



**Atlantic Council**

SCOWCROFT CENTER  
FOR STRATEGY AND SECURITY



**NATO 20/2020**

**TWENTY BOLD IDEAS TO  
REIMAGINE THE ALLIANCE  
AFTER THE 2020 US ELECTION**

The Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security works to develop sustainable, nonpartisan strategies to address the most important security challenges facing the United States and the world. The Center honors General Brent Scowcroft's legacy of service and embodies his ethos of nonpartisan commitment to the cause of security, support for US leadership in cooperation with allies and partners, and dedication to the mentorship of the next generation of leaders.

The Scowcroft Center's Transatlantic Security Initiative brings together top policymakers, government and military officials, business leaders, and experts from Europe and North America to share insights, strengthen cooperation, and develop innovative approaches to the key challenges facing NATO and the transatlantic community. This publication was produced in partnership with NATO's Public Diplomacy Division under the auspices of a project focused on revitalizing public support for the Alliance.

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# NATO 20/ 2020

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# Foreword

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More than two decades after NATO's inspired decision to invite former adversaries to join its ranks, the Alliance is in need of equally captivating ideas. The serious business of deterring adversaries and fighting this century's wars has necessarily taken precedence over crafting a forward-looking vision. But developing that vision can't wait any longer. Rather than getting mired in today's debates about mundane issues like burden-sharing, NATO must build on its impressive track record of adaptivity, resilience, and achievement.

The essays in this volume are intended to push the Alliance to think boldly and creatively in the service of recapturing the public's imagination. They are, by design, provocative, occasionally in conflict, and sometimes impractical, at least in the near term. By prescribing ideas that "NATO should" pursue—be it devising new initiatives, course-correcting current policies, or sunseting troubled endeavors—the volume is an appeal for an Alliance that is more visionary, more capable, and more self-evidently valuable to the security of more people. To achieve that end, we've assembled a roster of 38 contributors who reflect a diversity that eludes the NATO community generally. We've enlisted nearly as many next-generation viewpoints as established ones, often in combination.

This volume comes on the cusp of the 2020 US presidential election—a natural inflection point that will bear on NATO's future role and purpose. As the next US administration tackles relentless security challenges ranging from great-power competition to climate change, whether and how NATO contributes to solutions—and how it communicates its effectiveness—will rightly affect its standing with publics in the United States and beyond. By adopting these ideas, NATO can innovate its forms and functions to better accomplish both imperatives. If there is one overarching argument in this volume, it is this: As the complexity and pace of our world intensifies, policymaking and public diplomacy require originality, diversity, and audacity to achieve relevance in the 21st century.

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*By Christopher Skaluba, director of the Transatlantic Security Initiative in the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security.*



# Modernize the Kit and the Message

by H.E. Dame Karen Pierce DCMG

NATO will only remain successful over the next seventy years if it modernizes its capabilities, takes command of emerging technology, and harmonizes its strategic messaging.

# Modernize the Kit and the Message

Over the last few years NATO has been called many things, from obsolete, to brain-dead, to warmongering. So we must be doing something right. In truth, built on the common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, NATO is an unparalleled defensive Alliance which has kept the Euro-Atlantic region and beyond safe for more than seventy years. It has played a crucial role in bringing security and stability to Europe and its neighborhood, as its role in the Balkans showed. The importance of this can't be underestimated in this seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. NATO continues to act as a platform for shared values and interests, now with partnerships across the world. The world is growing more dangerous. Technological advances have the potential to transform warfare as significantly as nuclear weapons did after WW2. We need to be clear with our publics what NATO does now and needs to do in the future. Tellingly, a lot of Russian energy still goes into trying to undermine the North Atlantic Alliance every day. NATO is fit for the challenges of today. But it will only remain successful over the next seventy years if it continues to modernize its capabilities and its message.

## New Threats and Complex Challenges

The threats NATO faces today are much more multifaceted than those faced by the Alliance when it was first established. Great power dynamics are making the world more unpredictable. Russia and China seem to see the current situation as a competition to re-set the rules of international affairs and their actions are getting more dangerous in this respect.

Russia continues to pursue hybrid warfare and to develop new ways to destabilize Europe and the Alliance with the United States, using everything from disinformation to new missile systems. The Skripal poisonings in Salisbury, an English city, in 2018, underscored the seriousness of the threat we face from

Russia. As the United Kingdom's permanent representative to the United Nations at the time, I saw Russia making light of a reckless and dangerous attack in which a British citizen died and many more were endangered. In leaving the Novichok agent in a public place, Russia's GRU played dice with the lives of British citizens.

After this attack, the UK and our allies ensured that Russia paid a heavy price for breaking international law, including through the expulsion of 153 intelligence officers from NATO members and other European countries. But two years later, a banned chemical weapon has again been used, this time against leading Russian opposition figure Alexey Navalny. This is little short of gangsterism. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council have a special duty to uphold international law on the prohibited use of chemical weapons.

