SRMUN VIRTUAL 2021
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Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to the SRMUN Virtual 2021 and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO is an alliance of 30 Member States from North America and Europe that was originally created in 1949 to ensure the collective defense and security of their Member States through military and political means. The alliance served as a cross-Atlantic adversary against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, and now continues to support the democratization and political integration of Europe while deterring nationalist militarism across the continent. NATO decisions are made by consensus vote, which has been a vital principle for the alliance since its formation.

By focusing on the mission of 30-Member State alliance, NATO will simulate a crisis situation through which delegates will be tasked to work together to achieve consensus. In doing so, the delegates must simultaneously react to crisis developments and respond to the pressing discussions held by the body.

The NATO committee history and attached addendum provide an introduction to the operation of NATO at SRMUN Virtual 2021. Additionally, two topic updates reflecting timely issues most relevant to NATO and its mandate are included in this Background Guide. It is highly recommended that these topic updates are carefully read and understood. Delegates are expected to go beyond the updates and engage in intellectual inquiry of their own to develop position papers that reflect the complexity of current global issues important to their Member State and their externalities. Delegations in NATO are expected to submit a position paper and be prepared for a vigorous discussion at the conference.

Position papers should be no longer than one page in length (single spaced) and demonstrate your Member State's position, policies, and recommendations on the topic. For more detailed information about formatting and how to write position papers, delegates can visit srmun.org. ***All position papers MUST be submitted no later than Friday, September 17, 2021, by 11:59pm EST via the SRMUN website in order to be eligible for Outstanding Position Paper Awards.***

We are enthusiastic about SRMUN's newest virtual conference, and we wish you all the best of luck in your conference preparation and look forward to working with you in the near future. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions while preparing for the conference.

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History of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Formed on April 4, 1949, through the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an alliance of, currently, 30 Member States across Europe and North America.[1] The alliance was created in the aftermath of the Second World War to "safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means."[2] With collective defense and security at the core of NATO's mandate, NATO was originally formed for three purposes: "deterring Soviet expansionism, forbidding the revival of nationalist militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence in the continent, and encouraging European political integration."[3] The North Atlantic Treaty did not establish a military structure at first, however one was adopted after the detonation of an atomic bomb by the Soviet Union in 1949 and the beginning of the Korean War in 1950.[4]

NATO, as a military organization, is composed by the Military Committee, which involves the work of many different sectors such as the Chiefs of Defense of NATO, the International Military Staff, and the military Command Structures.[5] The Cold War period led to NATO's policy of "Massive Retaliation," which established that the alliance would retaliate with Nuclear Weapons if the Soviet Union attacked NATO Member States.[6] This policy changed in the 1960s when a detente was established, and the "Massive Retaliation" response shifted to a "Flexible Response" strategy.[7] Subsequently, in 1987 the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, an agreement that was considered the beginning of the end of the Cold War.[8] After the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, NATO members began to question if the alliance was still necessary, eventually concluding that two of its founding missions were still important – deterring nationalist militarism in Europe and encouraging the democratization and political integration of Europe.[9] With these purposes in mind, NATO has remained an alliance throughout time and has enacted several major decisions since 1989.[10]

Some of the key components of the North Atlantic Treaty are Articles 3, 4, 5, and 6.[11] Article 3 urges Member States to work within their territory and along with other Member States in order to more effectively resist attack and increasing Member State collaboration in a variety of areas.[12] Article 4 ensures that Member States collaborate with fellow Allies on "security matters of common interest".[13] Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty embodies the collective defense principal at the core of NATO's purpose.[14] This means that an attack against one Member State is an attack against them all.[15] Article 6 clarifies Article 5 in saying that an armed attack against a Member State includes the aggression towards any Member State's territories "in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of Turkey or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer," as well as on any of the vessels, aircrafts, or forces of Member States in these territories.[16] This article has only been invoked once following the attacks on US soil on September 11, 2001.[17] After these attacks, NATO implemented its first counter terrorism operation – Eagle Assist – which was

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[1] "NATO's Purpose," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, April 18, 2018, accessed July 20, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/topics_68144.htm.

[2] "NATO's Purpose," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[3] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed July 20, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm.

[4] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[5] "Structure," *US Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed July 20, 2020, https://nato.usmission.gov/our-relationship/about-nato/structure/.

[6] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[7] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[8] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[9] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[10] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[11] "A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[12] "About NATO," *US Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed July 20, 2020, https://nato.usmission.gov/our-relationship/about-nato/.

[13] "About NATO," *US Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[14] A Short History of NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_139339.htm.

[15] "Collective Defense – Article 5," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified November 25, 2019, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm.

[16] "Collective Defense – Article 5," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[17] "Collective Defense – Article 5," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

the first time NATO military assets were deployed due to Article 5.[18] In 1994, NATO also created the Partnership for Peace program, which allowed non-NATO Member States to share information and modernize their militaries to become more democratic, along with opening a path for future membership.[19]

The main political decision-making body of NATO is the North Atlantic Council (NAC).[20] The NAC is headed by the Secretary-General and is composed of a delegation from each Member State.[21] All policy decisions are made at the collective will of all Member States, requiring a consensus for every action.[22] The Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) is the most senior body on nuclear issues and continuously reevaluates and adapts nuclear policy for the Alliance.[23] Both the NPG and NAC work with the Military Committee (MC) when military decisions are involved, with the MC also serving as a link between the political and military bodies of the organization.[24] Decisions made by the MC provide consensus-based advice from Member States to the NAC and Strategic Commanders.[25] There are also several specialized subordinate committees that meet regularly under NAC to fulfill and fully carry out NATO's agenda.[26] The MC also has two subordinate bodies: The Allied Command Operations and the Allied Command Transformation.[27]

