



2022 NATO Summit in Madrid—Collective Defence as a Priority

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The leaders of NATO have approved a new strategy that should help the Alliance adapt to the threats posed by Russia and the increasing rivalry with China. They also made concrete decisions to strengthen defence and deterrence that largely correspond to the appeals of the Eastern Flank countries, including Poland.

How will NATO's priorities change compared to the previous strategy?

The new strategy indicates that the Alliance's priority is to strengthen its ability to conduct the collective defence mission. The document reflects the radical change in NATO threat perception triggered by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the years-long conflict in eastern Ukraine, and finally the Russian full-scale invasion launched in February this year. In the previous strategy of 2010, the Allies identified terrorism as the main threat and expressed hope that a partnership with Russia would be built. Now, they recognise Russia as the most significant and direct threat to their security. NATO stresses that it cannot treat Russia as a partner because of its aggressive policy. In this way, the Alliance has made it clear that it no longer feels bound by the 1997 agreement with Russia, which had long been used by the Alliance to limit its presence on the Eastern Flank. The new strategy no longer mentions cooperation, but only maintaining the communication channels necessary to reduce the risk of unintended escalation or to conduct talks on military transparency. It also opens the way to strengthening the conventional and nuclear dimensions of defence and deterrence policy. The allies announced they would develop the potential for military and technological solutions for the needs of the collective defence mission, although they did not decide more ambitious goals in terms of increased defence spending. However, they agreed to increase the NATO common-funded civil and military budget, which can support the development of the integrated command structure or prepositioned stocks with ammunition and equipment.

How does the Alliance enhance its ability to conduct collective defence missions?

The allies decided to increase the NATO military presence on the Eastern Flank where multinational battalions (around 1,000 soldiers) have been stationed since 2017. In some countries (e.g., in Estonia and Lithuania), structures enabling the creation of a brigade (about 3-5,000 soldiers) are to be established. The most serious change concerns the additional reinforcement forces that would be deployed in the event of a threat of a large-scale attack. Until this week, the NATO commander could call on 40,000 soldiers of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and had the possibility of asking for two times as many forces (comprising a total force of around 80,000) under national commands from the NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI). According to NATO's Secretary General, now there will be more than 300,000 soldiers under the command of the Alliance on a permanent basis. However, this goal was neither included in the strategy nor in the summit declaration. It is not known how and when it would be achieved, or how many of these troops will come from the U.S. or from European states. The details are to be agreed by 2023. Nevertheless, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, the reinforcement forces will be assigned to specific countries. This will enable the preparation of defence activities in cooperation with local troops and taking into account local geographic conditions. The Alliance has announced that it will build prepositioned ammunition and equipment depots, which will shorten the time to deploy troops. Exercises will be strengthened. The credibility of defence and deterrence will be additionally increased thanks to the admission of Sweden and Finland to NATO. The

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Turkish authorities agreed to support the membership of both countries in exchange for a promise not to support Kurdish organisations considered by Türkiye as a threat and the removal of an arms embargo on Türkiye. The timing of the formal NATO enlargement depends only on the pace at which the member states ratify the accession protocols.

How will the U.S. strengthen the security of its European allies?

The U.S. announced a further build-up of its military presence in Europe. Previous plans to deploy two F-35 squadrons to the UK and increase the number of guided missile destroyers from four to six have been confirmed. But there are also new decisions. An additional army brigade will be deployed to Romania, and new air defence capabilities to Germany and Italy. The United States announced that U.S. Army V Corps Headquarters in Poland (with additional elements: garrison headquarters and field support battalion) will be stationed on a permanent basis. Although this only partially addresses Poland's appeals for a bigger and permanent U.S. military presence, the decision has a strategic dimension. In December 2021, Russia issued an ultimatum to the U.S. and NATO demanding that the deployment of their troops in Europe reflect the situation in 1997, hence it cannot be ruled out that Russia could provoke a direct confrontation with the Alliance to demand a buffer zone on the territory of the Eastern Flank countries. The U.S. is signalling that is ready to fulfil the security guarantees regarding the defence of its allies and that Russia will not achieve its goals through a conflict with NATO. Thanks to the deployment of additional air and anti-missile defence capabilities to Europe and the shifting of forces to the east, it will be much more difficult for Russia to launch an attack against Eastern Flank states or use such a threat for political purposes.

What other tasks will NATO take up?

The Alliance announced greater support for Ukraine, although the main effort still will be on the shoulders of individual member states. NATO wants to further develop its ability to respond to threats that are often not military in nature and are not limited to the Euro-Atlantic, treaty area. Therefore, in addition to collective defence, it will continue to perform crisis-management and cooperative-security missions, which require cooperation with partners and organisations such as the European Union. It also will keep what it calls a global perspective and the ability to respond to threats from all geographic directions. The Allies identified terrorism as the most serious asymmetric threat. The context in which it was placed, though, indicates that strengthening of collective defence will require the constant support of the allies in combating terrorism. For the first time, NATO's strategy includes a reference to China. The allies see Chinese policy as a challenge to their interests, security, and values. This should make it easier to respond to threats stemming from China's activity in, for example, cyberspace, space, or possible Chinese attempts to block sea lines of communication. In response to threats from China, NATO is ready to develop cooperation with partners from the Indo-Pacific and create new partnerships. At the same time, the wording indicates that the allies want to maintain the chance to cooperate with China and even to pull it away from cooperation with Russia. The strategy formulated in this way should increase NATO's importance for the U.S. and strengthen transatlantic ties. On climate, the Alliance will place a greater emphasis on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the armed forces. Taking the threats of climate change seriously can help strengthen public support for NATO across the Alliance.