



**CANADIAN GLOBAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE**  
**INSTITUT CANADIEN DES AFFAIRES MONDIALES**

# **A Canadian Primer to the NATO Summit in Brussels June 14, 2021**

by Colin Roberson  
June 2021

# POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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by Colin Robertson

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Prepared for the Canadian Global Affairs Institute  
1800, 150 – 9th Avenue S.W., Calgary, AB T2P 3H9  
[www.cgai.ca](http://www.cgai.ca)

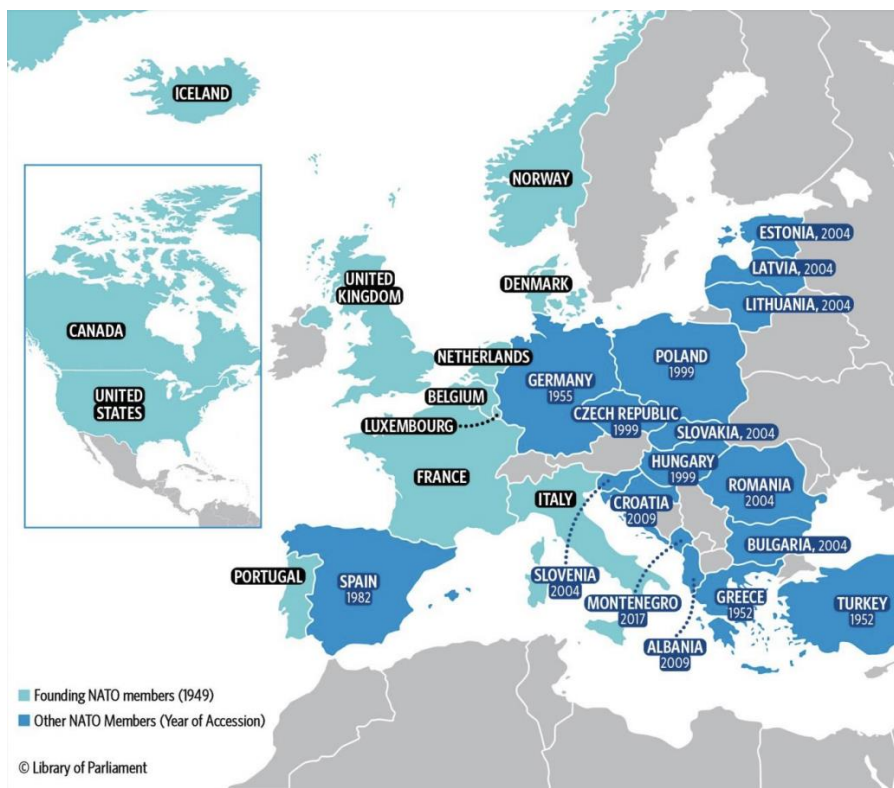
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ISBN: 978-1-77397-196-4



Residents and prime ministers of the thirty NATO nations will meet in Brussels on Monday, June 14. The agenda, for this their 29<sup>th</sup> summit since the Alliance was formed in 1949, will discuss safeguarding the rules-based order in the face of the rising challenge from China and Russia. NATO operations in Afghanistan and Iraq will also be discussed.

To “defend” NATO, says Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, requires “strengthening existing partnerships and building new ones, including in the Asia-Pacific, Africa, and Latin America,” in line with NATO’s 2030 [ambitions](#).

For the U.S., which is the biggest contributor to NATO, “deterrence and defense remain [NATO’s job number one](#)”. As President Joe Biden said before leaving for a European tour that includes the G7 and EU summits and a meeting with Russia’s Vladimir Putin, as well as the NATO summit, he wants to ensure that “the [democratic alliances and institutions](#) that shaped so much of the last century” will also shape the post-pandemic world.



Source: Map prepared by the Library of Parliament, Ottawa, 2018, using data from NATO, “[NATO Countries](#),” 26 March 2018.

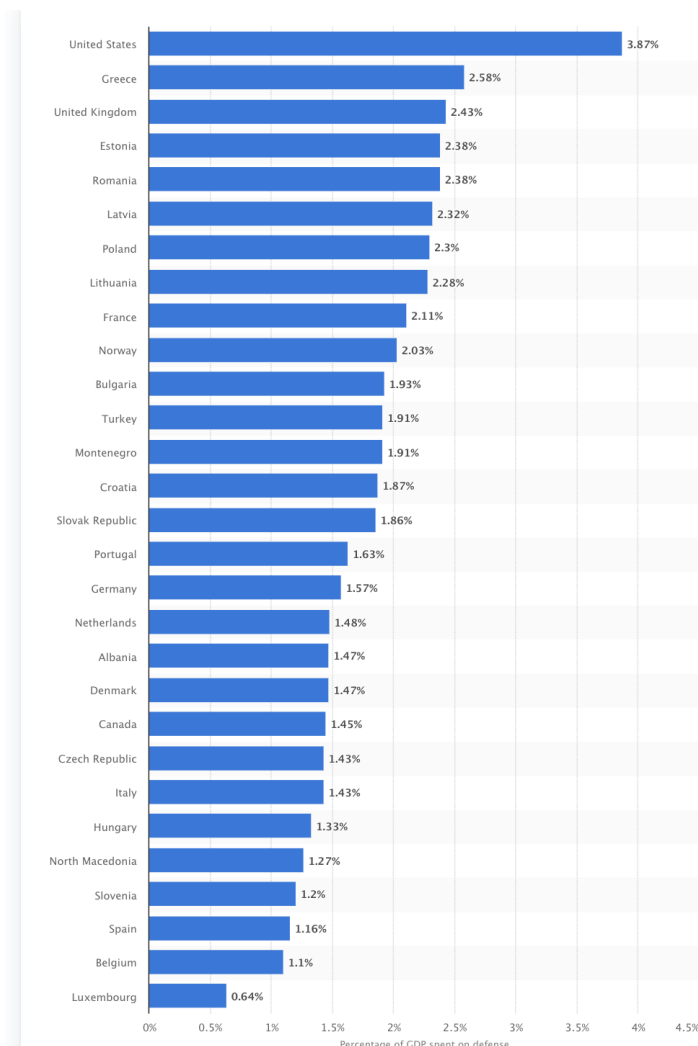
*Note map does not include North Macedonia that joined NATO as the 30<sup>th</sup> ally in 2020*