Meanwhile China is also investing heavily in new capabilities, global infrastructure, cyberspace, nuclear weapons, and long-range missiles that could reach NATO nations. China's actions in the South China Sea and use of malicious cyber activity for criminal ends risk a wider security effect. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased uncertainty and accentuated trends. It has sharpened the focus on the challenge Beijing increasingly poses, and shown that China, as well as Russia, is quite capable of spreading disinformation to advance its own interests.

NATO members want to use new innovations to benefit their citizens and to bolster open societies. But we need to be alive to the risk that state adversaries will utilize technological developments to undermine our traditional strengths, and even against their own citizens as we have seen with China's use of artificial intelligence in Xinjiang. And we cannot be confident that we can prevent such technologies reaching malign non-state actors.

## Modernize the kit and the message

F-35B Lightning Jets embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth for the first Carrier Sea Training. (UK Ministry of Defence)



### Keep on Modernizing

The good news is that NATO has a track record of adapting fast to new priorities. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the Alliance has transformed. It has established enhanced Forward Presence on its eastern flank, adapted its command structure, increased the readiness of its forces, and agreed a new military strategy. It has recognized cyber and space as new domains of operations, acknowledged that cyber and hybrid attacks could lead to the invocation of Article 5, and introduced a counter-hybrid strategy. It has also adapted to address Russia's deployment of new intermediate-range missiles, including by strengthening air and missile defenses and adapting exercises; built new partnerships (40 and counting, including in the Indo-Pacific); and is playing a constructive role in countering the global pandemic by delivering personal protective equipment and medicine. And it has welcomed new allies—Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia this year, whilst giving Ukraine the privileged status of enhanced opportunity partner.

Now, NATO is readying itself for artificial intelligence and autonomous weapons, quantum computing which could render current encryption obsolete, and new weapons such as hypersonic missiles that have global reach and could reduce allies' decision time in the face of attack. There has already been some impressive

progress, including the agreement in London of a clear roadmap for "Emerging and Disruptive Technologies," which describes the complex security environment which allies will navigate together.

In the UK, we are already thinking through how best to reshape the armed forces and modernize capabilities through our Integrated Foreign, Security and Defence Review. NATO will remain the bedrock of the UK's collective security. Our defense budget will keep increasing above the rate of inflation. We will continue to see the two percent of GDP target as a floor, not a ceiling.

At the heart of the UK's renewed offer to NATO will be a set of capabilities which demonstrate the value of agility and speed of response, readiness, and our status as a framework nation. Innovation, as well as science and technology, will be central to our capability strategy. Underpinned by the commitment of our number one strategic asset, our Continuous At Sea Nuclear Deterrent, we will bring leading capabilities across air, sea, land, space, and cyber.

We believe that this will, increasingly, become the direction of travel for the whole Alliance as it implements its new deterrence and defense concept. Future armed forces will be measured not by the number of



platforms in our inventories, but by our ability to outmatch any adversary, wherever and however they fight, even if those fights are gray zone efforts to undermine our security in other ways. Deterring a growing range of threats from a larger range of state and non-state actors will require a broader range of capabilities from across our governments, and from our collective Alliance.

### Invest in Our Message

As NATO continues to adapt, so too do we need to demonstrate and communicate the value it holds to our citizens. When NATO allies see things differently, as all good friends sometimes do, the press and media work overtime to highlight our differences. That is their job. When NATO is quietly getting on with its day-to-day work, its one billion citizens hear much less. Communicating this positive message was one reason the UK was so proud to host the NATO Leaders' Meeting last year in London, the home of NATO's first headquarters, where we marked the seventieth anniversary of the signing of the founding Washington Treaty.

We invited politicians and military officers, along with think tankers and academics, to join the celebrations, but we also wanted younger generations to take pride in the Alliance's successes. Reaching new audiences is a key goal of the NATO Engages Consortium, and these scene-setting events, held on the sidelines of formal NATO meetings, have fast become one of the liveliest parts of the NATO calendar.

The audience at the NATO Engages event in London reflected the contemporary makeup of the societies the Alliance is designed to protect, with a majority under the age of thirty. In my experience, that age group wants to be talked with, not at, and they want to hear directly from pilots and aid workers, not just politicians. They want to hear from people their own age as well; people like 16-year-old Olivia Seltzer from Santa Barbara, California, who founded *'The Cramm'* newsletter, which now reaches readers in seventy countries around the world.

The British Embassy in Washington DC, where I am now based, works to amplify such activity and reach new generations of Americans. For thirty-five years,

embassy officials have enjoyed talking to university students participating in the annual International Model NATO Conference. Investment in our students is an investment in our future security.

As the strategic context has evolved, so too has public perception. NATO's work should not only reflect the challenges we face today but cater to the modern-day concerns of its citizens, and we need to tell this new chapter in the NATO story with confidence and clarity. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's launch of #NATO2030 demonstrates his understanding of this challenge—we hope all NATO allies will follow.

