

The Eastern Flank's Voice at the NATO Summit

The undersigned represent a group of independent research institutes and think-tanks from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's eastern flank. As NATO meets at the historic Summit in Madrid, we felt it important that the **voice of the region most exposed to the Russian threat** is heard.

NATO was set up to protect its members against the threat of the expansive Soviet Union and we welcome the Alliance's renewed prioritization of defence and deterrence, as was stressed at the Summit. With the end of the Cold War, the focus of the Alliance has shifted toward collective security and crises management, as precipitated by wars in former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. Today, **with Russia waging war in Ukraine, in the direct vicinity of NATO's Eastern flank, it is becoming clear that the renewed focus on defence and deterrence is essential.** Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO agreed to set up an Enhanced Forward Presence at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, which came in the form of battalion-size groups in the Baltic states and Poland. This was an important decision that provided Eastern member states with trip-wire reassurances. However, as we can see in Ukraine, Russia is waging an unscrupulous war of attrition. To resist the expansion of Russian aggression to NATO's East, **trip-wire capabilities may not be enough.**

Therefore, **we encourage the Alliance to expand its presence in the Eastern flank from battalion to brigade-size battle groups.** We emphasize the need to fully form brigade-sized battlegroups as soon as possible and to prepare them for factual deployment in the intended countries. We would also support a decision to place prepositioned equipment and weapons stockpiles in the region. During the Cold War, the Alliance's territory was protected by hundreds of thousand troops stationed in West Germany in permanent bases. Today, the Alliance's East region is in the same position that West Germany was at during the height of the Cold War—**a sizeable and enduring investment of the NATO Allies in the East is the best way to prevent war and deter Russia** from crossing the NATO border. We call on all NATO members to significantly increase national defence spending and strengthen military capabilities necessary to ensure effective deterrence and provide timely defence and support in an event of any military conflict or provocation. We support the goal of significantly increasing the air defence capabilities of NATO's Eastern flank countries and deploying state-of-the-art defence systems that could ensure effective air control in both peacetime and any military event.

When the Cold War ended, the Allies reached out to Russia and signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act in 1997. As a political document, in addition to reiterating the main building blocks of European security architecture including the commitment to refraining from threat or use of force, the Act stipulates that NATO would refrain from stationing nuclear and significant combat forces on the territories of new member states, provided the security environment to remain unchanged. These commitments were tied to Russia upholding and implementing the provisions of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty. Russia suspended its participation in the Treaty in 2007, completely withdrawing in 2015. It attacked Georgia in 2008 and currently occupies 20 percent of its territory, and annexed the Crimean peninsula of Ukraine in 2014 before launching a full-fledged Ukrainian invasion in February 2022. Russia's actions leave absolutely no doubt that **NATO's security has dramatically deteriorated and Eastern member states are facing a heightened threat.** Reinforcing its

deterrence and defence to respond to these changes in security environment, NATO would not be breaking its word and the commitments made in the Act – which Russia, on the other hand, has clearly violated on numerous occasions. The worsening security situation in the Black Sea region requires a long-term strategic vision of the Alliance to the riparian member states and partners.

We appreciate that Allies have made it clear they consider China’s coercive policies a challenge to our interests, security and values. **China failed to condemn Russia’s war in Ukraine**, instead providing Russia with political support. How this position is aligned with upholding the basic norms of international law and the principle of state sovereignty that China continuously stresses is unclear. We call on China to join on nations that have condemned illegal and brutal war that Russia wages against Ukraine.

We support the decision of Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance, welcome the trilateral consensus reached and appreciate the statecraft that made it possible. The membership of these two allies will undoubtedly strengthen the Alliance, its defence and resilience at the difficult times to come.

The decisions made in Madrid demonstrate that **the Alliance is an indispensable anchor of transatlantic security**. NATO can and will adapt to meet security challenges faced by all the Allies. NATO represents a group of nations joined by common values, which will continue to provide the essential bond of the Alliance.

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