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NATO: Key Issues for the 117th Congress

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SUMMARY

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NATO: Key Issues for the 117th Congress

Heads of state and government from the 30 member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are due to meet in May or June 2021 to discuss security challenges and consider proposals to bolster political cohesion within the alliance. When allied leaders last met in London, United Kingdom, in December 2019, deliberations exposed heightened political tension and divergent views on a number of issues. Former President Trump's criticisms of NATO and individual European allies and his Administration's perceived lack of consultation with allies on key foreign policy issues were points of contention.

Despite these tensions, the United States has continued to play a key role in advancing NATO's respond to a range of security challenges. In the seven years since Russia occupied Crimea and invaded Eastern Ukraine, the United States has been an architect of NATO's increased focus on deterring Russian aggression, including through the deployment of an Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) of about 4,500 troops to the three Baltic States and Poland. NATO also has bolstered its response to terrorist threats and instability in the Middle East and North Africa, primarily through partnerships and training activities. In February 2021, NATO defense ministers agreed to expand NATO's training mission in Iraq, from its current level of about 500 trainers to potentially as many as 4,000. In the coming months, the allies also are expected to decide on the future of NATO's ongoing "train and assist" mission of about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan; to address the potential security implications of Chinese investment and engagement in Europe; and to bolster resilience to nonmilitary threats, ranging from pandemics to climate change.

In response to recent transatlantic tensions and questions about NATO's longer-term relevance, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg launched the NATO 2030 Initiative to advance proposals to strengthen the alliance, both militarily and politically. In 2021, he plans to present allied leaders with recommendations to reinforce alliance unity, broaden NATO's approach to security, and defend the rules-based international order. Recommendations could include updating NATO's strategic concept, last updated in 2010, to better reflect today's security environment, especially with respect to Russia and China; enhancing NATO's capacity to counter nonmilitary threats; and strengthening NATO's commitment to democratic values and enhancing its relationships with like-minded partners across the globe.

President Biden has signaled support for Stoltenberg's proposals and, more broadly, has pledged renewed U.S. support for NATO and increased cooperation and consultation with NATO allies. Although these statements have been welcomed across NATO, analysts caution that disagreements between the United States and its allies could persist, including on how best to confront China and Russia and on long-standing concerns about defense spending and burden-sharing. U.S. allies also may continue to question U.S. credibility given policy reversals experienced during the Trump Administration and concerns about longer-term U.S. foreign policy trends, such as a potential embrace of isolationism or a return to "America First" policies by a future Administration.

Although many Members of Congress have criticized specific developments within NATO—regarding burden-sharing, for example—Congress as a whole has demonstrated consistent support for NATO. During the Trump Administration, congressional support at times was viewed by some as an effort to reassure allies troubled by President Trump's criticisms of the alliance. Over the past several years, both chambers of Congress have passed legislation reaffirming U.S. support for NATO (e.g., H.Res. 397, H.R. 676, H.R. 5515/P.L. 115-232, and H.Res. 256 in the 115th Congress; S. 1790/P.L. 116-92 and H.R. 6395/P.L. 116-283 in the 116th Congress) and in some cases sought to limit the President's ability to withdraw from NATO unilaterally (H.R. 676 in the 115th; S. 1790/P.L. 116-92 in the 116th Congress). At the same time, Congress continues to assess NATO's utility and value to the United States, and some Members are concerned about key challenges facing NATO, including burden-sharing, managing relations with Russia and China, and divergent threat perceptions within the alliance.

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Introduction

The United States was the driving proponent of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) creation in 1949 and has been the unrivaled leader of the alliance as it has evolved from a collective defense organization of 12 members focused on deterring the Soviet Union to a globally engaged security organization of 30 members (see **Figure 1**). Historically, U.S. Administrations have viewed U.S. leadership of NATO as a cornerstone of U.S. national security policy that brings benefits ranging from peace and stability in Europe to the political and military support of important allies, including many of the world's most advanced militaries. During his term in office, former President Donald Trump openly challenged long-standing U.S. support for NATO, however, arguing, among other things, that NATO was a "bad deal" for the United States.[1]

Although past U.S. presidents criticized burden-sharing dynamics within NATO, none did so as stridently and publicly as Trump. Trump's criticisms contributed to heightened political tensions between the United States and Europe, prompting some allies to question his Administration's commitment to NATO and to criticize its perceived unilateral approach to foreign policy issues. Trump Administration officials maintained that the United States remained committed to NATO, highlighting the Administration's requests in 2017 and 2018 to increase funding for the U.S. force presence in Europe and its efforts to secure defense-spending increases across the alliance in recent years.

Many allies have welcomed President Joe Biden's pledge to renew U.S. support for NATO and to prioritize consultation and cooperation with allies. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said the new U.S. Administration presents "a unique opportunity to open a new chapter in relations between Europe and North America."[2] Allied heads of state and government are expected to meet at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, in May or June 2021 to set NATO's agenda for the coming year. Key allied priorities include the following:

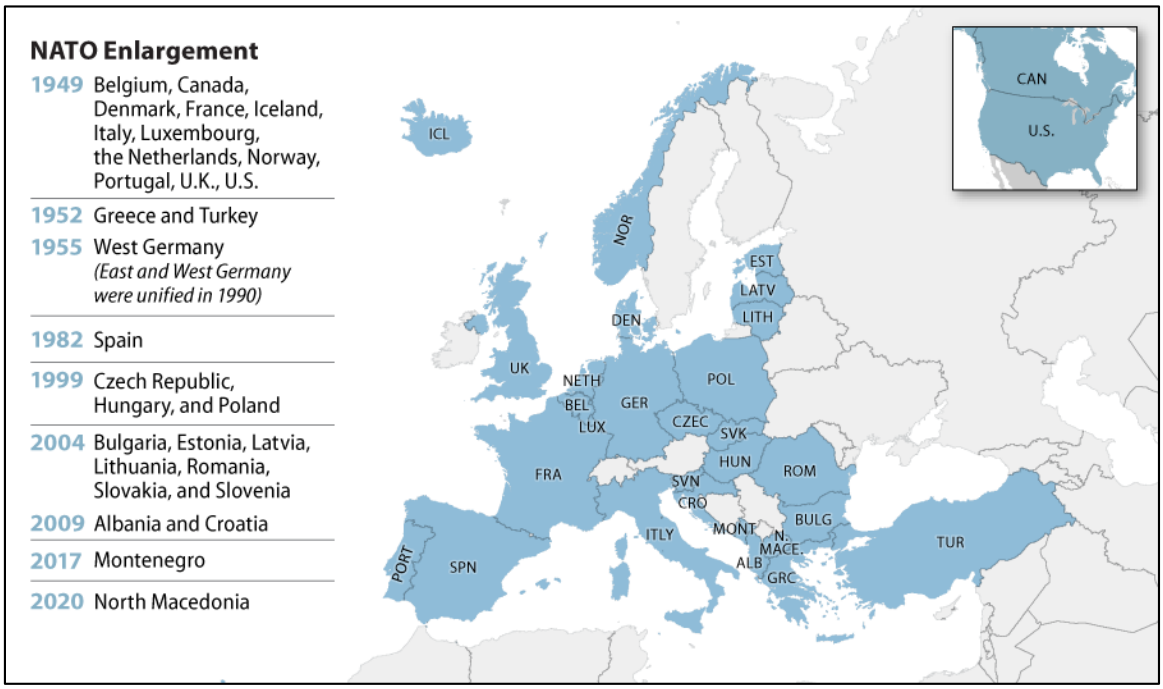
- Deterring **Russian aggression in Europe**, including Russia's use of cyber and hybrid warfare tactics;
- Deciding on **NATO's future in Afghanistan**, especially in light of recent agreements between the United States, the Taliban, and the government of Afghanistan;
- Confronting **instability in the Middle East and North Africa**, including through an expanded mission in Iraq;
- Responding to potential **security challenges posed by China** and growing Chinese investment in Europe;
- Enhancing the **resilience** of member states to respond to nonmilitary security threats and crises including hybrid and cyber threats, pandemics, and climate change; and
- Enhancing **political cohesion** and consultation within the alliance—Stoltenberg plans to present proposals to reinforce unity within NATO, broaden the alliance's approach to security, and defend the rules-based international order of which NATO has been a part since the end of the Second World War.

[1] Tessa Berenson, "Europe Worries as President Trump Heads to NATO Summit," *Time*, July 10, 2018.

[2] NATO, "Online Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg Following the First Day of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," February 17, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181560.htm.

Congress has consistently supported NATO and U.S. leadership of the alliance, including as allied concerns about the U.S. commitment to NATO increased during the Trump Administration. Nevertheless, analysts caution that disagreements between the United States and its allies could persist in several key areas, including on how best to confront China and Russia and on long-standing concerns about defense spending and burden-sharing. Furthermore, some allies may continue to question U.S. credibility as a leader and ally in light of the policy reversals experienced during the Trump Administration, ongoing U.S. political fragmentation, and concerns about longer-term U.S. foreign policy trends, such as a potential embrace of isolationism or a return to "America First" policies by a future Administration.

Figure 1. NATO Members and Dates of Accession



Source: Congressional Research Service.

Key Defense and Security Challenges

When NATO heads of state and government last met in London in 2019, the allies stressed their commitment to advancing existing readiness and deterrence initiatives and to confronting emerging security challenges, including by declaring space as an operational domain for NATO. The allies also reinforced their support of NATO's ongoing mission in Afghanistan and other counterterrorism efforts and discussed the implications for NATO of China's efforts to deepen economic and political ties with Europe (see text box below for more on the London Leaders' Meeting). In 2021, NATO leaders are expected to continue to address these issues while also advancing initiatives to enhance societal resilience to nonmilitary threats, including pandemics, building on lessons learned during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Outcomes of the 2019 London Leaders' Meeting

Heads of state and government from NATO's 30 member states last met in London, United Kingdom (UK), in December 2019. NATO and U.S. officials highlighted the following key deliverables from the London Leaders' Meeting:

- Completion of a new Readiness Initiative, under which the alliance would have at its disposal 30 mechanized battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 naval combat vessels ready to use within 30 days.
- Declaration of space as a new operational domain for NATO and advances in combatting cyber and hybrid threats, including establishing new baseline requirements for telecommunications infrastructure.
- Increased defense spending by European allies and Canada.
- Renewed commitment to NATO's mission in Afghanistan and counterterrorism efforts in the Middle East and North Africa.
- Agreement to assess China's impact on NATO and transatlantic security.
- Initiation of a new "forward-looking reflection process … to further strengthen NATO's political dimension including consultation."

Source: NATO, *London Declaration*, December 4, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm.

Deterring Russia

Since Russia occupied Crimea and invaded Eastern Ukraine in 2014, NATO has renewed its focus on territorial defense and deterring Russian aggression. Among other measures, NATO member states have deployed an Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) totaling about 4,500 troops to the three Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and Poland; established a "Tailored Forward Presence" in Romania, Bulgaria, and the Black Sea; increased military exercises and training activities in Central and Eastern Europe; and established new NATO command structures in six Central and Eastern European countries.[3]

In 2019, the allies announced progress on several new initiatives intended to enhance NATO's readiness to respond swiftly to an attack on a NATO member, including by reinforcing the EFP battlegroups. A cornerstone of these efforts is the so-called Four-Thirties Readiness Initiative, proposed by the United States in 2018, under which NATO should have 30 mechanized battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 naval combat vessels ready to use within 30 days.

Although the allies have continued to support and contribute to NATO deterrence initiatives, some analysts question the effectiveness and sustainability of these efforts. Several studies have concluded that as currently postured, NATO forces would struggle to defend NATO's most vulnerable allies, for example the Baltic States, from a Russian attack. Some allies, including Poland and the Baltic States, have urged other NATO members to deploy more forces to the region to reinforce the alliance's deterrence posture. Others stress the importance of enhancing military mobility to respond quickly to an attack in the eastern part of the alliance. Critics also highlight the importance of broadening NATO's deterrence concept to include countering cyber and hybrid attacks, including disinformation campaigns.[4]

[3] NATO, *Boosting NATO's Presence in the East and Southeast*, updated regularly at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm.

[4] See, for example, David A. Shlapak and Michael Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank*, RAND Corporation, February 2016; and Melanie W. Sisson, "It's Time to Rethink NATO's Deterrent Strategy," War on the Rocks, December 6, 2019, at https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/want-to-deter-russia-think-mobility-not-presence/.

