

Celeste Wallander is Senior Advisor with WestExec Advisors and adjunct Senior Fellow with the Center for a New American Security. She has served for 10 years as a U.S. government defense and security official, and as a leader and scholar in universities, thinktanks, and foundations. She was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on February 16, 2022 and appointed by the President of the United States on February 17, 2022 as the 29th Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, in which capacity she served until January 20, 2025. In this role, she was responsible for U.S. national security policy toward Europe, NATO, Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa. She led U.S. defense policy in support of Ukraine against Russia's invasion in February 2022, and U.S. policy on the defense modernization of NATO, culminating in the historic Washington NATO Summit on the 75th anniversary of the alliance in 2024. Previously, she served as President and CEO of the U.S.-Russia Foundation (2017-2022), Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russia/Central Asia on the National Security Council (2013-2017), as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia/Ukraine/Eurasia (2009 to July 2012), professor at American University (2009-2013), visiting professor at Georgetown University (2006-2008), Director for Russia/Eurasia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (2001-2006), Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (2000-2001), and professor of Government at Harvard (1989-2000). She is the author of over 90 publications on European and Eurasian security issues, focused on Europe, NATO, Russia, and Ukraine. She received her Ph.D. (1990), M.Phil. (1986) and M.A. (1985) degrees from Yale University, and her B.A. (1983 – summa cum laude) from Northwestern University. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, the Atlantic Council of the United States, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies.