

## Always rising to the challenge

Written by Rajnish Singh on 19 April 2019 in News  
News

NATO may be 70 years old, but, as Rajnish Singh reports, the alliance retains a youthful spring to its step as it continues to address ever-challenging security and defence issues.



Anna Fotyga | Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual

As NATO celebrates its 70th anniversary this April, the most successful military alliance in modern history is facing ever-changing security and defence challenges and political divisions. Despite this, Anna Fotyga, chair of Parliament's subcommittee on security and defence (SEDE), remains confident of its continuing effectiveness.

"The alliance stands ready to face challenges from the east and south of Europe, the war on terrorism and even financial burden sharing and remains resolute in the face of growing challenges."

The Polish deputy stressed that it was also important to mark the anniversary of NATO's expansion into central Europe. According to Fotyga, the political closeness between the EU and the US was

fundamental to its success, which showed the strength of the transatlantic bond and the unity of allies.

---

#### RELATED CONTENT

- [Defending The Front Line](#) [1]
  - [Cosying up to Russia](#) [2]
  - [AI in unmanned military systems: Finding opportunities amidst the challenges](#) [3]
  - [UK must remain a defence player](#) [4]
  - [United we stand, divided we fall](#) [5]
- 

Another contributing factor was shared values and a vision for a united Europe. Despite the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Warsaw Pact, for Fotyga, “Russian aggression in and around Europe,” still remains a serious security challenge, as does terrorism and political instability in the southern neighbourhood.

Highlighting the growing threat of cyber-attacks and ballistic missile proliferation, Fotyga said “Undaunted by the scale and complexity of these challenges, NATO has responded with speed and determination, implementing the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence in a generation.”

“Undaunted by the scale and complexity of these challenges, NATO has responded with speed and determination, implementing the biggest reinforcement of our collective defence in a generation” **Anna Fotyga MEP**

She believed her home country was playing a growing role saying, “Poland has been at the forefront of these changes, standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the frontlines with our allies.” Despite a recent rift between European allies and the US over financial contributions, Fotyga remained resolutely confident in the strength of the alliance.

“The NATO we see today stands ready to address the threats of tomorrow and it is because of dedicated partners like the US, Canada, the UK, and Norway, Poland and other countries, that it remains at the cutting edge of military operational capabilities.”

Belgian ALDE deputy Hilde Vautmans, whose country hosts both NATO and the EU, highlighted the close relations between the two bodies. “Over the last 70 years NATO has been a steady, reliable and trustworthy partner of the European Union.” However, in an increasingly complex security environment, Vautmans believes that the EU now needs to develop its own defence capabilities.

Further contributing to a more militarised EU has been the shift in the United States’ political engagement with NATO’s European allies over the last ten years. Vautmans said, “Although the visible part of this change is attributed to US President Trump’s administration’s strong statements on NATO financial burden sharing, this shift was already being taken place since the Obama administration.”

“The [European] Union must continue to reinforce its role as a global player, making EU defence and security a priority and European sovereignty in defence the ultimate

objective” **Hilde Vautmans MEP**

For Vautmans, the EU’s move towards strategic autonomy is of the utmost importance. She said it is being developed with a “smart and non-competing approach” with regard to NATO’s established capabilities. The EU and NATO also have a series of cooperation agreements in areas such as cyber defence and military mobility, enabling stronger deterrence capabilities.

Though Vautmans stressed that NATO will remain Europe’s main security and defence partner, she added “it is clear, more than ever, that the Union must continue to reinforce its role as a global player, making EU defence and security a priority and European sovereignty in defence the ultimate objective.”

Fellow NATO delegation deputy, Geoffrey Van Orden, highlighted the pivotal role of NATO in Europe’s history, particularly those of the US, UK, Germany and other transatlantic allies in deterring the nuclear and conventional threats from the Soviet Union. “This was in spite of prolonged campaigns of subversion within our societies as well as moments of high military tension, such as the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the Cuban missile crisis.”

However, the former army officer accepts that, despite its success, NATO has been tested in recent years, including being engaged in demanding counter-terrorist operations, most notably in Afghanistan. Van Orden pointed out that more subtle threats were emerging, such as cyber-attacks, the use of chemical weapons, missile proliferation, the weaponisation of space, maritime ‘provocations’ and campaigns of disinformation and fake news, exploiting social media.

“[The UK] will now have to play an even stronger role, both encouraging European allies and reassuring the United States, in the revitalisation of NATO” **Geoffrey Van Orden MEP**

He said, “This comes at a time when so many citizens of the democracies take peace and freedom for granted, others doubt our democratic institutions and there is reluctance to divert scarce public resources to defence.”

But Van Orden did not share Vautman’s confidence in an ever-growing separate EU military dimension, warning. “This can only create division between the US and its continental European allies, precisely at a time when western solidarity is needed more than ever.”

Commenting on the UK’s post Brexit relationship with the EU, Van Orden said, “The United Kingdom, Europe’s most powerful military power, will now have to play an even stronger role, both encouraging European allies and reassuring the United States, in the revitalisation of NATO, the primary instrument for the defence of the West and its values.”

## **About the author**

Rajnish Singh is commissioning editor of the Parliament Magazine

## **Tags**

[US-EU](#) [6]

[Foreign Affairs](#) [7]

## **Categories**

[Defence and Security](#) [8]



## Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [Climate Crisis](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2020](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)  
[MonitoringDods](#)  
[ResearchDods](#)  
[EventsDods](#)  
[Training](#)

## Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)  
[HouseThe](#)  
[Parliament](#)  
[MagazineHolyrood](#)  
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)  
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)  
[Service](#)  
[World](#)  
[PublicTechnology](#)  
[Training](#)  
[JournalDods](#)  
[Parliamentary](#)  
[CompanionVacher's](#)  
[Quarterly The](#)  
[European Union and](#)

[Public Affairs  
Directory](#)

## **Dods events**

[Westminster  
BriefingDigital  
Health & Care  
ScotlandMEP  
AwardsThe Skills  
SummitScottish  
Public Service  
AwardsPublic Sector  
Procurement  
SummitPublic  
Sector ICT  
SummitCyber  
Security  
SummitCyber  
Security  
2017Training  
Journal Awards](#)

## **Partnership events**

[The Health and  
Care Innovation  
ExpoCivil Service  
LiveCivil Service  
AwardsChief  
Nursing Officer for  
England's  
SummitWomen into  
LeadershipThe  
Youth Justice  
ConventionSocitm  
Spring  
ConferenceNHSCC  
Annual Members'  
EventDods at Party  
Conference](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/news/always-rising-challenge-0>

**Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/interviews/defending-front-line>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/cosying-russia>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/ai-unmanned-military-systems-finding-opportunities-amidst-challenges>
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/uk-must-remain-defence-player>
- [5] [https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner\\_article/raytheon/united-we-stand-divided-we-fall](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner_article/raytheon/united-we-stand-divided-we-fall)
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/us-eu>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/foreign-affairs>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/defence-and-security>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>