

NATO – BETWEEN SAFETY AND SECURITY. NATO SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON – FINDINGS AND CONCERNS

SAFETY AND SECURITY – THE SHIELD AND SWORD STRATEGY

Safety and security are two distinct, but related and connected issues. While often mistakenly used interchangeably, together they form an integrated *safe-secur* system that seeks to ensure the maximum safety/security to various entities. Safety is about establishing and maintaining resilience/capability to prevent threats/challenges of a generally unintentional nature, such as natural disasters or accidents. It constitutes a more passive dimension of safety/security, primarily concerned with non-military aspects. To some extent, safety can be likened to a more or less effective defensive shield. Security, on the other hand, is generally about actively countering threats/challenges of a deliberate nature, that is those generated or supported by humans (and in the future, perhaps by artificial intelligence). It often requires physical force or military measures (hard security) to be used in conjunction with the necessary support of soft security, including financial, legal, administrative, and other measures. This dimension of safety/security can therefore be compared to the sword.

Despite the above differences, in the case of both safety and security, one can talk about the need, value and purpose of safety/security and the pursuit of interests involved. Both safety and security can be considered internally and externally (internationally), and pointing to a wide variety of related factors. However, the distinction between safety and security is not always clear-cut and different authors perceive it in different ways,¹ as illustrated by Clarissa Meerts. In her opinion, safety refers to a state of being free from danger or threat, and is closely related to physical conditions, such as the absence of injury. Security, on the other hand, is more concerned with actions to prevent or respond to external threats (Meerts, 2021). Drawing from the above, certain entities, such as NATO for the purpose of this analysis, can be said to apply security to ensure maximum safety to itself and its members.

This article makes the primary reference to the *safe-secur* (shield and sword) model as a theoretical starting point for discussing the recent NATO Summit in Washington (9–11 July, 2024) and its key outcomes. In this context, a number of research questions arise, such as: (1) To what extent are the Summit's key outcomes actionable?; (2) Will individual NATO members have the determination, resources, and political will on the one hand, and unity and solidarity on the other to implement them?; (3) Will it be possible in the future to ensure the public support for the implementation of the agree-

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Marek Madej, Prof. Łukasz Jureńczyk, Colonel Prof. Robert Reczkowski and Mrs. Katarzyna Matschi among others, for their consultations on the matter.

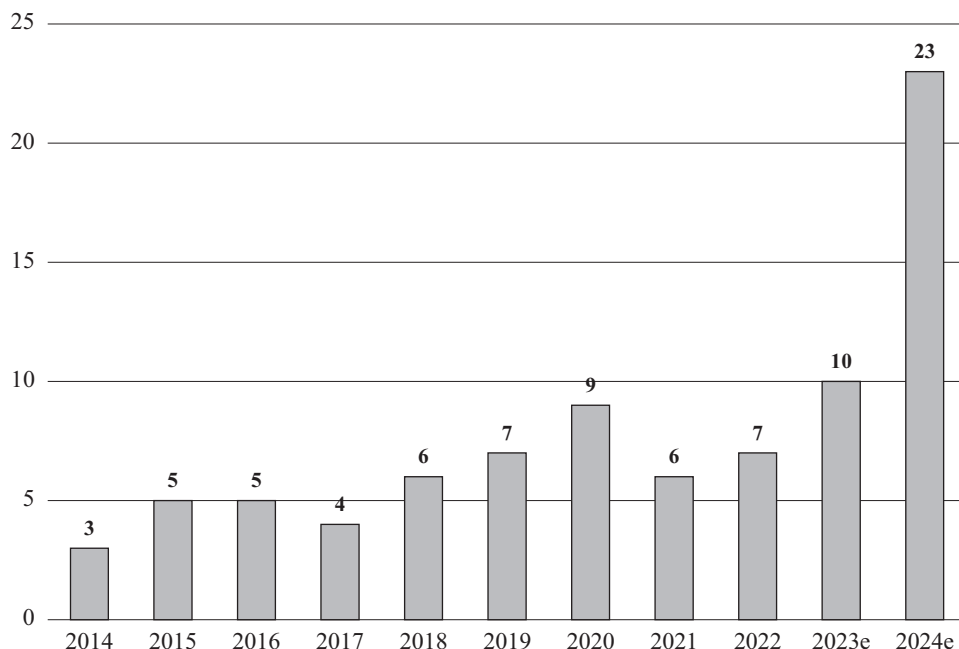
ments reached, including high financial costs, especially if the economic and social situation deteriorates or a financial crisis arises?; (4) How will this be affected, for example, by the political crisis ongoing in Germany and France at the end of 2024, the second presidency of Donald Trump starting in 2025, or the further geopolitical reorientation of the United States towards the Indo-Pacific region? These and other research questions are the starting point for the analysis in the text.

NATO SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON

In July 2024, Washington hosted the NATO jubilee summit. This was a historical reference to the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Pact, while in practical terms it addressed the most important challenges and threats currently facing it. In addition to the leaders of the 32 member states, the meeting was also attended, among others, by representatives of the European Union and Ukraine, selected countries from the Indo-Pacific region and the Middle East. The summit agenda was both highly diverse and extensive, including numerous components of a political, social, expert and social nature discussed at conferences, seminars, meetings and events, such as the NATO Public Forum, the meeting of the North Atlantic Council and the NATO-Ukraine Council.