Other allies, including leaders in Western European countries such as Germany, Italy, and France, have stressed the importance of a dual-track approach to Russia that complements deterrence with dialogue. These allies contend that efforts to rebuild cooperative relations with Moscow should receive as much attention as efforts to deter Russia. Accordingly, these allies are reluctant to endorse permanently deploying troops in countries that joined NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union due to concerns that this would violate the terms of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act; in consideration of these terms, NATO's EFP has been referred to as "continuous" but rotational rather than "permanent."[5]

Transition in Afghanistan

NATO allies have expressed continued support for the ongoing NATO training mission in Afghanistan, but NATO's future presence could be determined largely by the February 2020 agreement between the United States and the Taliban, in which the United States committed to withdraw all allied and partner forces by May 1, 2021.[6] In January 2015, following the end of its 11-year-long combat mission in Afghanistan, NATO launched the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) to train, advise, and assist Afghan security forces. Between 2015 and late 2018, NATO allies and partners steadily matched U.S. increases in troop levels to RSM. Over the past year, however, the mission's force strength has dropped from about 16,500 troops in February 2020 to about 9,500 troops. As of February 2021, about 7,100 of the 9,592 troops contributing to RSM were from NATO members and partner countries other than the United States. After the United States (2,500 troops), the top contributors to the mission were Germany (1,300), Italy (895), non-NATO-member Georgia (860), and the United Kingdom (750).[7]

NATO leaders welcomed the February 29, 2020, joint declaration between the United States and Afghanistan and agreement between the United States and the Taliban in pursuit of a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan. Secretary General Stoltenberg said NATO would implement adjustments, including troop reductions, to its mission as outlined in the agreements; he stressed, however, that such actions would be "conditions-based." Some European allies expressed concern that the Trump Administration did not consult them on possible drawdown plans and called for any such plans be carried out in close coordination with the allies.[8]

At a February 2021 meeting of NATO defense ministers, the allies agreed to a U.S. request to postpone decisions on additional troop withdrawals until the Biden Administration completes a review of U.S. force posture and security conditions in Afghanistan. European allies and Canada uniformly welcomed U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin's commitment to consult closely with them on any additional force posture decisions.[9] Most analysts question the likelihood of a sustained NATO military presence in Afghanistan without continued U.S. participation. Not only do the allies rely on U.S. force protection capabilities, but many have viewed their participation in

[5] In the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the allies agreed not to permanently station "substantial combat forces" in countries that joined NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

[6] For more on the military drawdown, see CRS Report R46670, *U.S. Military Drawdown in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions*, coordinated by Clayton Thomas.

[7] NATO, *Resolute Support Mission: Key Facts and Figures*, February 2021, at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/2/pdf/2021-02-RSM-Placemat.pdf.

[8] See, for example, "Germany Worried at Possible U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *DeutscheWelle*, December 28, 2018; Ben Farmer, "Britain Left in Dark over U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Telegraph*, December 21, 2018.

[9] NATO, "Online Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg Following the Second Day of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," February 19, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181561.htm.

the mission largely as an act of solidarity with the United States and implicitly contingent on U.S. participation.

Expanding NATO Engagement in Iraq and Addressing Broader Instability in the Middle East and North Africa

Over the past several years, some NATO members, including the United States, have called on the alliance to do more to counter terrorist and other security threats emanating from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). NATO has launched new initiatives to address instability in the MENA region, but progress has been limited, due in part to challenging political and security conditions on the ground and a lack of consensus within NATO on the appropriate role for the alliance. New NATO initiatives launched since 2018 include a training mission in Iraq; the "Package on the South," a range of programs aiming to assist crisis management operations and partner with governments to build security capacity; and establishment of a NATO Regional Hub for the South in Naples, Italy, to coordinate NATO responses to crises emanating from the MENA region.[10] NATO also has deployed aerial surveillance aircraft (Airborne Warning and Control System, or AWACS) to assist the global coalition fighting the Islamic State terrorist organization.

In February 2021, NATO defense ministers announced plans for a significant but gradual expansion of the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI), a noncombat advisory and training mission established in Baghdad in 2018.[11] According to NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, the mission could increase from 500 to up to 4,000 personnel.[12] NMI was launched at the request of the Iraqi government and is focused on helping to strengthen Iraqi security institutions and armed forces to assist their fight against terrorism. NATO forces do not deploy with their Iraqi counterparts, and all NMI activities are approved by the Iraqi government. NATO officials say the enhanced mission will partner with more Iraqi security institutions and expand activities beyond Baghdad. Political instability, changing security conditions, and the COVID-19 pandemic have at various times caused NATO to curb or suspend operations, and Secretary General Stoltenberg emphasizes that the mission's expansion will be conditions-based.

Several factors have limited enhanced NATO engagement in the MENA region. These factors include a belief among some allies that the EU is the appropriate institution to lead Europe's response to terrorism and migration issues and a related reluctance to cede leadership on these issues to NATO. France, for example, has advocated strong European responses to terrorism and conflict in the Middle East but has generally opposed a larger role for NATO. Some allies also disagree on what the appropriate response should be to some of the security challenges in the MENA region, with some appearing hesitant to involve NATO in a way that could be seen as endorsing military action.

Assessing China's Impact on NATO and Transatlantic Security

In a February 2021 speech at the Munich Security Conference, President Biden called on the United States and Europe to "prepare together for a long-term strategic competition with

[10] NATO, "Fact Sheet: Brussels Summit Key Decisions, 11-12 July 2018," July 2018.

[11] NATO Fact Sheet, "NATO Mission Iraq," updated regularly at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/144032.htm.

[12] NATO, "Online Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg Following the Second Day of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," February 19, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181561.htm.

China."[13] Biden Administration officials have indicated they share the concerns of the Trump Administration and some Members of Congress who have urged NATO to assess the security implications of growing Chinese investment in Europe and to work more proactively to counter potential negative impacts on transatlantic security.[14] U.S. officials and some Members of Congress have expressed particular concern about Chinese investment in critical infrastructure and telecommunications systems, such as 5G networks.

At their 2019 meeting in London, NATO leaders formally acknowledged for the first time in a high-level NATO declaration that China's "growing influence and international policies" pose potential "challenges" to NATO.[15] Since then, the alliance has taken steps to address some specific concerns, and Secretary General Stoltenberg has increasingly singled out potential challenges posed by China. In February 2021, Stoltenberg identified the rise of China as a "defining issue for the transatlantic community" and called on the allies to enhance cooperation with like-minded democracies around the world, "so we can protect the rules-based order, which is undermined by countries that do not share our values, like Russia and China."[16]

In 2019, NATO agreed to update its baseline requirements for civilian telecommunications to reflect emerging concerns about 5G technology.[17] The allies agreed to assess the risks to communications systems associated with cyber threats, and the consequences of foreign ownership, control, or direct investment. Although the EU is attempting to develop common guidelines to govern contracting decisions on 5G networks, these decisions would remain the prerogative of individual national governments.

