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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 Essays:

NATO's Summer of Discontent (and the transparency gap)

NATO has had a trying summer. In addition to President Trump's intentionally disruptive reality-show presence at the alliance summit in July, NATO is experiencing a critical row between two key member states: the United States and Turkey. In addition, an alarming transparency gap in NATO continues to receive zero attention.

Trumpeting defence spending

For an alliance that purports to be held together by shared values, mutual commitment and trust, the harm done by President Trump is incalculable. He chastised his European allies, and especially Germany, for "delinquency" in defence spending, thoughtlessly demanded that the 2 per cent spending target be raised to 4 per cent, and then claimed success for a "deal" to work towards spending targets already agreed in 2014. At that time only three members—Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States—were meeting that pledge, but since then, Poland and Estonia have done so, and figures released by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in July show that Latvia, Lithuania and Romania will join them by the end of the year.

In a private session at the summit, President Trump is also reported to have threatened to leave NATO if allies did not "pay their bills". His subsequent claim that the allies had agreed to "up their commitments very substantially" was something that several—including the French, Italian and German leaders

—swiftly denied. Nonetheless, Trump pronounced NATO to be in better shape after his summit scolding of allies.

Although no *extra* defence spending was agreed at the summit, the fact that none of the allies made the case that they are already spending enough suggests that the Trump agenda (and fear of Russia by members on the eastern flank) won the day. The existing planned increases are themselves the biggest "in a generation" and the biggest "since the end of the Cold War" according to Stoltenberg. With a touch of the forelock, the Secretary General [attributed](#) the increases directly to Trump: "All allies have heard President Trump's message loud and clear. We understand that this American president is very serious about defence

spending. And this is having a clear impact. After years of decline, when allies were cutting billions, now they are adding billions".

(Alexis Tsipras (Prime Minister of Greece) with Donal Trump (US President), NATO Summit, 11 July 2018 – photo credit: NATO)



Moreover, as the dust settles from a turbulent summit, there is at least one other well-defined outcome: the detailed [communiqué](#) sets out a clear path towards a marked military escalation tacitly aimed at Russia.

Trump and Erdogan butt heads

NATO is not only being pounded by political instability in Washington. Establishment parties and politicians are losing ground to populists and other previously fringe characters in all corners of the alliance. From an inward-focused UK, obsessed by Brexit, to a resurgence of authoritarian and quasi-authoritarian politics in countries such as Turkey, Hungary and Poland, is

testing the notion that the alliance is hard-wired not just by shared geopolitical interests but shared political values.

Escalating tensions between the United States and Turkey have become a particularly pressing concern. A dispute that has gelled around the arrest of Andrew Brunson (a US pastor detained in Turkey on specious charges of supporting a failed coup against President Erdogan in 2016), was brought to the boil by the US imposition of economic sanctions, escalating presidential statements and counter-statements, and the growing possibility that Turkey might realign itself with Moscow.

The fault lines between Washington and Ankara run much deeper than the Brunson affair, and include allegations that the US was behind the 2016 attempted coup (while Washington has been critical of Erdogan's increasing authoritarianism at home), disagreements over counter-terrorism operations in Syria (namely US support for Syrian Kurdish groups that the Turkish government considers as enemies) and Ankara's decision to purchase S-400 air defence systems from Russia.

Transparency within NATO: a subject best avoided at summits

NATO's limited financial (and other) transparency makes it difficult to ensure that NATO-related spending (by both member states and collectively) is efficient and effective. Financial management information is routinely provided by intergovernmental bodies such as the EU and World Bank. But NATO does not yet provide basic information about its income, expenditure or performance evaluations to the general public.

One way for the public and parliamentarians to really understand what is happening in NATO is to follow the money. But without a publicly

available annual budget or reliable performance metrics, it is often impossible to grasp the significance of what is being proposed or implemented within the alliance. Consequently, citizens and parliaments of member countries are unable to monitor whether their contributions to NATO result in an efficient international organisation.

As a result of some external pressure for greater transparency and accountability (from, among others, [Senator Sam Nunn](#) and the [Netherlands Court of Audit](#)), the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration committed the alliance to "further work in the areas of delivery of common funded capabilities, reform governance and transparency and accountability, especially in the management of NATO's financial resources".

The 2016 Warsaw Summit Declaration stated "We have introduced greater transparency by publishing financial audits. We have improved our strategic communications... We will continue improving accountability, governance and transparency. We task the Council to pursue these efforts, building on recent achievements and taking advantage of the move to the new NATO Headquarters...". However, despite a few token [financial transparency reforms](#) little has changed. Moreover, both the Brussels 2017 and 2018 Summit Declaration's failed to mention this topic at all, suggesting that it is no longer a priority for the alliance (if indeed it ever was).

As the alliance approaches its 70th birthday its resilience and deep institutional and military-to-military networks are being severely tested. In the absence of strong political leadership from the alliance's key members, and a greater commitment to transparency and accountability, the summer of discontent is likely to continue into the autumn and well beyond.

The endless war in Afghanistan and the departure of another US general claiming a winning strategy

On the 22 August, US Army General John Nicholson, commander of NATO's Resolute Support mission and US Forces-Afghanistan since March 2016 held his [final press conference](#) on the state of operations in Afghanistan. Despite worsening levels of violence and little territorial security, Gen. John Nicholson claimed that President Trump's South Asia Strategy is working and has finally given coalition and Afghan forces the support they need to get to a negotiated peace with the Taliban. His replacement, Army Lt. Gen. Scott Miller, took over command on the 2 September.

(US Army Gen. John Nicholson, then commander, Resolute Support and US Forces - Afghanistan delivers remarks during an Independence Day ceremony at Resolute Support headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan, 4 July 2018 - photo credit: NATO Resolute Support



Mission)

In 2014, Nicholson's predecessor, [General John Campbell](#), said that he, too, had "seen the change" and that Afghan forces were ready to fight on their own. [General Joseph F. Dunford](#) trumpeted "the inevitability of our success" in 2013, while his predecessor, [General John Allen](#), declared, "We are winning. We are winning". In 2011, [General David Petraeus](#) said that US forces had "reversed the momentum of the Taliban", while [General Stanley A. McChrystal](#), in 2010, thought that "success is still achievable".

Since US-led forces ousted the Taliban from power in 2001, there have been 17 [different commanders in Afghanistan](#). The command of the International Assistance Force (ISAF) rotated between officers of the participating nations, until it was replaced by the Resolute Support mission in December 2014. However, the first US general took command in February 2007 and only US generals have been in command since that time. All have suggested that success is just around the corner.

President Trump's South Asia strategy: more of the same

President Donald Trump unveiled his [South Asia strategy](#) in August 2017,

which he [said](#) involved "the integration of all instruments of American power- diplomatic, economic, and military- toward a successful outcome". The emphasis was clearly on the military component, with "attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from

taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror acts against America" laid out as the benchmarks of a successful outcome. The details of what constituted this seemingly open-ended and condition-based "victory" and how it would be achieved were ill-defined, however. The US has increased its troop presence from 8,400 in the final months of Obama's term [to about 14,000](#) now (a mix of 'trainers', 'advisers' and Special Operations personnel), although the Pentagon no longer discloses troop numbers in Afghanistan.

A previously undisclosed part of the Trump administration's Afghan war strategy was [revealed by the New York Times](#) in late July. It seems Afghan forces are being encouraged to abandon rural checkpoints, instead focusing on protecting population centres. While such withdrawals are not new, the fact the military continues to abandon large areas of countryside to the Taliban 17 years in says much about the current situation.

According to Nicholson, what the strategy needs is more time to realize an "unprecedented opportunity for peace". How realistic is this latest assessment by the latest departing US general and what are the chances of peace?

The costs – both human and fiscal – continue to rise

It is worth remembering that Afghanistan superseded Vietnam as the longest war in US history back in 2012, and that the US reconstruction programme in Afghanistan was already larger than the post-World War II Marshall Plan by 2014. To date, military operations and stabilization efforts have cost more than [\\$900 billion in Afghanistan](#), according to the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). The fiscal year 2019 budget request for US operations in Afghanistan is \$46.3 billion, a total which includes \$5.2 billion to train Afghan security forces.

Despite 17 years of US and NATO military presence and billions of dollars in training and equipment, Afghan security forces have been unable to eliminate persistent Taliban attacks. For example, a multi-pronged Taliban offensive in the Afghan provincial capital of Ghazni, a strategic crossroads about 75 miles southwest

of Kabul, overwhelmed Afghan government forces on the 10 August. Over the next four days, Afghan security forces backed by US advisers and air strikes [sought to drive Taliban fighters out of the city](#). Hundreds of people were killed or wounded during the fighting.

[According to the US military](#), the Afghan government currently controls just under 60 per cent of the country, the Taliban just under 20 per cent and the remaining 20 per cent is contested. However, these figures may underplay the extent of Taliban gains, with a January [BBC study](#) suggesting that the insurgents are openly active in 70 per cent of Afghanistan. More than 2,400 US military and civilian personnel have been killed since operations in Afghanistan began in 2001, and more than 20,000 wounded, [according to US DoD casualty data](#).

Overall, there have been nearly 3,500 coalition deaths in Afghanistan, the latest being three Czech NATO soldiers killed by an Afghan suicide bomber on the 5 August.



(NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visits the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command at Camp Morehead – photo credit: NATO)

[Civilian casualty statistics](#) are even more alarming, with 1,692 killed and 3,430 injured in the first half of this year alone – more than in any other similar period since the UN began recording figures nearly ten years ago. The UN attributed 42 per cent of the civilian casualties to the Taliban, 18 per cent to the Islamic State and 20 per cent to pro-government forces, including Afghan national security forces and international military forces. And since 2009 the war has claimed the lives of at least 28,291 civilians and injured 52,366, [according to UN figures](#), with the Taliban and other insurgents responsible for roughly 70

per cent of those deaths and injuries, and Afghan government forces and international—largely US—forces responsible for the rest.

A former US Special Forces commander says the unthinkable

Gen. Miller, Nicholson's replacement in Afghanistan, told a Congressional confirmation hearing in June that "I can't guarantee you a timeline or an end date," as to when operations in Afghanistan would end. Miller most recently commanded US Joint Special Operations Command, but another former Special Operations Forces commander, Gen. Donald Bolduc, [wrote](#) recently that the current approach in Afghanistan is not "worth another body bag or hospital bed". He argues that the US has three choices to resolve the war: Maintain the current approach or return to a comprehensive strategy — neither of which he recommends, pull troops but not abandon the country entirely, or negotiate a truce with the Taliban.

"The bottom line is that despite the dedication and sacrifice of our service members, America's long war in Afghanistan will not end well," he wrote. "Despite our senior leaders' efforts to portray the war as an American victory, the United States is not going to defeat the Taliban, other groups, and ISIS there anytime soon".

"We have worn out our Afghan partners and everyone is tired of the war," he writes. "We have overstayed our welcome with the populace and drawn more violent extremist organisations to Afghanistan. We have not achieved regional security and hold zero leverage over the Taliban to force them

to the negotiating table or to implement a viable reintegration programme".

Although Bolduc warns that it "does not sit well to depart" Afghanistan, he concludes that "it deserves serious consideration". That would not mean full abandonment, however: While military forces would be reduced, diplomatic and financial assistance for the Afghan government would remain, he suggests. Finally, Bolduc mentions the possibility of negotiating a truce with the Taliban, which he also sees as being fraught with problems. He suggests that there are irreconcilable differences between the US-Afghan governments and the Taliban leadership, as well as a lack of cohesiveness on the Taliban side, not helped by gains made by the Islamic State (which threatens to haemorrhage the Taliban rank and file) and other outside influences in neighbouring countries.



(US Marines and US Army Soldiers with Task Force Southwest (TFSW) and Col. Shah Wali,

commander of the 215th Corps Regional Military Training Centre, hold hands as a sign of friendship during an Eid al-Fitr celebration at Camp Shorabak, Helmand Province, 25 June 2018 – photo credit: NATO Resolute Support Mission).

Prospects of a peace process

Since at least 2007, various actors—including senior representatives of the UN, EU, [Germany](#), Norway, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and China—have attempted to initiate formal negotiations between the Afghan government or the United States and the Taliban through different channels and approaches. President Obama announced a change of course in 2009 by declaring that the United States was

now willing to conduct talks with “moderate Taliban”. And when Ghani was inaugurated as president of Afghanistan in 2014, he identified achieving peace as his top priority. In July 2015, the first formal although (by the Taliban) officially unacknowledged talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban took place in Pakistan, as part of the so-called [Murree Process](#). To date, however, it has not been possible to initiate substantive talks between the conflict parties in Afghanistan and the peace process remains largely unstructured and disjointed. For example, both Washington and Kabul recently declined to join [Russian-hosted peace talks](#) that were due to take place in Moscow on the 4 September, apparently with the participation of the Taliban.

(Tariq Shah Bahrami, Afghan Minister of Defence, and Abdul Jabbar Naeemi, Kunduz Provincial Governor, speak during a shura in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan, 5 July 2018 – photo credit: NATO



Resolute Support Mission)

At their Brussels Summit in July, NATO agreed to sustain the alliance’s presence in Afghanistan and fund Afghan security forces until 2024, as well as well as expressing strong support for President Ghani's latest peace proposal. Ghani sought a conditional three-month ceasefire with the Taliban on the 19 August, but the Taliban increased its attacks instead, including [a major assault on the eastern city of Ghazni](#). During an earlier June ceasefire, Washington said it would “support, facilitate, and

participate” in any Kabul government-led peace talks with the Taliban. And in a signal that the Trump administration is serious about an Afghan peace process, Zalmay Khalilzad, an Afghan-born former US ambassador to Kabul, was recently [appointed](#) as a special envoy on Afghanistan.

The Taliban has spurned repeated offers for peace talks by the Afghan government in 2018, insisting that it will only negotiate directly with the United States, which Washington officially refused to do insisting on an “Afghan-owned, Afghan-led process”. However, the Taliban held their [first](#)

[direct contact](#) with a US government official at the end of July in a preliminary discussion in Qatar about future peace talks on Afghanistan. Some [reports](#) suggest that these backchannel discussions made significant progress.