An important discussion will be around an updated [Strategic Concept](#) to sustain NATO’s technological edge. Discussion will flow from the recent [NATO 2030](#) report. Strengthening readiness and resilience requires securing supply chains, renovating infrastructure, and improving communications.

Facing destabilizing and malicious cyber activity, there is recognition that NATO’s cyber operations needs attention. In February, Defence Ministers endorsed NATO’s [Coherent Implementation Strategy on Emerging and Disruptive Technologies](#) including a security-focused



## Defence Expenditures as a share of GDP 2020



technology hub, what Stoltenberg calls a "defence innovation accelerator", with private sector partnership. At the Munich Security conference in March, Chancellor Angela Merkel proposed we "join forces in all spheres and regard security as a concept of networked security, of [multidimensional security](#)."

The summit will also "set the gold standard when it comes to understanding and mitigating the security implications of climate change", says Secretary General Stoltenberg.

The U.S. inevitably dominates these summits, for better or worse. As Biden told the [State Department](#) shortly after his inauguration "we will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again, not to meet yesterday's challenges, but today's and tomorrow's". Repairing NATO is central to this objective. The values enunciated in the new [Atlantic Charter](#), signed with Prime Minister Johnson on the eve of the G7 meeting will be reflected in his interventions. In practical terms, it means support for the NATO 2030 initiative, keeping the alliance strong militarily, making it stronger politically and giving it a more global view.

In his [preview](#) of the summit, Secretary General Stoltenberg described a world of growing global competition saying NATO members must strengthen its political consultations; reinforce collective defence through increased readiness, modernize capabilities, and invest; and develop Alliance-wide resilience to make its societies less vulnerable to attack and coercion. This means more money – burden sharing – for joint training and exercises, stronger cyber defences, cutting-edge capabilities, and more capacity-building for partners.

Success at Brussels will be measured not just by the degree of cohesion and camaraderie after the turbulence of the Trump years but on how they deal with the immediate, urgent and future. All are important.

In the immediate and urgent category: Can the Alliance come together with stronger actions on Russia and on China? Are the Europeans, for example, prepared to support with their ships,



submarines and aircraft freedom of navigation exercises in the South China Sea? Do they turn a blind eye to growing illiberal practises in Alliance members Turkey, Hungary and Poland? How do they manage the exit from Afghanistan? Do they stay the course in Iraq? And how does climate fit into their deliberations?

Looking forward, will they agree on a new Strategic Concept that addresses the challenges of technological change as represented by 5G, semiconductors, supply chains, export controls and technology rules and standards. Will we see some of the ‘values’ contained in the new [‘Atlantic Charter’](#) set forth by Prime Minister Boris Johnson and President Biden reflected in the NATO communique? Can the EU and U.S. resolve their differences on data protection and big data content? What about the new battle domains of cyber, hybrid, space and disinformation? Can the Alliance take a collective defence against ransomware attacks and deal with the challenges posed by cryptocurrency?

And then what about that old chestnut: burden-sharing?

## **What will be Discussed?**

### *Defence Spending*

The United States shoulders nearly 70 per cent of the alliance’s operating budget. In terms of GDP the U.S. spent roughly 3.87 per cent on defence in 2020, [according to NATO](#), while the average in European NATO countries and Canada was around 1.78 per cent. U.S. Presidents and [Secretaries of Defense](#) have consistently encouraged NATO members to spend more and, while president, Donald Trump mused about quitting NATO over allies’ inability to meet the 2 per cent GDP target for defence spending. While most allies, including Canada, still fall short, NATO defence spending by European allies and Canada has seen [seven consecutive years](#) of increases.

### *Developing a new Strategic Concept*

The current [Strategic Concept](#) “Active Engagement, Modern Defence”, adopted in 2010, outlines three essential core tasks – collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security to meet diverse threats including the proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons, terrorism, cyber-attacks and fundamental environmental problems. [NATO 2030: United for a New Era](#), the 67-page report (November, 2020) of the Secretary General’s Reflection Group (that included former Canadian National Security Advisor Greta Bossenmaier) argues for a new strategic concept, drawing from the current concept but taking into account the return of systemic rivalry and the rise of global threats as well as the strains on allied unity. A big piece of the Reflection Group’s report deals with technological change and the need for NATO to catch-up and adapt to emerging and disruptive technologies (EDT). As they argue:

*Maintaining a technological edge is the foundation upon which NATO’s ability to deter and defend against potential threats ultimately rests. EDTs pose a fundamental challenge but also—if harnessed correctly—an opportunity for the*



