany to remain committed to the agreement.

The new coalition aims to replace the German air force's ageing Tornado fighter-bombers, the only Bundeswehr plane fitted to carry US nuclear bombs, which has been in service since the 1980s. The defence ministry plans to phase it out between 2025 and 2030, while a decision to purchase F-18s as a replacement was postponed until 2022. The new coalition appears to want to find a nuclear-capable replacement, but could yet be deterred by the cost, thought to be in the tens of billions of Euros, or the [questionable utility](#) of continuing with the nuclear sharing role.

The coalition deal also included an agreement to arm the next generation of German military drones and to carry out an investigation of the chaotic evacuation from Afghanistan in August.

The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy and WILPF Germany, has launched a new policy brief: ['How militarised is Germany's foreign policy?'](#). By providing an analysis of Germany's

foreign and security policy priorities, decision-making processes, and multilateral engagement from a feminist perspective, this policy brief identifies entrenched militarisation in Germany's foreign and security policy. It also provides concrete actionable recommendations that can be taken by the German government.

[German defense minister: Russia will not 'dictate' to NATO](#), Deutsche Welle, 19 December 2021

[NATO Secretary General welcomes Germany's new Chancellor at NATO headquarters](#), NATO News Release, 10 December 2021

[Joint press conference](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, 9 December 2021

[NATO Secretary General: NATO needs a strong Germany](#), NATO News Release, 9 December 2021

[Berlin's new leadership could mean NATO spending rises and U.S. missiles stay in Germany](#), CNBC, 25 November 2021

[Germany to remain part of NATO's nuclear sharing under new government](#), Reuters, 24 November 2021

[Incoming German government commits to NATO nuclear deterrent](#), Defense News, 24 November 2021

[NATO Secretary General: Germany has a special responsibility to keep NATO strong](#), NATO News Release, 19 November 2021

[NATO Secretary General attempts to hold the line on nuclear sharing: Germany and Norway caught in the crosshairs](#), NATO Watch Comment, 23 November 2021

[Speech](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the German Atlantic Association 'NATO Talk' Conference 2021, 19 November 2021

Sebastian Biba, [Germany's relations with the United States and China from a strategic triangle perspective](#), *International Affairs*, Volume 97, Issue 6, November 2021, pp. 1905–1924

[NATO Secretary General discusses Belarus, Russia, with Chancellor Merkel](#), NATO News Release, 19 November 2021

[NATO expects Germany to stay in alliance's nuclear sharing – Stoltenberg](#), Yahoo News, 19 November 2021

Daniel Kochis, [The Next German Government Should Maintain NATO Commitments](#), Heritage Foundation, 8 November 2021

[First Joint German Special Ops and US Navy SEAL Mission](#), SOFREP, 23 October 2021

## Greece

In October France and Greece signed a defence and security deal worth around 3 billion euros, which includes the Greek purchase of three French warships. President Macron hailed the accord as a major boost for the EU's defence ambitions. The MoU for the purchase of the Belharra frigates was agreed less than two weeks after the AUKUS agreement led to the cancellation by Australia of a contract to buy French submarines. Macron said the arms sale was part of a deeper "strategic partnership" between the two countries to defend their shared interests in the Mediterranean.

Emmanuel Karagiannis, [New armaments require a new doctrine](#), Ekathimerini, 24 December 2021

[Greece ratifies landmark intra-NATO defence pact with France](#), Al Jazeera, 7 October 2021

## Hungary

In November, Ferenc Kajári, a Major General of the Hungarian Armed Forces became the 26th commander of KFOR for one year and the first Hungarian to hold the post. Kajári emphasized that, according to NATO's assessment, the security situation in Kosovo is stable but fragile.

[Hungarian assumes command of NATO mission in Kosovo](#), Budapest Business Journal, 20 October 2021

[NATO Deputy Secretary General meets with Hungary's Minister for Innovation and Technology](#), NATO News Release, 19 October 2021

## Italy

In October NATO hosted the NATO-Industry Forum 2021, the primary venue for strategic dialogue with industry on NATO capability planning, development and delivery.

[Italy hosts first training course for Allied Joint Air Operations](#), NATO News Release, 18 December 2021

[Secretary General praises Italy for major role in NATO](#), NATO News Release, 18 November 2021

[Italy hosts NATO-Industry Forum 2021](#), NATO News Release, 19 October 2021

## Latvia

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with President Egils Levits in Riga in late November ahead of the meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers that took place in Riga (see above).

[NATO Secretary General in Latvia: "an attack against one Ally is an attack on all Allies"](#), NATO News Release, 29 November 2021

## Lithuania

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited Lithuania (and Latvia – see above) in late November, together with the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, to demonstrate solidarity with NATO allies and EU member states in the Baltic region. In Lithuania, the Secretary General held discussions with President Gitanas Nausėda and Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė about developments on Lithuania's border and Russia's military build-up near Ukraine. The Secretary General said that all allies expressed solidarity with Lithuania and provided practical help, including through deployment of a NATO team of experts to Lithuania to share information, analysis, and experience in countering hybrid threats.

[Joint NATO-EU visit highlights solidarity and cooperation through visit to Baltic region](#), NATO News Release, 28 November 2021

[Joint press conference](#) with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda and Prime Minister of Lithuania Ingrida Šimonytė, 28 November 2021

[Lithuania says Belarus will keep testing West, urges NATO rethink](#), Reuters, 28 November 2021

Egle Murauskite, [Lithuania: Nuclear and Conventional Risk Assessments, and Policy Responses](#), BASIC, 28 October 2021

## Montenegro

Since joining NATO, Montenegro's small military force (consisting of 2,400 active-duty personnel) has modernised its weaponry and participated in several military and crisis management drills.

[Joint press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Prime Minister of Montenegro Zdravko Krivokapić, 23 November 2021

## North Macedonia

A ceremony to mark the inclusion of the Republic of North Macedonia in the NATO Air Policing system was held in December at Skopje airport.

[NATO Air policing protects North Macedonia's airspace](#), NATO News Release, 10 December 2021

## Norway

Norway was the first NATO state to announce its participation as an observer at the meeting of states parties to the nuclear ban treaty - Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) - to be held in Vienna in March 2022. Germany has since followed suit (see above). Norway's elections in September 2021 led to a change of government, with Jonas Gahr Støre of the Labour Party elected as Prime Minister. As Foreign Minister,



Gahr Støre was supportive of the “humanitarian initiative” process which led to the negotiations of the TPNW. The government’s platform also says that it will increase Norway's efforts for nuclear disarmament, take the initiative to focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and work together with countries inside and outside NATO for a world without nuclear weapons.

There were vigorous exchanges of views within the Norwegian media from [proponents](#) and [opponents](#) of Norway’s participation at the TPNW meeting – including this [interview](#) with the NATO Secretary General and an [opinion piece](#) by his Chief of Staff (articles in Norwegian). These attempts to sway public opinion in Norway come in the face of significant support for the TPNW within the country. Several Norwegian political parties have expressed support for Norway’s accession to the treaty, and in September 2020, six former Norwegian prime ministers, foreign ministers, and defence ministers signed an [open letter](#) calling on current leaders to “show courage and boldness – and join the treaty”. Dozens of Norwegian cities, including the capital, Oslo, have called on the Norwegian government to sign and ratify the TPNW, while a 2019 public opinion [poll](#) found that 78 per cent of Norwegians wanted their government to sign and ratify it (85 per cent of whom wanted Norway to join even if it were the first NATO country to do so).

In addition, Norway’s largest pension fund has divested from nuclear weapons-linked companies. It [sold holdings](#) totaling \$147 million in companies including Raytheon Technologies and Rolls-Royce Holdings Plc due to their links to nuclear weapons production.

Trine Jonassen, [Norway's Squeeze between Russia and NATO](#), High North News, 31 October 2021

## Poland

Poland plans to more than double the size of its military to at least 250,000 troops, the country’s defence ministry said in October. The plan is the new initiative of Poland’s radical rightwing government led by Law and Justice (PiS) and would make the Polish Army one of the largest in NATO. Other than enlarging the army, the plan – set out in a new draft bill dubbed “On Defence of the Fatherland” – assumes stepping up the modernization of the armed forces, and increasing the size of the so-called Territorial Defence, a kind of paramilitary service for civilians, to 50,000.