However, a formal peace process still

seems a distant prospect, especially given both sides are pursuing a ‘fight and talk’ strategy in the belief that battlefield success will help make their opponents more willing to negotiate. In addition to increased Taliban attacks, the US has continued its escalating campaign of airstrikes. But as the International Crisis Group [argues](#) confidence-building steps between the parties to reduce the war’s shocking civilian toll, could be within reach.

News, Commentary and Reports:

Air Power

NATO air forces must be able to defend against peer competitors and anticipate the growing role of cyber and space-based assets, according to a new [NATO joint airpower strategy](#) released on 26 June 2018. The document was approved by NATO Defence Ministers at their February 2018 meeting.

[NATO intercepted a Russian plane over the Black Sea. So why weren't US F-15s in nearby Romania used?](#) Defense News, 27 July 2018

Ian Davis, [NATO releases new joint air power strategy, but no recognition of potential for civilian casualties](#), NATO Watch, 30 June 2018

Michael Peck, [NATO Admits It May Lose Control of the Skies in a War](#), The National Interest, 27 June 2018

[Cyberwarfare and future megacities threaten air dominance, NATO report says](#), Stars and Stripes, 27 June 2018

[NATO publishes first air strategy](#), IHS Jane's Defence Weekly, 27 June 2018

[First NATO Joint Air Power Strategy Emphasizes Integral Role of Domain](#), US Department of Defense, 27 June 2018

[NATO unveils new joint air power strategy](#), NATO News Release, 26 June 2018

Arms Control & Disarmament

Even at the height of the Cold War in the 1980s, NATO Summit declarations generally addressed arms control and disarmament issues in some detail. In recent years, there has been no such focus, although the 2018 [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) does buck that trend by devoting eight paragraphs to the issue (paras 42-49).

However, after extolling its own track record in this area and stating that it remains open to further arms control negotiations (para 42), the declaration

then points the proliferation finger elsewhere: the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom by various state and non-state groups (para 43); doubts about Russian compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty (para 46), Russia's "selective implementation" of conventional arms control (para 47); North Korea's nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches (para 48); and Iran's missile tests and its "destabilising activities in the wider Middle East region", as well as Syria's "inventory of short range ballistic missiles" (para 49).

NATO also continues to argue that its "nuclear arrangements" are fully consistent with the NPT, while rejecting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as being "inconsistent with the Alliance's nuclear deterrence policy" (para 44) (see the discussion in the nuclear weapons section below).

Regrettably, there was no mention of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' recent report, [Securing Our Common Future](#), which is a visionary document that examines the potential for world disarmament from "hand grenades to hydrogen bombs". Instead, with a new arms race between NATO and Russia looming (including in outer space), the existing arms control regimes both nuclear and conventional are at risk of further deterioration.

Łukasz Kulesa, [The Future of Conventional Arms Control in Europe](#), Survival, Vol. 60:4, 2018, pp.75-90

Hans-Joachim Schmidt, [A Fresh Start of Conventional Arms Control in Europe Will Face Many Structural Problems](#), PRIF Report No. 151, 2018

[NATO highlights role in fighting illicit trade in small arms and light weapons](#), NATO News Release, 22 June 2018

Tytti Erästö and Petr Topychkanov, [Russian and US policies on the INF Treaty endanger arms control](#), SIPRI Topical Backgrounder, 15 June 2018

Garrett M. Graff, [The New Arms Race Threatening to Explode in Space](#), Wired, 6 June 2018

Chemical Weapons

In the [NATO Summit Declaration](#), the alliance reiterated its condemnation of the attack using a military-grade nerve agent in Salisbury (UK), noting the UK assessment that it is “highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible for the attack and that there is no plausible alternative explanation” (para 6). As noted in the arms control section above, the declaration also highlighted the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Iraq and Malaysia, which “underlines the importance of effective multilateralism and international cooperation, including through the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW, in addressing WMD threats”. It also stresses that “NATO will ensure that Allies can protect their populations, forces, and territories by deterring, defending against, responding to, and mitigating the consequences of the full spectrum of the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats, including with trained and rapidly-deployable forces” (para 43).

To this end, it has been reported that in October this year, NATO will conduct a computer exercise, Arena Star, which will simulate a state-on-state chemical weapon attack. Military representatives and scientists from more than seven NATO member states as well as partners, Japan and Australia, are expected to participate in the week-long exercise.

[NATO to hold chemical war games in shock rehearsal for Russian attack](#), Sunday Express, 26 August 2018

Civil Emergency Response

NATO has played an important role in the domain of civil emergency response for twenty years. On 3 June 2018, the

Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)—NATO’s principal civil emergency response mechanism—celebrated its 20th anniversary.

[NATO and civil emergency response: marking 20 years since the creation of the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre](#), NATO News Release, 4 June 2018

Climate Change

“If I were at the NATO meeting, a key point that I would make to President Trump and allied leaders is that if we’re serious about dealing with migration, about containing threats in the Middle East, about maintaining economic growth and trade, then climate change must be a priority.”

Vice Admiral Dennis McGinn, [The threat Trump has to acknowledge at NATO](#), CNN, 10 July 2018

[NATO Deputy Secretary General discusses links between climate and security at EU conference](#), NATO News Release, 22 June 2018

Collective Defence

In the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), collective defence was reaffirmed as one of NATO’s three core tasks as set out in its 2010 Strategic Concept (the other two being crisis management and cooperative security) (para 1).

At the two previous summits, it was agreed to enhance NATO’s military presence in the eastern part of the alliance by four multinational battlegroups totalling approximately 4,500 troops (deployed to the Baltic nations and Poland), triple the size of the NATO Response Force to 40,000—with a high-readiness Spearhead Force at its core—and set up eight small headquarters (NATO Force Integration Units) to facilitate training and reinforcements.

At the Brussels Summit this reinforcement of the Eastern Flank

continued with the adoption of a NATO Readiness Initiative, committing NATO to having 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval combat vessels, ready to use within 30 days by 2020 (para 14). “Far-reaching” decisions were also taken to adapt and strengthen the NATO Command Structure, with a new Joint Force Atlantic Command based at Norfolk in the United States, and a new Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany (para 29).

NATO faces the challenge of accommodating the divergent security priorities among its 29-member states. Southern allies generally prioritise action against terrorism and unchecked migration, while Eastern allies are primarily concerned with deterrence and Russia. These differences have grown more difficult to reconcile in recent years, as an assertive Russia and instability across the Middle East and North Africa have oriented NATO to multiple tasks. In an attempt to bridge this divide, the alliance continues to seek a 360-degree approach in which NATO forces are capable of deterring threats from the East and engaging with challenges emerging from the South and the North.

Michael Rühle, [A world without NATO?](#) NATO Review, 29 August 2018

Maria Mälksoo, [Countering hybrid warfare as ontological security management: the emerging practices of the EU and NATO](#), *European Security*, Vol. 27:3, 2018, pp. 374-392

Marc Thiessen, [NATO's purpose is to ensure we don't have to defend Montenegro](#), Washington Post, 31 July 2018

[How Roads Could Win or Lose a War With Russia](#), Popular Mechanics, 23 July 2018 - Amid cries to increase NATO defence spending, many see investments in heavy vehicles and good roads as ways to deter Russia

Sarah Pruitt, [What Is NATO's Article 5?](#), History, 19 July 2018

Iulia Joja and Octavian Manea, 2018 [NATO Summit: Finally a focus on the Black Sea?](#) Real Defense, 11 July 2018

Jim Townsend, [NATO's Force Generation and Deployment](#), GMF Policy Brief No. 29, July 2018

John R. Deni, [NATO'S Presence in The East: Necessary But Still Not Sufficient](#), War on the Rocks, 27 June 2018

Teri Schultz, [NATO's 'Four Thirties' plan — does it add up?](#) Deutsche Welle, 25 June 2018

[NATO focuses on speed in the Baltics amid worries over Russia](#), NBC News, 23 June 2018

[NATO has put forces in Eastern Europe to counter Russia — here's where its battle groups are located](#), Business Insider, 12 June 2018

[NATO to increase quick-response troops and arms](#), Deutsche Welle, 3 June 2018

[Experts: NATO's focus in Baltic region must be on reinforcement](#), ERR News, 3 June 2018

Eastern Flank Group ('The Bucharest 9')

The leaders of the group known as the Bucharest Nine (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, which meets every quarter), [met](#) in Warsaw on 8 June to discuss various issues of common security, and agreed that they remain fully committed to implementing all the initiatives developed as part of NATO's forward presence on the Eastern flank. The meeting ended with a joint declaration that outlined the Bucharest Nine's aims for the Brussels summit:

[NATO's air defense problem: Maintaining the peace vs. securing the eastern flank](#), Defense News, 19 July 2018

[NATO Eastern Flank Presidents Agree on Joint Approach Ahead of Brussels Summit](#), Emerging Europe, 11 June 2018

[NATO command structure should be mirrored at political level says President](#), ERR News, 9 June 2018

[NATO eastern flank members pledge closer ties, citing Russia](#), Star Tribune, 8 June 2018

Southern Flank

Political differences in NATO continue to limit NATO's involvement in the South. Missions in Afghanistan and Iraq (see below) are mainly US operations.

[NATO Using New Mission Set to Address Southern Flank](#), US Department of Defense, 1 August 2018

Arctic Flank (High North)

The UK House of Commons Defence Committee issued a report in August outlining the Russian threat in the Arctic region. The Committee calls on the UK to expand its military presence in the Arctic to counter Russian activity. The committee said Russia's re-activation of bases in the Arctic, re-introduction of strategic bomber flights over Northern airspace and marked increase in the level of naval activity that projects power from the Arctic into the North Atlantic all had "potentially serious strategic implications for the United Kingdom and for NATO".

UK House of Commons Defence Committee, [On Thin Ice: UK Defence in the Arctic](#), Twelfth Report of Session 2017-19 Report, HC 388, 15 August 2018

Counter Terrorism

In the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) NATO reiterated its commitment to an "enhanced role in the international community's fight against terrorism, including through awareness and analysis, preparedness and responsiveness, capabilities, capacity building and partnerships, and operations" (para 11). The alliance will update the May 2017 Action Plan by the end of 2018 "to adapt to evolving priorities and to counter emerging terrorist threats".

To date, NATO's counter-terrorism focus has been on NATO training missions in the Middle East and North

Africa, the use of NATO surveillance planes and air-to-air refuelling in support of the anti-ISIS coalition, and since May 2017, full membership of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The Brussels summit adds a new commitment: a "biometric data policy which, consistent with applicable national and international law and subject to national requirements and restrictions, will further support our ability to identify returning foreign terrorist fighters and other threat actors" (para 11).

Vera Mironova, [Can ISIS regroup? Lessons from interviews with ex-ISIS fighters](#), NATO Review, 9 August 2018

[New NATO project to help with real-time detection of explosives in public transport](#), NATO News Release, 15 June 2018

Cyber Security and Information Warfare

NATO now considers cyberspace to be a conflict domain alongside that of air, sea and land. This is reflected in the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) which makes 27 references to 'cyber' and notes that cyber defence is part of NATO's core task of collective defence. The declaration claims that NATO has "agreed how to integrate sovereign cyber effects, provided voluntarily by Allies, into Alliance operations and missions, in the framework of strong political oversight". A commitment to act in accordance with international law is also reaffirmed (para 20), and a new Cyber Operations Centre will be created at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium (para 29).

As cyberattacks increase in destructive potential and remain difficult to attribute, NATO faces a dilemma of whether and how to adapt its policy of strategic ambiguity to a new era of cyberwarfare. There is also the question as to how NATO can reconcile the integration of covert offensive 'sovereign cyber effects' with the

commitment to abide by international law. The United States, for example, is widely believed to conduct [covert offensive cyber operations](#).

Andrew Tunncliffe, [NATO's Locked Shield Exercise: a cybersecurity success?](#) Army Technology, 20 August 2018

Stewart M. Patrick and David Gevarter, [NATO's Deterrence Problem: An Analog Strategy for a Digital Age](#), Council on Foreign Relations (blog), 8 August 2018

Sorin Ducaru, [NATO's tougher approach to cyberthreats is all about operationalization](#), Fifth Domain, 7 August 2018

Federico Guerrini, [NATO's Latest Weapon: A Facebook Game For Fake News Countering](#), Forbes, 31 July 2018

'Ridiculous propaganda': Users slam [NATO's online fake news game](#), RT, 31 July 2018

[NATO battles fake news, one video game at a time](#), Stars and Stripes, 27 July 2018

[NATO launches The News Hero Facebook game to counter Russia's info war](#), NBC News, 27 July 2018

Gregory Shupak, [The Sanctification of NATO](#), Fair, 26 July 2018

James Stavridis and Dave Weinstein, [NATO's Real Spending Emergency Is in Cyberspace](#), Bloomberg, 18 July 2018

Sorin Ducaru, [NATO advances in its new operational domain: cyberspace](#), Fifth Domain, 6 July 2018

Jens Stoltenberg, [How NATO Defends Against The Dark Side Of The Web](#), Wired, 9 June 2018

Stefan Soesanto, [An Alliance Too Far: The Case Against a Cyber NATO](#), Defense One, 6 June 2018

Sorin Ducaru, [NATO's Most Urgent Pledge Isn't 2%-of-GDP. It's Better Cyber Defense](#), Defense One, 4 June 2018

Defence Budgets and Procurement

The NATO Summit in Brussels was dominated by the burden-sharing debate and President Trump's unique take on the issue. While not the first president to raise the issue—these

transatlantic burden-sharing frictions have been ever present since NATO's inception—none have ever done so with such malice (see the introductory essay).

Despite Trump's complaints, the argument over NATO burden sharing is not so straightforward. A closer look at the data reveals that the US is principally spending its defence dollars for its own security needs. Moreover, the 2 per cent of GDP defence spending guideline is not the only (or best) indicator as to whether member states are sufficiently resourcing their militaries. And as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [pointed out](#), the pledge is a guideline only: "You can ask 10 lawyers to provide a legal interpretation of that document and then you will have, I guess, 10 different interpretations. This document is not a legal document. It is a political document with a political commitment".