*Alliance. Without a strategic surge in this area, allowing adversaries to gain competitive advantage would impede NATO's ability to win on the battlefield, challenge strategic stability and change the fundamentals of deterrence, but also offer state and even non-state actors, including eventually terrorists, the potential to threaten our societies from within. They also could undermine NATO's political cohesion, by raising questions about technology.*

## *China*

The Reflection Group described the [China challenge](#) as follows:

*The scale of Chinese power and global reach poses acute challenges to open and democratic societies, particularly because of that country's trajectory to greater authoritarianism and an expansion of its territorial ambitions. For most Allies, China is both an economic competitor and significant trade partner. China is therefore best understood as a full-spectrum systemic rival, rather than a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor. While China does not pose an immediate military threat to the Euro-Atlantic area on the scale of Russia, it is expanding its military reach into the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Arctic, deepening defence ties with Russia, and developing long-range missiles and aircraft, aircraft carriers, and nuclear-attack submarines with global reach, extensive space-based capabilities, and a larger nuclear arsenal. NATO Allies feel China's influence more and more in every domain. Its Belt and Road, Polar Silk Road, and Cyber Silk Road have extended rapidly, and it is acquiring infrastructure across Europe with a potential bearing upon communications and interoperability.*

It recommended NATO take a series of steps including:

- *Increase information-sharing analysis on China within the Alliance;*
- *Continue efforts to build resilience and counter cyber-attacks and disinformation that originate in China;*
- *Expand efforts to assess the implications for Allies' security of China's technology capability development;*
- *Invest in its ability to monitor and defend against any Chinese activities that could impact collective defence, military readiness and/or resilience in SACEUR's Area of Responsibility;*
- *Continue to identify vulnerabilities of key sectors and supply chains, in coordination with the EU;*
- *Uphold NATO cohesion when Allies engage China bilaterally and through formats such as the 17+1 format and Belt Road Initiative;*





- *Adapt to China's integrated MCF doctrine by encouraging Allies to increase technological and military engagement with Allies more vulnerable to Chinese penetration.*

Secretary General Stoltenberg recently observed that while NATO needs to “[engage with China](#) on issues like arms control and climate change, and therefore China is not an adversary”, their human rights record and actions in the South China sea is a reminder that “they don’t share our values.” China is also a potential challenger: it has the second largest defence budget, the largest Navy, they are investing heavily in new modern capabilities including hypersonic weapon systems and they are integrating new disruptive technologies like facial recognition, artificial intelligence and big data into the new weapon systems.

### *Russia*

As the NATO chiefs of defence [observed](#) after their May meeting, “Russia continues to demonstrate a sustained pattern of destabilising behaviour, including its violations of Ukraine’s and Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” The Reflection Group recommended NATO should continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue, within parameters agreed at the Wales and Warsaw Summits. The Group assessed [Russia](#) as follows:

*After the end of the Cold War, NATO attempted to build a meaningful partnership with Russia, based on dialogue and practical cooperation in areas of common interest. But Russia's aggression against Georgia and Ukraine, followed by its ongoing military build-ups and assertive activity in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, in the Eastern Mediterranean, Baltic, and in the High North, have led to a sharp deterioration in the relationship and negatively impacted the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia routinely engages in intimidatory military operations in the immediate vicinity of NATO and has enhanced its reach and capabilities for threatening airspace and freedom of navigation in the Atlantic. It has violated a number of major international commitments and developed an array of conventional and non-conventional capabilities that threaten both the security of individual NATO Allies and the stability and cohesion of the Alliance as a whole. Russia has amply demonstrated its ability and willingness to use military force, and continues to attempt to exploit fissures between Allies, and inside NATO societies. It has also employed chemical weapons on Allied soil, costing civilian lives.*

### *Afghanistan*

By September NATO will be drawing down its non-combat Resolute Support Mission (RSM), which has been training, advising and assisting the Afghan security forces and institutions since January 2015. NATO operations in Afghanistan began after the UN Security Council authorized the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force that operated from August 2003 to December 2014. ISAF is NATO’s longest mission employing more than [130,000 troops from 51 NATO](#) and partner nations, including Canada. Canadian Forces left Afghanistan in March 2014



after a twelve-year campaign and the loss of [161 men and women](#). Canada continues to support a number of [programs and activities](#).

### *Iraq*

Iraq remains a [battle-ground](#) for domestic, regional, and international competition. In [May](#), NATO ministers agreed to expand the alliance's Iraqi mission.

### *Ukraine*

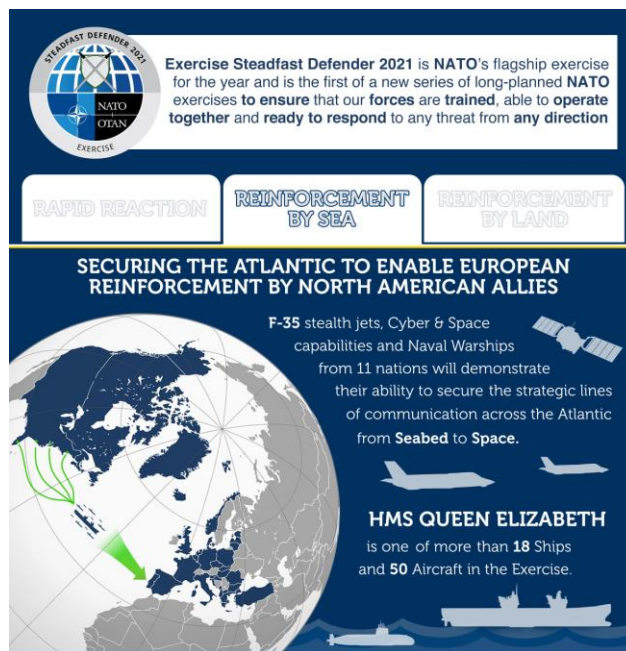
At their April meeting the NATO-Ukraine Commission "reaffirmed NATO's [unwavering support](#) for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity calling on Russia to engage constructively at the OSCE on its military activities. Secretary General Stoltenberg called on Russia to end its military build-up, stop its provocations, end its support for the militants in eastern Ukraine, and withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory to abide by the Minsk Agreements.