[Polish defense minister: Here’s how NATO must adapt](#), Defense News, 6 December 2021

[President asks Nato to boost readiness of its forces at eastern border](#), First News, 25 November 2021

[NATO Secretary General and Polish President address Belarus, Russian build-up near Ukraine](#), NATO News Release, 25 November 2021

[Polish police fire teargas at people trying to cross from Belarus](#), The Guardian, 16 November 2021

[Polish PM urges ‘concrete steps’ by Nato to address border crisis](#), The Guardian, 14 November 2021

Wojciech Lorenz, [Russia’s Strategy, Goals, Means and Ways – A View from Poland](#), BASIC, 1 November 2021

[Poland moots plans to make its army one of Nato’s largest](#), BNE Intelligence, 27 October 2021

## Romania

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin urged more defence cooperation among Black Sea allies during his [visit to Romania](#) in October. During talks in Bucharest with Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and Defence Minister Nicolae Ciuca, Austin said action was needed by littoral states of the Black

Sea amid Russia's "militarization" of the region.

[NATO Secretary General discusses situation in and around Ukraine with the Prime Minister of Romania](#), NATO News Release, 21 December 2021

[Joint press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with the Prime Minister of Romania Nicolae Ciucă, 21 December 2021

[In Romania, Pentagon Chief Urges More Black Sea Cooperation](#), RFE/RL, 20 October 2021

## Spain

NATO's next Summit will take place in Madrid on 29-30 June 2022, the Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced during a visit by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in October. The Spanish government intends to launch consultations on matters to do with NATO with the country's citizens, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said.

[Spanish air chief calls for Madrid to meet NATO's 2 percent defense spending goal](#), Defense News, 4 November 2021

Kim Cragin, Michael Bartlett and Will Crass, [Recalibrating U.S. Counterterrorism: Lessons Learned From Spain](#), Lawfare, 10 October 2021

[Spain wants to involve public in consultations on NATO](#), Big News Network, 9 October 2021

[NATO Secretary General visits Spain to prepare Madrid Summit](#), NATO News Release, 8 October 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. 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 September, President Erdoğan [announced](#) that Turkey will purchase another Russian air defence system, despite warnings from the US and other NATO allies that this could endanger the security of NATO. Erdoğan claimed that America's failure to sell Turkey the US-made Patriot air defence system led to his government's purchase of the Russian system. Later, during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Erdogan indicated that Turkey could work with Russia on joint defence and security projects, including potentially building more Russian nuclear reactors in Turkey.

[Turkey Urges Russia to Drop 'One-Sided' NATO Demands](#), Moscow Times, 27 December 2021

[Turkey-NATO cooperation is crucial for the country's security: Defence Minister Akar](#), Middle East Monitor, 19 November 2021

Cüneyt Güner & Mehmet Alper Sozer, [NATO-Turkey: An Ambiguous Relationship in an Unpredictable Security Domain](#), Small Wars Journal, 10 November 2021

[Turkey Accused Of Moving Its S-400 Missile Systems To A Critical NATO Base Housing American Nukes, F-35s](#), Eurasian Times, 8 November 2021

[Biden Tells Erdogan US and Turkey Must Avoid Crises](#), military.com, 31 October 2021

[President Biden Reaffirms Turkey's Importance as NATO Ally, Noting Concerns over Its Possession of Russian S-400](#), Caspian News, 31 October 2021

[Latest Erdogan spat leaves 'bitter aftertaste' in US-Turkey relations](#), Financial Times, 28 October 2021

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[Turkey and Russia: Are they rivals or cooperating competitors?](#) Times of India, 11 October 2021

Maximillian Hess, [Turkey's passage to Great Power status?](#) Foreign Policy Research Institute, 8 October 2021

## United Kingdom

### *Integrated Review*

In March 2021, the UK Government published its [Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy: Global Britain in a Competitive Age](#), as well as a Defence Command Paper, [Defence in a Competitive Age](#) and a [Defence and Security Industrial Strategy](#). The Integrated Review sets out a 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 preceding 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. The Government's process for developing the review has been [criticised](#) for "leaving the public, civil society and other stakeholders out in the cold" and that key strategic decisions "were taken outside of the official process and in the absence of any external consultation".