Within the Brussels Summit Declaration, the NATO allies reaffirmed "our unwavering commitment to all aspects of the Defence Investment Pledge agreed at the 2014 Wales Summit, and to submit credible national plans on its implementation, including the spending guidelines for 2024, planned capabilities, and contributions" (para 3). It also notes that all allies have started to increase the amount they spend on defence in real terms, some two-thirds have national plans in place to meet the commitment by 2024, and more than half are spending more than 20 per cent of their defence expenditures on major equipment, including related research and development, with 24 expecting to do so by 2024.

[Allies to receive first shipment of Precision Guided Munitions acquired through NATO](#), NATO News Release, 22 August 2018

Torsten Gojowsky, Sebastian Koegler, Bernardus Haspels, Flemming Haar, and Sverre Wetteland, [Resistance to Innovation in NATO](#), Strategy Bridge, 16 August 2018

Must Read: Steven Grundman, [Does The U.S. Meet NATO's Defense Spending Guideline?](#) Aviation Week & Space Technology, 15 August 2018

[NATO's East Is Rearming, But It's Because of Putin, Not Trump](#), Bloomberg, 14 August 2018

Brian Blankenship, [Control vs. Cost-sharing: the dilemma at the heart of NATO](#), War on the Rocks, 7 August 2018

Lawrence Korb, [Two Percent Defense Spending for NATO Is a Flawed Idea](#), The National Interest, 2 August 2018

Jo Jakobsen, [Is European NATO really free-riding? Patterns of material and non-material burden-sharing after the Cold War](#), *European Security*, 2018

Diana Ohlbaum, [The NATO We Have And The NATO We Seek](#), Lobe Log (blog), 25 July 2018

[Blindspot on a Bureaucracy: Who's supposed to 'pay' what to NATO?](#) Lima Charlie, 22 July 2018

[Trump Inaccurately Claims NATO Spending Is Increasing 'Only Because of Me'](#), New York Times, 17 July 2018

[Higher NATO Defense Spending May Not Help U.S. Contractors](#), Roll Call, 16 July 2018

Must Read: Lindsay Koshgarian, [Trump's Complaints About NATO Defense Spending Don't Add Up](#), Fortune, 12 July 2018

Arthur Herman, [Beyond the 2 Percent Solution: Trump and the Future of NATO](#), Hudson Institute, 12 July 2018

[FACT CHECK: Trump's Claims On NATO Spending](#), NPR, 11 July 2018

America's NATO partners don't need to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, let alone 4 percent. And the fact that some of America's most prominent progressive politicians and journalists think they should underscores just how detached liberal foreign policy has become from the values liberals supposedly prize.

What American liberals should be saying is not that Germany's defense spending is too low but that America's is too high

Peter Beinart, [NATO Doesn't Need More Defense Spending. America needs less](#), The Atlantic, 11 July 2018

[Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries \(2011-2018\)](#), NATO Press Release, 10 July 2018

Must Read: Lucie Béraud-Sudreau and Nick Childs, [The US and its NATO allies: costs and value](#), Military Balance Blog, 9 July 2018

[The US spent \\$686 billion on defense last year — here's how the other NATO countries stack up](#), CNBC, 6 July 2018

Lucie Béraud-Sudreau and Bastian Giegerich, [NATO Defence Spending and European Threat Perceptions](#), *Survival*, Vol. 60:4, 2018, pp. 53-74

[NATO Seasparrow conducts successful flight test of ESSM Block 2](#), Naval Sea Systems Command, 5 July 2018

[NATO Allies Defend Their Military Spending In the Face of President Trump's Criticism](#), TIME, 4 July 2018

[Trump Warns NATO Allies to Spend More on Defense, or Else](#), New York Times, 2 July 2018

[Ahead of NATO summit, Trump urges Canada to up defense spending](#), Japan Today, 24 June 2018

Patrick Tucker, [Amid NATO Infighting, the Future of the F-35 Is Shrinking](#), Defense One, 19 June 2018

[How are NATO members doing on reaching defense spending goals?](#), Defense News, 8 June 2018

Energy Security

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

During the summit President Trump accused Germany of being a “captive to Russia” because of an energy agreement with the country. Trump’s only evidence to back this wild claim was that Chancellor Angela Merkel was allowing Gazprom, the Russian energy company, to construct a natural-gas pipeline to Germany.

Julijus Grubliauskas and Michael Rühle, [Energy security: a critical concern for Allies and partners](#), NATO Review, 26 July 2018

Enlargement & Partnerships

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) reaffirmed NATO’s commitment to the alliance’s Open Door Policy under Article 10 of the Washington Treaty (para 62) and extended an invitation to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to start accession talks (para 63) – and see the discussion on Macedonia below. There were also several references in the declaration to NATO’s many other partnership arrangements (para 51), as discussed below.

African Union

NATO has been cooperating with the African Union (AU) since 2005 and is primarily based on ad-hoc military-technical cooperation. NATO committed to expanding cooperation with the AU in 2016, with the aim of making it an integral part of NATO’s efforts to work more closely with its partners to tackle security challenges emanating from the south. There were no new commitments in the Brussels Summit Declaration.

[NATO hosts the African Union for Military to Military Staff Talks](#), NATO News Release, 12 June 2018

Armenia

Armenia contributes to NATO-led operations and cooperates with NATO

and other partner countries in many other areas. The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) reaffirms NATO’s support for the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty of Armenia (para 67).

Paul Goble, [Armenia’s involvement with NATO helps it strengthen relations with Georgia](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 114, 31 July 2018

China-NATO relations

NATO has maintained a dialogue with countries that are not part of its partnership frameworks, on an ad-hoc basis, since the 1990s. One such country is China. While there is no mention of China in the Brussels Summit Declaration, the [2018 US National Defense Strategy](#) cites China as a strategic competitor. In July, China accused the United States of starting “the biggest trade war in economic history” as the two sides imposed steep new tariffs on tens of billions of dollars of each other’s exports.

[NATO and China resume military staff to staff talks](#), NATO News Release, 11 June 2018

Colombia

In May Colombia became the latest NATO ‘partner across the globe’.

[Colombia joins NATO, and that means trouble](#), People’s World, 5 June 2018

[What is Colombia seeking in NATO?](#), Granma, 4 June 2018

Cyprus

Cyprus is the only EU member state that is neither a NATO member state nor a member of the NATO Partnership for Peace programme.

[Our View: Cyprus won’t upset relations with Russia to join Nato](#), Cyprus Mail, 7 June 2018

[Cyprus dismisses reports on NATO scenarios](#), Ekathierini, 5 June 2018

EU-NATO Relations

Following the signature of the Joint Declaration on NATO-EU cooperation in Warsaw in July 2016, NATO and the EU have been discussing how to expand their joint work, including by bringing more coherence in their respective defence capability development priorities and output. The European Council Conclusions of June 2018 called for further deepening of NATO-EU cooperation. And in July 2018 a new [Brussels Joint Declaration](#) was signed by the NATO Secretary General, the President of the European Council, and the President of the European Commission.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) reaffirmed that the EU “remains a unique and essential partner for NATO” (para 69), committed NATO to continue to develop and deepen that cooperation by “fully implementing the common set of 74 proposals” (para 70); and endorsed the development of coherent, complementary and interoperable European defence capabilities, “avoiding unnecessary duplication” (para 71)

Vladimir Socor, [Trump's Brusque Posturing on EU Risks Affecting Security of NATO](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 111, 25 July 2018

[Joint Declaration](#) on EU-NATO Cooperation by The President of the European Council, The President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Brussels, 10 July 2018

[NATO Secretary General meets European leaders at EU Council in Brussels](#), NATO News Release, 28 June 2018

[Secretary General welcomes stronger NATO-EU cooperation](#), NATO News Release, 25 June 2018

[NATO and EU Senior Military Officials deepen military EU-NATO cooperation](#), EEAS News Release, 21 June 2018

[EU legislature says European Army should be 'complementary' to NATO](#), Defense News, 13 June 2018

[EU-NATO cooperation: Council welcomes progress in the implementation of the common 74 actions](#), Council of the EU Press Release, 8 June 2018

[EU Security and Defence – partnering with NATO for mutual benefit](#), EEAS News Release, 8 June 2018

Finland

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

In the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), there is a commitment to further strengthening of that cooperation, “including through close political consultations, shared situational awareness, and joint exercises” (para 52).

[President Niinistö: Finland's NATO membership "a possibility"](#), YLE, 25 August 2018

[Poll: One-third would back Finland's Nato membership on President's say-so](#), YLE, 13 August 2018

[Russia threatens counter-measures if Finland and Sweden join Nato](#), YLE, 25 July 2018

[Finland's Defence Minister: Russia's comments on NATO partnership likely a distraction](#), YLE, 25 July 2018

Georgia

A 2008 Bucharest Summit Declaration promised eventual NATO membership for Georgia. Since independence in 1991, Georgia has made steady progress toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and also partly stabilized relations with Russia. However, Russian forces entered two breakaway Georgian regions in 2008, which continue to be garrisoned by

Russian troops, something Moscow says is in keeping with local people's wishes, but which NATO and the Georgian government calls an illegal occupation. Hence, Tbilisi's Western aspirations remain unresolved and Georgia is unlikely to gain entry into NATO or the EU in the near term. Expanded practical cooperation with NATO remains the main current focus with participation in NATO exercises and missions.

NATO leaders were due to discuss ties with Georgia on the second day of their July summit in Brussels. However, President Trump forced member states to hold an emergency session on defence spending, cutting short a meeting on Ukraine and Georgia and scrapping entirely a session on Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, in the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), NATO reiterated its support for the "territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia" and called on Russia to "reverse its recognition of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia as independent states; to implement the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire, particularly the withdrawal of Russian forces from the territory of Georgia; to end its militarisation of these regions; and to stop the construction of border-like obstacles" (para 7).

The declaration also reiterated the decision made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Georgia will become a member of the Alliance (para 65). But while welcoming the "significant progress realised since 2008" there was no indication as to when that might happen. A separate [NATO-Georgia Commission Declaration at the Brussels Summit](#), marked the tenth anniversary of the Commission.

In August, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said that any future NATO decision to admit Georgia could trigger "a terrible conflict". Medvedev's comments came weeks after President

Putin warned NATO against cultivating closer ties with Ukraine and Georgia, saying such a policy was irresponsible and would have unspecified consequences for the alliance.

Also in August, NATO forces and troops from partner countries undertook a combat training exercise in Georgia. Around 1,300 Georgian troops were joined by over 2,000 troops from 12 countries—including more than 1,000 US forces—for the Noble Partner exercise that took place on 1-15 August.

[Medvedev Warns NATO Admission of Georgia Could Trigger 'Terrible Conflict'](#), Moscow Times, 7 August 2018

[Kremlin warns of conflict if Georgia joins NATO](#), UPI.com, 6 August 2018

[Georgia slams Russia 'occupation' ahead of NATO war games](#), Deutsche Welle, 1 August 2018

[NATO Chief Says Georgia, Not Russia, Must Decide On NATO Membership](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 18 July 2018

[Secretary General: NATO is united in support for Georgia's security](#), NATO News Release, 18 July 2018

Daniel Davis, [Trump Shouldn't Accept Georgia into NATO](#), The National Interest, 6 June 2018

Israel

Israel is now being invited to take part in NATO naval drills and is developing warm maritime partnerships with NATO countries.

[Near Russia: Israel Participates in Major NATO Exercise](#), Haaretz, 5 June 2018

[Ex-Israeli officials: Why would we expect NATO to help us in an Iran war?](#) Jerusalem Post, 4 June 2018

[NATO chief says alliance won't aid Israel if Iran attacks](#), USA Today, 2 June 2018

Japan

Japan is the longest-standing of NATO's 'partners across the globe'. Building on initial contacts in the early 1990s,

dialogue on common security interests has become more regular and structured. NATO and Japan signalled their commitment to strengthen cooperation in a joint political declaration signed in April 2013.

[NATO and Japan conduct joint exercise in the Baltic Sea](#), NATO News Release, 22 August 2018

Macedonia

At the 2008 Bucharest Summit, NATO invited the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to join the alliance as soon as a mutually acceptable solution to the name issue had been reached. Macedonia's efforts to join NATO and the EU were being blocked by Greece, which said the name Macedonia implied a territorial claim over Greece's own northern region of that name.

In June, Macedonia signed a deal with Greece that will see its name changed to the Republic of North Macedonia. After the announcement, Greek officials promised to withdraw formal objections to Macedonia's membership in both NATO and the EU.

The Macedonian parliament formally ratified the agreement with Greece on the 20 June. Nationalists in both Greece and Macedonia remain opposed to the deal, which must also be approved by the Greek parliament. Macedonia has to amend its constitution to conform with the provisions of the deal, and a referendum on it is scheduled for 30 September.

At the Brussels Summit, NATO leaders formally invited Macedonia to start membership talks, with the condition that membership cannot be completed until the name deal with Greece is fully implemented (para 63 of the Summit Declaration).

In January 2019, the protocol for NATO membership will be signed, meaning that Macedonia will start to participate in NATO structures – but without the

right to vote. After signing the protocol for membership, ratification in all 29 parliaments of the NATO member states is required, which is expected to take about 12 months, after which Macedonia will become a full member of NATO.

A nationwide survey by the International Republican Institute, IRI, shows that Macedonia's optimism and support for joining NATO and the EU has increased in recent months, with 57 per cent saying that they favoured entering the EU and NATO under the country's newly agreed name.