U.S. officials have warned European allies and partners that using Huawei or other Chinese 5G equipment could impede intelligence sharing with the United States due to fears of compromised network security. Although some allies, such as Germany and Italy, have said they would not prevent Chinese companies from bidding on 5G contracts, these allies have stressed that they would not contract with any companies that do not meet their national security requirements.[18] In 2020, the United Kingdom announced it was banning Huawei from participating in its 5G network; other allies, such as Poland and Romania, have announced stringent security requirements that would prevent Huawei's participation.

Despite U.S. concerns about China's growing footprint in Europe, Biden Administration officials have expressed optimism that the United States and Europe can work together to meet the various security and economic issues posed by a rising China. Analysts, too, cite numerous concerns

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[13] The White House, "Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference," February 19, 2021.

[14] The Trump Administration's 2017 National Security Strategy expressed concern that, "China is gaining a strategic foothold in Europe by expanding its unfair trade practices and investing in key industries, sensitive technologies, and infrastructure." White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, p. 47.

[15] NATO's 2019 *London Declaration* states, "We recognize that China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an alliance." NATO, *London Declaration*, December 4, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm.

[16] NATO, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference 2021," February 19, 2021; and NATO, "Online Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg Following the First Day of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," February 17, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181560.htm.

[17] NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," October 25, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_169945.htm?selectedLocale=en.

[18] Guy Chazan and Nic Fildes, "Germany Crackdown Set to Exclude Huawei from 5G Rollout," *Financial Times*, September 30, 2020; Giuseppe Fonte, "Italy Vetoes 5G Deal Between Fastweb and China's Huawei: Sources," Reuters, October 23, 2020.

shared on both sides of the Atlantic and contend that joint U.S.-European pressure on China would be more effective than either partner's individual dealings with China.

Enhancing Resilience

Whereas NATO has long focused on fostering strong militaries, allied leaders increasingly stress the importance of broader societal and economic resilience.[19] In the coming year, NATO is expected to refine its baseline requirements for national resilience to reflect lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and concerns about the potential security impacts of an array of nonmilitary threats, including disinformation campaigns and vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure.[20] Secretary General Stoltenberg has specifically identified the need for more resilient transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G and undersea cables, and for safer and more diverse supply lines, especially for fuel, food, and medical supplies.[21]

NATO's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

NATO has assisted its member states as they confront the COVID-19 pandemic. Although NATO traditionally focuses on responding to military threats, the alliance possesses command-and-control and logistics capabilities to coordinate multilateral responses to a range of security challenges, including natural disasters and pandemics. NATO's primary disaster response mechanism, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), has coordinated NATO's pandemic response. Among other measures, NATO's response has included the following:

- Arranging the acquisition and transportation of critical medical supplies and equipment to NATO members and partner countries in need;
- Coordinating military assistance to national civilian efforts to build hospitals, increase testing, transport patients and medical personnel, and distribute medical equipment; and
- Establishing the NATO Pandemic Response Trust Fund to stockpile medical equipment and supplies and to provide immediate relief to allies or partners in need.

Some observers argue that NATO's pandemic response efforts may have boosted allied unity and cohesion during a period when individual member states were taking divergent approaches to the crisis and accepting assistance from potential NATO adversaries, including Russia and China. Other analysts warn that economic fallout from the pandemic could negatively affect allied defense budgets and that restrictions on multilateral military exercises and other NATO operations could reduce allied readiness.

Sources: NATO Fact Sheet, "NATO's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," February 2021, at https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/2/pdf/2102-factsheet-COVID-19_en.pdf; Elisabeth Braw, "The Coronavirus Pandemic Should be NATO's Moment," *Defense One*, March 31, 2020.

Defense Spending and Burden-Sharing

Congress and successive U.S. Administrations have long urged NATO allies to increase national defense budgets to ensure more equitable distribution of defense responsibilities within the alliance. A primary focus of the Trump Administration's NATO policy was to secure increased

[19] In the words of NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, "Increasingly, our security does not just rely on strong militaries. We need strong, resilient societies and economies too." NATO, "Opening Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on NATO 2030 and the Importance of Strengthening the Transatlantic Bond in the Next Decade and Beyond," February 4, 2021.

[20] For background on NATO's baseline resilience requirements, see NATO, "Resilience and Article 3," updated regularly, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132722.htm.

[21] NATO, "Opening Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on NATO 2030 and the Importance of Strengthening the Transatlantic Bond in the Next Decade and Beyond," February 4, 2021.

defense spending in line with NATO targets. Although Secretary General Stoltenberg credited then-President Trump with playing a role in spurring recent allied defense spending increases, many of Trump's critics, including European leaders, warned that his strong criticism of European allies was damaging NATO cohesion and credibility.[22]

The Biden Administration has signaled it will continue to prioritize calls for higher defense spending and more equitable burden-sharing arrangements, but officials have stressed that they will pursue a more consultative and collaborative approach with allies.[23] In February 2021, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said he would seek allied approval to increase common funding for ongoing deterrence efforts in Eastern Europe in an effort to increase solidarity and enhance burden-sharing. Stoltenberg also called for the creation of a new NATO defense innovation initiative to increase interoperability and promote transatlantic cooperation on defense innovation.[24]

In 2006, NATO members informally agreed to aim to allocate at least 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) to their national defense budgets annually and to devote at least 20% of national defense expenditure to procurement and related research and development. These targets were formalized at NATO's 2014 Wales Summit, when the allies pledged to halt declines in defense expenditures and "move towards the 2% guideline within a decade."[25]

U.S. and NATO officials say they are encouraged that defense spending by European allies and Canada has grown for seven consecutive years (see **Figure 2**). According to Secretary General Stoltenberg, European allies and Canada have added $190 billion in defense spending since 2014; the figure is expected to rise to $400 billion by the end of 2024.[26] In 2014, 3 allies met the 2% guideline; in 2021, 9 allies are expected to have met the 2% guideline and 24 allies are expected to have met the 20% benchmark for spending on major equipment.[27]

[22] David Wemer, "NATO's Stoltenberg Credits Trump as Allies Increase Defense Spending," Atlantic Council, July 11, 2018.