NATO is funded through direct and indirect contributions. Direct funding contributions from Member States are established through a cost-shared formula based on Gross National Income and "represents a small percentage of each member's defense budget."[28] Indirect contributions make up the majority of NATO's funding.[29] These contributions include things like donating equipment or troops to a military body.[30] Consequently, NATO has two main budgets: civil and military, which are decided on by the Budget Committee.[31]

NATO and the United Nations (UN) collaborate in maintaining international peace and security.[32] NATO's Secretary-General often participates in the UN General Assembly and regularly reports to the UN Secretary-General on UN-mandated NATO operations.[33] NATO and the UN work together on focus areas such as peace-keeping, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, women and peace and security, the protection of children in armed conflict, small arms and light weapons, and disaster relief.[34] NATO has also received mandates from the UN Security Council on operations in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya.[35] Additionally, NATO has supported several UN operations, such as the peace-keeping operations in Sudan and Somalia and the disaster-relief operations in Pakistan.[36] In continuity with cooperation between the two bodies, a Joint Declaration was signed in September 2008, and updated on October 6, 2018, that created a framework for further cooperation and dialogue between

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[18] "Collective Defense – Article 5," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[19] "Collective Defense – Article 5," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[20] "What is NATO?" *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html
[21] "What is NATO?" *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[22] "North Atlantic Council," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified October 17, 2017, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49763.htm.
[23] "Nuclear Planning Group (NPG)," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified March 27, 2020, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_50069.htm.
[24] "What is NATO?" *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html
[25] "Military Committee," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified May 28, 2019, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49633.htm.
[26] "Military Committee," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[27] "What is NATO?" *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/index.html
[28] "Funding NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified May 5, 2020, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_67655.htm.
[29] "Funding NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[30] "Funding NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[31] "Funding NATO," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[32] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified February 15, 2019, accessed June 22, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50321.htm.
[33] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[34] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[35] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[36] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

NATO and the UN.[37] The partnership between NATO and the UN, along with other international organizations, remains an integral piece to NATO's comprehensive approach to crisis management and operations.[38]

One of the key areas of focus for NATO in 2020 is the Middle East and the challenge in the continued stabilization of the region.[39] In Afghanistan, NATO is working to uphold the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership and implementing the Resolute Support mission.[40] This mission is non-combative and seeks to support the Afghan security forces through providing 16,000 troops who train, advise, and assist the existing Afghan military, as well as aid in budgetary development, management and deployment of personnel, operational planning, and more.[41] The NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership was created in 2010 at the summit in Lisbon, and acts as NATO's political arm within Afghanistan.[42] This agreement exists to maintain the vital relationship between NATO Member States and Afghanistan through training sessions on topics such as defense education and the improvement of national defense structures' governance.[43]

Iraq has also been a part of NATO's Middle East focus recently.[44] Established at the 2018 Summit in Brussels, NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) exists to protect Iraqi sovereignty and to ensure that ISIS does not return.[45] This is achieved through the deployment of non-combative troops to Iraq to train, strengthen, and educate the existing Iraqi military and security forces through three military education institutions in Baghdad, Besmayah, and Taji.[46] NMI works with several other international efforts in Iraq such as Operation Inherent Resolve, as well as other organizations including the UN, and the European Union.[47] In March 2020, NATO pulled back some of its troops and training from Iraq due to mounting fears of the COVID-19 outbreak, however it assured the international community that their commitment to the Member States remains.[48]

For a large part of 2020, NATO attempted to assist Member States as they dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic that spread across the globe.[49] On March 6th, NATO made their first press release involving the virus, and welcomed help and expertise from the World Health Organization.[50] NATO Member States began to send aid to each other, including both transport capabilities and medical aid.[51] NATO-aligned Member States such as Poland, Afghanistan, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina all received COVID-19 medical aid from the alliance.[52] By June, Sweden and Poland led the distribution of the aid to the Middle East and to Member States bordering the Black Sea.[53] These efforts in aid distribution assisted in combating the virus, likely decreasing the potential harm and driving the international death toll down.

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[37] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[38] "Relations with the United Nations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[39] "Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia to top NATO Ministerial agenda," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[40] "NATO-Afghanistan relations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, published Feb 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/2/pdf/2002-backgrounder-afghanistan-e.pdf.
[41] "NATO-Afghanistan relations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[42] "NATO-Afghanistan relations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[43] "NATO-Afghanistan relations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[44] "NATO-Afghanistan relations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[45] "NATO Mission Iraq," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, published April 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/2004-factsheet-NMI-en.pdf.
[46] "NATO Mission Iraq," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*
[47] "NATO Mission Iraq," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[48] "Defense ministers agree to enhance NATO's training mission in Iraq," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified Feb 14, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_173306.htm.
[49] "NATO response to COVID-19," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, accessed July 20, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174271.htm?selectedLocale=en.
[50] "NATO response to COVID-19," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[51] "Coronavirus response: Poland distributes medical aid across the Western Balkans," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, last modified on May 29, 2020, accessed July 20, 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_176082.htm.
[52] "Coronavirus response: Poland distributes medical aid across the Western Balkans," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[53] "EADRCC Situation Report #17," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, published on June 19, 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/6/pdf/200619-EADRCC-0104_sitrep17.pdf.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization Addendum

(rev. August 2021)

I. Overview of Agenda

Adoption of Agenda

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit meetings are the highest-level gatherings of NATO Member States and are called on an ad-hoc basis to address, decide, and institute policy that will provide strategic direction for Alliance activities. Summits are assembled upon the approval of the Permanent Representatives or foreign and defense ministers of the North Atlantic Council (NAC), often in response to new developments in evolving political and military security situations. The last NATO summit was the 31st formal meeting held in Brussels, Belgium, in June 2021 to address developments and multifaceted threats and challenges including aggression from the Russian Federation, China's growing global influence, climate change, human trafficking, migration, terrorism, and cyber security.[54]

NATO summit meetings are chaired by the NATO Secretary-General, and often result in decisions relayed through declarations or communiques, where strategic and decisive action is outlined for implementation through the relevant NATO bodies. Defense and command organizational structure may also be modified or otherwise reformed during these meetings. Consensus decision-making is a fundamental principle of NATO's structure, and decisions throughout all NATO committees' meetings must be approved by the general agreement of the Member States. In order to reach full Member State consensus, NATO's Secretary-General has the responsibility of helping to facilitate productive deliberation at NATO summit meetings.

How SRMUN Virtual's North Atlantic Treaty Organization Will Set the Agenda

SRMUN Virtual's NATO will operate differently than other committees held at SRMUN conferences. As opposed to providing delegates with pre-selected topics to consider or an open agenda, NATO immediately encounter a crisis situation. In a change from previous NATO committees at SRMUN, the alliance will not set an agenda based on current issues of importance to NATO by means of a 2/3 vote or any vote. The crisis situation will be an issue that may or may not reflect from the committee's two Topic Updates that were published on the SRMUN Virtual committees' website. Additionally, these Topic Updates do not need to reflect the topic presented in the delegates' position paper. The two Topic Updates provided prior to conference are simply tools to inspire delegates to think about current events from an international lens.

NATO will operate independently of the other organs at SRMUN due to the crisis scenario. Therefore, other UN organs represented at SRMUN will not refer items to NATO. The Secretary-General and any external actors within the overarching NATO structure are staff members and will not impact substantive debate, except when necessary.

At the first committee session and after roll call, the Secretary-General of NATO, also known as the committee's Director, will inform delegates of the crisis scenario. Delegates may make formal speeches and utilize caucuses to discuss potential topics and negotiate how to proceed in addressing the situation.

II. Voting

NATO will adhere to the voting rules set forward in the actual North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Procedural votes require a simple majority to pass. Substantive matters (except for setting the agenda, which won't apply at SRMUN Virtual) may only be passed by consensus.

III. Position Papers

As there is no set topics for NATO at SRMUN Virtual, delegates will be asked to write a position paper that are different from all other SRMUN committees. Instead of two topics in the Background Guide, delegates will be presented with two relevant Topic Updates, either provided alongside the publication of the NATO Addendum or in

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[54] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, June 14, 2021, accessed July 21, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en

the weeks leading up to an upcoming conference, detailing current information impacting the alliance. These Topic Updates are intended to help prepare delegates with awareness of real-world events that may impact debate in committee. At SRMUN Virtual, NATO delegates will be immediately presented with a crisis situation that may or may not reflect from the committee Topic Updates.

Delegates have the option to write a position paper about one topic based on either Topic Updates or on another topic related to NATO's mandate and must reflect the interests of their Member State. The position paper should present the significance of the issue. If delegates submit their position papers by the conference's deadline, they will be eligible to win Outstanding Position Paper Awards.

IV. Crisis Background

Background

NATO was structured with focus on addressing some of the most challenging security issues facing allied Member States. NATO is expected to function continuously, adapting to new circumstances, and reacting to continual security developments as they arise. Delegates to NATO must be prepared to handle an international crisis at any time.

SRMUN Virtual's North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Addressing a crisis situation is often a piece of the work of NATO. If a crisis situation arises, the NATO Secretary-General, also known as the committee's Director, will provide delegates with pertinent briefing materials and periodic updates. The NATO Secretary-General will also forward communications from the governments of NATO Member States to their representatives, likely in the form of reports and communiqués. Other committees at SRMUN will not become involved. It is up to NATO delegates to decide a course of action to attempt to resolve a crisis. The primary tools for delegates to resolve a crisis are diplomacy and negotiation. Delegates should be prepared to represent the interests of their Member State in any potential crisis.

V. Outside Parties

Background

NATO has the option, upon full body consensus, to invite non-NATO members to participate, without vote, in discussions that affect the non-Member States. In the past, such invitations have been extended to foreign ministers or Heads of State of countries belonging to the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the NATO-Ukraine commission, external stakeholders to sensitive NATO security decisions, representatives from the World Bank, etc.

SRMUN Virtual's North Atlantic Treaty Organization

The resources of SRMUN are limited, so logistically, it may not be possible to honor all requests. If a potential crisis requires it, SRMUN may seek ways to accommodate such a request. To invite a non-Member State, delegates must first advise the committee Director and Assistant Director of the request. If it is cleared, a delegate should make a motion such as: "The delegate from France moves for the invitation of representatives from Ukraine to participate in a discussion of the agenda item under discussion." The motion requires consensus to pass.

Topic Update I: The Situation in Afghanistan

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty, also known as The Washington Treaty, sets a "spirit of solidarity" with the inclusion of Article 5.[55] Signed on April 4, 1949, The Washington Treaty produced the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and Article 5 committed the 12 founding Member States to protect each other if a member is struck with an armed attacked.[56] The NATO Member States agreed that an attack against one or more members in Europe or North America would equate to an attack on all alliance members.[57] The founding members settled they each have the right to invoke Article 5 in order to "restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."[58]

Initially, the United States (US) of America had concerns about the implications Article 5. The US wanted to avoid entering in foreign conflict, but European members preferred the superpower to come to their aid if under attack.[59] NATO Member States agreed to include the phrase "as it deems necessary" to Article 5, which enables each member the option of providing alternative assistance such as aid if there's no automatic military commitment.[60] Within NATO, the premise of aiding a fellow ally against an attack is referred to as "collective defense."[61] NATO Member States collectively invoked the mutual defense clause for the first time in the alliance's history following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on American soil.[62,63]

On September 12, 2001, the North Atlantic Council, which serves as the main political decision-making body within NATO, agreed that if agents abroad were responsible for the September 11 terror attacks, then Article 5 could be invoked.[64,65] Frank Taylor, then-US Ambassador at Large and Coordinator for Counterterrorism, briefed the North Atlantic Council that Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network of Al-Qaida planned the terror attacks.[66] According to Taylor's October 2, 2001, briefing, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan were protecting bin Laden.[67] Taylor's briefing solidified NATO's Article 5 invocation.[68] Days after the briefing, NATO allies agreed on eight measures in effort to combat terrorism, which included enhanced intelligence sharing, increased security of US facilities abroad, and access to allies' ports, airspace, and airfields.[69] By December 2001, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) established a military mission in Afghanistan per the request of the Afghan interim government to maintain security in and around the capital city of Kabul.[70] In 2003, NATO took on a stronger role in the Afghan military operations that would last for nearly two decades.[71]

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[55] "Founding treaty," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, September 24, 2020, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_67656.htm

[56] "The North Atlantic Treaty," signed April 4, 1949, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm

[57] "The North Atlantic Treaty," signed April 4, 1949, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[58] "The North Atlantic Treaty," signed April 4, 1949, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[59] "Founding treaty," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[60] "Founding treaty," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[61] "Collective defence - Article 5," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, February 8, 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm

[62] "Collective defence - Article 5," North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

[63] Suzanne Daley, "AFTER THE ATTACKS: THE ALLIANCE; For First Time, NATO Invokes Joint Defense Pact With U.S.," *The New York Times*, September 13, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/13/us/after-attacks-alliance-for-first-time-nato-invokes-joint-defense-pact-with-us.html

[64] "North Atlantic Council," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, October 10, 2017, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49763.htm

[65] "Statement by the North Atlantic Council," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, September 12, 2001, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-124e.htm

[66] "Invocation of Article 5 confirmed," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization,* October 3, 2001, accessed July 29, 2001, https://www.nato.int/docu/update/2001/1001/e1002a.htm.

[67] "Invocation of Article 5 confirmed," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

[68] "Invocation of Article 5 confirmed," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

[69] "Statement to the Press by NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, on the North Atlantic Council Decision On Implementation Of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty following the 11 September Attacks against the United States," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, October 4, 2001, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2001/s011004b.htm

[70] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, July 6, 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

[71] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

History & Actions Taken by NATO

The UNSC's S/RES/1386 authorized the creation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for Afghanistan in December 2001.[72] S/RES/1386 built upon the Bonn Agreement and S/RES/1378, the latter which recognized the need to address the security and political crisis in Afghanistan and condemned the Taliban for using the UN Member State as a base for terrorist groups.[73,74] Following the request of the UN and the Afghan government, NATO took command of the ISAF, its first operational mission outside of Europe, in August 2003 and expanded its operations beyond Kabul.[75]

NATO described the ISAF as the alliance's "most challenging mission" with more than 130,000 troops — at its peak — from a combination of NATO Member States and partner nations.[76] During the next several years, NATO forces were heavily engaged in combat while trying to rebuild the mountainous country's government and its military force.[77] With the escalating violence, NATO allies did have concerns about Taliban insurgency and the rate of casualties.[78] In 2007, then-US Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged the fragility of Afghanistan and called on allies to remain committed to the Afghan cause.[79] Gates said, "Our progress in Afghanistan is real but it is fragile. At this time, many allies are unwilling to share the risks, commit the resources, and follow through on collective commitments to this mission and to each other. As a result, we risk allowing what has been achieved in Afghanistan to slip away."[80]

Improving Afghanistan's military forces was the core goal of NATO's ISAF mission, known as the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A).[81] By 2009, the NTM-A was established and trained recruits and their skills.[82] The ISAF efforts led to nearly 352,000-trained Afghan soldiers and police officers.[83] The training included combat preparation, intelligence, medical, and route clearance support.[84] In November 2010, NATO members declared the alliance will handover security responsibilities to Afghan forces by late 2014, a timeline coincided with some withdrawal of US troop levels.[85] The ISAF mission was considered completed in December 2014. Afghan forces were given full responsibility of securing their country.[86] In a letter to the UN Secretary-General, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg noted the ISAF's progress, however, included 31,773 casualties by November 2014.[87]

According to NATO, the ISAF created a safe atmosphere for "improving governance and socio-economic development, which are important conditions for sustainable stability."[88] Afghanistan also improvements in basic health during the decade of ISAF's mission, including a decline in maternal mortality and increase in life expectancy.[89] "A vibrant media scene sprang up. Millions of people have exercised their right to vote in five election cycles since 2004, including the 2014 presidential and provincial council elections, which resulted in the establishment of a National Unity Government," noted NATO regarding ISAF.[90] NATO's mission, however, didn't

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[72] United Nations Security Council resolution 1386, *The Situation in Afghanistan*, S/RES/1386, (December 20, 2001), http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/1386.

[73] United Nations Security Council resolution 1386, *The Situation in Afghanistan*.