[Macedonia Poll: High Levels of Support for EU, NATO Ahead of Referendum](#), International Republican Institute, 29 August 2019

[Macedonian Support for EU, NATO Rises Before Referendum](#), Balkan Insight, 29 August 2018

Ted Galen Carpenter, [How Macedonia Could Push NATO into a War](#), The National Interest, 25 August 2018

[US Voices Support for Macedonia's EU-NATO Integration](#), Balkan Insight, 23 August 2018

[Macedonia: The protocol for NATO membership will be signed in January 2019](#), European Western Balkans, 22 August 2018

Margarita Assenova, [Moscow Pushes to Derail Macedonia's NATO Membership](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 117, 6 August 2018

Milan Simurđić, [Macedonia's NATO Membership Will Affect the Entire Balkans](#), Balkan Insight, 25 July 2018

Nezavisen Vesnik, [Spins and misinformation of NATO propagandists](#), Independent Balkan News Agency, 24 July 2018

[Russia is Sabotaging NATO's Expansion by Undermining Historic Diplomatic Deal, Greek Officials Say](#), Newsweek, 23 July 2018

[Macedonian parliament adopts declaration supporting NATO bid](#), Tampa Bay Times, 19 July 2018

Doug Bandow, [America Doesn't Need Another Weakling NATO Ally](#), The American Conservative, 19 July 2018

Frida Ghitis, [Macedonia Got the Green Light to Join NATO. Why Is It Still Worried About Russia?](#) World Politics Review, 19 July 2018

[Russia: Greece Taking Part in 'Dirty Provocations' for NATO](#), Military.com, 18 July 2018

[Macedonia celebrates the invitation to join NATO](#), Washington Post, 14 July 2018

[NATO Secretary General and Prime Minister Zaev mark the beginning of accession talks](#), NATO News Release, 12 July 2018

[Macedonia expects green light for NATO membership talks: foreign minister](#), Reuters, 9 July 2018

[NATO Chief Hopeful On Macedonia Membership Talks](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 25 June 2018

[Skopje Protests Greet 'Historic' Macedonia Name Deal With Greece](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 18 June 2018

[Greek PM Survives No-Confidence Vote Over Macedonia Name Deal](#), Radio Free Europe/Radio Europe, 16 June 2018

[Russia Tensions: Another European country could Join NATO. Will it anger Moscow?](#) Newsweek, 15 June 2018

[FYR Macedonia's presidential veto unlikely to derail name dispute solution with Greece, but other obstacles remain](#), Jane's 360, 15 June 2016

[Joint press statement](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and European Council President Donald Tusk on the solution to the "name dispute", NATO News Release, 13 June 2018

[Statement by the Secretary General on the agreement between Athens and Skopje](#), NATO Press Release, 12 June 2018

[The Latest: Head of UN Hopes Macedonia Deal Will Be a Model](#), US News, 12 June 2018

[North Macedonian Name Deal Hits Hurdles Right Out of the Gate](#), Bloomberg, 12 June 2018

Stevo Pendarovski, [A Perennial Candidate Waits for NATO to Open its Door](#), GMF Blog, 12 June 2018

Mediterranean Dialogue

NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) was initiated in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council and currently involves seven non-NATO countries in the region: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. The MD aims to contribute to regional security and stability, achieve better mutual understanding.

In the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), NATO declares that it is "committed to building a stronger and more dynamic relationship with our Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners, including to help them modernise their defence and security institutions (para 55). Jordan (para 56) and Tunisia (para 57) are specifically named for further cooperation within this framework, while the alliance stands ready to develop a long-term partnership with Libya, "possibly" leading to membership in the Mediterranean Dialogue (para 58).

[GMF releases study on NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue](#), NATO News Release, 20 July 2018

Charlotte Brandsma, [As NATO Looks South, What Do Mediterranean Partners Think?](#) GMF (blog), 18 July 2018

Must Read: Ian Lesser, Charlotte Brandsma, Laura Basagni and Bruno L  t  , [The Future of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue](#), The German Marshall Fund Report, June 2018

Policy

Charles Pena, [How NATO enlargement becomes a security liability](#), Washington Times, 26 July 2018

Qatar

Qatar is one of four countries—along with Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates—participating in NATO's 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. In January 2018, Qatar signed a security agreement with NATO and in March

signed a further agreement allowing NATO forces and personnel to enter and transit Qatar, and to use the Al-Udeid Air Base.

[Isolated by neighbors, Qatar looks to join NATO](#), Times of Israel, 6 June 2018

[NATO dashes Qatar membership hopes](#), Egypt Today, 6 June 2018

Science for Peace and Security Programme

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme, which provides mechanisms to engage NATO partners in practical cooperation activities based on scientific research, technological innovation, and knowledge exchange. Over the past decade, the Programme has initiated nearly 800 collaborative activities among its 29 member states and 41 partner countries ranging from cyber defence in Jordan to humanitarian demining in Ukraine

[1958 - 2018: The Science for Peace and Security Programme celebrates its 60th anniversary](#), NATO News, 9 August 2018

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. The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) welcomes the “continued progress made in building the NATO-Serbia partnership” (para 61).

The Serbian commission for examining the alleged effects on public health of NATO’s use of depleted uranium ammunition during the 1999 bombing of Yugoslavia will start work in late August or early September, its chairman said.

[Serbia to Begin Probe of NATO Bombing Consequences Soon](#), Balkan Transitional Justice, 30 July 2018

[Serbia launches probe into 1999 NATO bombing](#), Euractiv, 14 June 2018

Sweden

Sweden’s 7.3 million voters go to the polls on 9 September to elect a new parliament and government. There appears to be growing support for joining NATO in Sweden, with the four-party opposition bloc agreeing in January to back membership of the alliance for the first time. During a visit to Sweden the same month, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said “Sweden and NATO cooperate very tightly. If Sweden were to apply to join, I think there would be broad support for that within NATO”.

In the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), there is a commitment to further strengthening cooperation with Sweden, “including through close political consultations, shared situational awareness, and joint exercises” (para 52).

At the beginning of August it was reported that Sweden will sign a \$1 billion contract to acquire the Patriot missile system,

[Sweden to sign \\$1 billion Patriot missile deal this week: report](#), Reuters, 1 August 2018

Tunisia

In 2014, 20 years after joining the Mediterranean Dialogue initiative, Tunisia entered a NATO individual partnership and cooperation programme focused on priority areas including counter-terrorism and border security.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) commits NATO to further developing cooperation with Tunisia. More specifically, it approves new Defence and Related Security Capacity Building

assistance measures, which will include cyber defence, counter-improvised explosive devices, and the promotion of transparency in resource management (para 57).

Francis Ghilès, [Tunisia's delicate balancing act with Nato](#), Middle East Eye, 21 June 2018

Ukraine

Relations between NATO and Ukraine date back to the early 1990s and have since developed into one of the most substantial of NATO's partnerships. Since 2014, in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, cooperation has been intensified.

In the run up to the July Brussels Summit, however, there were fears that President Trump might officially accept Russia's annexation of Crimea. When reporters asked the president whether he would be willing to recognize Russia's claim on the territory, Trump responded "[w]e're going to have to see". But even if President Trump was open to discussing the Crimea situation at his Helsinki Summit with Russian President Putin the Kremlin indicated that it was not. Press secretary Dmitry Peskov announced that "such an issue as Crimea cannot and will not be on the agenda because Crimea is an integral part of Russia". Putin is willing to discuss "all other questions".

At the NATO Summit, ties with Ukraine were due to be discussed on the second day. However, President Trump forced member states to hold an emergency session on defence spending, cutting short a meeting on Ukraine and Georgia. Nonetheless, in the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#), NATO reiterated its support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, strongly condemned Russia's "illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, which we do not and will not recognise", urged "Russia to cease all political, financial, and military support to militant groups and stop intervening

militarily in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and to withdraw troops, equipment, and mercenaries from the territory of Ukraine" (para 7).

In terms of Ukraine's potential future NATO membership, the declaration reaffirmed decisions taken at the Bucharest Summit and subsequent Summits (para 67). But despite trumpeting the "success of wide-ranging reforms" and looking forward "to further progress in Ukraine's efforts to overcome significant remaining challenges and ensure the full implementation and sustainability of ambitious but necessary reforms", there was no indication as to when Ukraine might be invited to become a member of NATO.

Instead, the declaration focused on enhancing existing technical cooperation—including security sector reform through the Comprehensive Assistance Package, cooperation on Black Sea security and strengthening resilience against hybrid threats through the NATO-Ukraine Platform on Countering Hybrid Warfare—and potentially "enhanced opportunities within the Partnership Interoperability Initiative" (para 67). These same themes were repeated in a separate [Chairman's statement on NATO-Ukraine following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council with Georgia and Ukraine at the Brussels Summit](#).

Adam Coffey, [Ukraine Five Years On: Enduring Challenges](#), RUSI Commentary, 24 August 2018

[New law on national security supported by all NATO partners - Poroshenko](#), Ukrinform, 13 August 2018

Oleg Varfolomeyev, [Ukraine's Defense Industry Slowly Moves Toward Adopting NATO Standards](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 114, 31 July 2018

[Some 45% of Ukrainians support Ukraine's accession to NATO - poll](#), UNIAN, 30 July 2018

Ihor Kabanenko, [NATO Brussels Summit: Key Outcomes and Implications for Ukrainian Interests](#), Eurasia Daily Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 107, 8 July 2018

[Ukraine Will Attend NATO Summit Despite Hungarian Objection](#), VOA, 4 July 2018

Irnya Somer, [Ukraine enters upcoming NATO summit with hopes and fears](#), Kyiv Post, 4 July 2018

[Crimea will 'never' be discussed in international negotiations, Russia says](#), Newsweek, 2 July 2018

[Trump Leaves Door Open to U.S. Recognizing Russia's Crimea Grab](#), Bloomberg, 30 June 2018

[NATO Soldiers Train Ukrainian Paratroopers](#), Hromadske, 29 June 2018

[Hungary agrees to Ukraine's participation in NATO summit, but keeps blocking bilateral Commission](#), UNIAN, 22 June 2018

[Poroshenko on Law on National Security: Significant step toward Ukraine's membership in NATO](#), UNIAN, 22 June 2018

History

Matthew Waxman, [NATO and War Powers: Remembering the 'Great Debate' of the 1950s](#), Lawfare, 11 July 2018

Military Exercises

Major military exercises are being conducted with increasing frequency in Europe and beyond. Both Russia and NATO have been holding large Cold War-style war games. Both sides claim the exercises, which involve mainly conventional air, sea and land assets, but also cyber and potentially nuclear warfare simulations, are purely defensive in nature. But it is clear the exercises are also meant to showcase new capabilities and technologies, and display not only the strength of their respective alliances, but how quickly troops and heavy equipment can move to defeat a territorial incursion at the frontier. (See the essay on this issue in [NATO Watch Observatory No.46](#)).

From 11 to 15 September, Russia will hold its biggest military exercise in nearly four decades. The exercise, which will also involve the Chinese and Mongolian armies, will take place in central and eastern Russian military districts. Vostok-2018 (East-2018) will involve almost 300,000 troops, more than 1,000 military aircraft, two of Russia's naval fleets, and all its airborne units. Russia has briefed NATO on the exercise and invited military attaches from alliance countries based in Moscow to observe the exercise.

NATO's largest military exercise since the end of the Cold War, [Trident Juncture 2018](#), will take place in Norway in October and November, including thousands of non-NATO troops from Finland and Sweden. The exercise will feature 40,000 troops from all 29 NATO members, 70 ships, 150 aircraft, and 10,000 ground vehicles, all under the command of the US Navy's Adm. James Foggo, head of the Joint Forces Command Naples.

Key NATO and allied military exercises in June-August 2018:

- UNIFIED VISION 18 (4-29 June): A NATO exercise that aimed to test and improve the interoperability of Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance assets and involved fast jets, Unmanned Aircraft Vehicles (UAVs), frigates, under-water gliders, maritime vehicles, etc. Location: Czech Republic, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, US and North Atlantic
- BALTOPS (3-15 June): A US annual maritime-led exercise, with 22 Nations (20 allies and 2 partners), involving more than 4700 personnel, 44 ships and submarines, and over 60 air assets. Location: Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and Baltic Sea
- SABER STRIKE (6-23 June): Annual US-led field training exercise, including around 18,000 troops from 19 NATO nations. Location: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland

- SUMMER SHIELD (7–16 June): This annual multinational exercise led by Latvia tested a broad range of combat support elements, including artillery, air defence and reconnaissance, and involved around 2,500 troops from eight allies. Location: Latvia
- RAMSTEIN ALLOY 18 II (25–27 June): The focus of this NATO air exercise was on enhancing the interoperability of NATO and partner countries. Location: Estonia
- DYNAMIC MONGOOSE (25 June–6 July): An annual NATO exercise to train submarine warfare, antisubmarine warfare (ASW), ASW surface units and maritime patrol aircraft. Location: North Atlantic

[Nato alarm: Russia announces vast scale of world's biggest military exercise since cold war – and China is taking part](#), South China Morning Post, 29 August 2018

[Russia war games: Biggest since Cold War 'justified'](#), BBC News, 28 August 2018

[Russia is getting ready for its biggest war games since the Cold War — a potential sign they're worried about NATO](#), Business Insider, 28 August 2018

[Russia to hold biggest war games since 1981](#), The Guardian, 28 August 2018

[First load of military equipment for Exercise Trident Juncture 2018 arrives in Norway](#), NATO News Release, 24 August 2018

[#BalticBrief: Sputnik Targets NATO Exercise, Reveals Wider Narrative Trend](#), Digital Forensic Research Lab, 6 August 2018

[Sailors Join NATO Allies in Sub Exercise as Russia Threat Grows](#), Military.com, 14 July 2018

[NATO Warships Start Submarine Hunt Drill as a 'Strong Signal' to Russia](#), Newsweek, 26 June 2018

[With the Russian Threat in Mind, NATO Prepares for a Different Kind of War](#), The Daily Signal, 22 June 2018

[19 NATO Allies and partners wrap up exercise Saber Strike 2018](#), NATO News Release, 15 June 2018

[Lithuania sees fake news attempt to discredit NATO exercises](#), Channel News Asia, 14 June 2018

[Elisabeth Braw, NATO Needs More Big Exercises, Too](#), Defense One, 14 June 2018

[NATO forces show Russia they can resist invasion as war games come to an end](#), Newsweek, 14 June 2018

[Commander Describes Exercise Trident Juncture Effort, Planning](#), US Defense News Release, 12 June 2018

[Exercise Trident Juncture 18 to demonstrate NATO's ability to defend itself](#), NATO News Release, 11 June 2018

[NATO 'Committed To Defense, Deterrence,' U.S Admiral Says](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 11 June 2018

[NATO Launches Massive Saber Strike Maneuvers In Poland, Baltics](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 3 June 2018

Missile Defence

Under the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) for European Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) operations, BMD-capable Aegis ships are operating in European waters to defend Europe from potential ballistic missile attacks, supposedly from countries such as Iran and North Korea. Two Aegis Ashore sites in Poland and Romania are also part of the EPAA.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) discusses NATO's BMD capability in some detail (paras 37-41). It begins with the controversial claim that "missile defence can complement the role of nuclear weapons in deterrence; it cannot substitute for them". Rather, many experts suggest that further development of [BMD capabilities are likely to be destabilizing](#), especially if other nuclear-armed states pursue similar systems. The declaration goes on to say that "Should international efforts reduce the threats posed by ballistic missile proliferation, NATO missile defence can and will adapt accordingly. Full Allied political control and oversight are essential, and full implementation will be ensured and monitored" (para 37). Again, however, the [history of BMD development in NATO](#) suggests that there will be little

public transparency on these decisions, which tend to be US industry-led. Transparency on these issues also continues to be [problematic](#) in the United States.

NATO BMD is currently based mainly on US EPPA assets in Romania, Turkey, Spain, and Poland, but the summit declaration suggests that “additional voluntary national contributions will provide robustness”, without indicating where these might arise (para 38).

Initial Operational Capability for NATO BMD was declared in 2016. The next major milestone is the completion of the core element of the NATO BMD Command and Control, the only component eligible for common funding, and NATO is looking for opportunities to “quickly and effectively improve delivery” of this component so as to “reach system maturity and Full Operational Capability” (para 39).

The summit declaration also reiterates that “NATO BMD is not directed against Russia and will not undermine Russia’s strategic deterrence” (para 41). As currently configured, NATO BMD is intended to defend against potential threats emanating from outside the Euro-Atlantic area, and according to the declaration, “there is no intention to redesign this system” to have a capability to target Russia’s strategic nuclear weapons in the future. However, there has been some [speculation](#) that President Trump is indeed looking to adjust its own missile defence policy to include threats from Russia and China.

There are also [reports](#) that the US military is developing a system for using artificial intelligence to spot nuclear missile launches. And according to Lockheed Martin, the company’s most advanced version of the Patriot missile, PAC-3 MSE, broke its distance record in intercepting a target during a test in July.

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Three key decisions were taken at this ministerial meeting: A NATO Readiness Initiative was agreed, committing NATO to having 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 naval combat vessels, ready to use within 30 days by 2020; it was confirmed that the new Joint Force Atlantic Command will be based at Norfolk in the United States, and the new Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany (and that the Command Structure will be enhanced by more than 1,200 personnel); and Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the creation of a Composite Special Operations Component Command (C-SOCC).

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[U.S. pushes NATO to ready more forces to deter Russian threat](#), Reuters, 5 June 2018

NATO Summit: July 2018

Although he criticized allies and pressed for large spending increases (see essay above), President Trump signed onto a joint NATO declaration that largely reaffirmed existing commitments. Key items in the declaration include:

- A NATO Readiness Initiative was agreed, committing NATO to having 30 battalions, 30 air

squadrons and 30 naval combat vessels, ready to use within 30 days by 2020 (see 'collective defence' section above).

- It was confirmed that the new Joint Force Atlantic Command will be based at Norfolk in the United States, and the new Enabling Command in Ulm, Germany. The Command Structure will be enhanced by more than 1,200 personnel (see 'collective defence' section above).
- A new Cyber Operations Centre will be created at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium (see 'cyber' section above).
- A new NATO training mission in Iraq will be launched, with several hundred trainers, and defence capacity building support for Jordan and Tunisia will be increased (see 'operations and missions' below).
- The Secretary General announced that NATO's 'Hub for the South' in Naples, Italy, is now fully operational.
- The government in Skopje has been invited to start accession talks. Once all national procedures have been completed to finalise the agreement on the name issue, the country will join NATO as its thirtieth member (see 'Macedonia' sub-section above).

These decisions were largely rubber-stamping agreements reached at earlier ministerial and committee meetings (see, for example, the [February 2018 NATO Defence ministerial](#), the [May 2018 NATO Defence Committee meeting](#) and the [June 2018 NATO Defence ministerial](#)). It was also reported after the Summit that senior US national security officials had pushed NATO ambassadors to complete most of the substance in advance to prevent President Trump

from unravelling the formal policy declaration.

Official texts:

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[Brussels Declaration on Transatlantic Security and Solidarity](#), 11 July 2018

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NATO Shadow Summit IV:

NATO's 360-degree approach to deterrence and collective defence: over-stretched and under-powered?

9 July 2018, King's College London

On 9 July 2018, the British American Security Information Council, the Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security at the University of Birmingham, NATO Watch, and King's College London hosted a conference to discuss the most pressing challenges facing NATO as it approached its upcoming summit in Brussels. The conference was convened to discuss an overarching question: 'Is NATO's 360-degree approach to deterrence and collective defence over-stretched and under-powered?' In an increasingly complex and unstable geopolitical environment and with a myriad of internal challenges threatening NATO cohesion, this was a timely and important opportunity to review the alliance's trajectory.

Read the Summary Report [here](#).

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Nuclear Weapons

NATO's collective defence strategy is based on a mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities. The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) largely follows the trend of recent NATO summits in highlighting the importance of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy (e.g. "As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance", para 35), making out the alliance to be a responsible nuclear weapon exponent (e.g. "The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression.... The circumstances in which NATO might have to use nuclear weapons are extremely remote", para 36) and pointing the proliferation finger elsewhere, particularly towards Russia (which it accuses of making "significant investments in the modernisation of its strategic forces; its irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric... and the growing number of its exercises with a nuclear dimension", para 6).

However, the summit declaration also approved some significant changes to NATO's policies on nuclear deterrence and non-proliferation. An analysis by the [Arms Control Association](#) identified at least five such changes. First, a minor but subtle change in language suggests a potentially increased role for the 150 to 200 US B61 nuclear gravity bombs believed to be deployed on the territory of five NATO states (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey). The statement that "NATO's nuclear deterrence posture also relies on United States' nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe" (para 35), suggests a shift from the alliance's

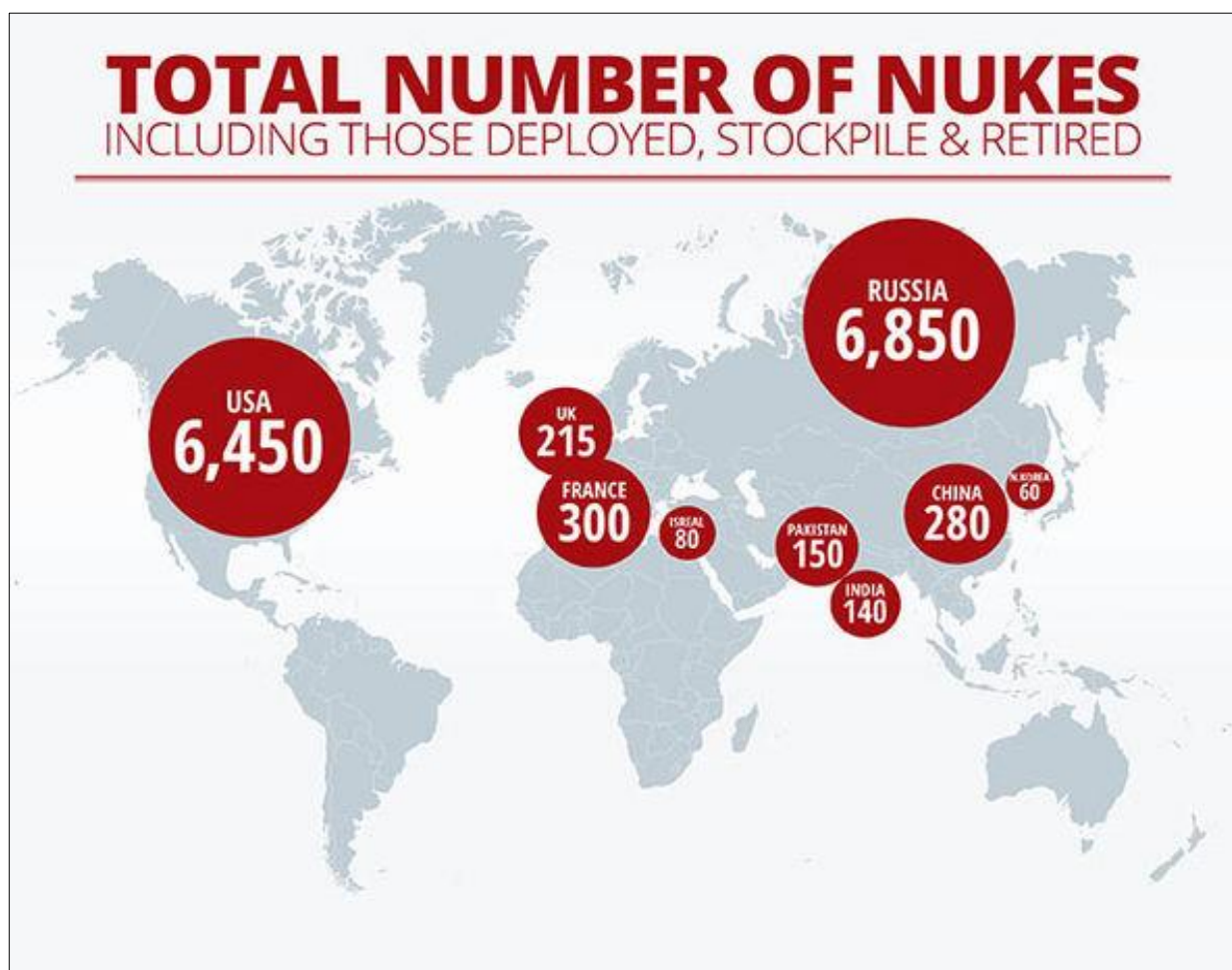
2016 Warsaw declaration stating that the posture relied “in part” on US forward-deployed nuclear weapons (while the two previous summit statements gave no explicit reference to the need for US nuclear weapons in Europe).

Second, the summit declaration addresses in stronger terms alleged Russian violations of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The 2016 summit declaration highlighted the importance of the INF Treaty and called on Russia “to preserve the viability of the INF Treaty through ensuring full and verifiable compliance”, but the new declaration states that “the most plausible assessment would be that Russia is in violation” of the treaty—a claim that the US government has been making for several years—and “urges Russia to address these concerns in a substantial and transparent way, and

actively engage in a technical dialogue with the United States” (para 46).

Third, the summit declaration appears to water down NATO’s commitment to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The 2016 declaration called for the universalization of the CTBT, whereas the 2018 declaration makes a more limited call for all states “to declare and to maintain a voluntary moratorium [on nuclear testing]...pending the potential entry into force” of the CTBT (para 45).

Fourth, while the 2016 summit declaration celebrated the Iran deal, the 2018 document fails to mention it. This reflects transatlantic divisions over the issue, with Europeans attempting to preserve the agreement in the face of President Donald Trump’s decision in May to withdraw the US from the accord. Instead, the 2018 summit declaration states that NATO is “committed to permanently ensuring



that Iran's nuclear programme remains peaceful, in line with its international obligations" and goes on to focus on concerns with Iran's ballistic missiles, "destabilising activities in the wider Middle East region" and support for terrorism (para 49).

Fifth, the 2018 declaration praised US and Russian reductions in strategic nuclear weapons under New START—the first mention of this treaty since the 2010 summit document—and expressed "strong support for its continued implementation", while stopping short of calling for an extension of the treaty beyond its 2021 expiration date. If allowed to expire, the US and Russian nuclear arsenals could be unconstrained by any binding arms control agreements for the first time since 1972, triggering an expensive and dangerous new arms race.

NATO also continues to argue that its "nuclear arrangements" are fully consistent with the NPT, while rejecting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as being "inconsistent with the Alliance's nuclear deterrence policy" (para 44). Both of these claims remain questionable. NATO nuclear sharing arrangements have been [repeatedly criticized](#) during meetings of NPT states-parties as being at odds with the treaty's letter and spirit. And while NATO membership appears to be incompatible with the principles set out in the TPNW for as long as nuclear weapons remain central to NATO's mission and defence, member states will

nonetheless have to factor the treaty into their exchanges both with domestic audiences

and with states supporting the ban treaty. There may also be scope for individual member states to step out from under the NATO nuclear umbrella. One recent [study argues](#) that "a state that wishes to withdraw from the nuclear umbrella associated with NATO can do so without violating any legal obligations to the alliance, and would in fact have the full right to do so". The TPNW would also allow such a state to continue to participate in joint military operations with nuclear armed states as long as it does not assist with prohibited acts, such as possessing, threatening to use, or using nuclear weapons.

A [second study](#) focused on Sweden, which frequently partners with NATO but is not a member state. Sweden has appointed an inquiry chair to examine how joining the TPNW would affect Sweden's defence policies and its obligations under other agreements. Sweden was one of 122 nations to adopt the TPNW in July 2017. The study concludes that if Sweden became a party to the treaty, the country could not assist its allies with prohibited activities involving nuclear weapons. It could, however, maintain its relationships with NATO and the EU and continue to participate in joint military operations without violating the treaty.

While European NATO governments may not yet be contemplating stepping away from nuclear weapons, political mobilisation is taking place in several member states in support of the TPNW (e.g. [Spain](#)). And opposition to nuclear

weapons is reflected in [public opinion polls](#) in Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and Italy, all of which



host US nuclear weapons as part of NATO nuclear sharing arrangements. The [survey](#) found that at least twice as many people are in favour of removing the weapons rather than keeping them; that at least four times as many people are in favour of their countries joining the TPNW than not; and that at least four times as many people are against investment in nuclear weapon production than are for it. Regarding the latter, a number of banks have chosen to divest from nuclear weapon producers. The Belgian Bank [KBC](#) was the latest to do so in June, explicitly mentioning the TPNW as a guiding factor in its decision.