### *Belarus*

The North Atlantic Council [condemned](#) the forced landing of the civilian aircraft in Minsk (23 May) as a violation of international norms and rules, and a direct attack on the freedom of expression and the free and independent press. Some allies now restrict the access of the Belarussian airliner to their airspace and called for an independent international investigation.

### *NATO Readiness*

In [2018](#), NATO defense ministers agreed to the "Four Thirties" initiative, a military readiness plan that now means the Alliance has [30 land battalions, 30 air squadrons, and 30 navy vessels, ready for deployment in 30 days or less](#). The Russian invasion of Ukraine (2014) and intervention in Syria (2015) underline the need for NATO readiness. In practical terms this means a rapid combat-ready expeditionary force with attention to cyber defence and maritime security. As NATO scholar Julian Lindley-French and Admiral (retired) James Stavridis, former SACEUR, argue: "Article 5 collective defence must be modernized and re-organized around cyber-defence, missile defence and the advanced deployable forces vital to contemporary defence." Military exercises demonstrate [shortcomings](#) in NATO's ability to move forces across Europe, because of bureaucracy (customs officials asking



<https://shape.nato.int/steadfast-defender>

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MORE THAN **20** PARTICIPATING NATIONS

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to see passports at borders) and inadequate infrastructure (the bridges, roads and railways that have to handle military transports).

### *NATO Partners and NATO Expansion*

NATO's partnerships, born out of its 1990 London summit, focused first on the former Soviet bloc nations (many of whom are now full members), then on crisis management in the Balkans, and, since 9-11, on wider partnerships now including more than forty nations around the world – Australia, New Zealand and, as the latest addition, Mongolia. At its peak, the ISAF mission in Afghanistan included 22 partner nations. Partnership does not include the security guarantee of Article 5. Ukraine and Georgia want membership in NATO and, at the Bucharest summit in 2008, NATO encouraged this. But NATO enlargement is controversial and there is discussion [of different architecture](#) to guarantee security. A wise person's [report](#) (2016) commissioned by the Finnish government concluded that Finland and Sweden should stick together, whatever the decision, but that membership would provoke Russia. It described Russia as an “unsatisfied power” that “has made unpredictability a strategic and tactical virtue, underpinned by an impressive degree of political and military agility.”

### *Countering Terrorism*

With its Terrorism Intelligence Cell at NATO HQ, NATO's Counter-Terrorism Policy Guidelines focus Alliance efforts on three main areas: awareness, capabilities and engagement. NATO is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

### *Migration*

NATO and the EU work on migration, seeking to tackle the root causes and to help stabilize the source countries, including training local forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. NATO is also assisting in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, and through [Operation Sea Guardian](#), to provide help to the EU Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean, with ships and maritime surveillance aircraft.

## **Public Opinion and NATO**

A [Pew Research Center](#) survey conducted in spring 2021 says citizens hold a positive views of NATO at or near all-time highs across several member states. Americans, who [contribute the most](#) to NATO's annual budget, are at 61 per cent favorable, the same as the overall median across the NATO states surveyed. While Americans are more favorable toward NATO than not, partisans hold very different views of the alliance. Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents are much more likely than their Republican counterparts to have a positive assessment of NATO (77 per cent vs. 44 per cent, respectively).



A [pan-European survey](#) in November and December 2020 of more than 15,000 people in 11 countries commissioned by the European Council on Foreign Relations concluded “while most Europeans rejoiced at Joe Biden’s victory in the November U.S. presidential election, they do not think he can help America make a comeback as the pre-eminent global leader.”

## Views of NATO, 2009-2021

% who have a *favorable* opinion of NATO

■ Highest rating ■ Lowest rating

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2020-21 Change
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
<b>NATO member countries</b>													
Italy	64	-	-	61	60	64	59	57	-	60	59	72	▲13
Netherlands	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	79	-	72	67	71	▲4
Spain	56	53	62	45	42	47	44	45	-	49	51	55	▲4
Belgium	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	61	▲1
U.S.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	61	▲1
Germany	73	57	60	65	59	55	59	67	63	57	58	59	▲1
France	71	68	70	67	58	64	49	60	-	49	50	51	▲1
UK	63	60	63	62	59	60	61	62	-	65	66	66	0
Greece	-	-	-	20	25	-	25	33	-	37	-	38	-
Canada	-	-	-	-	57	56	56	66	-	66	69	67	▼2
<b>Non-NATO country</b>													
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	58	65	-	63	65	70	▲5