In terms of its content, the summit's agenda tackled a range of issues, including, for example, NATO's policy of deterrence and collective defence, the military presence of NATO on its eastern flank, conducting exercises and training, nuclear deterrence strategy, the integrated air and missile defence system, arms control, the threat of terrorism, new technologies, space, cyberspace operations, supply chains, the production of military equipment and ammunition, arms expenditure and related technological innovations. A lot of attention was paid not only to support for Ukraine, and the threat from Russia, but also to the challenges posed by China, the problems of North Korea, Iran and Belarus. In addition, the current dangers in the Middle East and Africa were highlighted. Detailed findings concerning the above issues were published in the Washington Summit Declaration and Pledge of Long-Term Security Assistance for Ukraine (*Washington*, 2024a).

NATO members reaffirmed their commitment, made at the Newport Summit in 2014, to spend at least 2 per cent of their gross domestic product on defence and pledged to increase their industrial defence capacity in order to achieve specific capabilities. As early as 17 June 2024, at a meeting with Joe Biden in Washington, Jens Stoltenberg announced new figures for defence spending. He reported that the distribution of the financial burden in NATO was improving and indicated that the defence spending of the European pact members and Canada would increase by about 18 per cent in 2024, and 23 NATO members would invest at least 2 per cent of their respective GDP that year. This represents an almost fourfold increase from 2021, when only six countries reached this level. The situation has changed primarily because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the accompanying threats. According to the latest estimates, all NATO countries will collectively spend about \$1.5 trillion on defence in 2024, with the United States spending \$968 billion, more than twice as much as all the other pact members combined.

Graph 1. Number of Allies meeting 2 per cent GDP

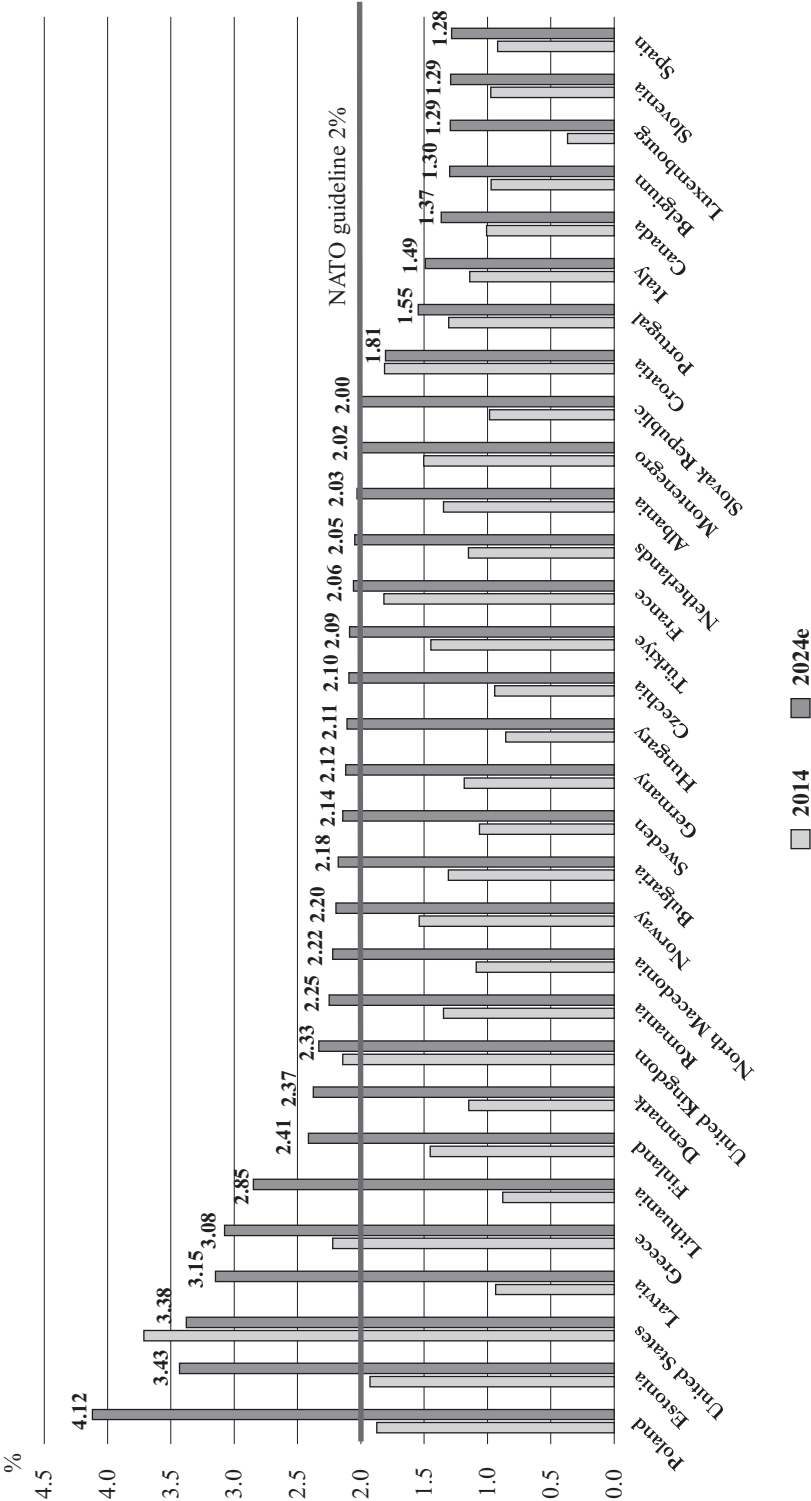
Notes: Data as at 12 June 2024, based on 2015 prices and exchange rates. Figures for 2023 and 2024 are estimates. The NATO Europe and Canada aggregate from 2017 onwards includes Montenegro, which became an Ally on 5 June 2017, and from 2020 onwards, North Macedonia, which became an Ally on 27 March 2020, from 2023 onwards Finland, which became an Ally on 4 April 2023, and from 2024 onwards Sweden, which became an Ally on 7 March 2024; 2024 e: Figures for 2024 are estimates.