Governments have a duty to be honest and open with our citizens—a duty we NATO members discharge, in stark contrast to our adversaries. This is critical for the public support we need to make investments and adaptations. No single ally, including the United States, can face the growing threats alone. It is recognition of these threats that brought the increases to defense spending agreed at the London Leaders' Meeting, with an additional \$400 billion due to be spent on defense by non-US allies between 2016 and 2024. Whilst the post-COVID-19 economic challenge will be huge, security investment remains crucial: collective defense is also cost-effective defense and it is what ensures peace. By taking on more of the burden of securing the US's Western flank, the UK and other NATO allies are helping the United States respond to the growing challenge of China. China's expanding influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance.

As UK ambassador to the United States, I want to get across the concept that our continued strength and security comes from Euro-Atlantic unity. All of NATO's citizens, American or otherwise, should recognize that the Alliance is critical for all our national security. NATO stood in solidarity with the United States and invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first and only time in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. Since then, thousands of European and Canadian servicemen and women have joined the fight against terrorism alongside their American allies around the world. I saw this myself when I was the UK's ambassador to Afghanistan: NATO means that the United States doesn't have to fight alone.

## Look To The Next Seventy Years

NATO is bound to be called more names over the next seventy years. That's fine—scrutiny, openness, and challenge are important and powerful antidotes to authoritarianism. And our freely-enjoined Alliance represents a contribution to security and stability everywhere as well as to our ability to project our power, our influence, and our values for good around the world.

Over the next seventy years, NATO will continue to adapt in the face of emerging challenges and technologies. The most powerful and successful Alliance the world has seen will not ossify. We'll continue to call out attacks on our values and our open societies, wherever and whoever they come from. And we will do so from a position of strength, a position underpinned by capabilities adapted to tackle a changing threat. The capabilities of NATO will modernise and change; the strength of NATO will remain the power of its allies and their ability to share burdens.

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*Her Excellency Dame Karen Pierce DCMG is the British ambassador to the United States.*

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# Build an Atlantic- Pacific Partnership

by James Hildebrand, Harry W.S. Lee, Fumika Mizuno, Miyeon Oh, and Monica Michiko Sato

NATO is the only institution capable of organizing transatlantic and transpacific stakeholders to address China's political, military, and information threats.

# Build an Atlantic-Pacific Partnership

The West is recognizing that China's rise has fundamentally shifted the global balance of power. For the first time, the European Union (EU) declared China as a "systemic rival" in 2019.<sup>1</sup> NATO leaders also mentioned China for the first time in the 2019 London Declaration, identifying both the "opportunities and challenges" of China's growing influence.<sup>2</sup> As the West grapples with a strategy to address China's rise, it faces a full-spectrum challenge from China in traditional and non-traditional security spheres that NATO is best positioned to confront.

In the traditional security sphere, China has continued its aggressive actions in the South China Sea while expanding its naval power beyond the waters of Asia to the Indian Ocean, the Mediterranean, the North Atlantic, and the Arctic. This activity is accompanied by an increasingly global military footprint—including the development of overseas bases and strategic sea-ports. Such actions and their potential consequences pose an increasing threat to the maritime security of NATO allies, as well as their access to global seaborne trade. Beijing's growing military cooperation with Moscow in both the Asian and European theaters also complicates allied contingency planning by raising the possibility of a coordinated horizontal escalation.

In the non-traditional sphere, Europe will face a particularly acute challenge from the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) global influence operations. While the CCP's efforts to shape the global information environment came to the fore in Europe at the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak, it has long engaged in more malign and surreptitious forms of influence operations. These include cyber warfare and espionage,

dis- and misinformation campaigns, election interference, co-opting independent media, and bribing public officials.

Europe is not alone in facing this challenge from China. Much like the individual countries of Europe, not all Indo-Pacific states are equipped to counter traditional and non-traditional security threats from Beijing. In order to protect their economic freedom, democratic institutions, and national security, transatlantic and Indo-Pacific states share the common task of responding to China's rise. The international community needs a credible, multilateral champion that can form an "Atlantic-Pacific Partnership" and serve as a strategic counterweight to Beijing's growing military assertiveness, whether it's in the South China Sea, the European theater, or the Arctic. Given its institutional structure, capabilities, and capacity to link Indo-Pacific partners under a cohesive multilateral mechanism, NATO is the institution best suited to take on this role.

In the coming decade, NATO should establish itself as the central node of a global network dedicated to countering China's hostile and malign activities by formalizing an Atlantic-Pacific Partnership (APP). This effort should first be focused on integrating NATO's existing bilateral relationships with Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand into a multilateral "30+4" consultative network, while still seeking other opportunities for collaboration in the region and beyond. As it develops, the habits of cooperation built through the APP would create a foundation for coordinated planning and response to China's traditional and non-traditional threats in Europe and Asia. NATO should lead this effort for several reasons:

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1 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *EU-China—A strategic outlook*, *European Commission*, 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>.