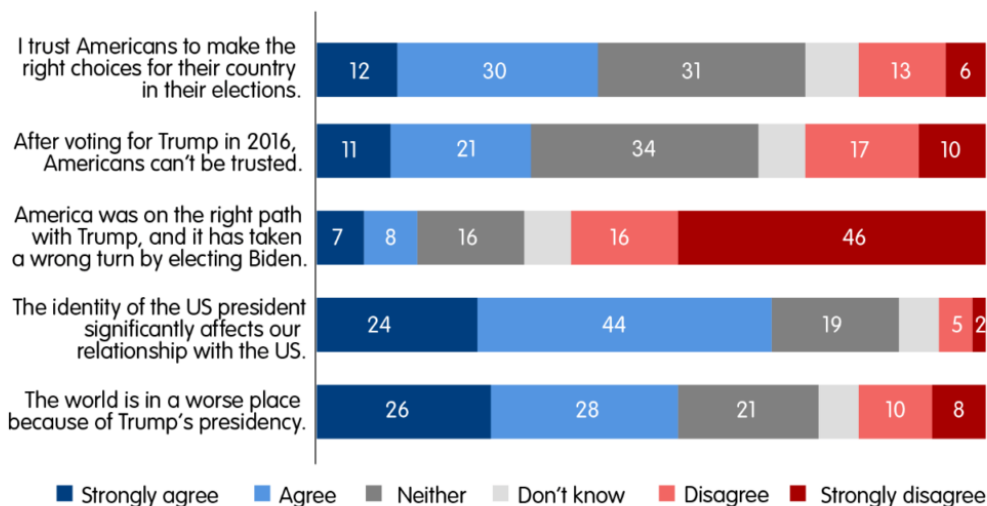
Note: Statistically significant change in **bold**. Prior to 2020, U.S. surveys were conducted by phone. See topline for results.

Source: Spring 2021 Global Attitudes Survey. Q4f.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



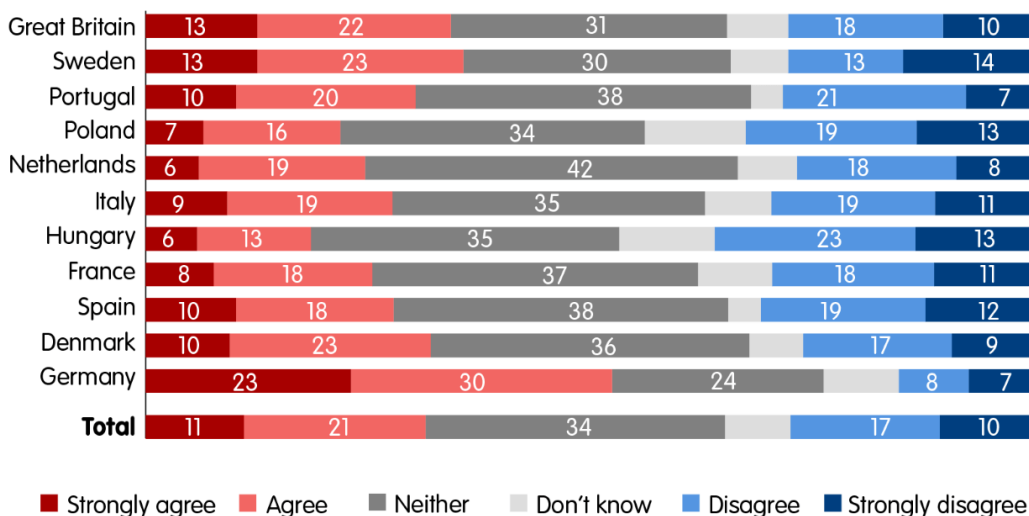
**Thinking about the US presidential election, for each of the following statements, please indicate whether you agree or disagree and how strongly in per cent**



Considering all 11 surveyed countries as one sample.  
Source: ECFR-commissioned data from Dataprix and YouGov  
ECFR - ecf.eu

While Europeans are happy with Biden's election, like their leaders, they fear a return of another Donald Trump in four years.

**After voting for Trump in 2016, Americans cannot be trusted** in per cent



Source: ECFR-commissioned data from Dataprix and YouGov  
ECFR - ecf.eu



## What is NATO?

NATO is a military and political alliance constructed around the principles of collective security, democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. It has [30 members](#) including Canada, the United States and most European nations, as well as a host of Euro-Atlantic [partner nations](#). NATO represents half of the world's economic and military power. As Secretary General Stoltenberg observes, "[no other superpower](#) has ever had such a strategic advantage."

In the wake of the Second World War, the victors set up a series of international institutions. The foremost was the United Nations, and its alphabet soup of agencies - WHO, UNHCR, FAO et al - with universal membership designed to advance human progress and prevent the "[scourge of war](#)". Responding to what Winston Churchill described as the "[iron curtain](#)" descending "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic", the western alliance set up a collective security agreement called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

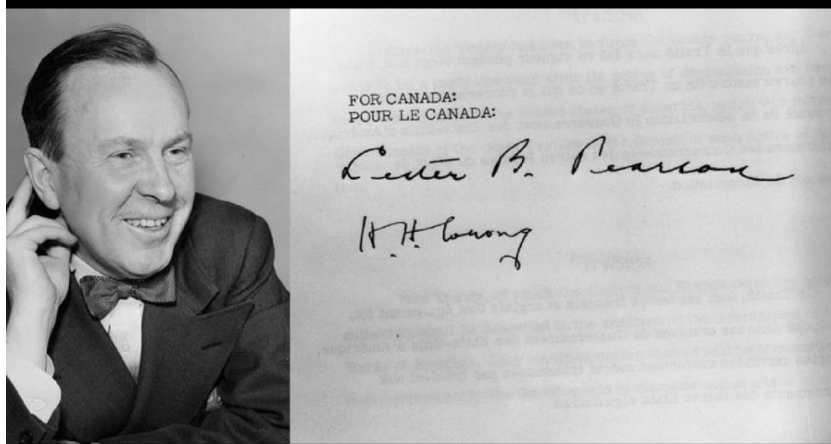
In the [words](#) of its first secretary general, Lord Ismay, NATO was to "keep the Russians out, the Germans down, and the Americans in". Most importantly it's a collective security agreement - an attack on one would be considered an attack on all (Article 5). NATO was also designed, at Canadian insistence, to have an economic dimension to promote trade, investment, and commerce between the members (Article 2).

The [agreement](#) was signed in Washington on April 2, 1949. Its original membership included twelve countries - the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg. In signing the agreement Canadian External Affairs Minister Lester Pearson [said](#) that Canadians "feel deeply and instinctively" that the treaty is "a pledge for peace and progress".

The Alliance expanded with Turkey and Greece joining in 1952, West Germany in 1955 and Spain in 1982. France left the military alliance in 1967 but rejoined in 2009. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, NATO membership is now [30 countries](#) - including Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia,

"This is more than a Treaty for defense. We must, of course, defend ourselves, and that is the first purpose of our pact; but, in doing so, we must never forget that we are now organizing force for peace so that peace can one day be preserved without such force."

**Lester B. Pearson**  
Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1949

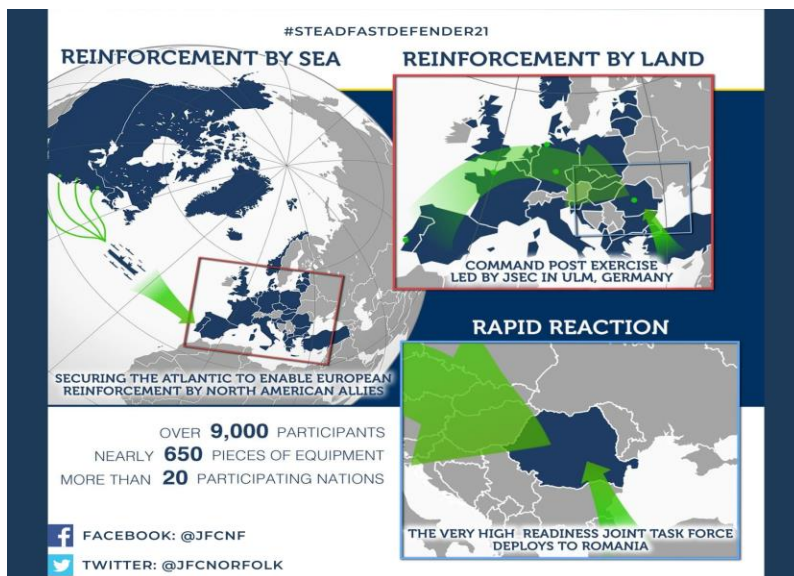




Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

## NATO Today

NATO is based in its purpose-built (2018) [headquarters](#) in Brussels, where Secretary General [Jens Stoltenberg](#), a former Norwegian prime minister, leads its Secretariat with Deputy Secretary General [Mircea Geoană](#), a former Romanian minister of Foreign Affairs. NATO military operations are headed by two commanders: the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) based in Brussels is currently U.S. General [General Tod D. Wolters](#) and the incoming Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) based in Norfolk, Virginia will be French General [Philippe Lavigne](#) currently French Air and Space Force Chief of Staff.



Member nations are represented in both the NATO Council and Military Committee. A Canadian has never held the post of Secretary General but Canadians have twice served as Chair of the Military Committee. General Ray Henault, a former Chief of Defense Staff, was chair from 2005-2008. The incoming chair is [Admiral Rob Bauer](#), Chief of Defence of the Netherlands Armed Forces. Legislators from NATO nations meet annually in the NATO parliamentary assembly.

In 2018 NATO has four Joint Forces Commands located in: [Brunssum, Netherlands](#), to enhance coordination, cooperation and situational awareness; [Naples, Italy](#), to prepare for, plan and conduct military operations in order to preserve the peace, security and territorial integrity of Alliance member states; [Norfolk, Virginia](#) to protect sea lanes between Europe and North America; and in [Ulm, Germany](#), to focus on logistics in Europe. The Norfolk and Ulm commands were added in 2018.

Canada, Norway and the U.S. collaborate with the EU through participation in the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) defence project [Military Mobility](#) enabling the movement of military personnel and assets throughout the EU, whether by rail, road, air or sea.





## What has NATO done?

NATO is the classic defensive alliance with Article 5 of its charter declaring that “an attack on one is an attack on all.” Arguably the world’s most successful military alliance, alliance unity and its deterrence capacity contributed significantly to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany, and the demise of the communist threat in Europe.

NATO has three core tasks: collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. For its first 40 years, NATO’s purpose was to deter Soviet aggression. With the end of the Cold War, NATO shifted to help the former Soviet-bloc countries embrace democracy and the market economy. Today, it deters Russian aggression.

NATO forces were involved in bringing peace to the Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) in operations that continue today. NATO forces, under the umbrella of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), have been present in Afghanistan since 2003. There have been operations around Iraq (1990-1) and a training mission (2004-11). In 2005, NATO assisted in the relief efforts following the Pakistan earthquake. In recent years, NATO has also provided support to African Union peacekeeping missions in the Sudan and Somalia. NATO led the UN-sanctioned Libyan campaign (Operation Unified Protector in 2011), maintaining a no-fly zone and conducting air strikes against the Gaddafi regime. Canadian Lieutenant General Charles Bouchard directed the air campaign.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2014 presented NATO with a renewed challenge. Conflicts within and between states have created failing states and mass migration on its southern flank – in North Africa and the Middle East – that requires ongoing attention.

Since 1989, NATO has also become involved in a series of out-of-theatre missions. Over 150,000 troops served under NATO command in six different operations on three continents, including counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.





NATO still matters. But collective security means collective contributions from all alliance members. As the [New York Times](#) editorialized:

*Born after World War II, NATO linked America and Europe not just in a mutual defense pledge but in advancing democratic governance, the rule of law, civil and human rights, and an increasingly open international economy. The alliance was the core of an American-led liberal world order that extended to Asia and relied on a web of international institutions, including the United Nations and the World Bank. It remains the most successful military alliance in history, the anchor of an American-led and American-financed peace that fostered Western prosperity and prevented new world wars. No one has proposed anything credible to improve upon it.*

But as NATO 2030 argues, the Alliance also needs to be continuously adapting to changing technology and geopolitics.

## Canada and NATO

As a founding member of NATO, Canada has stood with their NATO Allies since 1949. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be pressed on Canada's financial commitment to NATO. The government's *Strong, Secure, Engaged* defence policy (2017) commits Canada to increasing its defence spending to [1.4 per cent](#) of GDP by 2026-27, well short of the NATO two per cent norm. But as Trudeau has said, "there are [many ways](#) of evaluating one's contribution to NATO" noting that Canada has "always been amongst the [strongest actors](#) in NATO."

"NATO and Article 5 are at the heart of Canada's national security policy."

The Hon. Chrystia Freeland  
Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs



This includes Canada's leadership of a multinational NATO mission in Latvia (and Trudeau will visit Latvia before going to the NATO summit). The [450-strong](#) Canadian Forces contingent represent the commitment Trudeau made at the [Warsaw summit](#) in 2016, as part of broader Canadian support to [Operation Reassurance](#), and note the "significant [procurement projects](#)" - especially the ongoing construction of new warships and the purchase of fighter jets - and Canada's renewed activist internationalism.



As part of Canada's commitment to NATO's [Operation Reassurance](#), Canada fighter jets patrol the [Baltic skies](#). Since April 2014, Canada has deployed our Halifax-class frigates, most recently [HMCS Charlottetown and HMCS St. John's](#), in support of NATO reassurance measures. HMCS Windsor, one of our Victoria-class submarines, recently returned from [five months](#) in the Mediterranean where its mission including tracking Russian submarines. Canada is also providing humanitarian and Special Forces support to a U.S.-led multinational effort to support pro-Iraq forces battling ISIS and other terrorist groups.

In terms of readiness, Canadian forces already have achieved significant interoperability on land, air and sea with the U.S. through NORAD, our binational aerospace and maritime surveillance agreement, and through both joint exercises and active operations in theatres like Afghanistan and Libya and now in Latvia. Trudeau can also point to Canada's recent mission as part of the UN peacekeeping operation in [Mali](#), involving 250 Canadian soldiers and eight helicopters.

Then-president Barack Obama repeatedly told Canada's Parliament: "[NATO needs more Canada](#)". Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland understands this, telling a Washington audience (June, 2018) that:

*Since the end of the Second World War, we have built a system that championed freedom and democracy and prevented regional conflicts from turning into total war. Canada for one is going to stand up in defense of that system....America has been the leader of the free world. We Canadians have been proud to stand at your side and to have your back. As your closest friend, ally, and neighbor, we also understand that many Americans today are no longer certain that the rules-based international order of which you were the principal architect and for which you did write the biggest checks still benefits America.*

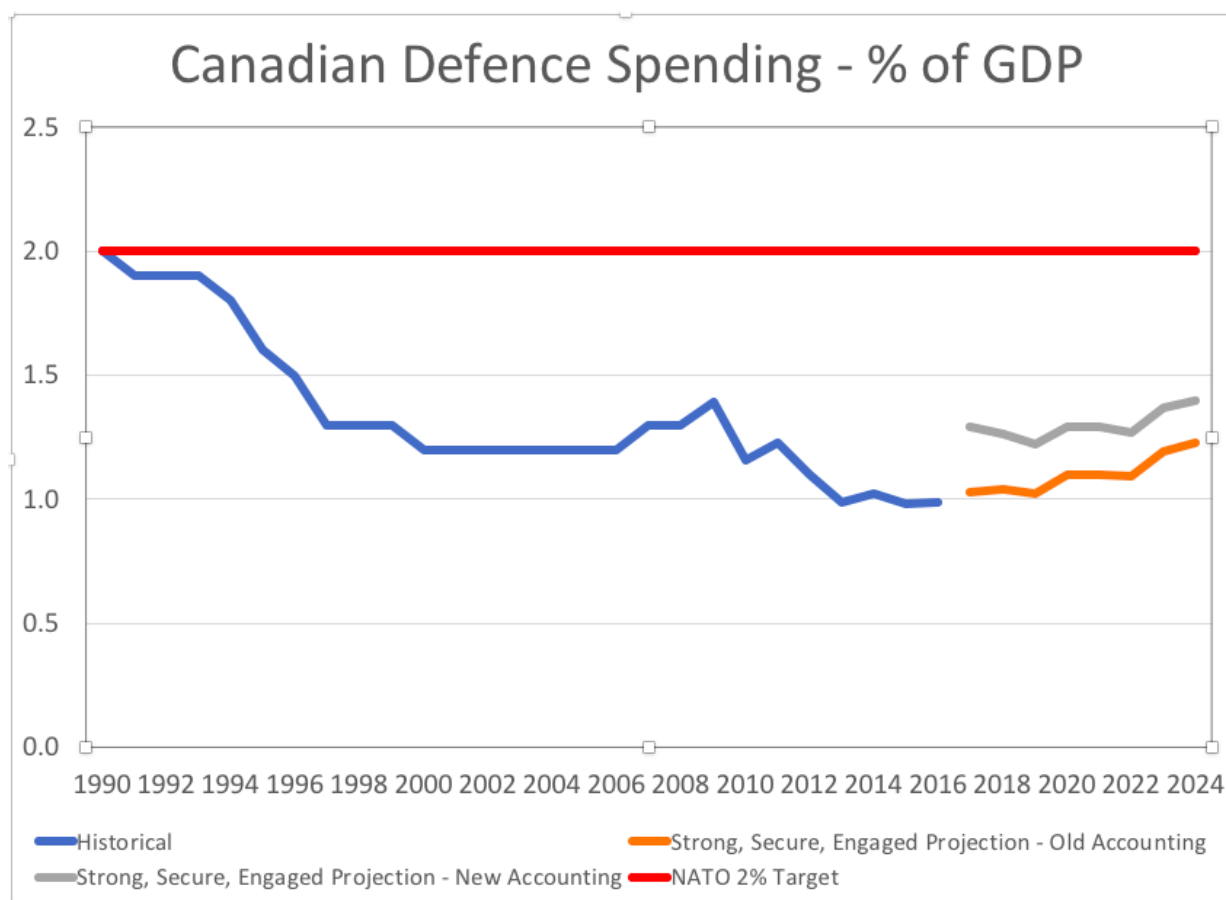
At the center of that defence arrangement, as Freeland, then foreign minister, told Parliament (June, 2017) in laying out the Trudeau foreign policy "[NATO and Article 5 are at the heart of Canada's national security policy](#)." We now need to up our defence contribution even beyond the additional monies included in the [2021 budget](#).