Source: *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2024)*, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Bruxelles 2024; https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2024/6/pdf/240617-def-exp-2024-en.pdf (20.12.2024).

It has been mentioned above that, by the end of 2024, 23 of NATO's 32 members would be spending at least 2 per cent of GDP on defence. In this context, however, two extremes are worth pointing out. On the one hand, there are five states that allocate at least 3 per cent of GDP (for example, Poland with 4.12 per cent, Estonia with 3.43 per cent, and the United States with 3.38 per cent), and on the other, a relatively large group of eight countries that do not meet the threshold of 2 per cent of GDP. These include Spain (1.28 per cent), Slovenia and Luxembourg (1.29 per cent each) at the forefront, but the problem of insufficient funding also applies to Belgium, Canada and Italy, among others.

Summit participants welcomed the progress in strengthening and modernising NATO made since the Madrid and Vilnius summits, and agreed on the need to further strengthen cyber defence, including through NATO's new Integrated Cyber Defence Centre. The new commitments concerning the defence industry are particularly important. They are in part a follow-up to the Defence Production Action Plan developed at the Vilnius Summit in July 2023. Since then, the pact members have made significant progress in updating their national defence strategies, streamlining procurement processes, and investing in industrial production. For example, in January 2024, NATO's

Graph 2. Defence expenditure as a share of GDP (per cent) – based on 2015 prices and exchange rates



Source: *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2024)*, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Bruxelles 2024; https://www.nato.int/nato_static_files2014/assets/pdf/2024/6/pdf/240617-def-exp-2024-en.pdf (20.12.2024).

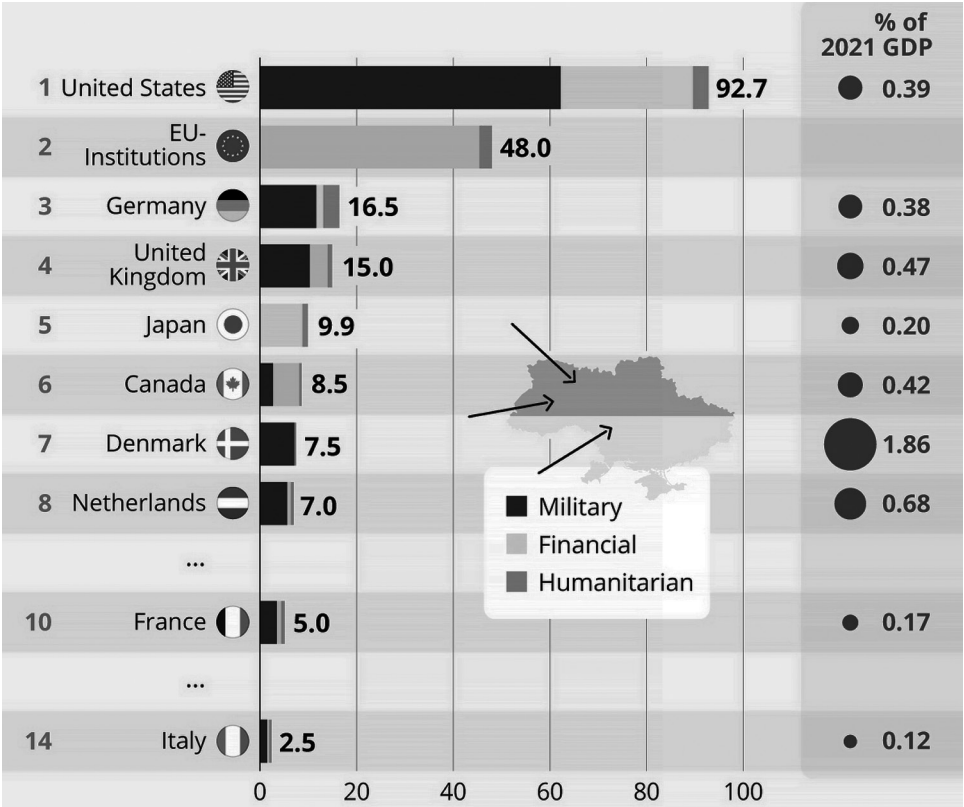
European members agreed to jointly purchase approximately 1,000 Patriot missiles. At this NATO summit, the Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) made a request for Stinger anti-aircraft missiles worth about \$700 million. As reported, over the next five years, NATO's European members and Canada plan to acquire a number of air and artillery defence systems, some 850 modern aircraft (mainly F-35s), and a range of other cutting-edge equipment.

The Washington Summit emphasised that the Alliance was taking various measures to strengthen the Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) system based on the 360-degree approach. The Pact's air defence policy has already been updated, which will be followed by enhancement of specific defence capabilities. One component of this solution is the IAMD Rotational Model deployed across the Euro-Atlantic area, with a special focus on the eastern flank. The adopted strategy entails air defence systems from allied countries being deployed in the most vulnerable regions of the Pact, such as the Dutch Patriot battery participating in exercises in Lithuania. An increase in NATO's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) capabilities was also announced. In this respect, the newly opened Redzikowo base will play an important role, supplementing the system's components in Romania, Spain and Turkey.

