

Biden's Message to NATO Summit: U.S. Has Sacred Obligation to Article 5 War Clause

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Voice of America today ran a story about the tenor and theme of President Joe Biden's presentation at tomorrow's NATO summit in Brussels with the headline [Biden to Reassure Allies of US Commitment to NATO Mutual Defense Clause](#). In the report it cites a pledge Biden made in an address to American Air Force service members at the Royal Air Force Mildenhall base on June 9: ["In Brussels, I will make it clear that the United States' commitment to our NATO Alliance and Article 5 is rock solid. It's a sacred obligation that we have under Article 5."](#) Today the White House posted an online fact sheet on the summit which contained in its opening paragraph [this stark statement](#): "During the Summit, the President will reaffirm the enduring Transatlantic bond through NATO and underscore the United States' ironclad commitment to Article 5 – an attack on one is an attack on all and will be met with a collective response."

In the Mildenhall speech Biden also celebrated the fact that the U.S. and his host country, the United Kingdom, were founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He failed to add they're both nuclear powers and have fought together in NATO's wars in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya. NATO was characterized by the American commander-in-chief as "the strongest military and political alliance in the history of the world," adding, "that's not hyperbole." Both points rare instances of veracity from him. NATO in fact is unique in a manner that cannot be exaggerated. It is unique in the following ways:

- it is the only military alliance in the world
- it is the longest-lasting military bloc in the modern history of the world, this year marking its 72nd anniversary
- it is the largest military bloc ever, with 30 members and 40 partners on all six inhabited continents (up from 16 members and no partners 30 years ago)
- it maintains military relations with as many more nations, including the [55-nation African Union](#) and [Troop Contributing Countries from the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America](#) that served under its command in Afghanistan
- it has waged war in three continents (Yugoslavia in Europe, Afghanistan in Asia and Libya in Africa)
- it is the only military alliance to have ever included more than one nuclear power

- (the U.S., Britain and France) and to [openly proclaim itself a nuclear alliance](#)
- it is the only military alliance that has defined outer space as an operational domain as well as air, land, sea and cyberspace, and that has just [opened a Space Centre \(in Germany\)](#)

There are several other aspects of NATO and its activities that are unprecedented in scope and nature. Not the least important of which is its Article 5 mutual military assistance provision, the essence of which is:

“The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them...will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

There is no greater threat to peace, to world peace in the nuclear age, than for a military alliance of 30 nations (and growing) to be prepared to go to war (including against nuclear powers) at the request of any of its member states.

It is that collective defense obligation that Biden has focused on since taking office in January and that he will highlight at tomorrow’s thirty-nation summit. It is in fact a central theme, arguably the main one, of his foreign policy.

In his [virtual address to the annual Munich Security Conference in February](#) he said:

“We continue to support the goal of a [Europe whole and free and at peace](#). The United States is fully committed to our NATO Alliance, and I welcome Europe’s growing investment in the military capabilities that enable our shared defense.

“You know, to me and to the United States, and to us, we’ll keep article – we’ll keep faith with Article 5. It’s a guarantee. An attack on one is an attack on all. That is our unshakable vow....”

In an opinion piece in the *Washington Post* [on June 5, Biden wrote \(or had attributed to him\)](#):

“As new technologies reshape our world in fundamental ways, exposing vulnerabilities like ransomware attacks and creating threats such as invasive AI-driven surveillance, the democracies of the world must together ensure that our values govern the use and development of these innovations – not the interests of autocrats.

“Those shared democratic values are the foundation of the most successful alliance in world history. In Brussels, at the NATO summit, I will affirm the United States’ unwavering commitment to Article 5 and to ensuring our alliance is strong in the face of every challenge, including threats like cyberattacks on our critical infrastructure.”

Dividing the world into NATO allies, partners and affiliates against the four nations that Washington and Brussels have branded autocrats, authoritarians and threats to the rules-based international order – Russia, China, Iran and North Korea ([now five with diminutive Belarus](#)) – is being done in the name of a global Manichean struggle between democracy (us) and autocracies (them). At the Mildenhall air base Biden also said:

"I believe we're at an inflection point in world history – the moment where it falls to us to prove that democracies will not just endure, but they will excel as we rise to seize the enormous opportunities of a new age.

"We have to discredit those who believe that the age of democracy is over, as some of our fellow nations believe. We have to expose as false the narrative that decrees of dictators can match the speed and scale of the 21st [century] challenges."

And after offering obligatory diplomatic platitudes about preferring to get along with Russia (if it would only change its ways; all its ways), he canceled out that message with these assurances:

"But I've been clear: The United States will respond in a robust and meaningful way when the Russian government engages in harmful activities. We've already demonstrated that. I'm going to communicate that there are consequences [for violating] the sovereignty of democracies in the United States and Europe and elsewhere.

"I'm going to be clear that the Transatlantic Alliance will remain vital – a vital source of strength for the UK, Europe, and the United States. And I'm going to make sure there's no doubt as to whether the United States will rise in defense of our most deeply held values and our fundamental interest."

A European and ultimately a global crusade by history's most formidable military bloc to make the world safe for democracy in the face of tyrants, despots, autocrats, dictators and authoritarians – most bearing Russian surnames.

The U.S. *chargé d'affaires* at NATO headquarters (Biden is yet to name an ambassador), Douglas Jones, further clarified U.S. international military priorities in recently stating that while NATO needs to confront challenges presented by China, [Russia remains the "most immediate threat to the common security of the allies."](#)

Speaking to *Euronews*, Jones confirmed that Biden's main message to his 29 allies at the NATO summit will concentrate on "recommitting the United States to NATO and expressing the iron-clad commitment of the United States to Article 5."

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, speaking recently in the U.S. at an Atlantic Council event, asserted this concerning alleged cyberattacks of the sort regularly attributed to Russia:

"In a way it doesn't matter [whether it's a kinetic attack or a cyberattack, we will assess as allies whether it meets the thresholds for triggering Article 5](#). It sends a message that we regard cyberattacks as seriously as any other attack."

For all its assertions that it is a political-military alliance, NATO is a military bloc with Article 5 as its bedrock.

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