

NATO Strategic Concept 2022



THE AGENDA

- The NATO Madrid summit held over the 29th-30th June 2022 has been regarded as the most important summit for the organisation in decades.
- It is being held in the aftermath of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, which has severely destabilised international security by breaking norms of borders, conduct of war and "the nuclear taboo" and exacerbating existing crises. In response, Finland and Sweden have formally applied to join NATO.
- At the same time, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been aggressively pursuing attempts to push back against the existing International System and realign it with its own vision of spheres of influence under a dominant China.
- Against this backdrop, terms like "forward defense" and "a new Cold War", have come to the fore, and have defined NATO's Strategic Concept.

WHAT IS A STRATEGIC CONCEPT?

Approximately every ten years, NATO disseminates a document based on discussions had at the previous summit to reaffirm the organisation's enduring purpose and lay out its fundamental security tasks.

CRITICAL CHALLENGES

1. **"Strategic competition, pervasive instability and recurrent shocks define our broader security environment."**
 - The most obvious example of this is the Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine, but there are also the broader shocks of terrorism (increasingly racially or ethnically motivated) and cyber attacks (by state and non-state actors) as well as a decrease in democratic governance that fuels instability.
 - The document further elaborates that **"Strategic competitors test our resilience and seek to exploit the openness, interconnectedness and digitalisation of our nations."** This is not a new observation, but, as the growth of hyper partisanship and politically motivated violence has shown, it is playing an increasingly critical role in International Security.
2. **"The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area."**
 - While this passage is likely primarily focused on the kinetic aspects of the Russian threat, Russia has not abandoned "Active Measures" (a.k.a. Hybrid Warfare) as a method of undermining stability.
 - As Russia's isolation continues, it is highly likely that it will pursue Active Measures more aggressively to undermine Western unity over Ukraine and in order to avoid a direct confrontation with NATO. It is almost certain this will include disinformation and cyber attacks.
3. **Conflict, fragility and instability in Africa and the Middle East directly affect our security and the security of our partners.**
 - Inequality, resource shortages, poor governance and the spread of jihadism are the major interlinked crises fueling this instability. It further risks impacting supply chains, degrading international cooperation and fueling international terrorism.
 - Many of these crises are being exacerbated by Climate Change (which the document cites as **"the defining challenge of our time"**)
4. **The PRC stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values.**
 - Under Xi Jinping, the PRC has become more assertive in its disregard for the International System and its norms as its ambitions (the South China Sea, Taiwan and suppressing criticism of China) have grown.
 - Hybrid Warfare; specifically the **"Three Warfare's Doctrine"** (psychological warfare, public opinion warfare and legal warfare), is at the forefront of the PRC's attempts to remake the International System.

RELATION TO STRATCOM

A. At the core of these issues is a question of narrative - The PRC's attempts to realign the International System hinges on its ability to convince other states that its system is a better guarantor of prosperity and security and that it is the most reliable international partner. Likewise, Western unity and international responses to Ukraine will be dependent on who's narrative surrounding the war (and its impacts, such as food shortages) gains traction in the wider international community.

B. Societal resilience plays a key part in countering disinformation, influence campaigns and extremist narratives - Public knowledge of a problem is the first step to countering it. Multiple international actors are seeking ways to counter malign information campaigns as part of the wider competition between narratives. Sweden has formed a Psychological Defense Agency, while MI5 Director General Ken McCallum has expressed the need for the public to be "as aware of influence campaigns as they are of terror threats." It is likely that such campaigns will become commonplace, and will require expertise from government, academia and the private sector to help formulate them.