[74] United Nations Security Council resolution 1378, *The Situation in Afghanistan*, S/RES/1378, (November 14, 2001), http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1378.

[75] "ISAF's mission in Afghanistan (2001-2014) (Archived)," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, September 1, 2015, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_69366.htm.

[76] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[77] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[78] Zachary Laub and Lindsay Maizland, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 14, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan.

[79] Laub and Maizland, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*.

[80] Laub and Maizland, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*.

[81] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[82] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[83] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[84] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[85] Laub and Maizland, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations*.

[86] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[87] United Nations Security Council, *Letter dated 28 November 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council*, S/RES/2189 (2014), November 28, 2014, https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%2F2014%2F856&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop

[88] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[89] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

[90] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.

end with the conclusion of ISAF. A month later, in January 2015, NATO started Resolute Support Mission (RSM).[91]

With the unanimous support of the UNSC, with S/RES/2189, the RSM has been intended as a non-combative NATO-led mission to train, advise, and assist Afghanistan's security forces and institutions.[92] At its inception, RSM comprised of approximately 10,000 troops from 36 NATO Member States and its partner nations.[93] Allies' involvement is not strictly in the number of troops — with the US providing the bulk of troops at 2,500 followed by Germany's 1,300, and Italy at 895 troops — but also financially supporting the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.[94]

Current Situation

By late November 2020, NATO had less than 12,000 troops in Afghanistan, and US troops accounted for less than half of those numbers.[95] NATO operations in Afghanistan, however, have heavily relied on US resources and infrastructure.[96] Despite the progress made by NATO and independent missions from the US, Taliban fighters continue to launch a series of attacks, killing thousands of civilians and seizing land.[97] US officials and the Taliban came to an agreement to deescalate violence along with American troop withdrawals by May 1, 2021.[98] Current US President Joseph Biden agreed with the previous US administration's intention to withdraw troops but extended the deadline to late August 2021.[99] Since Biden's announcement, talks between the Taliban and US officials have stalled.[100] A Taliban spokesman said peace talks will not resume "until all foreign forces completely withdraw from our homeland."[101]

With the ongoing US troop withdrawals, NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg shared his concerns about Afghanistan's progress eroding:

> *"We now face a difficult decision. We have been in Afghanistan for almost 20 years, and no NATO ally wants to stay any longer than necessary. But at the same time, the price for leaving too soon or in an uncoordinated way could be very high. Afghanistan risks becoming once again a platform for international terrorists to plan and organize attacks on our homelands. And ISIS could rebuild in Afghanistan the terror caliphate it lost in Syria and Iraq."[102]*

> *"NATO went into Afghanistan after an attack on the United States to ensure that it would never again be a safe haven for international terrorists. Hundreds of thousands of troops from Europe and beyond have stood shoulder to shoulder with American troops in Afghanistan, and over 1,000 of them have paid the ultimate price."[103]*

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[91] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

[92] United Nations Security Council resolution 2189, *Resolution 2189 (2014) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7338th meeting, on 12 December 2014*, S/RES/2189, https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%2FRES%2F2189(2014)&Language=A&DeviceType=Desktop.

[93] "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, (February 2021): https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/2/pdf/2021-02-RSM-Placemat.pdf.

[94] "Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

[95] Lorne Cook, "NATO chief warns of high price if troops leave Afghanistan," *Associated Press,* November 17, 2020, https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-afghanistan-jens-stoltenberg-fdec23cec8f081440884ba558cc65eb3.

[96] Adam Taylor and Michael Birnbaum, "In rare rebuke of Trump, NATO chief warns against troop cuts in Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, November 17, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2020/11/17/jens-stoltenberg-afghanistan-trump/

[97] "America's Longest War: A Visual History of 19 Years in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal*, April 18, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/us-longest-war-afghanistan-11583010024

[98] "America's Longest War: A Visual History of 19 Years in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal.*

[99] "America's Longest War: A Visual History of 19 Years in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal.*

[100] "America's Longest War: A Visual History of 19 Years in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal.*

[101] Sune Engel Rasmussen and Jessica Donati, "U.S. Plan to Withdraw Troops From Afghanistan Hampers Peace Talks With Taliban," *Wall Street Journal,* April 14, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-plan-to-withdraw-troops-from-afghanistan-hampers-peace-talks-with-taliban-11618417275?mod=article_inline.

[102] Barbara Starr, "NATO chief warns against premature withdrawal from Afghanistan," *CNN*, November 17, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/17/politics/jens-stoltenberg-afghanistan-withdrawal/index.html.

[103] Starr, "NATO chief warns against premature withdrawal from Afghanistan," *CNN.*

NATO allies have remained committed to Afghanistan as the US' August deadline looms, but the organization recognized "there is no military solution" to Afghanistan's challenges.[104] In April 2021, NATO forces began their own withdrawal process as the RSM operation will end, but he reassured Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani about the "deeply challenging" security situation in the country and the need for a "negotiated settlement."[105,106] Stoltenberg said NATO will continue to provide funding, civilian presence, and out-of-country training for Afghanistan.[107] Since the announcement of RSM reaching its conclusion, Belgian, Danish, Dutch, Estonian, German, Georgian, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, and Spanish troops, among others, were pulled from NATO's Afghanistan operations as of late June 2021.[108] NATO, acknowledging the rise of insurgency in Afghanistan, noted any Taliban attacks on its allies during the withdrawal process will be met with "a forceful response."[109]