2 NATO heads of State and Government, "London Declaration," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, December 4, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_171584.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm)

## Build an Atlantic-Pacific Partnership

NATO Standing Maritime Group One conducts a passing exercise with Japan's Maritime Self-Defense squadron in the Baltic Sea. (Source: NATO)



### Structural Resilience to Chinese Pressure

First, as an institution focused on security, NATO is uniquely resilient to Chinese pressure in ways other organizations are not. A notable example is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a major regional multilateral institution whose members' economic dependence on, and geographic proximity to, China provide it deep incentives to avoid confrontation.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, primarily due to the historical development of the region, security in the Indo-Pacific is characterized by a web of disjointed security groupings and bilateral alliances. As China grows increasingly assertive, this lack of a unifying, credible, multilateral enforcer in the region will become a major challenge.

NATO's credibility in this context lies in its multilateralism and diversity. Compared to a unilateral US-led response to Chinese aggression, a NATO-led, and therefore consensus US-European response, would have global legitimacy in the eyes of many. At the same time, leadership from a US-led multilateral

organization like NATO would reassure US allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific that the United States remains committed to a coordinated effort among democracies.

### Existing Capabilities to Counter Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats

NATO has existing capabilities to counter traditional and non-traditional security threats. In the realm of traditional security, not only does NATO have the military capacity to uphold maritime security in regions beyond Europe, but it has also proactively supported and participated in military operations concerning global security. NATO has led the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (now the Resolute Support Mission) and provided training to national militaries in the Middle East as a member of the Coalition to Defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). Since 2008, its naval forces have also actively

<sup>3</sup> Ayman Falak Medina, "ASEAN Overtakes EU to Become China's Top Trading Partner in Q1 2020," ASEAN Briefing, <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/asean-overtakes-eu-become-chinas-top-trading-partner-q1-2020/>.

conducted anti-piracy operations off the shores of Africa.

Further, NATO allies like the United Kingdom and France have individually stepped up their presence in the Indo-Pacific. The United Kingdom conducted its first joint exercise with the United States in the South China Sea in 2019 and deployed the HMS Albion to conduct Freedom of Navigation (FON) exercises near the Paracel islands in August 2018.<sup>4</sup> At the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018, French and British defense ministers announced they would sail warships through the South China Sea to challenge China's military expansion.<sup>5</sup> As the leading member of NATO, the United States has spearheaded many of NATO's global military operations and continues to work with its allies in Asia to counter China's maritime expansion in the Indo-Pacific. The administration of US President Donald J. Trump has pursued measures to deepen security cooperation with allies and partners with stakes in the South China Sea. For example, the United States has provided over \$300 million through the US Department of State's Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative, and conducted a record number of Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in the South China Sea in 2019.<sup>6</sup> NATO's largest allies are clearly cognizant of, and willing to address, China's military threat.

In the sphere of non-traditional security, NATO allies have experience working together to counter Russian gray-zone threats, including influence operations. At the NATO Foreign Ministerial meeting in 2015, NATO adopted a strategy to counter hybrid threats in cooperation with the European Union. Member-states were encouraged to map potential vulnerabilities borne

out of Russia's involvement in their "business, financial, media, or energy concerns," and share lessons learned within NATO.<sup>7</sup> More recently, in response to Russia's dissemination of disinformation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, NATO has intensified digital communications across all platforms, hosting online events and producing articles, translating factsheets, and broadcasting videos (even in Russian) to counter false narratives.<sup>8</sup> NATO also stepped up engagement with the European Union, G7, United Nations, and the US Department of State to organize a coordinated response to mitigate Russian disinformation.<sup>9</sup>

Although the strategy and tactics of Russian and Chinese influence operations differ, and NATO's track record of responding to influence operations is varied, this experience and existing response mechanisms provide a framework for countering non-traditional threats from China. This makes NATO the ideal institution through which Atlantic states can partner with Indo-Pacific states, transfer institutional knowledge, rigorously investigate best practices through information sharing, and build resilience.

## Mechanisms for Enlisting Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific

NATO can leverage its existing institutional connections to coordinate key US allies and partners in the region. US allies in the Indo-Pacific, and their proximity to China, posits these nations as the first line of defense against Beijing's aggression, a reality that makes them essential to any multilateral effort to maintain the rules-based international order. Additionally, NATO maintains six individual channels for engaging

4 "British navy's HMS Albion warned over South China Sea 'provocation,'" BBC, September 6, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-45433153>.

5 Liu Zhen, "France, Britain to sail warships in contested South China Sea to challenge Beijing," *South China Morning Post*, June 4, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2149062/france-britain-sail-warships-contested-south-china-sea>.

6 The US Coast Guard engages in robust capacity building training efforts and equipment transfers to Southeast Asian nations as well. "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision," US Department of State, November 4, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>; Amy E. Searight, "US Coast Guard cooperation with Southeast Asia: Maritime Challenges and Strategic Opportunities," Statement before the US House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, March 10, 2020, <https://transportation.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Searight%20Testimony.pdf>.

7 Brittany Beaulieu and David Salvo, "NATO and Asymmetric Threats: A Blueprint for Defense and Deterrence," *German Marshall Fund: Alliance for Security Democracy* 31 (2018): 3, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18856?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18856?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents); Jamie Shea, "Resilience: a core element of collective defence," *NATO Review*, March 30, 2016, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2016/03/30/resilience-a-core-element-of-collective-defence/index.html>.