[23] See, for example, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, "The U.S. Can't Meet its Responsibilities Alone. That's Why We Believe in NATO," *Washington Post*, February 16, 2021.

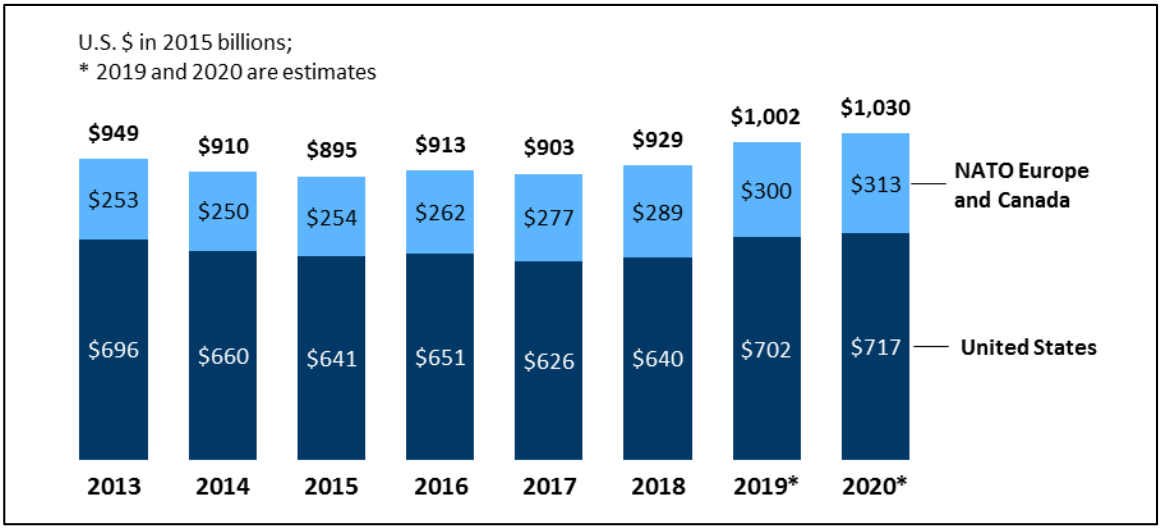
[24] NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Ahead of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers on 17 and 18 February at NATO Headquarters," February 15, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181427.htm.

[25] NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration*, September 5, 2014, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

[26] NATO, "Online Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg Following the First Day of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," February 17, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181560.htm; NATO, NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Heads and State and/or Government," December 4, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_171554.htm.

[27] NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Heads and State and/or Government," December 4, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_171554.htm; the nine allies expected to meet the 2% benchmark in 2021 are Estonia, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom, and the United States. NATO, *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2020)*, October 21, 2020.

Figure 2. Defense Spending by NATO Members, 2013-2020



Source: Created by CRS. Data from NATO, *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries*, October 21, 2020.

Although all allied governments agreed to the Wales commitments, many, including Germany and Italy, emphasize that allied contributions to ongoing NATO missions and the effectiveness of allied military capabilities should be considered as important as total defense spending levels. For example, an ally spending less than 2% of GDP on defense could have more modern, effective military capabilities than an ally that meets the 2% target but allocates most of that funding to personnel costs and relatively little to ongoing missions and modernization.

Analysts on both sides of the Atlantic also have argued that a relatively narrow focus on defense inputs (i.e., the size of defense budgets) should be accompanied by an equal, if not greater, focus on defense outputs (i.e., military capabilities and the effectiveness of contributions to NATO missions and activities). The alliance's target to devote at least 20% of each member's national defense expenditure to new equipment and related research and development reflects this goal.

Secretary General Stoltenberg likewise has emphasized a broad approach to measuring contributions to the alliance, using a metric of "cash, capabilities, and contributions."[28] Proponents of the broad approach additionally argue that an assessment of allied contributions that takes into account factors beyond the 2% of GDP defense spending metric would be more appropriate given NATO's wide-ranging strategic objectives, some of which may require capabilities beyond the military sphere.

In 2019, allied leaders approved a U.S. proposal to reduce assessed U.S. contributions, and to increase German contributions, to NATO's relatively small pot of *common funds*. National contributions to NATO's common funds—about $3.1 billion total in 2021—pay for the day-to-day operations of NATO headquarters, as well as some collective NATO military assets and infrastructure. For the budget period from 2021 to 2024, the U.S. share of NATO's common funded budget is slated to decrease from 22% to about 16%, or about $500 million.[29]

[28] NATO, "Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Ahead of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers," October 23, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_169891.htm.

[29] Percentage shares of the common funds are negotiated among the allies based on per capita income and other factors. U.S. shares for the three funds have fallen over the past three decades. NATO, *Funding NATO*, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm.

Enhancing Political Cohesion

Many NATO leaders have warned that heightened political tensions within the alliance over the past several years could have lasting negative repercussions. Divergent views have emerged on a range of issues, including U.S. policy toward NATO and Europe, Turkey's standing as a member of the alliance, EU security and defense policy, NATO's relations with Russia, and allies' commitment to democratic values.[30] Doubts about the Trump Administration's support for NATO and disputes within the alliance on whether and how to respond to policy disagreements have prompted some to question NATO's strategic direction and future.[31] Although European allies have welcomed President Biden's pledge to enhance U.S. engagement in NATO, and with Europe more broadly, some analysts caution that lingering European concerns about U.S. credibility could hamper U.S.-European relations.

Throughout the course of the Trump Administration, Secretary General Stoltenberg stressed that disagreement among allies is not a new phenomenon and argued that "Europe and North American are doing more together in NATO today than we have for decades."[32] More recently, however, Stoltenberg has acknowledged that differences between Europe and the United States have raised "serious questions about the strength of our alliance on both sides of the Atlantic" and has pointed to the coming years as a "historic opportunity to build a stronger alliance. To regain trust, and reinforce our unity. Europe and North America working together in NATO, in strategic solidarity."[33]

When allied leaders met in London in 2019, they agreed to initiate a "forward-looking reflection process … to further strengthen NATO's political dimension including consultation."[34] Secretary General Stoltenberg has since launched the NATO 2030 Initiative to develop proposals to make sure "NATO remains strong militarily, becomes even stronger politically and takes a more global approach."[35] Stoltenberg aims to present his proposals to allied heads of state and government at a summit in Brussels during the first half of 2021. He says his recommendations will focus on the following three areas:

- **Reinforcing unity** by increasing common funding for deterrence and the defense of NATO territory, agreeing to political consultations on all issues affecting member states' security, and updating NATO's Strategic Concept—last updated in 2010—to "chart a common course going forward;"
- **Broadening NATO's approach to security** beyond the military sphere to include societal resilience, increasing collective investments to maintain NATO's technological edge and interoperability, and addressing the security impact of climate change; and

[30] For a more detailed account of broader tensions in the transatlantic relationship, see CRS Report R45745, *Transatlantic Relations: U.S. Interests and Key Issues*, coordinated by Kristin Archick; for more on NATO's relations with Russia, see CRS Report R45652, *Assessing NATO's Value*, by Paul Belkin.

[31] See, for example, Joe Gould, "U.S., European Lawmakers Swipe Trump and Turkey in New Syria Joint Statement," *Defense News*, October 21, 2019.

[32] NATO, "Press Conference Ahead of Meetings of NATO Foreign Affairs Ministers"; "Transcript: Emmanuel Macron in His Own Words," *The Economist*, November 7, 2019.

[33] NATO, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference 2021," February 19, 2021.

[34] NATO, *London Declaration*, December 4, 2019, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm.

[35] NATO, "NATO 2030: Making a Strong Alliance Even Stronger," at https://www.nato.int/nato2030/.

- **Defending the rules-based international order**, and countering China's and Russia's challenges to this order, by strengthening NATO's commitment to democratic values and enhancing its relationships with like-minded partners across the globe.[36]

Concerns Regarding the U.S. Commitment to NATO

As noted, many analysts and allied leaders questioned the Trump Administration's commitment to NATO and expressed concern that Trump's criticisms of the alliance could cause lasting damage to NATO cohesion and credibility. In addition to admonishing European allies for failing to meet agreed NATO defense spending targets, Trump repeatedly questioned NATO's value to the United States.[37] Although he was not the first U.S. President to press the allies to increase defense spending, none did so as stridently and none called into question the U.S. commitment to NATO as openly or to the same extent as Trump.

Some NATO members contend that divergence between the United States and many European allies on a range of key foreign and security policy issues, from Iran's nuclear program to fighting the Islamic State terrorist organization in Syria, impeded cooperation in NATO and exposed strategic rifts within the alliance.[38] In a widely reported November 2019 interview, French President Emmanuel Macron cited these divergences when he proclaimed that, "we are currently experiencing the brain death of NATO." Referring to concerns about the drawdown of U.S. forces from Syria in October 2019 and subsequent military operations by Turkey, he lamented, "You have partners together in the same part of the world, and you have no coordination whatsoever of strategic decision-making between the United States and its NATO allies. None. You have an uncoordinated aggressive action by another NATO ally, Turkey, in an area where our interests are at stake. There has been no NATO planning, nor any coordination."[39]

President Macron has joined other European allies in welcoming President Biden's pledge to "reengage with Europe, to consult with [Europe and NATO], to earn back our position of trusted leadership."[40] President Biden has stressed that the transatlantic alliance is the foundation for North American and European security and shared prosperity, and he has emphasized that his Administration appreciates allied contributions to NATO and will consult closely with allies on all aspects of foreign and security policy. European allies, including Germany, have reacted positively to the Biden Administration's decision to halt a planned troop withdrawal from Germany and have welcomed the Administration's initial moves to reengage with multilateral agreements and organizations, including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the World Health Organization, the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START Treaty) with Russia, and the Iran nuclear agreement.[41]

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[36] NATO, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference 2021," February 19, 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181696.htm.

[37] Atlantic Council, "Trump Again Questions U.S. Commitment to Defend NATO Allies," December 12, 2017; Tessa Berenson, "Europe Worries as President Trump Heads to NATO Summit," *Time*, July 10, 2018.

[38] See, for example, James McAuley and Rick Noack, "Withdrawal of U.S. Troops from Northern Syria Angers, Worries Europeans," *Washington Post*, October 7, 2019.

[39] "Transcript: Emmanuel Macron in His Own Words," *The Economist*, November 7, 2019.

[40] The White House, "Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference," February 19, 2021.

[41] See, for example, Federal Government of Germany, "Speech by Federal Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel During the Munich Security Conference Special Edition," February 19, 2012.

Analysts caution that the United States and its NATO allies may continue to disagree on how to address some major challenges facing the alliance. Chiefly, some European allies may be reluctant to endorse a strategic framework of great power competition between the United States and China and Russia that continues to be a key driver of U.S. foreign policy doctrine. President Biden has called on NATO allies to work with the United States to counter China's and Russia's perceived efforts to undermine transatlantic and European unity and the democratic systems of governance that undergird NATO and the European Union. Although many allies have condemned Chinese and Russian policies, many also have been wary of jeopardizing strong economic and in some cases, political, relations with one or both countries.

U.S. allies also could continue to question U.S. credibility given policy reversals experienced during the Trump Administration; ongoing U.S. political fragmentation; and concerns about longer-term U.S. foreign policy trends, such as a potential embrace of isolationism or a return to "America First" policies by a future Administration. Questions about the U.S. commitment to NATO and European security during the Trump Administration led to heightened calls in Europe for European allies to reduce dependency on the United States and pursue a more autonomous European foreign and security policy. Proponents of increased European "strategic autonomy," including French President Macron, have said a more independent and militarily capable Europe would benefit both Europe and the United States by ensuring more equitable burden-sharing (see text box below). Others in Europe, including Poland and the Baltic States, have been more reluctant to endorse policies that might be viewed as undermining strong U.S. leadership of NATO.

EU Security and Defense Policy

Some European leaders, including French President Macron, have argued that uncertainty about the future U.S. role in European security should add urgency to long-standing efforts to develop coordinated European defense capabilities and policies, independent of but complementary to NATO. For two decades, the EU has sought to develop its Common Security and Defense Policy to bolster its common foreign policy, strengthen the EU's ability to respond to security crises, and enhance European military capabilities. Improving European military capabilities has been difficult, however, especially given many years of flat or declining European defense budgets. In recent years, the EU has announced several new defense initiatives, including a European Defense Fund (EDF) to support joint defense research and development activities and a new EU defense pact (known as Permanent Structured Cooperation, or PESCO) aimed at spending defense funds more efficiently.