We should do more because Canadian sovereignty requires it and as we learned once again, during the COVID pandemic, the Canadian Forces first responder role goes beyond natural disasters - including bringing relief in retirement homes as well.

We could also do much more to assert our Arctic sovereignty – picking up the pace for construction of the icebreakers by using all of Canada's shipyards and building more Arctic Offshore patrol ships and supply ships. We should also invest now in the next generation of submarines – they are the ultimate stealth weapon to deter unwelcome intrusions. And why not invest in a hospital ship to provide humanitarian relief in the increasing number of climate-related disasters that beset coastal nations?



Canada should also make the most of its membership in the EU/NATO [Centers for Excellence](#) especially those focusing on hybrid threats in Helsinki, Finland; cyber threats in Tallinn, Estonia; strategic communications in Riga, Latvia.



## Further Reading

NATO has a comprehensive [website](#) but start with the [NATO 2030](#) report.

Still worth reading is the [GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation initiative](#), led by General John Allen and including CGAI Fellow Julian Lindley-French. In the spirit of the Harmel Report (1967) and to “to [better prepare NATO](#) not only to meet the many technology and affordability challenges but to master them -- from hybrid warfare to hyper war” they recommend a strategic review in time for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit so that NATO is “prepared, fit and able to act across the seven domains of grand conflict: air, sea, land, cyber, space, information and knowledge.”

On Canada’s role read scholar Timothy Andrews Sayle’s [Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order](#) and the forthcoming [Canada in NATO, 1949-2019](#) by scholars Joseph Jockel and Joel Sokolsky.



CGAI produced a [series of papers](#) on NATO in advance of parliamentary hearings by the House of Commons National Defence committee into NATO and its report [Canada and NATO: An Alliance Forged in Strength and Durability](#) is worth reading.



## ► About the Author

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A former Canadian diplomat, **Colin Robertson** is Vice-President and Fellow at the [Canadian Global Affairs Institute](#) and hosts its regular [Global Exchange podcast](#). He is an Executive Fellow at the University of Calgary's [School of Public Policy](#) and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the [Norman Paterson School of International Affairs](#) at Carleton University. A member of the Department of National Defence's Defence Advisory Board, Robertson is an [honorary captain \(Royal Canadian Navy\)](#) assigned to the Strategic Communications Directorate. Robertson sits on the advisory councils of the [Alphen Group](#), [Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy](#), [North American Research Partnership](#), the [Sir Winston Churchill Society of Ottawa](#) and [the Conference of Defence Associations Institute](#). During his foreign service career, he served as first head of the Advocacy Secretariat and minister at the Canadian embassy in Washington, consul general in Los Angeles, as consul in Hong Kong, and in New York at the UN and Consulate General. A member of the teams that negotiated the Canada-U.S. FTA and then NAFTA, he is a member of the Deputy Minister of International Trade's Trade Advisory Council and the North American Forum. He writes on foreign affairs for the [Globe and Mail](#) and he is a frequent contributor to other media. [The Hill Times](#) has named him as one of those who influence Canadian foreign policy.

## ► Canadian Global Affairs Institute

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The Institute was created to bridge the gap between what Canadians need to know about Canadian international activities and what they do know. Historically Canadians have tended to look abroad out of a search for markets because Canada depends heavily on foreign trade. In the modern post-Cold War world, however, global security and stability have become the bedrocks of global commerce and the free movement of people, goods and ideas across international boundaries. Canada has striven to open the world since the 1930s and was a driving factor behind the adoption of the main structures which underpin globalization such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and emerging free trade networks connecting dozens of international economies. The Canadian Global Affairs Institute recognizes Canada's contribution to a globalized world and aims to inform Canadians about Canada's role in that process and the connection between globalization and security.

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