8 "NATO's approach to countering disinformation: a focus on COVID-19," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated July 17, 2020, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/177273.htm#case>.

9 Ibid.

key Indo-Pacific nations as “global partners:” Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Mongolia. However, these partnerships operate primarily on a bilateral, siloed, and consultative basis, focusing on issue areas tailored to each country and each differing in the intensity and nature of partnership activities. Certain NATO member states also have partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific through mechanisms such as the Five Eyes, the Five Power Defense Agreement, the Quad, and several other strong but disparate bilateral security agreements.

A cohesive mechanism that connects these individual partnerships around a shared central threat does not yet exist. This presents a critical gap that NATO can bridge to unify and deepen these existing mechanisms. Individual Southeast Asian countries not involved in the previously listed arrangements may also be more amenable to joining a NATO-led initiative in the Indo-Pacific rather than a US-led one.<sup>10</sup>

## Policy Recommendations

As NATO and its allies adapt to a more competitive, multipolar world, the Alliance and its leading members should advance the following priorities:

**Establish an official Atlantic-Pacific Partnership** that provides like-minded Indo-Pacific countries the opportunity to participate in a NATO-coordinated regional network. NATO should focus initial efforts on integrating its existing bilateral relationships with Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand into a multilateral “30+4” consultative network. The APP would provide opportunities for multilateral dialogue to address the most pressing challenges facing the transatlantic-pacific community. Modeled after NATO’s existing efforts with Finland and Sweden, security cooperation under the APP could include “regular political dialogue and consultations; exchanges of information on hybrid warfare; coordinating training and exercises; and developing better joint situational awareness to address common threats and develop joint actions, if needed.”<sup>11</sup>

Early cooperative efforts can leverage NATO’s strong track record on military cooperation to establish a regularized mechanism for discussing strategic issues and sharing intelligence on China’s maritime capabilities and activities in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, joint military cooperation between China and Russia, and China’s overseas influence operations. These mechanisms could then be used as a platform to develop a collective Atlantic-Pacific security posture toward China or a coordination mechanism for responding to traditional and nontraditional security threats.

**At the same time, seek opportunities to expand relations with ASEAN**, while remaining realistic about the limitations on cooperation. Prior interactions by NATO allies with ASEAN member states have been limited to arms sales to specific countries that met international standards on human rights. In light of this history, early efforts could focus on expanding existing mechanisms such as the ASEAN+3 Defense Ministers Dialogue and deepening people-to-people ties through enhanced inter-governmental and inter-institutional exchanges. As it builds a relationship with ASEAN, NATO also could target outreach to key members who are likely to be more interested in proactively responding to Chinese security threats. Working alongside the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF), NATO could assist in capacity building and equipment transfers to Southeast Asian states while respecting ASEAN’s opposition to external militarization of the region. Even if initial efforts do not count on strong institutional buy-in from ASEAN, it will be critical for NATO to maintain channels for building greater levels of support over the long-term, should ongoing geopolitical trends deepen the institution’s concerns about undue Chinese influence.

**Combat non-traditional threats by expanding resilience.** In a world where security threats increasingly come from non-traditional, non-military sources, focusing cooperation among NATO partners on conventional defense and security has proven insufficient. NATO must work within the APP to prepare societies

10 Amitav Acharya, “Why Is There No NATO In Asia?” *The Normative Origins of Asian Multilateralism*, (Harvard University, 2005, [https://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/1049\\_why\\_no\\_asian\\_nato\\_final.pdf](https://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/1049_why_no_asian_nato_final.pdf)).

11 “Relations with Sweden,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, July 15, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52535.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52535.htm).

for a wider range of threats. NATO's seven baseline requirements for resilience currently emphasize support for continuity of government, the provision of essential services in NATO member states, and civil support to the military. Thus far these requirements have proven valuable in addressing certain vulnerabilities to Chinese influence, control, or espionage, particularly in 5G networks. However, they do not address the pervasiveness of Chinese influence operations in supply chains, society and politics, cyberspace, business, infrastructure development, and many other areas. NATO cannot be caught flat-footed in response to these challenges, which demand a different strategy.

The APP should be the forum through which a more expansive approach to resilience is explored. Using insights from Indo-Pacific countries that have faced more extensive Chinese influence efforts than Europe, these discussions should explore a new concept of resilience that would focus specifically on identifying, exposing, and countering a broad range of influence

operations. This concept would expand the scope of resilience to account for activities not yet addressed by NATO, but routinely directed by the Chinese government against foreign states, including coercive diplomacy, meddling in elections, co-option of educational and cultural institutions, and industrial espionage.

Looking forward to the Alliance's strategic operations in 2030, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said, "we need to work even more closely with like-minded countries like Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea to defend the global rules and institutions that have kept us safe for decades."<sup>12</sup> Both unchecked military expansion and malign Chinese influence operations will quietly erode democratic principles and institutions worldwide in the coming decade, leaving the democratic guardians of the rules-based international system unable to defend it effectively. NATO can and must immediately take the lead in becoming the necessary strategic counterweight to China's rise.