Secretary General Stoltenberg has expressed support for further EU defense integration and cooperation but emphasizes that these efforts should strengthen the European pillar within NATO—21 NATO members are also members of the EU—rather than replace or supplant NATO. U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has echoed Stoltenberg's calls for EU defense initiatives to complement rather than duplicate existing NATO initiatives and capacities. The Trump Administration joined some Members of Congress in expressing concern that the EDF and PESCO could restrict U.S. defense companies from participating in the development of pan-European military projects. Supporters of EU defense integration highlight that PESCO's initial priority projects were identified in consultation with NATO and that several of these projects focus on enhancing military mobility across Europe, a key NATO priority.

Tensions with Turkey

Over the past several years, heightened tensions between some allies and NATO member Turkey have prompted some policymakers to call into question Turkey's qualification for continued NATO membership and raised broader questions about standards for NATO membership and mechanisms to ensure adherence to these standards.[42] Turkey has faced sharp criticism and

[42] The only explicit mechanism for leaving NATO in the North Atlantic Treaty is Article 13, which allows parties to leave one year after giving a notice of denunciation to the United States. Article 2 of the treaty states that its parties

sanctions, or the threat of sanctions, from some fellow NATO members (including the United States) for a number of issues, including its acquisition and planned operation of a Russian S-400 air defense system; its October 2019 military operations against Kurdish forces in northern Syria; and its actions toward Greece and some other countries in an ongoing dispute in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.[43]

Turkey has been a NATO member since 1952 and has participated in numerous NATO missions, including ongoing operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Western Balkans. NATO, in turn, has invested substantially in military facilities in Turkey, including naval bases and radar sites. Since 2013, NATO members have provided Turkey with air defense support through the deployment of defensive missile systems along its southern border.[44]

Secretary General Stoltenberg criticized Turkey's acquisition of the S-400 air defense system, underscoring that it "can pose a risk to Allied aircraft" and "cannot be integrated into NATO's air and missile defense system."[45] Stoltenberg also suggested, however, that Turkey could continue to participate in NATO's air and missile defense systems if the S-400 were excluded from these systems. Some allied leaders have argued that NATO should uniformly exclude Turkey from NATO's defense systems if it deploys the S-400.[46] In December 2020, the Trump Administration enacted sanctions curbing U.S. exports to Turkey's defense procurement agency as a consequence of its S-400 acquisition.; this move followed a 2019 decision to suspend Turkey's participation in the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program due to concerns about S-400s in Turkey compromising the security of F-35 technology and some congressional leaders' placement of informal holds on other U.S.-Turkey arms sales.[47]

Since 2012, Turkey has invoked Article 4 of NATO's founding treaty to prompt high-level NATO consultations on a perceived threat from Syria to Turkey's territorial integrity or security on three separate occasions. Nevertheless, many allies strongly condemned Turkey's 2019 military operations against Kurdish forces in Syria that had been cooperating with other NATO members in the fight against the Islamic State terrorist organization. Although NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg acknowledged Turkey's "legitimate" security concerns in Syria, he urged Turkey to

"will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them."

[43] For more on these incidents and Turkish policy more broadly, see CRS Report R44000, *Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations In Brief*, by Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas; and CRS Insight IN11185, *Turkey Sanctions in Pending Legislation: Issues for Congress*, by Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas.

[44] In spring 2018, the Italian parliament voted to end its deployment of one of two missile defense systems currently under NATO command in southern Turkey by the end of 2019; the other system is under Spanish command. NATO, "NATO Patriot Mission in Turkey," at https://shape.nato.int/ongoingoperations/nato-patriot-mission-in-turkey-; Emre Peker, "NATO Chastises Turkey over Syria, But Fears Driving It Toward Russia," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 11, 2019.

[45] NATO, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Joint Press Conference with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu," October 5, 2020, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_178528.htm.

[46] Nick Wadhams, "NATO Chief Says Turkey Remains Important Ally Despite S-400 Deal," Bloomberg, July 17, 2019.

[47] Valerie Insinna, et al., "Congress has secretly blocked US arms sales to Turkey for nearly two years," *Defense News*, August 12, 2020; The Biden Administration has not expressed openness to changing U.S. positions on these issues, despite Turkish leaders' hopes of reaching some arrangement that would allay U.S. security concerns about S-400s on Turkish soil. The future of U.S. sanctions on Turkey and the long-term impact of the S-400 issue on Turkish defense procurement are unclear.

"act with restraint" and do everything possible to preserve the gains that had been made against the Islamic State.[48]

Long-standing tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea between Greece and Turkey escalated in the second half of 2020, within a broader context involving a number of other regional countries.[49] Greece and non-NATO member Cyprus have strenuously objected to Turkish naval vessels exploring for natural gas in what they consider to be their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Turkey disputes some of the Greek and Cypriot EEZ claims.

Although the EU and most NATO member states have condemned Turkey's incursions into internationally recognized Greek and Cypriot waters, allied governments have done so with varying degrees of severity, reflecting differences in their views on how to manage relations with Turkey. Within NATO, France has joined Greece in advocating a relatively hard-line approach to Turkey. In August 2020, France deployed naval vessels and fighter jets for exercises with the Greek military following the arrival of a Turkish seismic research ship in Greek waters, and French President Emmanuel Macron has advocated EU sanctions on Turkey. Most analysts view France's approach as an outgrowth of its broader disputes with Turkey, including in Libya, where the two countries have supported opposing sides in the civil conflict.

Tensions within NATO on how best to address Turkey's actions and grievances have challenged alliance cohesion. Secretary General Stoltenberg has focused on de-escalating tensions by encouraging dialogue and negotiation. The North Atlantic Treaty does not contain provisions explicitly authorizing NATO allies to take action against another NATO member. However, the United States and other NATO members could take measures to affect the character of allied cooperation with Turkey—for example, by changing their contributions of equipment or personnel to specific activities in Turkey.

Commitment to Democratic Values

Over the past several years, policymakers in some NATO member states have called on NATO to more proactively promote democratic norms and values. Proponents have expressed concern about perceived democratic "backsliding" within the alliance, including possibly weakening public support for democracy and democratic values, the rise of authoritarian-leaning nationalist and populist leaders, and anti-establishment sentiment and deepening polarization in some NATO member states.[50] Some observers have cautioned these trends could have a lasting negative impact on political cohesion within NATO and ultimately could erode NATO's capacity to carry out its core task of ensuring the collective security of its members. They add that these trends could embolden potential adversaries, including China and Russia, that may seek to undermine allies' commitments to these values by promoting alternative systems of governance.