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Operations and Missions

Afghanistan

Also see opening essay above.

Ceasefire and peace process

The Afghan government, international forces, and Taliban insurgents all observed a temporary ceasefire for a few days in June. The truce was unprecedented in Afghanistan's long war, brought a notable decline in violence and prompted scenes of joy across the country, often involving government and Taliban forces celebrating together.

The Taliban announced its three-day ceasefire to coincide with the end of Ramadan. The ceasefire came on the back of a unilateral move by the Afghan government to temporarily halt fighting against the Taliban. By the end of June, however, while the Afghan government maintained its unilateral ceasefire, the Taliban resumed its offensive, in one incident capturing more than 80 Afghan police officers.

On the 16 July, the NATO Resolute Support mission [refuted](#) a *New York*

Times [report](#) that said it is willing to engage in direct talks with the Taliban. Nonetheless, at the end of July it was reported that the Taliban held their first direct contact with a US government official, Alice Wells, in a preliminary discussion about future peace talks. And in early August it was [reported](#) that a former US Army colonel and a former State Department official repeatedly met with Taliban representatives as part of a backchannel peace process.

On the 19 August, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced a conditional plan for a three-month ceasefire with the Taliban. The plan called for a truce between the Taliban and Afghan security forces starting the next day and continuing until the 19 November.

Islamic State and suicide bombings

A suicide bombing in Afghanistan at the beginning of July killed 19 people, many of whom were members of the nation's Sikh and Hindu minorities. Twenty-nine people were killed and 81 wounded in a suicide bombing in a Shiite Muslim mosque in early August. A few days later a suicide bombing outside Kabul left three NATO soldiers dead. And on the 15 August at least 48 people were killed and 76 injured by a suicide bomber at a private learning centre in the Shiite district of Kabul. Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate—the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)—is believed to have been responsible for most, and probably all, of these attacks.

The head of ISKP, Abu Saad Erhabi, and 10 other ISKP fighters were [reportedly](#) killed in an airstrike by Afghan and coalition forces in Nangarhar province in late August. Erhabi is the third head

of the ISKP to be killed by the US-led international coalition since July 2017.

US strategy and airstrikes

A previously undisclosed part of the Trump administration's Afghan war strategy was revealed by the [New York Times](#) at the end of July. It seems Afghan forces are being encouraged to abandon rural checkpoints, instead focusing on protecting population centres.

In early August, a US airstrike mistakenly targeted a police outpost in Afghanistan, killing at least a dozen members of the Afghan security forces. The strike came amid intense fighting between the Taliban and Afghan

government forces. Also in August, Afghan and US forces, including Special Forces, resisted a Taliban siege in the eastern city of Ghazni. However, the five-day assault by the Taliban [killed](#) at least 100 Afghan soldiers and police and more than 150 civilians.



(Afghan Special Security Forces and US Special Operations Forces land in Chimal district, Balkh

province, Afghanistan, 8 July 2018 – photo credit: NATO Resolute Support Mission)

Civilian casualties

The UN's mission in Afghanistan [reported](#) in July that there were more civilians killed in the first half of 2018 than in any other similar period since the organisation began recording figures nearly ten years ago.

Development and governance

A June [report](#) painted a dismal picture of the state of education in Afghanistan. "Nearly half all children in Afghanistan are out of school due to conflict, poverty, child marriage and discrimination against girls, the

number rising for the first time since 2002”.

A [report](#) by SIGAR, a US government watchdog, found that unqualified and potentially corrupt actors continue to operate in key Afghan anti-corruption institutions.

At the end of August, three senior Afghan officials—Defence Minister Tariq Shah Bahrami, Interior Minister Wais Barmak, as well as Masoom Stanekzai, head of the National Directorate of Security—resigned, citing policy differences with the government amid deteriorating security. President Ashraf Ghani rejected their resignations.

The Brussels Summit

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) reaffirmed NATO’s commitment “to ensure long-term security and stability in Afghanistan” and extended the “financial sustainment of the Afghan forces through 2024” (para 53). It also called on Pakistan, Iran and Russia “to contribute to regional stability by fully supporting an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process”.

A separate and more detailed [Joint Statement on the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan](#) welcomed the Afghan government’s “unprecedented offer of unconditional peace talks to the Taliban. We fully support the Afghan government’s aim of reaching an inclusive peace agreement with the Taliban”. There was also a commitment to “sustain the non-combat Resolute Support Mission that delivers training, advice and assistance to the Afghan security institutions and forces until conditions indicate a change in the mission is appropriate”.

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Iraq

NATO and Iraq are engaged in political dialogue and practical cooperation aimed at developing the capacity of Iraq's security forces, its defence and security institutions, and its national defence academies.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) announced that NATO is launching a "non-combat training and capacity

building mission in Iraq, at the request of the Government of Iraq for additional support in its efforts to stabilise the country and fight terrorism" (para 54). The new mission will build upon existing NATO training activities in Iraq, and will maintain a "modest and scalable footprint", and complement the ongoing and future efforts of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/Da'esh and other relevant international actors. Australia, Finland and Sweden are cited as operational partners in this mission.

On the 22 August, it was announced that Canada, under the leadership of Major-General Dany Fortin, had been selected to lead the new NATO Mission Iraq.

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[NATO Stepping Forward on Training Mission to Iraq](#), US Department of Defense, 30 July 2018

[KRG welcomes NATO decision to include Peshmerga in new Iraq mission](#), Kurdistan24, 21 July 2018

[Training Tasks: How Does NATO Plan to Restructure Its Military Presence in Post-ISIS Iraq?](#) Future Centre, 18 July 2018

Kosovo

Amidst continuing tensions in Serb-majority northern Kosovo, the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) reiterated that NATO's presence, mainly through the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), "contributes to a safe and secure environment, working in close cooperation with the Kosovo authorities and the EU". It adds that "any changes to NATO's force posture will remain conditions-based and not calendar-driven" (para 60).

[NATO Vows to Prevent Violence in North Kosovo](#), Balkan Insight, 1 August 2018

[Kosovo arrests two suspected of plotting attacks on NATO](#), Reuters, 8 June 2018

Populism and NATO

Recent elections in several European countries witnessed the rise of populist movements, most of which share Eurosceptic, isolationist, and often pro-Russian stances. However, to date very little of this populist sentiment has been directed at NATO.

Must Read: Jonathan Katz and Torrey Tausig, [An Inconvenient Truth: Addressing Democratic Backsliding Within NATO](#), German Marshall Fund, 10 July 2018

Must Read: [This is what people think about NATO](#), World Economic Forum, Pew Research Center, 12 July 2018

President Trump and the Transatlantic Bond

The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and many government officials and commentators across the alliance have articulated the importance of the 'transatlantic bond' and how it has been strengthened in NATO. However, President Trump's nationalistic 'America first' agenda and 'shaking of the NATO tree' suggests that such a bond may only be skin deep and close to breaking point. On the other hand, it is often difficult to discern to whom the President's heated

words are actually targeted and why. Apportioning his rhetoric between demagoguery, distraction and personal offence is rarely easy, and it is also not clear if his views reflect a deeper chasm in the transatlantic relationship. Views on this issue are mixed (as noted in the references below) although there remains a broad commitment to NATO within the US establishment and military.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) did its best to paper over the cracks by claiming that allies are "united in our commitment to the Washington Treaty, the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN), and the vital transatlantic bond" (para 1). In a separate [Brussels Declaration on Transatlantic Security and Solidarity](#) the defence of the status quo becomes even more robust: "Our Alliance embodies the enduring and unbreakable transatlantic bond between Europe and North America to stand together against threats and challenges from any direction". The shared values cited at the heart of this bond, include "democracy, individual liberty, human rights and the rule of law".

"For the President to say the EU was 'set up to take advantage of the United States, to attack our piggy bank', or that 'Nato is as bad as Nafta' is not only factually wrong, but proves to me that it's time to go."

The US ambassador to Estonia, Jim Melville, explaining his decision to resign in a personal Facebook message

[Trump Says He Told NATO Counterparts, 'I Will Leave You If You Don't Pay Your Bills'](#), CNS News, 22 August 2018

C. Mitchell Shaw, [Trump's Criticism of NATO Doesn't Go Far Enough](#), The New American, 20 August 2018

Richard Falk, [The Future of NATO: An Interview](#), The Transnational, 13 August 2018

[Trump says at NATO he got 'A Dictator or Two' to spend more on Military](#), Newsweek, 27 July 2018

[Trump launches fresh tirade against Nato and Germany during incoherent speech to US steel workers](#), Independent, 27 July 2018

Michael Kranz, [Why Eastern European countries aren't attacking Trump over NATO](#), Vox, 26 July 2018

Ken Hansen, [Donald Trump is wrong about NATO](#), Macleans, 25 July 2018

Tyson Barker and Mark Simakovsky, [Helsinki and NATO show we need a Trump containment strategy to protect us and our allies](#), USA Today, 24 July 2018

Must Read: Michael Klare, [Entering a 1984 World, Trump-Style: Or Implementing the Sino-Russian Blueprint for a Tripolar World Order](#), TomDispatch, 24 July 2018

Amy Davidson Sorkin, [In Dissing Angela Merkel and NATO, What Was Trump Telling Putin?](#) New Yorker, 23 July 2018

Rich Lowry, [Don't Dismiss NATO's Faraway Members](#), National Review, 20 July 2018

Jamie Fly, [Why Europe should heed Trump's NATO warning](#), Handelsblatt, 19 July 2018

[NATO Fearful as Trump Flip-Flops Like a Fat Goldfish On The Floor](#), The Daily Beast, 19 July 2018

[Trump Questions NATO "Article 5" Mutual Defense Clause](#), The New American, 19 July 2018

[In Interview, Trump Appears To Question NATO's 'Collective Defense' Clause](#), NPR, 19 July 2018

Philip Gordon and Ivo Daalder, [Trump's Biggest Gift to Putin](#), The Atlantic, 19 July 2018

John Feffer, [What's Behind Trump's Assault on Europe](#), Foreign Policy in Focus, 18 July 2018

Mark Hannah, [Did Trump just destroy NATO? If so, should we care?](#) Boston Globe, 17 July 2018

[Trump says Putin summit 'even better' than NATO meeting](#), Reuters, 17 July 2018

[Donald Trump praises meeting with Putin as 'even better' than NATO summit](#), Newsweek, 17 July 2018

[Trump thanks Finland for support on NATO, but Finland is not in NATO](#), Think Progress, 16 July 2018

Judy Dempsey, [Trump's Attitude Toward NATO Makes Putin's Job Easier](#), Carnegie Europe, 16 July 2018

Michael Sean Winters, [Trump's NATO trip is a win for propaganda, not for diplomacy](#), National Catholic Reporter, 16 July 2018

Kathleen Parker, [Saving NATO from Donald Trump](#), The Washington Post, 13 July 2018

Derek Chollet and Amanda Sloat, [Should NATO even hold summits under Trump?](#) Brookings, 13 July 2018

Richard Fontaine and Vance Serchuk, [The West Will Survive Trump](#). The transatlantic

alliance has seen worse, The Atlantic, 11 July 2018

(President Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May at the NATO Summit – photo credit: NATO)

Vijay Prashad, [For All His Bluster, Trump is Powerless Against NATO Allies — Here's](#)

[Why](#), Alternet, 11 July 2018 - Trump will gradually disappear from the stage. But other names will remain intact: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon...

Dalibor Rohac, [NATO's choice: adapt or die](#), Capx, 11 July 2018

[Trump Derides NATO as 'Obsolete.' Baltic Nations See It Much Differently](#), New York Times, 10 July 2018

Julian Zelizer, [Trump regarded differently going into NATO summit](#), CNN, 9 July 2018

[Trump 'will empower the Kremlin' if he continues to undermine Nato](#), The Observer, 7 July 2018

[Editorial: Trump should stop bashing NATO allies](#), Tampa Bay Times, 5 July 2018

[Will Donald Trump be Triumphant, Tetchy or Torpedo?](#) The Economist, 5 July 2018



Rebecca Kheel, [Trump tensions peak ahead of NATO summit](#), The Hill, 4 July 2018

[Trump Warns NATO Allies to Spend More on Defense, or Else](#), New York Times, 2 July 2018

Alexander Vershbow, [Who is the leader of the free world?](#) The Hill, 1 July 2018

[US ambassador to Estonia resigns over Trump policies and provocations](#), The Guardian, 30 June 2018

[US ambassador to Estonia resigns 'over Trump comments'](#), BBC News, 30 June 2018

[Trump Backs Russia on Election Interference Ahead of NATO Summit](#), The Atlantic, 28 June 2018

[Trump trashed Nato at G7, calling it 'as bad as Nafta', officials confirm](#), The Guardian, 28 June 2018

Martin Kettle, [Trump is hellbent on destroying the Nato alliance](#), The Guardian, 27 June 2018

[Trump's letters to allies mean the NATO Summit could be in trouble before it begins](#), Defense News, 27 June 2018

Kevin Baron, [NATO Will Outlive Trump \(and Putin\), Don't Worry](#), Defense One, 27 June 2018

[After 'diplomatic equivalent of a multiple-car pileup,' U.S. allies brace for NATO summit](#), Washington Post, 26 June 2018

Jamie Fly and Erik Brattberg, [Preserving Space for Cooperation in an Era of Transatlantic Turbulence](#), GMF, June 2018

[Why the head of NATO says there's 'no guarantee' that the trans-Atlantic alliance will survive](#), Military Times, 22 June 2018

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, [Trump Is Trying to Dismantle the World Order. Is NATO Next on His List?](#) TIME, 22 June 2018

[How Should Europe Respond to Trump's Bullying?](#) New York Times Editorial, 21 June 2018

[Questions hang over Nato stability as summit draws closer](#), The Guardian, 21 June 2018

[Nato chief says Trump-Putin meeting would not contradict policy](#), The Guardian, 21 June 2018

[Nato head calls for unity after Trump discord and Russia threat](#), The Guardian, 21 June 2018

[Trump's Putin Summit: NATO Fears President's Meeting Will Undermine Alliance](#), Newsweek, 21 June 2018

[NATO Secretary General: the transatlantic bond keeps us strong and secure](#), NATO News Release, 21 June 2018

[Nato chief warns over future of transatlantic relationship](#), The Guardian, 19 June 2018

Jens Stoltenberg, [Europe and North America need to stay united - now more than ever](#), The Guardian, 19 June 2018

Victor Davis Hanson, [The Post-War Order Is Over](#), Geopolitical Monitor, 4 June 2018

Responsibility to Protect

At the Warsaw Summit in July 2016, NATO leaders endorsed the [NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians](#). A *NATO Military Concept on the Protection of Civilians* was subsequently developed for future NATO operations and missions, in close cooperation with other international organisations and civil society. It was approved in 2018, but has not been made public. Concurrent with the new policy and concept is an action plan; activities include training exercises such as [Viking 18](#), held in April 2018, and a protection of civilians course in October 2018 hosted by the US Army War College Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute and the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre (FINCENT).

