

NATO Prepares for Confrontation: 5 Years to Halt the Military Challenge from Russia and China

Published on 11/06/2025

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, speaking at Chatham House in London, painted an extremely realistic picture of the global situation the Alliance faces today. **The conflict in Ukraine has only highlighted a much broader risk: the strategic convergence between Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea.** According to Rutte, these four actors are transforming global geopolitics into an increasingly systemic and coordinated confrontation.

Russia, despite having a GDP twenty-five times smaller than the entire NATO bloc, has managed to convert its economy fully to a wartime footing. **With Chinese technological support, Moscow produces in three months what NATO produces in a year: 1,500 tanks, 3,000 armored vehicles, and 200 Iskander missiles annually.** Its industrial capacity, according to NATO estimates and the German Chief of Staff, could allow it to regain large-scale offensive operational capabilities by 2029, creating a critical 3-5 year window for the Alliance.



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Alongside the growing Russian threat is China's rapid military expansion. **China has already surpassed the U.S. fleet numerically and aims to deploy 435 naval units by 2030, in addition to building an operational nuclear arsenal of over 1,000 warheads.** Meanwhile, Iran continues to fuel instability in the Middle East, while North Korea supplies arms to Moscow in exchange for advanced missile technology.

According to Rutte, the risk to Euro-Atlantic collective security can no longer be confined to a single geographic theater: today the threat is interconnected between Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East.

An Industrial and Financial Shift: 5% of GDP for Defense

The core of Rutte's strategic proposal concerns **the need for a quantum leap in military spending and the Alliance's production capacity**. After years of discussions on the famous 2% of GDP, a goal set in 2014 and now formally achieved, the Secretary General now proposes a much more ambitious target: **spending 5% of GDP to ensure collective security**.

The plan foresees that **3.5% will be allocated to the direct enhancement of the armed forces:** increase in equipment, armaments, ammunition, logistics, and operational support. The remaining **1.5% will be allocated to strategic infrastructure, civil resilience, industrial base development** and population preparedness. Civil infrastructure — bridges, ports, railways — must indeed be suitable for the rapid deployment of forces, while societies must be trained to cope with possible crisis scenarios.

On the industrial front, the situation is alarming: **despite the economic advantage, the Western industry is currently unable to guarantee adequate production rates.** NATO currently produces a quarter of the ammunition that Moscow can produce, while delivery times for strategic systems like the Patriot exceed 10 years. Without a production acceleration, deterrence would soon be stripped of credibility.



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Rutte praised the ongoing programs in the United Kingdom, such as the **six new ammunition production plants,** and also highlighted the European initiatives in the startup phase like the **SAFE Program** and **ReArm Europe**, which will allocate over 800 billion euros to strengthen the continent's defense production autonomy.

Credible Deterrence: Military Strengthening and NATO Weight Rebalancing

In addition to spending and producing more, NATO must have a credible and immediately deployable military tool to deter any aggression. According to Rutte, this means **making the Alliance more lethal** from an operational standpoint, while maintaining its defensive vocation.

On the ground, **it will be necessary to double armored vehicles and armored forces, exponentially increase ammunition production** and enhance all logistical and medical support capabilities. In the air, **current missile defense capabilities must grow by 400%** to match Russian and Chinese missile threats. One example: NATO has already launched the joint program that will lead to the acquisition of at least 700 F-35 fighters in the coming years.

Space, cyber, long-range attack systems, and armed drones will also be increased, as demonstrated by recent innovations used in the Ukrainian conflict, where drones costing a few hundred dollars can neutralize tanks worth millions of euros.

Simultaneously, Rutte strongly addressed the issue of **burden sharing**: the current disproportion between the U.S. contribution and that of Europe and Canada must be progressively rebalanced. The American commitment will remain solid, but Europe — in the Secretary General's view — now has the economic strength and political capacity to support a more significant share of the NATO budget. The Hague summit will seal this new internal financial pact.



Brussels Leads the Way: NATO Proposes 5% of GDP for Defense - brigatafolgore.net

Ukraine, Global Dossiers, and the Need to Act Now

The Ukrainian dossier remains central. Without formally reiterating in every document Kyiv's entry into NATO, Rutte confirmed that **the accession path remains "irreversible"** as established in previous summits. Today's priority remains to ensure maximum military and political support to enable Kyiv to defend and resist.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict continues to serve as a laboratory for testing new forms of multidomain warfare: from logistics to drones, from cyber operations to integrated command and control systems. For this reason, the Alliance will continue joint training programs, arms supply, and intelligence exchange with Ukrainian forces.

Outside the Ukrainian theater, Rutte drew attention to emerging global dossiers. In the Middle East, Iran's growing aggressiveness poses both a direct and indirect threat to NATO's balance. In the Indo-Pacific, China's growing presence forces the Alliance to expand cooperation with partners like Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. In the Arctic, finally, the melting ice is already transforming the region into a new strategic confrontation field, prompting Nordic countries to increase NATO coordination in the area.

On the internal political and financial front, Rutte sent a clear message to democratic governments: «**If we don't invest now, we'll have to learn Russian**». The decision on how to finance these efforts (taxes, debt, cuts) will be up to national governments, but the urgency to act is now unavoidable. The biggest mistake, warns the Secretary General, would be to wait any longer, risking — as Churchill warned — to arrive "too late".

Concluding his speech, Rutte reiterated that the Hague summit must mark an irreversible turning point: «**There will be no second chances for our security. We must act now, to ensure the defense of a billion people. This is how we will build a stronger, fairer, and more lethal NATO**.»

News link: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_235867.htm