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<sup>12</sup> "Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on launching #NATO2030," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last updated June 8, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_176197.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_176197.htm).





# Digitalize the Enterprise

by Jeffrey Reynolds and Jeffrey Lightfoot

If NATO is to unlock new frontiers of innovation and harness emerging technology, digitalizing how it does business is the key.

# Digitalize the Enterprise

NATO is party to the turbulent birth of a new era, one that began when the use of computer power, algorithm sophistication, and very large data sets converged to make digital technology the defining feature of the coming decade. It affects almost every aspect of human endeavor, and it underpins the future of warfare and non-military competition among state and non-state actors vying for influence, markets, and power. For NATO to carry out its enduring mission to protect the populations, territories, and forces of allied states, it must reconcile conventional diplomatic and military power with data as a strategic capability. It needs a strategy for digitalization to compete and win the conflicts of tomorrow.

NATO's Science and Technology Organization defines seven emerging disruptive technology areas with the most potential to increase the Alliance's operational and organizational effectiveness from now through 2040: artificial intelligence, autonomy, quantum technology, space technology, hypersonic technology, biotechnology and human enhancement, and novel materials and manufacturing.<sup>1</sup> Proficiency in *all* of them is critical for NATO's ability to conduct tomorrow's multi-domain operations, but it cannot expect to achieve strategic advantage in *any* unless it takes the intermediary step of digitalization. If the seven emerging disruptive technology areas are the locks to sustaining NATO's strategic advantage, then digitalization is the key to all of them.

## Why Digitalization Matters for NATO

Digitalization can bolster NATO's ability to gather and process information, take decisions, and automate routinized processes. The scope expansion inherent to digitalization enables NATO to consolidate data inputs across a range of sectors for better situational awareness, even in areas beyond its traditional regional and functional expertise. This makes decision making the

primary beneficiary of digitalization. The Alliance has clear decision making and command structures with established lines of authority and well-defined processes. Each stage of NATO's decision-making processes can be enhanced because digitalization enables the Alliance to reinforce its deterrence and defense posture *and* improve in areas of importance in the digital age: defeating both opportunistic and coordinated *disinformatziya* campaigns, predicting strategic shocks, leveraging the Internet of Things phenomenon, enhancing secure communications, and enabling sensitive information to "hide in plain sight" on the Web.

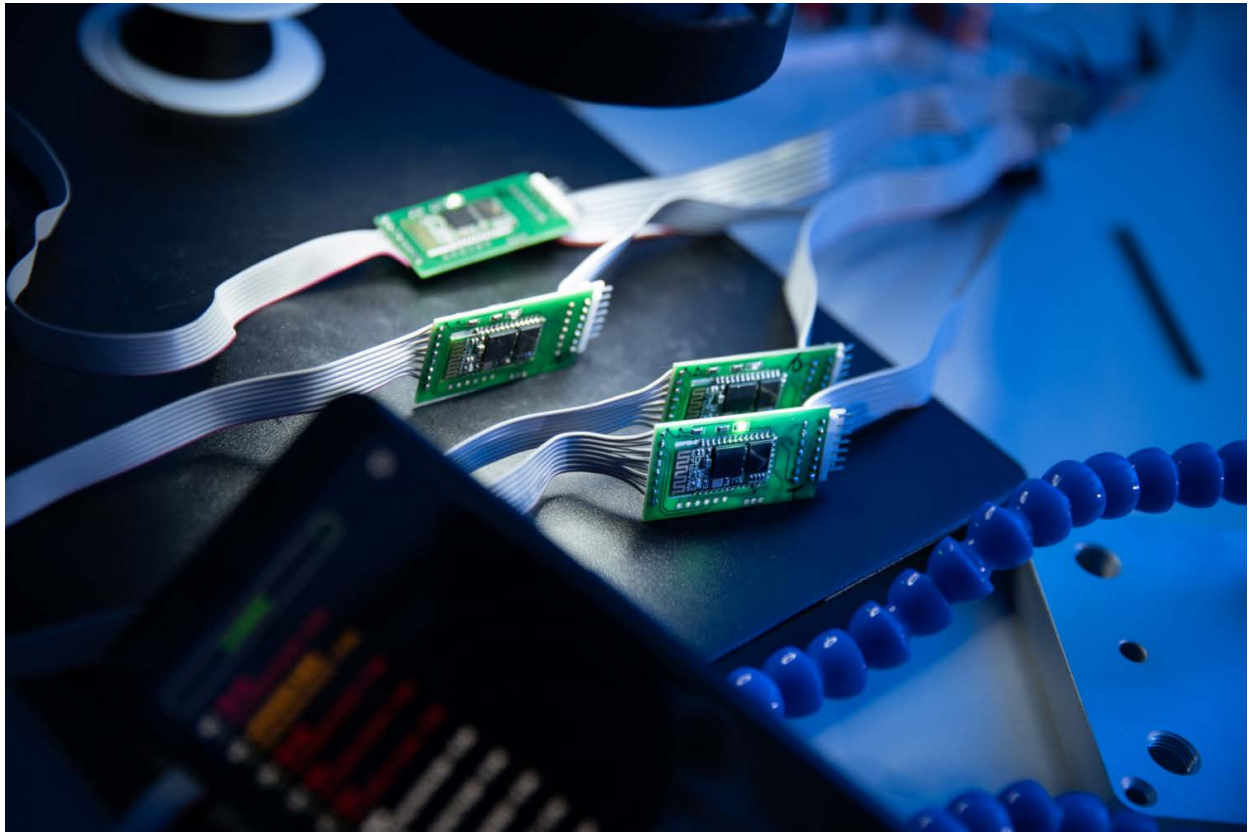
People are in the decision-making loop; they are central to every decision made by the Alliance. But automation—a core benefit of digitalization—may raise some eyebrows because it can be perceived as removing humans in decision making. This is a misconception. Digitalization does not reduce human decision-making power in NATO, it *reinforces* it. In effect, failure to digitalize *reduces* NATO's decision-making ability by having a diminished understanding of its strategic context, limited tools to respond, and antiquated processes when inevitable crises emerge.