Among the various topics of discussion, the issue of support for Ukraine was of the utmost importance. The pact members reaffirmed that they would continue to support Ukraine on its path towards complete Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership. The package of further assistance to Ukraine finally agreed at the summit consists of five main elements. One is the NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU) initiative, which will coordinate the majority of international military assistance. It will be headquartered in Wiesbaden, Germany. Next, the NATO-Ukraine Joint Analysis, Training and Education Centre (JATEC) has been established in Bydgoszcz, Poland. The second dimension addresses long-term security assistance to Ukraine, with financial support of €40 billion in 2025, and its continuation in the future. The third aspect refers to immediate military assistance, including, for example, air defence systems and the transfer of more aircraft, such as 79 F-16s that Ukraine is to receive (6 from Norway, 19 from Denmark, 24 from the Netherlands, and 30 from Belgium). The fourth element involves new bilateral security agreements between NATO members and Ukraine. Finally, the fifth dimension is about providing Ukraine not only with military and intelligence support, but also with political, economic, financial, and humanitarian assistance (*Relations*, 2024).

China also occupied a prominent place in the summit's conclusions, which noted that it has become a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine through its so-called "no-limits" partnership and its large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial system. This increases the threat Russia poses to its neighbours and to Euro-Atlantic security. Consequently, NATO has called on China, "as a permanent member of the UN Security Council with a special responsibility to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, to cease all material and political support for Russia's war effort. This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equipment and raw materials that serve as inputs to the Russian defence sector." It is additionally stated that China cannot enable the largest war in Europe today without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation, and stressed that China poses

Graph 3. Countries committing the most aid to Ukraine from January 24, 2022 to August 31, 2024 (in billion U.S. dollars)



Source: IfW Kiel Ukraine Support Tracker, statista, <https://www.statista.com/chart/28489/ukrainian-military-humanitarian-and-financial-aid-donors/> (19.12.2024).

a systemic challenge to Euro-Atlantic security. In this context, Chinese cyber-attacks and disinformation, developments in its space capabilities and nuclear arsenal were pointed out, among other things. At the same time, however, NATO members assured that they remained open to constructive cooperation with China, including building mutually transparent relationships (Washington, 2024a).

This dovetails with NATO’s continued strengthening of its strategic partnerships with pact members. The strategic partners identified at the summit included the European Union, selected countries in the Indo-Pacific region (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea), the Western Balkans, and the Black Sea. The need for the Pact to become more involved in ensuring stability and security in the Middle East and Africa was also emphasised. The declaration also highlighted issues such as maintaining technological superiority over rivals and addressing climate change, which affects global security. It was stressed that, as a result of closer cooperation between Russia, Belarus, China, Iran and North Korea (the most recent example being the involvement of North Korean soldiers), NATO will collaborate even more closely with various partners, including in particular the Indo-Pacific region and the European Union.

The Washington Summit and its outcomes can be summarised as making a valid, albeit not ground-breaking, attempt to shape a new transatlantic security environment in the political, military and geostrategic dimensions. This applies both to the further internal strengthening of the Pact and to the deepening of its relations with its allies, especially those from the Indo-Pacific region, the European Union and Ukraine. This is closely related to the need to effectively counter the numerous challenges and threats of a very complex nature, related to external (e.g. Russia and China) and internal factors (e.g. defence spending, arms production and continued coherent positions of pact members). The impact of the future policies of President Donald Trump, the domestic situation of member states, especially those engulfed in a major political crisis at the end of 2024 (e.g. Germany, France, Romania), and their different attitudes towards aiding Ukraine and/or its NATO membership remains unknown at present. At the end of 2024, Ukraine's membership was rejected or questioned, to varying degrees and for varying reasons, by as many as eight countries, namely: Belgium, Slovenia, Spain, the United States, Germany, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and Hungary.

The summit clearly emphasised that security cannot be considered solely in the military dimension as it deals with a number of other challenges and threats, such as cyberspace attacks, the issue of the outer space, organised crime, disinformation, migration processes, climate issues, violations of international law, hybrid actions, including, for example, radicalism and terrorism. The latter in particular is currently escalating, as the situation in Syria shows and the recent report by the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) stresses, according to which the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) alone carried out 788 attacks worldwide in the first half of 2024, including 536 in Africa (U.S., 2024).

During the summit, NATO's state and government leaders also approved a new pledge of the Alliance to expand industrial capacity. It aims to accelerate the capabilities and production of the defence industry and underscores the strategic importance of transatlantic cooperation in this area as well. A strong defence industry is essential for NATO to implement its effective deterrence and defence policy and to continue to support Ukraine. The pledge commits NATO to long-term activities such as developing national plans to strengthen industrial capabilities, accelerating international procurement, improving the implementation of standards to enhance interoperability, removing barriers to trade and investment, and securing critical supply chains (NATO's, 2024).

Discussions and agreements conducted in a multi-party format were an important extension of the agreements reached by all NATO members at the summit. The signing of a letter of intent by Poland, France, Germany and Italy to jointly develop ground-launched cruise missiles with a range of over 500 kilometres deserves to be mentioned in this respect. The creation of such a system would fill the current gap in European defence arsenals and provide an alternative to U.S. Tomahawk missiles. The letter of intent addresses both NATO's security policy, including the decision to deploy U.S. long-range missiles on German territory from 2026, and earlier discussions within the Weimar Triangle. It is also a concrete token of strengthened European defence capabilities and the cooperation of selected actors to this end (Four, 2024).