### *UK nuclear weapons*

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.

### *UK Defence Committee inquiry into NATO*

The UK Defence Committee has opened an [inquiry into the UK, US and NATO](#) that will examine how the UK intends to work with allies to counteract the shared threats identified. For written evidence to the committee see [here](#).

### *Attack on transparency*

The UK government has been [accused](#) of waging a secret war against transparency, using an array of tactics to block the release of information to the public. In a report published in October, the investigative journalism website [openDemocracy](#) alleged that last year was the worst year for transparency since the Freedom of Information Act came into force in 2005. It highlighted the government's own figures that show that in 2020, 41% of freedom of information requests by the public to central government departments were granted in full. Government statisticians acknowledge that "this is the [lowest figure since recording started in 2005](#)".

### *UK armed forces chief warns of war with Russia*

In November, the outgoing head of the UK's armed forces Gen Sir Nick Carter

[warned](#) that the UK military will have to be ready for war with Russia after recent tensions in eastern Europe, but he did not believe Vladimir Putin really wanted a “hot war” with the west. He said Russia was now a greater threat in eastern Europe than it was when he started in the role eight years ago, but he “distinctly hoped” there would not be a war with Russia.

Michael Nwankpa, [A Humane and Sensible Approach to the Immigration Crisis](#), RUSI Commentary, 21 December 2021

[After taking in Afghan commandos, the British military may try to build another elite special-operations force](#), Business Insider, 19 December 2021

Malcolm Chalmers, [The Spending Review and the UK's Strategic Priorities](#), RUSI Whitehall Report 3-21, 14 December 2021

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[Putin tells Boris Johnson urgent talks needed over Nato's plans for Ukraine](#), The Guardian, 13 December 2021

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[British army to get extra £8bn of kit as part of radical shake-up](#), The Guardian, 25 November 2021

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[Special forces hid evidence of Afghan killings](#), BBC News, 11 November 2021

Maryna Vorotnyuk, [UK-Ukraine Security Cooperation](#), RUSI, 10 November 2021

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[UK government ‘waging secret war against transparency’](#), The Guardian, 25 October 2021

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Abigail Watson and Lewis Brooks, [‘Persistent Engagement’, Persistent Risk: The impact of UK security assistance on rights and peace](#), Saferworld Infographic Briefing, October 2021

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Dan Lomas, [Forget James Bond? Public Perceptions of UK Intelligence](#), RUSI Commentary, 12 October 2021

Juliana Suess, [The First UK National Space Strategy](#), RUSI Commentary, 4 October 2021

## United States

### *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”.

In October CIA Director William Burns [announced](#) that the agency will reorganize to address key national security threats. The agency is launching two new centres, one focused on China and another focused on new technology and global problems like climate change and pandemics. These new priorities reflect a shift away from the last two decades, where terrorism was the focus among intelligence agencies.

It was also revealed in October that US forces have been secretly training Taiwan’s military for at least a year amid increasing concern over potential Chinese encroachment of the island. The United States has also sold billions of dollars of military equipment to Taiwan in recent years.

The US Navy and Army held [three tests](#) in October of hypersonic weapon component prototypes following reports of missile tests from China and North Korea. The United States has actively pursued the development of hypersonic weapons as part of its

conventional prompt global strike program since the early 2000s.

### *Climate change and national security*

In October the Biden administration [released](#) a series of reports analysing the link between climate change and national security (see box). The reports detail the wide-reaching effects of climate change and how the agencies plan to respond. Notably, one report details the role of climate change in influencing migration, the first time the US government has recognized the link.