NATO also agreed a policy document on *Protection of Children in Armed Conflict – the Way Forward* in 2015 and deployed a Children and Armed Conflict Adviser as part of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan in 2016 – the first such deployment in a NATO-led mission.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) endorses all these measures without making any new specific commitments.

It states that NATO will “continue to promote robust policies” in the areas of Children and Armed Conflict and Protection of Civilians” (para 74) and in regard to the protection of children in armed conflict, “will continue to update its policy and broaden its operationalisation, taking into account best practices of the Resolute Support Mission” (para 76). Finally, the declaration states that “NATO and partners are committed to ensuring that all efforts are made to avoid, minimise, and mitigate the negative effects on civilians arising from NATO and NATO-led military operations and missions, as underscored in our new military concept for the Protection of Civilians” (para 77).

Despite these policy commitments, Human Rights Watch [alleged](#) in July that NATO has “failed to fully investigate alleged unlawful airstrikes in Afghanistan, which may contribute to rising civilian casualties”. The NATO Resolute Support Mission’s civilian casualty team is criticised for “not conducting on-site investigations after attacks resulting in civilian casualties, relying instead on visual and satellite imagery and typically unreliable Afghan security force reports”.

Marla Keenan and Victoria Holt, [Preparing to Protect: Advice on Implementing NATO’s Protection of Civilians Policy](#), NATO ACT OPEN Publications, July 2018

[NATO: Bolster Inquiries Into Afghan Civilian Deaths](#), Human Rights Watch, 9 July 2018

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.

Unsurprisingly, relations with Russia feature prominently in the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) (paras 4-7). NATO

asserts that “Russia has breached the values, principles and commitments which underpin the NATO-Russia relationship” (para 4) and that it does not seek confrontation and “poses no threat to Russia”, despite responding to the deteriorated security environment by “enhancing our deterrence and defence posture, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance” (para 5).

It also catalogues a long list of Russian transgressions, including:

- “illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea and ongoing destabilisation of eastern Ukraine”;
- “irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric”;
- large-scale, no-notice snap exercises; continued “violation, non-implementation, and circumvention of numerous arms control and confidence-building obligations and commitments”;
- hybrid actions, including attempted electoral interference, widespread disinformation campaigns and malicious cyber activities;
- a military-grade nerve agent attack on the UK;
- the downing of civilian flight MH-17; and violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty; (paras 6, 22, 46 and 47).

The declaration also reiterates NATO’s support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, Georgia, and the Republic of Moldova and calls on Russia to withdraw the forces it has stationed in all three countries (para 7).

Finally, the declaration also states that NATO remains open to a “periodic, focused, and meaningful dialogue with a Russia willing to engage on the basis of reciprocity” in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), “with a view to avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase

transparency and predictability” (para 8). Since 2016, there have been seven NRC meetings at Ambassadorial level. However, in the next paragraph, the declaration states that the conditions for a proper partnership with Russia do not exist: “There can be no return to ‘business as usual’ until there is a clear, constructive change in Russia’s actions that demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities” (para 8).

[NATO Confirms Russian Naval Buildup Off Syria, Calls for Restraint](#), Haaretz, 29 August 2018

[Russia, the victim? Opposite NATO’s eastern flank, it’s an expansionist West causing anxiety](#), Defense News, 27 August 2018

William Mchenry, [We face greater threats than conventional forces from Moscow: NATO strategy should reflect that](#), The Hill, 24 August 2018

[Nato-Russia: Putin and Nato trade barbs over troops](#), BBC News, 22 August 2018

[NATO Fighter Jet Accidentally Fires Air-to-Air Missile Near Russian Border](#), Popular Mechanics, 7 August 2018

Eugene Rumer, [Russia Is Winning—Or Is It?](#) Moscow Times, 30 July 2018

Christopher Spearin, [NATO, Russia and Private Military and Security Companies](#), The RUSI Journal, 2018

[NATO forces are relearning the lessons of the Cold War to face Russian threats](#), Business Insider, 30 July 2018

[Russians Arrest NATO Spy Suspects in Probe of Hypersonic Missile Secrets](#), Washington Free Beacon, 25 July 2018

Lyle Jeremy Rubin, [It’s Time For A Little Perspective on Russia](#), Current Affairs, 20 July 2018

[If NATO is obsolete, why is Putin fighting it so hard?](#) Washington Post editorial, 24 July 2018

[Russia is warning NATO about exercises in Eastern Europe — the type of training Trump has said he could end at Putin’s request](#), Business Insider, 20 July 2018

Fabrice Pothier, [Putin routinely steps over NATO’s red lines](#), Politico, 20 July 2018

[Putin warns of ‘consequences’ if Nato develops closer ties with Georgia and Ukraine](#), Independent, 20 July 2018

[Putin Warns NATO Against Including Georgia and Ukraine](#), Moscow Times, 20 July 2018



[Putin warns NATO against closer ties with Ukraine and Georgia](#), Reuters, 19 July 2018

[Fresh footage of futuristic weapon tests & development released by Russian military](#), RT, 19 July 2018

[Russia's New Weapons Aim to 'Cement' Nuclear Parity with NATO, Kremlin Says](#), Moscow Times, 16 July 2018

Patrick Tucker, [This is How Russia Could Test NATO, Warns Former US Army Europe Commander](#), Defense One, 8 July 2018

Must Read: James Stavridis, [NATO Has Two Big Problems: Putin and Trump](#), Bloomberg, 5 July 2018

Sholto Byrnes, [A new approach to Nato: what kind of security alliance would we choose now?](#) National Interest, 2 July 2018

Mathieu Boulegue, [NATO Needs a Strategy for Countering Russia in the Arctic and the Black Sea](#), Chatham House, 2 July 2018

[NATO's Jens Stoltenberg: 'We don't want a new Cold War' with Russia](#), Deutsche Welle, 27 June 2018

Hugh White, [Deterring Russia](#), The Strategist, 26 June 2018

Must Read: Jill Aitoro, [NATO's infatuation: Russia, Russia, Russia!](#) Defense News, 25 June 2018

[If they needed to fend off war with Russia, U.S. military leaders worry they might not get there in time](#), Washington Post, 24 June 2018

[Russia warns of action against NATO forces near its border](#), Economic Times, 21 June 2018

Brittany Beaulieu and Steven Keil, [Russia as Spoiler: Projecting Division in Transatlantic Societies](#), GMF Policy Paper, 19 June 2018

Ted Galen Carpenter, [Is NATO Pushing Russia Towards Retaliation?](#) The National Interest, 15 June 2018

[Russia calls new NATO combat readiness plan blow to Europe's security: Ifax](#), Reuters, 13 June 2018

Dmitri Trenin, [Russia and Germany: From estranged partners to good neighbors](#), Carnegie Moscow Center, June 2018

Transparency, Accountability and Governance

For the second summit in a row, the declaration made no mention of transparency and accountability within the alliance (see opening essay), despite earlier commitments at the 2014 and 2016 summits.

Women, Peace and Security

NATO and partners in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) are committed to removing barriers for women's participation in peace and security matters, and in 2007 adopted a specific policy to support implementation of UNSCR 1325. At the 2014 Wales Summit, it was acknowledged that the integration of gender perspectives throughout NATO's core tasks would contribute to a more modern, ready and responsive NATO. The NATO Secretary General has appointed a Special Representative to serve as the high-level focal point on all aspects of NATO's contributions to the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In the [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) NATO states that it will "continue to promote robust policies to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda" (para 74), and that "NATO and its partners are committed to showing the leadership required to promote the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the subsequent WPS resolutions" (para 75).

Megan Bastick and Claire Duncanson, [Agents of Change? Gender Advisors in NATO Militaries](#), *International Peacekeeping*, Vo. 25:4, 2018, pp. 554-577

Corinna Hörst, Gale A. Mattox, and Laura Groenendaal, [Raising EU and NATO Effectiveness: The Impact of Diverse Boots on the Ground](#), GMF Policy Brief No.32, July 2018

Corinna Horst, [Security Needs a New Narrative](#), GMF Transatlantic Take, 4 June 2018

Security News from NATO Member States:

Albania

Albania joined NATO in 2009 and is still replacing its outdated weaponry. In August, Prime Minister Edi Rama announced that NATO is to invest 50 million euros (\$58 million) to modernize the air base in Kucove, 80 kilometres south of the capital Tirana. The base will serve Albania and also support NATO air supply operations, logistics support, air policing, training and exercises.

[NATO to modernize air base in Albania](#), ABC News, 4 August 2018

Canada

Canada will lead the new NATO training mission in Iraq (see above). A June report on Canada's role in NATO by the House of Commons defence committee urged the government to push NATO towards realizing its stated goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. This was one of 27 recommendations that ranged from: a call for a reinforcement of Canada's involvement with NATO against global threats, to an increased public education about the importance of NATO and Canada's place in it, to enhanced promotion of Canadian-owned defence companies in securing NATO procurements, to advocacy for the increased participation of women in peace and security objectives and a call for NATO allies to protect human rights and promote democracy.

David Charbonneau, [Canada's contribution to NATO](#), CFJC Today, 20 July 2018

[When It Comes to NATO, Do Actions Count More Than Budgets?](#): the Canada Letter, New York Times, 13 July 2018

Thomas Walkom, [What is the point of NATO?](#) The Star, 5 July 2018

[Trudeau to rebut Trump's charge of defence-spending lag with Latvia visit](#), The Globe and Mail, 3 July 2018

Terry Glavin, [As Donald Trump undermines NATO, what can Canada do?](#) Macleans, 25 June 2018

[Trump sends letter to Trudeau calling for increase in NATO spending](#), The Globe and Mail, 22 June 2018

[Committee urges government to press NATO to achieve goal of ending nuclear weapons](#), ipolitics, 20 June 2018

Czech Republic

Construction of a space surveillance centre (SATCEN) to assess and process satellite and aerial images for NATO and the Czech military intelligence service VZ started on 1 July and is expected to be fully operational by 2020.

[Building of Czech satellite centre for NATO officially launched](#), Prague Daily Monitor, 2 July 2018

Denmark

A personal letter from President Trump to the Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen ahead of the NATO summit—one of several letters sent to European leaders by the US President urging increases in defence spending (see above)—was published in the Danish press.

[Documentation: Here is Trump's letter to Løkke](#), Altinget, 4 July 2018 (in Danish)

Estonia

On the 17 August, the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF) announced their decision to abandon any active search for the missing missile accidentally fired from a NATO Eurofighter Typhoon in Estonian airspace on the 7 August. Over the preceding two weeks, the EDF employed three helicopters, five ground patrols and fifty-strong units of personnel to undertake the search, as well as Air Force drones.

[NATO Eurofighter stray missile search called off](#), ERR News, 17 August 2018

[Col. Jaak Tarien to take over as director of NATO CCD COE](#), ERR News, 14 August 2018

[NATO chief expresses regret over accidental missile incident in Estonian airspace](#), Baltic Times, 9 August 2018

[Estonia Searching For Missile Accidentally Fired During NATO Air Exercise](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 8 August 2018

[Estonian war robots could have big implications for future NATO plans](#), C4ISRNet, 3 August 2018

[Luik meets with NATO, European, Belgian defence chiefs in Brussels](#), ERR News, 5 June 2018

France

In a speech in late August, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, warned that Europe can no longer depend on the US for its military defence and called for an urgent new European security policy in the face of rising nationalism and extremism.

[Europe can no longer rely on US for security, says Emmanuel Macron](#), The Guardian, 27 August 2018

Erik Brattberg and Philippe Le Corre, [Can France and the UK Pivot to the Pacific?](#) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 5 July 2018

Germany

Germany has been the bullseye in the target of President Trump's attacks on NATO spending. In June, Germany committed to an extra €18bn in military spending, and to raise its defence budget by 80 per cent to reach 1.5 per cent of GDP by 2024—still well short of the 2 per cent NATO target. However, if Germany were to spend 2 per cent of its GDP on defence today, its defence budget would be around €64bn and would surpass Russia's defence spending (€57bn) and dwarf the budget of any other European country.

President Trump has expressed his surprise at the number of US troops currently stationed in Germany and in

late June it was reported the Pentagon is considering the implications of a withdrawal or transfer of US troops out of Germany.