Graph 4. The Defence-Critical Supply Chain Security Roadmap

Source: *Defence-Critical Supply Chain Security Roadmap*, NATO, July 2024, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2024/7/pdf/240712-Factsheet-Defence-Supply-Chain-Ro.pdf (10.12.2024).

CONCERNS ABOUT THE AGREEMENTS ADOPTED AT THE WASHINGTON SUMMIT

The preparations for the summit and the numerous and varied agreements adopted at it culminated in a truly extensive Washington Summit Declaration, which runs to 38 points. It addresses a wide array of topics, ranging from military, political and geo-strategic ones, to economic, social, financial, technological and even climate issues. This renders a comprehensive picture of NATO's challenges and threats, and provides compact guidelines on how to reduce and eliminate them. Or does it? Perhaps we should do the opposite, and pay attention to the various questions and concerns that arise? Additionally, there are issues that were addressed too vaguely, or even ignored in the assumptions and outcomes of the NATO summit.

First, there is the question of whether NATO members will be willing or able to maintain or increase their defence spending and thus meet their set or declared commitments to allocate at least 2 percent of GDP for this purpose. There are several reasons for concern in this respect. Among the most important ones is the need for individual pact members to take a number of other financial commitments into account. This is well illustrated by the United States, whose public debt already exceeds \$34 trillion, and the European Union. In the latter case, experts at the European Central Bank have calculated that between 2025 and 2031 alone, the European Union will need an additional €5.4 trillion (or nearly €800 billion per year) to implement its plans for green transformation, digitalisation of the economy, or simply to strengthen its military capa-

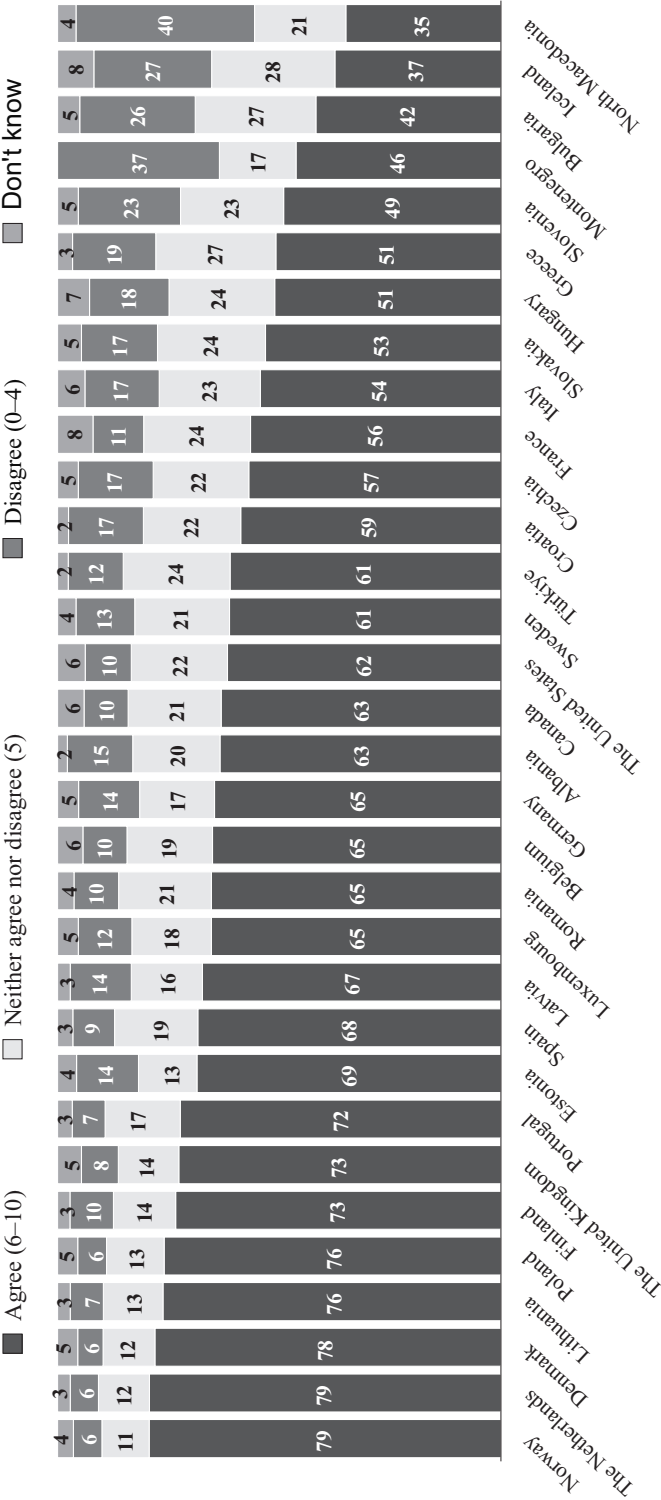
bilities. Bear in mind that in 2023, public debt ratios in eurozone countries ranged from 20 to as much as 160 per cent of GDP. New unexpected expenditures may additionally appear that will further complicate this situation. Tightening its fiscal discipline, the EU is already taking proceedings against seven member states (including Poland) that ran a deficit of at least 3 per cent last year, and the situation can be justifiably expected to recur in 2024. And what if the stock market crisis some experts are anticipating strikes in the next few years? Will the huge funds earmarked for defence be found?