In October, four US government entities—the [Department of Defense](#), [Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#), [Department of Homeland Security](#) and [National Security Council](#)—released four distinct reports on the effects of climate change on national security. These reports were issued pursuant to requirements established in two executive orders issued by President Biden earlier this year: [Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad](#) and [Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration](#). These four reports build off the Pentagon’s recent [Climate Adaptation Plan](#) and the Department of Homeland Security’s [Climate Action Plan](#), issued in September and October, respectively. Read in conjunction with the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s [Sixth Assessment Report](#), the four reports present a full, albeit bleak, picture of a climate-transformed world. Read:

Mark Nevitt, [What You Need to Know About the New Climate Security Reports](#), Lawfare, 26 October 2021

### *Civilian casualties*

In the last days of the battle against the Islamic State in Syria in March 2019, US airstrikes killed about 70 civilians, and despite drone footage at the time confirming the mistake, it was never publicly acknowledged by the US military until November 2021 following



an [investigation](#) by the *New York Times*. The United States has portrayed the air war against the Islamic State as the most precise and humane bombing campaign in its history and claimed that every report of civilian casualties was investigated and the findings reported publicly, creating what the military called a model of accountability. This was clearly not the case.

Further details of the *New York Times* [investigation](#) were released in December and found that, since 2014, the US air war in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan was plagued by flawed intelligence, poor targeting and thousands of civilian deaths, many of them children. The *Times* drew on more than 1,300 documents from a hidden Pentagon archive, and in addition to reviewing the military's own assessments of reports of civilian casualties—obtained through Freedom of Information requests and lawsuits against the Defense Department and US Central Command—it visited nearly 100 casualty sites in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan and interviewed scores of surviving residents and current and former US officials.

### ***Thoughts on US democracy***

In a November interview on [Axios](#) on [HBO](#), NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the 6 January attack on the US Capitol was an attack on NATO's values. "I regard that as an attack on the core democratic institutions of the United States and therefore also on core values of NATO," Stoltenberg said. During the interview Stoltenberg added that he still believed in the future of America's democracy. "I'm confident that our biggest ally ... will remain a strong democracy", he said, noting that the country "has been through difficult times, crises, before and always come out on the other end with a strong commitment to democratic institutions".

A [report](#) released in November by a Stockholm-based think tank added the

United States to an annual list of backsliding democracies for the first time. The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance found that globally more than one in four people now live in a backsliding democracy - defined as a nation experiencing a decline in the quality of their democracy. The report's assessment of the United States determined that former president Trump's questioning the legitimacy of the 2020 election results was a "historic turning point" that "undermined fundamental trust in the electoral process."

In December the United States held a virtual Summit for Democracy organized around three themes—defending against authoritarianism, fighting corruption, and promoting respect for human rights. It was no surprise that China and Russia were not included, but the [decision](#) to invite other countries with dubious human rights records, such as the Philippines and Nigeria, while excluding NATO allies Turkey and Hungary (both led by rulers with authoritarian streaks) raised eyebrows.

Fiona Hill, [argues](#) in an article in *Foreign Affairs*, that Biden should base a new transatlantic agenda on the mutual fight against populism at home and authoritarianism abroad through economic rebuilding and democratic renewal.

### ***US defence budget***

The House [passed](#) the compromised version of the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act in mid-December, providing \$27.8 billion for the Department of Energy for nuclear weapons and \$3.5 billion for military construction across the country. The bill dropped numerous provisions, including measures that would expand the draft to include women and repeal decades-old war power authorizations. The legislation also included the European Deterrence Initiative and the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which aim

to deter Russian and Chinese aggression respectively while also strengthening US presence in the regions. The law also calls for the creation of an independent commission to evaluate the Afghanistan War and provide recommendations and lessons learned.

### ***Arms sales to UAE suspended***

In December it was [announced](#) that the United Arab Emirates was suspending discussions with the United States over a \$23 billion arms deal to purchase about 50 F-35A fighter jets, Reaper drones and other advanced munitions. The Emirati government told US officials that it intended to stop the deal because the government believed the security requirements set forth by the United States to protect the weapons from Chinese espionage were too burdensome and would threaten the UAE's national sovereignty. The threat to cancel the contracts comes just two weeks after the UAE government agreed to buy military weaponry from France.

Peter Maass, [The U.S. Military Is a Machine of Impunity](#), The Intercept, 26 December 2021

Julianne Smith, US Ambassador to NATO, [NATO must adapt to new threats and challenges](#), Deutsche Welle, 24 December 2021

Andrew Bacevich, [How Awesome Is "Awesome"? America's Underperforming Military](#), TomDispatch, 21 December 2021

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