Secretary General Stoltenberg and President Biden have argued that bolstering democratic resilience within the alliance should be a component of any effort to counter potential threats

[48] NATO, "Joint Press Conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey," October 11, 2019.

[49] For background, see CRS Report R44000, *Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations In Brief*, by Jim Zanotti and Clayton Thomas.

[50] Experts warn against overgeneralizing nationalist and populist movements and note that not every such movement is necessarily threatening to democracy. However, in some cases political leaders associated with these movements have altered institutions considered central to democratic checks and balances and to genuinely free and fair democratic political participation, such as independent judiciaries and protections for freedom of speech, assembly, and other individual and civil rights.

from China and Russia.[51] Other NATO stakeholders have augmented these calls, including the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and a group of independent experts appointed by Secretary General Stoltenberg to inform the NATO 2030 initiative, both of which have called for NATO to establish a center for democratic resilience within the alliance.[52]

In the preamble to NATO's founding North Atlantic Treaty, the parties to the treaty express determination to "safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."[53] NATO continues to promote these principles, and adherence to democratic values is a stated requirement for NATO membership. Many analysts point out, however, that throughout NATO's history, allies have at times been reluctant to act against other member state governments for breaching democratic principles; NATO governments have included military dictatorships and unelected leaders who seized power through force, for example.[54] Some analysts caution that NATO's commitment to consensus decisionmaking could complicate efforts to enhance democratic accountability, as some member state governments could be reluctant to endorse additional scrutiny of their domestic political affairs.[55]

Issues for Congress

Congress was instrumental in creating NATO in 1949 and has played a critical role in shaping U.S. policy toward the alliance ever since. Although many Members of Congress have criticized specific developments within NATO—regarding burden-sharing, for example—Congress as a whole has consistently demonstrated strong support for active U.S. leadership of and support for NATO and its cornerstone Article 5 mutual defense commitment.

Congressional support for NATO traditionally has buttressed broader U.S. policy toward the alliance. During the Trump Administration, however, demonstrations of congressional support for NATO were at times viewed primarily as an effort to reassure allies about the U.S. commitment to NATO after President Trump's criticisms of the alliance. During the Trump Administration, both chambers of Congress passed legislation expressly reaffirming U.S. support for NATO.[56]

Congressional hearings on NATO in the 115th and 116th Congresses reflected a mixed assessment of President Trump's impact on the alliance.[57] Some in Congress argue that President Trump's

[51] NATO, "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Munich Security Conference 2021," February 19, 2021; "Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference," February 19, 2021.

[52] Rep. Gerry Connolly, NATO Parliamentary Assembly Political Committee report, *NATO@70: Why the Alliance Remains Indispensable*, paragraph 44, October 12, 2019; *NATO 2030: United for a New Era* – Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General, pg. 52, November 25, 2020.

[53] NATO, *The North Atlantic Treaty*, April 1949, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

[54] Ulla Schmidt, NATO Parliamentary Assembly Committee on the Civil Dimension of Security, *NATO @ 70: Reaffirming the Alliance's Values*, October 12, 2019.

[55] Judy Dempsey, "NATO's Bad Apples," Carnegie Europe, April 3, 2018; Jonathan Katz and Torrey Taussig, "An Inconvenient Truth: Addressing Democratic Backsliding within NATO," Brookings, July 10, 2018.

[56] This includes legislation passed by the House in January 2019 (H.R. 676), the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act (S. 1790/P.L. 116-92)—both of which seek to limit the President's ability to unilaterally withdraw from NATO—and the FY2021 William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 6395/P.L. 116-283). Some analysts also portrayed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's joint invitation to Secretary General Stoltenberg to address a joint session of Congress in April 2019, in commemoration of NATO's 70th anniversary as an additional demonstration of NATO's importance to Congress.

[57] See, for example, U.S. Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *NATO at 70: An Indispensable Alliance*, hearing, March 13, 2019, at https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/2019/3/nato-at-70-an-indispensable-alliance; U.S.

criticism of allied defense spending levels spurred defense spending increases by NATO members that were not forthcoming under prior Administrations, despite long-standing U.S. concern.

Other Members of Congress countered that President Trump's admonition of U.S. allies and his questioning of NATO's utility damaged essential relationships and undermined NATO's credibility and cohesion. They contended that doubts about the U.S. commitment to the alliance could embolden adversaries, including Russia, and ultimately may weaken other allies' commitment to NATO. Critics also lamented the Administration's reported lack of coordination with its allies on policies that have significant security ramifications for Europe, such as countering the Islamic State in Syria.

Most Members of Congress continue to express support for robust U.S. leadership of NATO, in particular to address potential threats posed by Russia. Many have called for enhanced NATO and U.S. responses to Russian aggression in Ukraine, and others have advocated stronger European contributions to collective defense measures in Europe. Increasingly, some Members of Congress have raised the possibility of taking formal action against an ally, such as Turkey, which pursues foreign and defense policies they believe could threaten alliance security. Other Members, including the current president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Representative Gerald Connolly, have advocated that NATO do more to monitor and promote NATO members' adherence to democratic values.

In light of these considerations, Members of the 117th Congress could address a number of key issues central to NATO's future, including the following:

- assessing the strategic value of NATO to the United States and the United States' leadership role within NATO;
- engaging in NATO's ongoing NATO 2030 Initiative to strengthen the alliance militarily and politically, including by updating NATO's strategic concept (NATO's current strategic concept was adopted in 2010) and considering ways to reinforce NATO's commitment to political consultation and democratic values;
- examining NATO's capacity and willingness to address other security threats to the Euro-Atlantic region, including from the MENA region, posed by challenges such as terrorism and migration;
- examining the possible consequences of member states' failure to meet agreed defense spending targets;
- assessing U.S. force posture in Europe and the willingness of European allies to contribute to NATO deterrence efforts and U.S. defense initiatives in Europe, such as the ballistic missile defense program and the European Deterrence Initiative;
- examining options to sanction allies that act in ways that could jeopardize allied security;
- revisiting the allies' commitment to NATO's stated "open door" policy on enlargement, especially with respect to the membership aspirations of Georgia and Ukraine; and
- developing a more comprehensive NATO strategy toward China, particularly given U.S. and other allies' concerns about the security ramifications of increased Chinese investment in Europe.

Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Assessing the Value of the NATO Alliance*, hearing, September 5, 2018, at https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/assessing-the-value-of-the-nato-alliance-090518.

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