The second question is whether the political elites and societies of member states will continue to accept NATO's promises and commitments. A survey conducted in all NATO member states prior to the Washington Summit shows that two-thirds of their population have a positive view of the Pact and are in favour (70 per cent) of their country remaining in its structures. Only 14 per cent hold the opposite view. This is accompanied by strong support for maintaining or increasing defence spending (76 per cent). The responses are slightly different when asked whether a country should provide assistance to another attacked member of the Pact under collective defence, with 63 per cent of respondents saying "yes", and 11 per cent – "no".

However, a closer look at these indicators reveals a less positive picture. For example, the willingness to provide assistance is quite high in Norway and the Netherlands (79 per cent), Denmark (78 per cent), Lithuania and Poland (76 per cent), but it is not so high in Slovenia (49 per cent), Montenegro (46 per cent), Bulgaria (42 per cent), Iceland (37 per cent) and North Macedonia (35 per cent). What is more, the popularity of providing aid is gradually declining – a total of 63 per cent respondents in all NATO countries declared it in 2024, a decline from 64 per cent in 2023, and 67 per cent in 2022. In contrast, the percentage of opponents has not changed, amounting to a stable 11 per cent. Therefore, it remains an open question how these indicators will develop in the future, especially if the war in Ukraine continues, new conflicts break out or escalate, or a significant economic and social downturn takes place. It is difficult to be optimistic, given, for example, the latest Eurostat report dated 2023, which reveals that over 94 million people in the EU (about 21 per cent of the population) are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This could further radicalise public sentiment in the future and contribute to a change in attitudes toward high defence spending, military sector development, allied support, or further aid to Ukraine, among other things. The same is also true for the United States, where more than 38 million Americans are living below the poverty line, which, combined with other domestic problems such as mass migration, rising crime rates, and economic regression, could lead President Donald Trump to reinforce isolationist tendencies and radically reduce U.S. commitment to the functioning of NATO or transatlantic security.

The third important issue is related to the willingness and ability of NATO members to sustain a growing commitment to arms production. On the one hand, it is necessary, if only because of the policies of Russia and China, but it is becoming increasingly costly on the other. This was addressed by President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, who announced the creation of a defence union and a common EU defence market. However, some experts argue that implementing these postulates may be seriously hindered, including in the case of Poland. For example, General Waldemar Skrzypczak claims: "This is impossible. The disparities in technological

Graph 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
(COUNTRY) should defend another NATO country if attacked



Source: NATO Audience Research: pre-Summit polling results 2024, Public Diplomacy Division 2024.

potentials and capabilities are too great. We are in the second league today and we have no chance to get upgraded to the first.” Other experts point to the complexity, diversity, and lengthiness of the process, further emphasising the divergence of interests not only within individual companies or lobby groups, but primarily among NATO member states. These divergences are likely to escalate even further with the presidency of Donald Trump. Long-standing negligence or bad decisions should also be mentioned. A good example of this is the shortage of 155 mm ammunition and the related problem of insufficient TNT production. The Reuters agency reports that NATO members are unable to supply Ukraine with an adequate amount of TNT because its use and production were miscalculated in the past. As a result, only one factory producing TNT was left in the whole of NATO, the Nitro-Chem factory in Bydgoszcz. The problems of arms production, such as the pace of implementation of orders, bidding procedures, product prices, supply chains, competition, and the activities of lobby groups, were highlighted by NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte during a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels (December 3–4), when he said: “We cannot have a situation where we just pay more for the same and we see large kickbacks to the shareholders. And that’s the debate we are having with the defence industry, and that is why this transatlantic corporation, from Türkiye up to the U.S. and all the defence industrial companies in the European Union, we need to work closely together to make sure that we produce at a much higher rate and an acceptable price. And I know that most of the CEOs of the defence companies agree with me, and they see, of course, the money going around, and they also see that the South Korean defence industrial base is getting into the market in a number of countries, who are now buying South Korean, because our own defence companies are not producing at the rate we need” (*Press*, 2024).

Incidentally, it is worth noting that, according to a report published on 2 December 2024 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), arms revenues of the world’s 100 largest arms-producing companies increased by 4.2 per cent to \$632 billion in 2023. The authors of the publication emphasise that all regions of the world saw an increase in arms revenues. Seventy-three out of 100 companies on the list saw an increase in profits, compared to 47 companies in 2022. The total revenues of the 42 companies in the top 100 linked to North America (41 in the United States and 1 in Canada), increased by 2.4 per cent to \$318 billion. This represents half of the world’s arms sales. It should be noted here that the revenues of the two largest companies, Lockheed Martin and RTX, dropped by 1.6 per cent and 1.3 per cent respectively. Despite strong demand for their products, they were unable to increase production sufficiently, mainly due to supply chain problems, especially in aerospace and missile defence. Revenues of companies in Europe (excluding Russia) rose 0.2 per cent to \$133 billion (21 per cent of global defence industry revenue). No fewer than seven of the European companies on the list are based in the United Kingdom, and BAE Systems remains the largest defence contractor in Europe. Significantly, the largest increase in revenues was recorded at Atomic Weapons Plant (up 16 per cent), which manufactures nuclear warheads. Four German companies, Rheinmetall, ThyssenKrupp, Hensoldt and Diehl, earned a total of \$10.7 billion, up 7.5 per cent from the previous year. In contrast, the combined revenues of the five French companies included in the ranking fell 8.5 per cent to \$25.5 billion. This was mainly due to a de-