[Why Does This German Frigate Have Drone "Kill Marks"?](#) Popular Mechanics, 27 August 2018

Terry L. Anderson, [What Germany brings to NATO — and what it doesn't](#), The Hill, 24 August 2018

[German army shows off ailing NATO helicopter](#), Deutsche Welle, 20 August 2018

[NATO confirms German troops to spearhead 'Trident Juncture' exercises](#), Deutsche Welle, 17 August 2018

Ulrich Kühn, Tristan Volpe and Bert Thompson, [Tracking the German Nuclear Debate](#), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 15 August 2018

Matthew Karnitschnig, [German bomb debate goes nuclear](#), Politico, 3 August 2018

[Most Germans think Europe can look after itself without help from US, finds poll](#), Independent, 23 July 2018

Victor Davis Hanson, [NATO's Challenge Is Germany, Not America](#), National Review, 19 July 2018

Jude Clemente, [Trump, NATO Summit Exposed Germany's Natural Gas Problem](#), Forbes, 15 July 2018

Marc Fisher, [Trump thinks NATO is just about Russia. It's about Germany, too](#), Washington Post, 13 July 2018

[German Officials, Trump Exchange Criticism Ahead Of NATO Summit](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 7 July 2018

[Angela Merkel: NATO must refocus on Russia threat](#), Politico, 7 July 2018

[Germany's choice for a Tornado replacement could undermine NATO](#), Defense News, 6 July 2018

[Merkel says Germany won't make NATO spending target until after 2024](#), Deutsche Welle, 15 June 2018

Greece

Greece is one of the few alliance members that exceeds NATO's goal for

defence spending, despite its severe financial difficulties. The country's rivalry with Turkey is a major factor.

[Greece Is One Of Few NATO Members To Have Met Defense Spending Goal](#), NPR, 9 July 2018

Hungary

The [dispute](#) between Hungary and Ukraine remains unresolved. It began over a so-called Language Law passed by Ukraine's Parliament to promote the use of the Ukrainian language. Western Ukraine has a multi-ethnic population, among them ethnic Hungarians. The Polish and Romanian minorities have negotiated and received concessions; Hungary (with local lobbyists) has not been willing to compromise. Budapest gave an ultimatum and are linking the matter to Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration efforts. In April, Budapest vetoed a planned session of the NATO-Ukraine Commission for the third time and also threatened to veto the invitation of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to NATO summit in July, but later officially waved the veto.

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) referenced the issue and urged Ukraine "to fully implement the recommendations and conclusions of the Opinion of the Venice Commission". The [Chairman's statement on NATO-Ukraine following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council with Georgia and Ukraine at the Brussels Summit](#) carried the same language, but with the addition that "Ukraine has stated its willingness to do so".

[Skijors names three conditions for Hungary to unblock NATO-Ukraine Commission](#), UNIAN, 25 June 2018

[Hungary agrees to Ukraine's participation in NATO summit, but keeps blocking bilateral Commission](#), UNIAN, 22 June 2018

Iceland

Increased Russian naval activities in the North Atlantic have refocused Western military attention on Iceland. While the US military has resumed irregular Cold War-style maritime and anti-submarine patrols from Iceland, there are no plans to reopen the US military base in the country.

[Whale Strandings Possibly Caused By NATO Training](#), Iceland Review, 25 August 2018

Valur Ingimundarson, [A Fleeting or Permanent Military Presence? The Revival of US Anti-Submarine Operations from Iceland](#), RUSI Newsbrief, 24 August 2018

Italy

The [Brussels Summit Declaration](#) announced that the new NATO military hub in Naples, Italy—known as [NATO Strategic Direction South](#) (NSDS)—was now fully operational as part of the alliance's effort to better monitor terrorism threats along the southern flank. More specifically, according to the declaration, the hub will "contribute to our situational awareness and understanding of regional challenges, threats, and opportunities; support the collection, management, and sharing of information; coordinate NATO's activities in the south; and reach out to partners" (para 55).

In late June, Italy's new defence minister Elisabetta Trenta said she would not reduce the country's purchase of 90 F-35 fighter jets but would seek to trim Italy's military presence in Afghanistan.

[Italy's new defense minister commits to F-35, butts heads with France](#), Defense News, 29 June 2018

Elisabeth Braw, [The Future of Italy's International Military Footprint](#), RUSI Commentary, 12 June 2018

[Secretary General praises Italy's "essential role" in NATO](#), NATO News Release, 11 June 2018

[NATO's new southern hub in Italy to be fully operational in July](#), Stars and Stripes, 11 June 2018

[Italy to ask NATO to help deal with migrant flows](#), Jerusalem Post, 8 June 2018

Latvia

During a visit to Riga in early July Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Canada would extend its leadership of the NATO battle group based in Latvia for another four years until March 2023, and increase the number of Canadian troops in Latvia from 455 to 540. The Canada-led multinational NATO battle group at Adazi military base in Latvia is currently 1,300 strong and forms part of the alliance's Enhanced Forward Presence. The battle group has been in Latvia since June 2017.

[NATO training Latvian military to quell 'civilian unrest' during largest drills in decades](#), RT, 20 August 2018

[1,400 foreign NATO soldiers serve in Latvia at the moment](#), The Baltic Times, 28 July 2018

[Forest fires in Latvia](#), NATO News Release, 25 July 2018

Latvian foreign minister urges bigger defence spend, Financial Times, 22 July 2018

Montenegro

Montenegro hit the news after the NATO summit when President Trump during an interview with Fox News indicated that he did not consider the country worth defending. Asked why the United States should defend Montenegro, Trump responded by saying that if Montenegrins decided to "get aggressive.... Congratulations, you're in World War III". This latest outburst was further indication of the President's lukewarm attitude to NATO and the Article 5 commitment.

In June, the Montenegro marked the first anniversary of NATO membership with a celebration in the royal capital

Cetinje. However, NATO membership still sharply divides Montenegrins, with opposition strongest among the large community of ethnic Serbs in the country. A public opinion survey conducted in May suggested that 47 per cent of Montenegrins are against NATO membership, while 45 per cent said it was good for the country.

Gordon Bardos, [Montenegro and NATO's Faustian Bargain](#), The Nation, 10 August 2018

Jeffrey Stacey, [A Russian Attack on Montenegro Could Mean the End of NATO](#), Foreign Policy, 27 July 2018

[Montenegro to Join NATO Cyber-Defence Centre](#), Balkan Insight, 23 July 2018

[Trump Questions NATO Commitment to Defend Montenegro](#), Balkan Insight, 18 July 2018

[NATO Anniversary Highlights Divisions in Montenegro](#), Balkan Insight, 5 June 2018

[Montenegro, a valuable Ally after one year of NATO membership](#), NATO News Release, 4 June 2018

Norway

In June it was announced that Norway will request 700 US marines to be stationed along its Russia border. Norwegian officials said the invitation will allow NATO forces to train in winter conditions, however the invitation also underscores Oslo's border-security concerns.

[NATO ships to make Norwegian coast safer](#), NATO News Release, 10 August 2018

[Norway renews NATO spending pledge as Trump's defense chief visits](#), Reuters, 14 July 2018

[More NATO warships to Northern Norway](#), Barents Observer, 18 June 2018

[Russia warns Norway of 'consequences' after it invites in more US Marines](#), The Independent, 15 June 2018

[More U.S. Marines In Norway Could Cause 'Growing Tensions,' Russia Warns](#), Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 14 June 2018

[Norway to invite more U.S. Marines, for longer and closer to Russia](#), Reuters, 12 June 2018

Poland

Some 18,000 troops took part in an annual military exercise in Poland and the Baltic in June. This year's exercise came as Polish officials are pushing for a permanent US military presence, a base that the government says it is willing to pay up to \$2 billion to fund.

Ben Hodges, [Don't put US bases in Poland](#), Politico, 4 June 2018

[US Army Launches War Games on NATO's Eastern Flank](#), Military.com, 3 June 2018

Portugal

In the run up to the NATO summit, José Alberto de Azeredo Lopes, the minister of defence for Portugal, suggested that NATO needed to reassess its internal structures to better deal with new challenges from Africa, Iraq and Syria.

[Portugal's defense minister targets NATO defense spending goals](#), Defense News, 25 June 2018

[Portuguese defence minister: NATO needs new strategic concept](#), ERR News, 2 June 2018

Romania

In June it was announced that Romania would join the Tallinn-based NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in 2019.

[Romania to Join NATO Cyber Defence Centre in Tallinn](#), ERR News, 18 June 2018

Spain

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, like several other NATO allies, received a letter from US President Donald Trump complaining that Spain is not contributing enough to collective defence.

[After Trump letter, Spanish PM avoids committing to more military spending](#), ElPais, 4 July 2018

Turkey

Since a failed coup in Turkey two years ago, it is [estimated](#) that 120,000 people have been discharged or suspended from the military, police and bureaucracy. In addition, thousands of Turkish military officers were jailed without due process by President Erdogan, especially those trained by NATO and stationed abroad.

In June, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan won another five-year term in a general election (winning 52.5 per cent of the vote), cementing his dominant position in Turkish politics. His election came against the backdrop of an intensifying defence dispute with the United States (see essay). Also in June, US company Lockheed Martin presented the first of 100 F-35 fighter jets that it had been commissioned to produce for Turkey. However, US lawmakers threatened to block the deal because of Turkey's human rights violations as well as its purchase of a Russian air defence system.

In August, President Trump doubled tariffs on Turkish steel and aluminium, leading to Turkish lira hitting a new low against the US dollar. Turkey's currency has lost 34 per cent of its value since January 2018, creating economic problems in Turkey.

Also in August, Turkish authorities branded a former high-ranking NATO officer a 'terrorist' and imprisoned him. After escaping back to Brussels, he told the German press that staying silent about what he saw is no longer an option.

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United Kingdom

In June the first four of the UK's F-35 combat aircraft arrived in the country. The UK may buy as many as 138 of the aircraft. Also in June, British defence company BAE System agreed a multi-billion contract with the Australian government to build nine new warships in Australia using a local workforce. The ships are based on anti-submarine

frigates that BAE is building for the British Royal Navy.

A parliamentary report by the Intelligence and Security Committee in June claimed that Britain knew “beyond doubt” that the US was mistreating detainees in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay following the 9/11 attacks. Intelligence officials claimed that they only had knowledge of mistreatment in “isolated incidents,” however; the report found that Britain supplied intelligence to the US in 232 cases when it knew, or at least suspected, that mistreatment was occurring. In 13 cases, British agents witnessed the mistreatment first-hand. There is still no formal policy that prohibits Britain from participating in rendition.

A two-year study by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Drones published in July found that the British government lacks “clear policy and sound legal basis” for use of armed drones and is putting civilian lives at risk. “Since 2015, the UK appears to have been taking serious risks in its use of drones. Specific concerns have been raised about the government’s shift towards a policy of ‘targeted killing’ as well as the legality of UK assistance to partner operations - and particularly that with its closest ally, the US,” it said.

“The APPG argues that there is a political and ethical imperative for the government to review and clarify its procedures for using drones and all the multi-national systems that back them up, lest ambiguities in the current position leave the UK dangerously exposed to legal challenges arising either from its own direct use of drones, or effective complicity in their use by others.”

On the 11 July, the UK's Protector, a new Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) flew non-stop from the United States to RAF Fairford in the UK. The flight from North Dakota to Gloucestershire took over 20 hours and was the first across

the Atlantic by a Medium Altitude UAV and the first time one entered UK airspace under beyond line-of-sight communication control. Also in July, it was reported that the UK's Watchkeeper UAV programme, which aims to provide the Army with a surveillance drone, has faced a series of major setbacks and delays.

In August it was announced that UK industry will benefit from a £92 million injection to design a national alternative to the EU's Galileo satellite system, which is itself a rival to the US GPS system. The UK has already contributed £1.2bn to the creation of Galileo, which is due to be launched in 2020, but the EU has begun to exclude Britain from the security aspects of its development. Britain had intended its military to use the technology in tandem with GPS.

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United States

A Government Accountability Office [report](#) published in May on US foreign military training operations said that with nearly \$2 billion being invested into 21 projects in 2016 and 2017 only eight of those projects improved the capabilities of the local force.

In June it was reported that the Pentagon had finished “initial draft plans” for low-yield nuclear weapons to be deployed on US naval assets. Democrat lawmakers are seeking to oppose development of the weapons.

After his meeting with Kim Jong-un in June, President Trump claimed North Korea is “no longer a nuclear threat”. However, differences remain about what the summit actually accomplished. It was reported the leaders agreed to “step-by-step” denuclearization. Trump tweeted the world has taken a “big step back from potential Nuclear catastrophe!”.

In June, the Pentagon gave US Cyber Command additional authority to carry out offensive operations, a move that grants commanders greater authority over cyber weaponry that previous administrations had tried to keep under tight control. And in a separate development, the US Army is spending half a billion dollars preparing its soldiers to fight underground in the tunnel complexes and infrastructure that exist below major cities. Army leaders have emphasized recently that the next war is likely to be fought in a mega-city and argue that US forces

need to be prepared to fight in subway systems and sewers.

Also in June, Javier Solana, a former secretary general of NATO (1995-1999) was denied access to the United States because he visited Iran in 2013. During his time as European foreign policy chief, Solana played an integral role in the Iran nuclear deal negotiations.

At the end of July, for the first time since 1997, the House approved the annual National Defense Authorization Act, sending it on track to become law before the beginning of the next fiscal year. The \$717-billion budget passed the House with a 359-54 vote. The bill also cleared the Senate on the 1 August with an 87-10 vote. A bipartisan group of senators also introduced legislation to impose new sanctions on Russia and restrict the president's ability to withdraw from NATO. The bill requires a two-thirds majority of the Senate for the US to leave NATO.

In June, President Trump announced that he had directed the Pentagon to establish a Space Force, describing it as a sixth branch of the US military. It would be the first time the Pentagon has stood up a new service since the Air Force received its independence after World War II. In August, Vice President Mike Pence outlined some of the concrete steps needed to create the US Space Force. A Pentagon report establishes a new command structure led by a four-star flag officer and a single civilian position to oversee the command. The Space Operations Force is expected to be vaguely modelled on the US Special Operations Command, bringing in personnel from all branches. There also will be a Space Development Agency to streamline hardware procurement and innovation.

According to a Department of Defense [estimate](#) the United States has spent \$1,500.8 billion on war-related costs in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria since September 2001. An [independent estimate](#) of US military spending by the

Cost of War project at Brown University that uses a broader definition of the term suggests that the figure could be as high as \$5,600 billion.

A call to name NATO's new \$1.4bn headquarters after the late US Senator John McCain has been backed by three former secretary generals. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen and Javier Solana said it would be a fitting way to "pay back a lifetime of service" to the Western military alliance.

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