

ISSUE BRIEF

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Reinvigorating NATO's Collective Defense at the 2018 Brussels Summit

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Since its creation in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has done more to promote democracy, peace, and security in Europe than any other multilateral organization, including the European Union. A stable, secure Europe is in America's interest. U.S. investment in NATO pays exponential dividends by generating security on the continent, building a network of like-minded nations to which the U.S. has looked for support from Afghanistan to the counter-ISIS mission, and affording the U.S. a leadership role in Europe that is commensurate with its substantial input.

This week's summit in Brussels represents an opportunity for the U.S. to lead on key issues as NATO continues to re-orient itself toward its core mission of collective defense. The U.S. should ensure that the threat from Russia is a specific focus of the Brussels Summit and the top agenda item for the leaders assembled. Other key issues include the need for allies to continue to make progress on defense spending, a more substantial Alliance focus on Black Sea security, ways to bolster Baltic security, keeping enlargement on the table, assisting Ukraine, and guiding NATO toward development of an Arctic strategy. The Heritage Foundation has published a series of eight *Issue Briefs* that address the most vital issues that heads of state will encounter at this critical summit.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <http://report.heritage.org/ib4887>

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1. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: The Alliance Must Increase Defense Spending

Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

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NATO's Brussels Summit on July 11 and 12 is a chance to address the lagging defense spending among European members. The North Atlantic Treaty's Article 3 is the most important when it comes to the overall health of the Alliance. Article 3 states that member states, at a minimum, will "maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." Only a handful of NATO members can say that they are living up to their Article 3 commitment. Reaching NATO's 2006 target of 2 percent of gross domestic product spending and meeting the Article 3 obligation requires a political, economic, and societal will to invest in defense. While some NATO members have increased defense spending, many nations in the Alliance continue to lag behind. The U.S. must continue to encourage NATO members to further increase defense spending in a realistic and timely way.

2. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: Renewed Focus on the Black Sea Needed

Luke Coffey

Issue Brief No. 4872

June 25, 2018

<http://report.heritage.org/ib4872>

The NATO summit in Brussels in July is an opportunity for the Alliance to focus on a region that has been increasing in geopolitical importance: the Black Sea. Since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in

2014, the Black Sea has essentially become a Russian lake. This is a direct threat to U.S. and NATO security interests. Many of the recent initiatives regarding the Black Sea at the NATO level have not met expectations. The U.S. should use the July summit to lead the Alliance in developing meaningful ways to work with the Black Sea littoral states to start the process of developing a strategy for regional security.

3. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: Time to Get Serious About the Arctic

Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

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June 27, 2018

<http://report.heritage.org/ib4875>

The NATO summit in Brussels on July 11 and 12 is an opportunity for the Alliance to finally focus on a region it has long ignored: the Arctic. Economic, oil and gas, and shipping opportunities are increasing in the region—as are Russian military capabilities. Even so, NATO does not have an agreed Arctic strategy. The U.S. should use the July summit to place the Arctic firmly on NATO’s agenda and ensure that the Alliance agrees on a common policy concerning the region’s security.

4. Addressing the Threat from Russia Must Be Front and Center at the 2018 NATO Summit

Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

Issue Brief No. 4876

June 29, 2018

<http://report.heritage.org/ib4876>

The 2018 NATO Summit will take place on July 11 and 12 in Brussels. Expectations for the summit are for a continued focus on implementing the decisions made at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, while seeking further progress on cybersecurity, defense spending, and military readiness. The United States should ensure that the threat from Russia is a specific focus of the Brussels Summit and the top agenda item for the leaders assembled. Russia continues to represent the only existential threat to member states; NATO must send a strong signal that it is strengthening deterrence measures explicitly in response to Russia. The U.S. should also address the security threat to European allies emanating from the planned Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, a political project that would greatly undermine European security if allowed to be completed.

5. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: Keep Georgia on the Path Toward Membership

Luke Coffey

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July 6, 2018

<http://report.heritage.org/ib4881>

The NATO summit in Brussels on July 11 and 12 offers an opportunity for the Alliance to thank Georgia for its contribution in Afghanistan, congratulate Georgia on its military reforms, and lay the groundwork for deeper cooperation and paving the way to eventual membership. The Alliance should live up to its 2008 promise and keep Georgia on track for NATO membership. Georgian NATO membership would bring more stability to the South Caucasus and transatlantic regions.

6. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: Bolstering the Defense of the Baltic States

Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

Issue Brief No. 4882

July 6, 2018

<http://report.heritage.org/ib4882>

The security and defense of the Baltic states deserves to be a key topic at the NATO summit in Brussels. The Baltic region is one of the most complex regions that the Alliance is obligated to defend. While decisions made at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, especially the creation of four battlegroups, were a step in the right direction, the region remains exposed. NATO should think strategically about putting in place durable, robust measures to better deter Russian aggression. The U.S. should lead the way in ensuring that NATO makes additional progress in bolstering the defense of the Baltic states at the Brussels Summit.

7. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: Don’t Lose Focus on Ukraine

Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

Issue Brief No. 4883

July 6, 2018

<http://report.heritage.org/ib4883>

The NATO summit in Brussels is an opportunity for the Alliance to provide realistic and meaningful support to Ukraine. In 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine. Russia illegally occupies Crimea. Russia provoked and now supports a separatist movement in eastern Ukraine that did not previously exist. Russia is the aggressor, and Ukraine is the victim. Realistically,

Ukraine has a long way to go before NATO membership, but that does not mean that the Alliance should disengage from Ukraine. On the contrary, NATO should deepen its partnership with Ukraine at the summit. It is in NATO's best interest to assist Ukraine in countering Russian aggression and to work toward the nation's long-term peace and stability.

8. Brussels NATO Summit 2018: Keep NATO Enlargement on the Agenda

Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis

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July 10, 2018

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Nuclear negotiations with Iran have been repeatedly tried and failed in the past. Even if a diplomatic agreement could be reached on the nuclear issue, it would be foolhardy to expect Iran's unscrupulous dictatorship to permanently abide by such an agreement. Yet the Administration continues to seek such a deal over the bloodied heads of Iranian opposition forces.

Conclusion

NATO remains crucial for security, stability, and peace in Europe, which is in America's best interest. It also consists of America's closest and most reliable allies, which represent a foundational pool of strength for the U.S. to draw upon. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford once described it, "From a U.S. perspective, I would tell you I believe our center of gravity as a nation, through a security lens, is the network of alliances."¹ NATO is the cornerstone of the U.S. network of alliances, and the Trump Administration should seize the opportunity in Brussels to reaffirm U.S. commitment and strengthen NATO's collective defense.

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1 Jim Garamone, "Top US General: Russia Trying to Undermine NATO," Atlantic Council, August 25, 2016, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/top-us-general-russia-trying-to-undermine-nato> (accessed July 10, 2018).