NATO reportedly has not updated the number of troops in the country, but an analysis of allies' government estimate more than 4,800 non-American troops are still in Afghanistan.[110] As the withdrawal of NATO allies continue, Taliban attacks against the Afghan government security forces increased in recent months. According to a US Inspector General report to the US Congress, there has been a 37 percent rise in "enemy-initiated attacks" between January 1, 2021, and March 31, 2021, compared to the same timeframe in 2020.[111] The report suggested the Taliban will continue large-scaled attacks that will affect Afghan security forces' infrastructure, roads, and checkpoints.[112] Since the US report, the Taliban has captured Afghan territory as Afghan security forces flee or succumb from battles.[113] It has been projected the Taliban controls nearly a third of the 421 Afghan districts.[114]

Conclusion

More than 50 years since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO allies invoked Article 5 for the first time following the September 11, 2001, terror attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C.[115] Once NATO members were informed the terror attacks were planned by the Al-Qaida terrorist network, which were protected by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the North Atlantic alliance mobilized for its first non-European mission to aid the US in Afghanistan. NATO's mission in Afghanistan has lasted nearly 20 years. For many within the NATO alliance, the mission was costly, financially and in casualties.

The NATO alliance remained committed to help Afghanistan build its security infrastructures and train the country's national forces.[116] In a communiqué following NATO's Brussels Summit in June 2021, the alliance reaffirmed its military operations will come to an end but its partnership with Afghanistan will not end. In the communiqué, NATO members agreed, "NATO will continue to provide training and financial support to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, including through the Afghan National Army Trust Fund."[117] The alliance will maintain an office in Kabul and assist in diplomatic talks with international and regional partners in Afghan-led

[104] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*
[105] "NATO and Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*
[106] Sudip Kar-Gupta, "NATO secretary-general: NATO will continue to support Afghanistan," *Reuters*, July 27, 2021, https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nato-secretary-general-nato-will-continue-support-afghanistan-2021-07-27/.
[107] Kar-Gupta, "NATO secretary-general: NATO will continue to support Afghanistan," *Reuters.*
[108] Geir Moulson and Kathy Gannon, "Most European troops exit Afghanistan quietly after 20 years," *Associated Press*, June 30, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/europe-afghanistan-health-coronavirus-pandemic-9c1c4f5732c032ba85865aab0338a7a3.
[109] "Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, July 6, 2021, last accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_113694.htm.
[110] Moulson and Gannon, "Most European troops exit Afghanistan quietly after 20 years," *Associated Press.*
[111] US Inspector General, "Operation Freedom's Sentinel: Lead Inspector General Report to the United States Congress," *US Department of Defense*, https://media.defense.gov/2021/May/18/2002654296/-1/-1/1/LEAD%20INSPECTOR%20GENERAL%20FOR%20OPERATION%20FREEDOM'S%20SENTINEL.PDF.
[112] US Inspector General, " Lead Inspector General Report," *US Department of Defense.*
[113] "Afghanistan: Taliban captures territory as NATO withdrawal continues," *Euronews and Associated Press*, May 7, 2021, https://www.euronews.com/2021/07/05/afghanistan-taliban-captures-territory-as-nato-withdrawal-continues.
[114] "Afghanistan: Taliban captures territory as NATO withdrawal continues," *Euronews and Associated Press.*
[115] CNN Editorial Research, "September 11 Terror Attacks Fast Facts," *CNN*, September 18, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2013/07/27/us/september-11-anniversary-fast-facts/index.html.
[116] "Brussels Summit Communique," June 14, 2021, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* Press Release (2021) 086, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en.
[117] "Brussels Summit Communique," June 14, 2021, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* Press Release (2021) 086.

peace processes.[118]

As NATO Member States and partner nations withdraw from Afghanistan, the Taliban regime has made territorial advances and increased attacks towards security forces and civilians. The Taliban and the US held peace talks but discussions have stalled after the US changed its troop withdrawal deadline. The Taliban regime has also pulled out of a planned peace conference that would've been held in Istanbul, Turkey. With the rise of Taliban attacks, although the Taliban has denied responsibility of some strikes, NATO continued its own withdrawal process but is ready to strike back if ambushed.

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[118] "Brussels Summit Communique," June 14, 2021, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* Press Release (2021) 086.

Topic Update II: Cyber Threats, Security, and Effects

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) allies have long acknowledged cyber threats can be harmful, but the issue has continuously evolved in a complex, costly, and destructive manner.[119] Cyber threats and defense became a primary topic of discussion during the 21st century. Since the 2002 Prague Summit, NATO allies have witnessed cyber-attacks against alliance members regardless of their size, from Estonia to the United States (US) of America.[120] In the nearly 20 years since the Prague Summit, cyber defense has been included in NATO's "core task of collective defence," and to consider the issue as serious as defending air, land, and sea space.[121] While NATO's mission was to defend itself from Soviet Union — now Russian Federation — hostility, the 30-member alliance has started to include the People's Republic of China as an adversary in the cyber realm.

History & Actions Taken by NATO

The NATO Member States have maintained security for their communications and information systems but it was the 2002 Prague Summit when cyber was on the alliance's agenda.[122] At the Prague Summit, the heads of state and governments met to discuss the "grave new threats and profound security challenges of the 21st century."[123] The summit, taking place 13 months since the organization's invocation of Article 5, heavily focused on air, land, and sea military functions, but for the first time it noted efforts to "strengthen our capabilities to defend against cyberattacks."[124] The initiative to strengthen NATO's cyber security came as the alliance sought to bolster the alliance's capabilities to defend against terrorism.[125]

At the 2006 Riga Summit, NATO members expanded on their cyber focus. The allies agreed to develop a NATO Network Enabled Capability, which will share data, information, and intelligence in a reliable, secure, and prompt line for the organization's operations.[126] NATO members also agreed to improve protections of their "key information systems" against cyberattacks.[127]

Unfortunately for Estonia, three years into its NATO membership, the Baltic Member State was the target of numerous cyberattacks. In late April 2007, the Estonian parliament, media organizations, banks, and other organizations encountered online disruptions, including spam messages and overwhelmed servers.[128] The cyberattack affected Estonians' access to banking services, emails, and lack of news information.[129] Coincidentally, Estonia proposed to NATO to establish a cyber defense center in 2004.[130] NATO, however, did not immediately fulfill Estonia's proposal.[131] Following the 2007 cyberattack against Estonia, the alliance was alarmed and motivated to address the "growing relevance of potential threats in the cyber domain."[132] On May 14, 2008, the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) was established in Tallinn, Estonia.[133] The CCDCOE

[119] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, April 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/4/pdf/2104-factsheet-cyber-defence-en.pdf
[120] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[121] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[122] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[123] "Prague Summit Declaration," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, November 21, 2002, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19552.htm.
[124] "Prague Summit Declaration," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[125] North Atlantic Treaty Organization. *The Prague Summit and NATO's Transformation*. Brussels, BL: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2003. https://www.nato.int/docu/rdr-gde-prg/rdr-gde-prg-eng.pdf.
[126] "Riga Summit Declaration," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, November 29, 2006, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_37920.htm.
[127] "Riga Summit Declaration," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[128] Damien McGuinness, "How a cyber attack transformed Estonia," *BBC News*, April 27, 2017, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/39655415.
[129] McGuinness, "How a cyber attack transformed Estonia," *BBC News*.
[130] "About us," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, accessed July 29, 2021, https://ccdcoe.org/about-us.
[131] "About us," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*.
[132] "About us," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*.
[133] "About us," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*.

has been tasked to identify and coordinate educational and training solutions for NATO's cyber defense.[134] Not all NATO Member States instantly engaged with the CCDCOE. By 2020, the CCDCOE has 25 NATO members as sponsoring nations, along with contributions from Austria, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland.[135]

In the years following the CCDCOE's creation, NATO also focused on cyber in various discussions and policies. The *NATO Policy on Cyber Defence* set the foundation for the organization's allies to improve cyber security.[136] In addition to providing coordinated assistance to an ally if the member if a victim of a cyberattack, NATO's policy includes the following practical steps:

> *"• NATO will develop minimum requirements for those national information systems that are critical for carrying out NATO's core tasks.*
> *• NATO assists Allies in achieving a minimum level of cyber defense in order to reduce vulnerabilities to national critical infrastructure.*
> *• Allies can also offer their help to an Ally or to the Alliance in case of a cyber attack.*
> *• Cyber defense will be fully integrated into the NATO Defence Panning Process (NDPP). Relevant cyber defense requirements will be identified and prioritized through the NDPP.*
> *• NATO Military Authorities will assess how cyber defense supports performing NATO's core tasks, planning for military missions, and carrying out missions.*
> *• Cyber defense requirements for non-NATO troop contributing nations will also be defined.*
> *• Strong authentication requirements will be applied. The acquisition process and supply chain risk management requirements will be streamlined.*
> *• NATO will enhance early warning, situational awareness, and analysis capabilities.*
> *• NATO will develop awareness programs and further develop the cyber component in NATO exercises.*
> *• NATO and Allies are encouraged to draw on expertise and support from the [CCDCOE] in Tallinn."[137]*

During the 2014 NATO Summit in Newport, Wales, the alliance acknowledged cyber defense as NATO's core task of collective defense, which implies the Article 5 could be invoked in a case of a cyberattack with equivalent effects to a standard armed attack as originally outlined in the North Atlantic Treaty.[138] According to the Wales Summit Declaration, the North Atlantic Council will determine if a cyberattack falls under the purview of Article 5 on a case-by-case basis.[139]

Current Situation

In 2016, NATO categorized cyberspace on equal footing, or domain, as air, land, and sea.[140] According to NATO, recognizing cyberspace as a "domain of operation" grants the alliance's military officials more tools to protect missions from cyber threats.[141] Although each NATO Member State are responsible for its own cyber defenses, NATO considers itself as the platform for members to consult, share information, and coordinate on cyber issues.[142] As of April 2021, NATO information technology (IT) infrastructure spans 60 different locations, ranging from its Brussels headquarters to NATO military posts, with more than 100,000 people dependent on the alliance's

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[134] "About us," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.*

[135] "About us," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence.*

[136] "Defending the networks: The NATO Policy on Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 2011, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_08/20110819_110819-policy-cyberdefence.pdf.

[137] "Defending the networks: The NATO Policy on Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

[138] "NATO Summit Updates Cyber Defence Policy," *NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence*, accessed July 29, 2021, https://ccdcoe.org/incyder-articles/nato-summit-updates-cyber-defence-policy/#footnote_1_2663.

[139] "Wales Summit Declaration," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, September 5, 2014, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm.

[140] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, April 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/4/pdf/2104-factsheet-cyber-defence-en.pdf.

[141] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

[142] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization.*

networks.[143] Because of Member States dependency of NATO's cyber networks, the organization reveals it has become a growing target for malicious cyber acts during the last ten years.[144]

During the Brussels Summit in June 2021, the 30 NATO Member States recognized they are facing "multifaceted threats" along with increasing security challenges.[145] Cyber was a significant topic of discussion at the Brussels Summit as several Member States were targets of ransomware attacks, including France and the US.[146] The alliance highlighted the Russian Federation's "hybrid actions" towards the NATO Member States, which ranged from "attempted interference in Allied elections and democratic processes; political and economic pressure and intimidation; widespread disinformation campaigns; malicious cyber activities; and turning a blind eye to cyber criminals operating from its territory, including those who target and disrupt critical infrastructure in NATO countries."[147] Russian President Vladimir Putin denied claims of instigating cyberattacks against the US.[148] "Where is the evidence? Where is proof? It's becoming farcical," said Putin, adding, ""We know it well. We have been accused of all kinds of things: election interference, cyberattacks and so on and so forth, and not once, not one time, did they bother to produce any kind of evidence or proof. Just unfounded accusations."[149]

NATO also had concerns about China's ambitions that threaten the alliance's security.[150] NATO specified China's mounting nuclear stockpiles, military cooperation with Russia, lack of transparency, and use of disinformation.[151] NATO members have called on China to maintain international commitments in the cyber domain.[152] In July 2021, the US issued a statement about China's "irresponsible and destabilizing behavior in cyberspace."[153] The statement, with the support of NATO and the European Union (EU), claimed China harbored an intelligence enterprise that includes hackers conducting informal global cyber operations.[154] The US said it has been aware that Chinese government-affiliated entities conducted ransomware operations targeting private companies with monetary demands.[155] China has repeatedly denied allegations of initiating cyberattacks.[156]

In early 2021, NATO members, the EU, and other UN Member States blamed China for a cyberattack on Microsoft Exchange email servers, reportedly affecting 30,000 American organizations and hundreds of thousands more abroad.[157] A major US pipeline and a major global meat producer were also the targets of a ransomware attacks in recent months.[158] During 2020, French businesses, hospitals, local governments, and schools lost more than USD 5.35 Billion in damages from ransomware.[159] NATO will launch a new military command center with a focus to deter computer hackers by 2023.[160] The new cyber command center will be able to launch its own cyberattacks, although NATO maintains that its operations are for defense only.[161]

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[143] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[144] "NATO Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[145] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[146] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[147] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[148] Zachary Basu, "Putin denies Russia is behind cyberattacks ahead of Biden summit," *Axios*, June 14, 2021, https://www.axios.com/putin-interview-highlights-biden-summit-ef635f91-43c6-4693-9787-f92f4231e174.html.
[149] Basu, "Putin denies Russia is behind cyberattacks ahead of Biden summit," *Axios*.
[150] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[151] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[152] "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[153] "The United States, Joined by Allies and Partners, Attributes Malicious Cyber Activity and Irresponsible State Behavior to the People's Republic of China," *The White House*, July 19, 2021, accessed July 29, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/07/19/the-united-states-joined-by-allies-and-partners-attributes-malicious-cyber-activity-and-irresponsible-state-behavior-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/.
[154] "The United States, Joined by Allies and Partners," *The White House*.
[155] "The United States, Joined by Allies and Partners," *The White House*.
[156] "China says Microsoft hacking accusations fabricated by US and allies," *BBC News*, July 20, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-57898147.
[157] Christina Wilkie, "U.S., NATO and EU to blame China for cyberattack on Microsoft Exchange servers," *CNBC*, July 19, 2021, https://www.cnbc.com/2021/07/19/nato-and-eu-launch-a-cyber-security-alliance-to-confront-chinese-cyberattacks.html
[158] Rishi Iyengar and Clare Duffy, "Hackers have a devastating new target," *CNN*, June 4, 2021, https://www.cnn.com/2021/06/03/tech/ransomware-cyberattack-jbs-colonial-pipeline/index.html.
[159] "Cybercrime: Insurance giant Axa to stop covering ransomware payments in France," *Euronews and Associated Press*, July 5, 2021, https://www.euronews.com/2021/05/07/cybercrime-insurance-giant-axa-to-stop-covering-ransomware-payments-in-france.
[160] Robin Emmott, "NATO cyber command to be fully operational in 2023," *Reuters*, October 16, 2018, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-cyber/nato-cyber-command-to-be-fully-operational-in-2023-idUSKCN1MQ1Z9.
[161] Emmott, "NATO cyber command to be fully operational in 2023," *Reuters*.

Conclusion

NATO has been committed to collaborate with allies, partners, international organizations, and the private sector to ensure cyber security.[162] The 30-member alliance recognizes cyber threats transcend national borders and its risks affects all segments of society.[163] Unfortunately for the 72-year-old alliance, the topic of cyber garnered traction in 2002. In 2004, the same year Estonia was admitted to the alliance, the former Soviet nation proposed a cyber defense center but its developments did not come into fruition until a massive 2007 cyberattack on the Baltic Member State. Since the 2007 cyberattack, NATO has improved its efforts on cyber defense with strengthened policies and summits on the issue. In recent years, cyberattacks, similar to the attack on Estonia, are becoming more frequent and are targeting traditional larger powers such as France, the US, and Germany. While NATO members, particularly the US, have criticized Russia and China for numerous cyberattacks, the issue continues to evolve and causing millions of dollars in damages. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg wrote, "Cyberattacks are now a part of our daily lives. ...It is often difficult to know who has attacked you, or even whether you have been attacked at all. And the culprits vary from governments to criminal gangs to terrorist groups and lone individuals. Nowhere is the fog of war thicker than in cyberspace."[164]

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[162] "Defending the networks: The NATO Policy on Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[163] "Defending the networks: The NATO Policy on Cyber Defence," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*.
[164] Jens Stoltenberg, "How NATO Defends Against the Dark Side of the Web," *Wired*, June, 9, 2018, https://www.wired.com/story/how-nato-defends-against-the-dark-side-of-the-web/.