cline in sales (down 41 per cent) of the aerospace company Dassault Aviation Group, drawing its main profit from the sale of Rafale fighter jets (down 60 per cent). Sales of the two Italian companies were down 10 per cent. On the other hand, the Polish Armament Group, ranked 64th, increased its revenues by 9 per cent. Due to the lack of available data, only two companies from Russia were included in the top 100, Rostech and United Shipbuilding Corporation, which ranked 7th and 41st, respectively. Twenty-three companies included in the ranking are based in Asia and Oceania; in 2023, their revenues increased by 5.7 per cent to \$136 billion, mainly on account of companies from South Korea, Japan and China, with one company in the top 10 each (Scarazzato et al., 2024).

Table 1

Revenues of the world’s top 10 arms producers and PGZ in Poland
(as estimated by SIPRI)

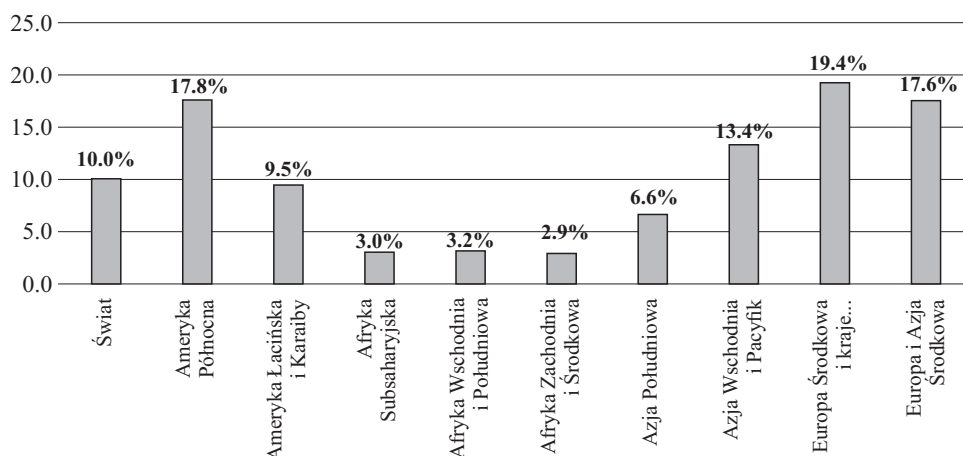
Position in the ranking	Company	Revenues in 2023 and 2022
1.	Lockheed Martin Corp. (United States)	2023 – 60.8 billion \$ (down 1.6 per cent compared to 2022)
2.	RTX (United States)	40.6 billion \$ (down 1.3 per cent)
3.	Northrop Grumman Corp. (United States)	35.5 billion \$ (up 5.8 per cent)
4.	Boeing (United States)	31.1 billion \$ (up 2 per cent)
5.	General Dynamics Corp. (United States)	30.2 billion \$ (up 3.2 per cent)
6.	BAE Systems (United Kingdom)	29.8 billion \$ (up 2.3 per cent)
7.	Rostech (Russia)	21.7 billion \$ (up 49 per cent)
8.	AVIC (China)	20.8 billion \$ (up 5.6 per cent)
9.	NORINCO (China)	20.5 billion \$ (down 2.7 per cent)
10.	CETC (China)	16 billion \$ (up 13 per cent)
64.	PGZ (Poland)	2.04 billion \$ (up 9 per cent)

Source: L. Scarazzato, N. Tian, D. Lopes da Silva, X. Liang, K. Djokic, *The SIPRI Top 100 Arms-producing and Military Services Companies, 2023*, December 2024, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2024/sipri-fact-sheets/sipri-top-100-arms-producing-and-military-services-companies-2023> (15.12.2024).

The fourth issue is the relationship between demography and security. In the final declaration of the NATO Summit in Washington, the demographic factor, which has both a direct and indirect impact on our security, was not specifically mentioned, unlike a number of other issues. The United Nations is warning that the population in some parts of the world will continue to decline in the future. This concerns certain NATO member states. According to the latest Eurostat report, published on 11 July 2024, the population of the European Union amounts to 449 million, an increase of almost 2 million compared to 2023, largely due to migration flows. However, there were declines in seven member states, with the largest ones in Poland (down 132,000), Greece (down 16,000) and Hungary (down 15,000). The case of Poland is of particular concern in this context and requires a separate discussion. In the future, this phenomenon will spread to other areas at an alarming rate. According to a report prepared in March 2024 by the Institute for Health Measurement and Evaluation in Seattle, fertility rates will drop below 2.1 in almost all countries across the world (97 per cent) by

2100. This problem already concerns 110 countries and will affect 155 by 2050. In addition, the population in some parts of the world, including Europe, is aging rapidly. Today, the median age in Europe (the average of the entire population) is 42, compared to 19 in Africa. The proportion of people aged 65 and over in Europe is currently more than 20 per cent and will more than double by 2030.

Graph 6. Proportion of people aged 65 and over in 2023



Source: World Bank Group calculations, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.65UP.TO.ZS?end=2023&start=2023&type=shaded&view=map> (12.12.2024); based on: O. Sobolewski, *Polska w niechlubnej siódemce państw UE. Dane pokazują skalę problemu*, 13.07.2024, <https://www.money.pl/gospodarka/oskar-sobolewski/polska-w-niechlubnej-siodemce-panstw-ue-dane-pokazuja-skale-problemu-7048400097508256a.html> (13.12.2024).