## Sustaining and Disruptive Digitalization in NATO

A digitalization strategy is the alignment of mundane efforts across the enterprise to electrify, automate, and move human labor beyond the critical path of routine administration in order to achieve tremendous gains in the speed, scale, and scope of operations.<sup>2</sup> Firms like Siemens and Airbus provide useful models of what digitalization looks like for large multinational organizations that excel in traditional industries, while seizing the opportunities that digitalization provides. As a point of departure, NATO should do what it does best and focus efforts in areas that create a "digital

1 NATO Science and Technology Organization, *Science and Technology Trends 2020-2040: Exploring the S&T Edge*, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/190422-ST\\_Tech\\_Trends\\_Report\\_2020-2040.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/190422-ST_Tech_Trends_Report_2020-2040.pdf).

2 Marco Iansiti and Karim R. Lakhani, *Competing in the Age of AI: Strategy and Leadership When Algorithms and Networks Run the World* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2020).



Source: adalidda.com

backbone” upon which to develop even greater capabilities: command and control (C2); intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); equipment maintenance optimization and prognostic/predictive diagnostics; business process automation; and supply chain management. This is sustaining digitalization—standard fare for the Alliance because if there is a single area of undisputed dominance for NATO, it is its ability to do the “muck work” of leveraging the expertise of allies, executing programs, creating processes, and applying best practices in the development of capabilities.

Here, good work is underway. Allies are developing a common understanding of NATO’s potential adversaries and the strategic context in which the Alliance must engage them. NATO Headquarters, Allied Commands Operations and Transformation, and the NATO Communications and Information Agency are developing digital capabilities, deepening relationships with innovation communities, and improving acquisition

processes with an eye to the future. NATO is updating its organizational structure, aligning critical conceptual pieces, and thinking about the role of digital technology in a changing security landscape.

But beyond incremental adaptation lies the true promise of digitalization—and the peril of losing the next conflict by failing to act today. This is disruptive digitalization. For NATO to move to this more ambitious phase, a coalition of allies who are digital pioneers will need to drive this agenda forward. Disruptive digitalization assumes that NATO can increase its strategic advantage over potential adversaries by championing creative thinking and new technology over legacy capabilities and traditional ways of doing business.<sup>3</sup> Let’s call them “game changers.”<sup>4</sup> Here are five of them:

**GAME CHANGER 1. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING (AI/ML):** Of the emerging disruptive technology areas, AI deserves special mention

3 The idea of “sustaining” versus “disruptive” innovation comes from the work of Gautam Mukunda. Gautam Mukunda, “We Cannot Go On: Disruptive Innovation and the First World War Royal Navy,” *Security Studies* (2010), 19 (1).

4 The authors would like to thank Richard Shultz, director of the International Security Studies Program at the Fletcher School, Tufts University, for the layout of the article. Inspired by “Showstoppers: Nine Reasons Why We Never Sent Our Special Operations Forces after al Qaeda Before 9/11,” *Weekly Standard*, January 26, 2004.

because of its (yet unrealized) potential to expand human insight beyond natural limits. Navigating crises of the future *without* AI/ML capability is tantamount to asking diplomats and soldiers to fight battles dumb, deaf, and blind. AI/ML can help harness the data tsunami that floods current data processing capability to present an elegant and exhaustive operational picture. It can dramatically increase the realism and intensity of training programs through virtual war games and tabletop exercises so that political and military staff across the Alliance can improve decision-making and consensus-building abilities from constant practice and familiarization. Crucially, AI/ML can help NATO gain insight into the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of potential adversaries—particularly their history, cultural practices, and psychology of their leadership—with a richness unavailable to leaders of the Alliance today.

