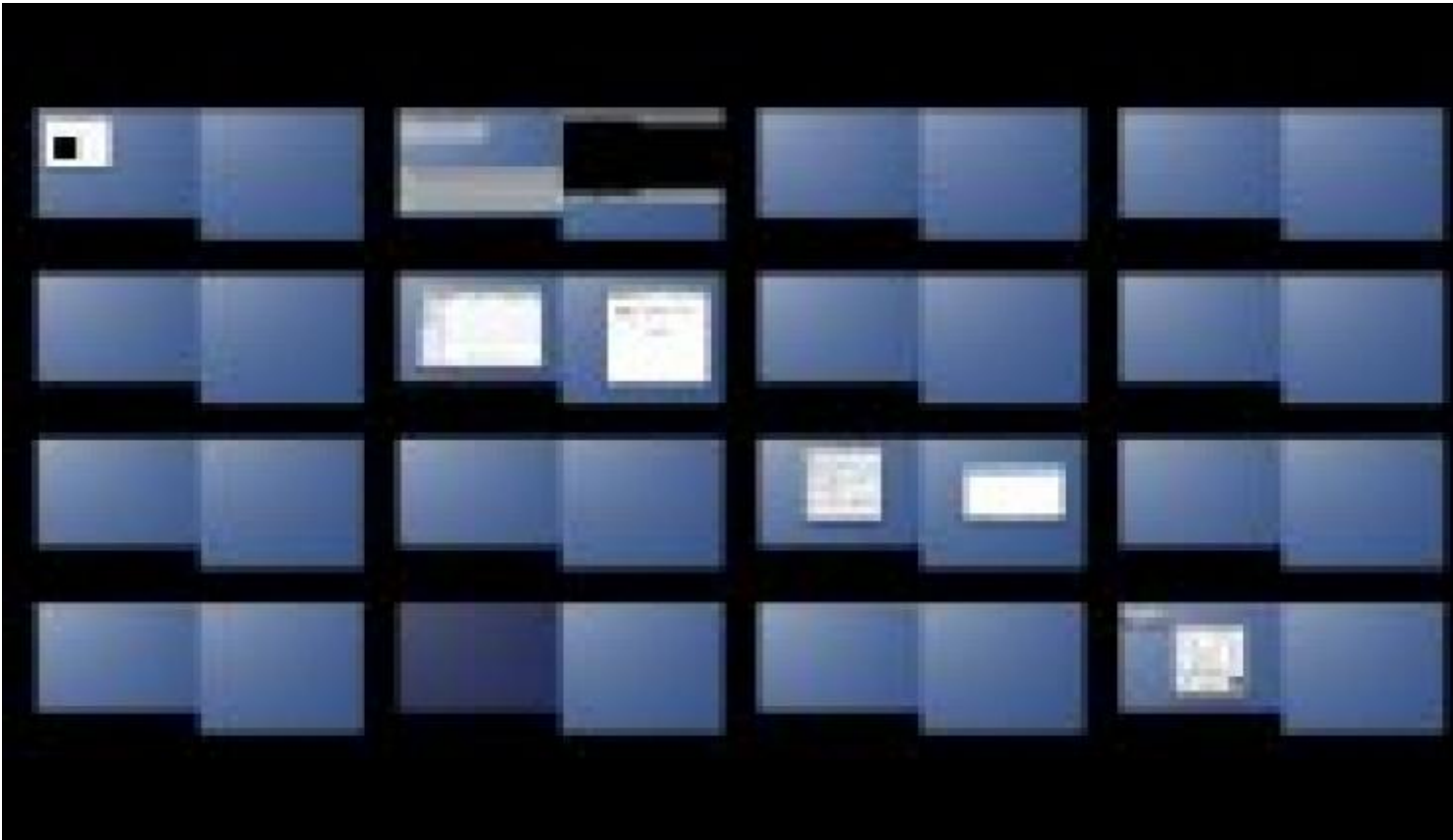


Why is independent monitoring of NATO needed?



There is a democratic deficit at the heart of NATO. It is the only major intergovernmental body not to have even a basic information disclosure policy and the Alliance continues to be a closed and secretive organisation distant from the general public. Most of the Alliance's work takes place away from the glare of publicity in an assortment of projects involving over 400 specialised agencies, centres, committees, groups and panels. Mechanisms for parliamentary and public accountability and oversight are inadequate or non-existent.

Refusal to disclose information (usually under the catch-all of 'national security interests') has been exploited on numerous occasions in NATO Member States to hide inefficiencies, disguise mistakes, and to advance multinational military procurement projects and contracting of services to a stage where they are beyond the point of cancellation, before parliamentary debate can take place. Restricted decision-making also prevents consideration of alternatives and encourages "business as usual". For example, an eight-year delay in NATO telling the Serbian government where thousands of cluster bombs were dropped during the 1999 Kosovo campaign, for example, was described by a Member of the UK House of Lords as "rather shameful". But a lack of transparency and accountability within NATO could be contributing to policy failure on an even greater scale and with potentially far greater consequences (akin to those in the financial world).

Citizens (and parliamentarians) in NATO Member States are bound by secrecy rules that were drafted in a very different era—when the public had different expectations about participation in defence and foreign policy, when few of its Member States had adopted a national right-to-information law, and when the threat posed to the Western alliance was more profound and immediate. All of these circumstances have changed, but the regime that governs the handling of shared information remains unchanged in important respects. Legislators and citizens are effectively being denied the right to participate in the formulation of policies that have a profound effect on their liberties and security.

Photo: Spaces w/Dual Monitors by [BAMCAT](#)

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