The chart above shows that this process is of particular concern in Central Europe and the post-Soviet Baltic states. In many cases, it will not be offset by migratory movements, which often trigger increasingly strong social protests. Future demographic conditions will affect not only labour markets, social welfare systems, or healthcare, but also security. This confirms the need for NATO to take into account an even wider range of factors affecting security and including, for example, the possibility of increased use of combat robots in various military formations.

NATO's functioning, including the adoption and implementation of the agreements reached at the Washington Summit, fits the safe-secure, or shield and sword model. It encompasses not only these two elements, but also the numerous interactions between them and the various factors that influence them. These determinants are both internal, related to the political, economic and social situation in NATO member states, and external. The latter refer to changes in the world, including geopolitical, economic, military and technological conditions. The external context is also directly or indirectly affected by the regional and global rivalry between individual politicians, parties, companies, lobby groups, states and, above all, the superpowers. Safety and security are the two pillars of NATO's functioning and development that are particularly important today, when the Pact is facing numerous challenges and threats and the world is shaken by great turbulences.

We are pleased to present another issue, the seventeenth, of *Strategic Review*, which includes an introduction by the Editor in Chief and five parts. The introduction, titled “NATO – between Safety and Security. NATO Summit in Washington – Findings and Concerns” summarises the July NATO Summit in Washington, including an analysis of its key findings and the possibilities for their implementation. The first part of the latest issue of our journal is titled THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY. Although it includes only two texts, it is of material importance and provides a foundation for the case studies presented later in the issue. The two texts here are “Global International Relations: Pioneers, Ideas, Doubts” and “Asymmetry of the Modern Conflicts.” The second part, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, includes six articles addressing, among other things, autonomous weapons, the Russian invasion of Ukraine analysed in the context of South Asia, Russian geopolitics and security strategy towards the Eurasian Area, and ethno-national foundations of aggression. The following articles feature in this part: “Implications of the Unmanned and Autonomous Weapons’ Development for NATO Functioning – Delineating the Research Area,” “Russia’s Aggression against Ukraine and South Asia: What Are the Implications of Moscow’s Nuclear Blackmail for India and Pakistan?,” “Russian Geopolitics after 2000 and Its Concept of Security in the Eurasian Area,” “Legal Bases for the ‘Uniting for Peace’ Mechanism and Its Use in the Conditions of the Russian Federation’s War against Ukraine,” “Ethno-National Basis of Russian Aggression in the Context of Global Security: a Biopolitical Approach” and “From Arroyo to Duterte: Two Decades of Philippines’ Foreign Policy Navigation between the US and China.” The third section, REGIONAL AND DOMESTIC ASPECTS OF SECURITY focuses mainly on the strategic and ideological determinants of Russian policy towards Belarus, the war in Ukraine analysed in the context of the Eastern Partnership Program, the armed forces of Ukraine, the role and importance of soft power in shaping the regional and global position of Saudi Arabia, and hybrid warfare from the perspective of Eurasian. In total, there are six articles here: “In the Shadow of War... Strategic and Ideational Determinants of Russia’s Policy towards Belarus after August 2020,” “The Russian-Ukrainian War and the Eastern Partnership Program,” “The Armed Forces of Ukraine: Problems and Challenges (1991–2021),” “The Role of Soft Power in Shaping Saudi Arabia’s Regional and Global Position,” “Activities of the National Police of Ukraine under Martial Law: Current Challenges and Prospects – Potential for Applying this Experience in Poland,” “Personality Factor Influence in Foreign Policy Decision Making (the Five-Factor Model of Personality Prism).” The fourth section, SOCIO-ECONOMIC SECURITY, refers, among other things, to the issues of education viewed as an element in the formation of personal security and identity, the demographic challenges in Europe interpreted as determinants of security, the importance of the Helsinki Final Act described in the context of international cooperation between Poland and Kazakhstan, and selected aspects of security in Ukraine. Five articles can be found in this section: “Educational Centres of the Ukrainian National Minority in the Warmian-Masurian Province as Subjects of the Formation of Personal Security and Identity,” “Conscial War against Ukraine: Putinism vs Ukrainian Identity,” “Europe’s Demographic Challenges as Determinants of Security,” “Budget Security: Public

Administration Mechanisms in Ukraine,” “Reception of the Declarations of the Third Basket of the Helsinki Final Act in the Context of International Cooperation between Poland and Kazakhstan (1992–2022).” The final, fifth part titled TERRORISM AND COUNTER-TERRORISM refers strictly to the issue of terrorism and combating it, and features two texts, entitled: “The Importance of Place in Contemporary Terrorist Attacks – Conclusions for Designing an Institutional Response” and “Structural Networking of Contemporary Terrorist Organizations – Analysis of the Super-network of the Islamic State in Europe.”

It is the opinion of the editors of *Strategic Review*, that such a diverse view of security issues clearly reveals not only its multifacetedness and evolution, but primarily the surrounding international realities. Looking, for example, from the perspective of the events unfolding in Syria or Ukraine in early December 2024, their dynamics may be surprising to many observers. Czesław Niemen, an iconic Polish singer, sang about this many years ago: “It is a strange world where there is still so much evil. And it is strange that for so many years man has despised man.”

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