**GAME CHANGER 2. DATA FACTORY:** In light of weaponized information directed at NATO and within allies, the Alliance needs to redesign its structures to maximize the utility of data as both a source of information and a weapon. A digitalized NATO requires a data factory consisting of robust data pipelines, training data, algorithm development centers, and associated workflows and storage facilities that work together seamlessly across the Alliance. Storing, sharing, and processing huge quantities of data on the front lines in real time requires an enterprise-wide approach that connects securely to the open Internet on trusted 5G networks. A data factory becomes a strategic capability for the Alliance in part because it makes NATO an information supplier instead of a consumer for allies and partners alike, thereby reinforcing its utility as a critical hub for international security. But a data factory requires a beefed-up organizational structure to win the “battle of the narrative.” This translates into the fusion of digitalized components at NATO Headquarters and throughout the NATO Command Structure under a “One NATO approach,” including: information; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; corporate communications, public diplomacy,

military strategic communications, and public affairs; cyber defense; operations; and related capability groups.

**GAME CHANGER 3. FOOTPRINT AND REACH:** The COVID-19 pandemic forced NATO to dispense with the idea that high-level meetings had to be held in person. In fact, the speed at which NATO’s staff pivoted to a work-from-home posture was breathtaking in speed and success.<sup>5</sup> Investment in digitalization as a way to work until there is a “return to normal” is shortsighted; digitalization offers NATO two complementary advantages that provide outsized benefits when paired together. First, there’s no better way to build trust than to do so face to face. A digitalized NATO could place staff members in key strategic locations to enhance understanding while remaining connected to their home headquarters. Consider the strategic benefit of a few innovation staff members embedded in Silicon Valley and Paris focusing on innovation, or political affairs officers located in Tokyo and Accra increasing geographic insight, for example. Second, digitalization can make interacting with NATO much easier for a wide range of partners. Partners wanting to develop relationships with the Alliance are often hamstrung by policy or technological limitations. But digitalization can bolster networks that allow more permissive security policy and opportunity for interaction, thereby increasing NATO’s ability to connect with a broader range of partners. Put simply, digitalization enables NATO to take the critical step of matching the placement of its staff to provide the most accurate, timely, and comprehensive risk assessments of the multi-dimensional global operating domain.

**GAME CHANGER 4: STAFF AND CULTURE.** Dying are the days when retired soldiers and diplomats formed the bulk of NATO’s staff. A digitalized NATO needs different competencies in its ranks. But NATO competes globally with the private sector for digital talent—from Allianz to a start-up in Omaha. Thus, NATO needs to reform its talent acquisition and retention policies to

5 “Success” is a subjective term here, but consider how NATO shifted in mid-March to a minimum manning posture in the commands and NATO Headquarters to keep staff and families safe. It upgraded its technical infrastructures to enable secure work from home. NATO’s leadership led townhalls and webinars to keep staff apprised of developments regarding COVID-19. Work was re-prioritized to reflect the constraints that pandemic response measures placed on staff. The results are clear: NATO kept the lights on, delivered necessary work, provided much-needed medical supplies, and communicated a strong narrative of steady leadership to allied populations. Was it perfect? No, but NATO’s leadership—from branch heads upward, and staff across the organization are to be commended for continuing a high degree of professional output while balancing (greatly) increased family responsibilities in demanding circumstances.

emphasize the expertise for digitalization and match expectations digital professionals are likely to have, like competitive pay and benefits, continuing education and coaching, exercises and training, flexible work arrangements, and the ability to rotate in and out of positions in other sectors to keep perishable skills current. The Alliance needs to champion the policies and cultural attributes espoused by digital professionals, like adopting agile work principles and design thinking, flatter hierarchies, experimentation, innovation, and continuous improvement.

**GAME CHANGER 5: A NEW(-ISH) WAY OF WAR.**

Potential adversaries like Russia and China are pushing ahead with their own digitalization plans and may take a more radical approach with regard to automation of the kill chain and weaponization of information. In doing so, they are increasing risk for everyone by challenging the core assumption that warfare is a primarily human endeavor. Clausewitz still matters, but rapid development of digital-age capabilities like “killer AI” raises serious questions about the ethics and legality

of digitalized warfare. Embracing digitalization enables NATO to maintain its core competencies required for collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management while enhancing its ability to anticipate non-military threats and opportunities. Digitalization helps NATO play a major role in shaping the rules of the road for future conflict; failure to digitalize denies the Alliance opportunity to do so. Moreover, the capabilities ushered in by digitalization diversify NATO’s toolset and reduce the risk of the Alliance being a powerful, but irrelevant force in an age where mastery of data is crucial to victory.

Digitalization is not a panacea, but it is the key to NATO’s proficiency across all seven emerging and disruptive technology areas. A digitalized NATO carries out the same enduring mission that it has had since 1949, but the form and function of the Alliance must be different to compete and win in an increasingly complex operating environment. NATO has the tools to digitalize masterfully; its allies expect no less.

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# Seek Membership for Mexico

by Christopher Skaluba and Gabriela R. A. Doyle

Building a relationship between NATO and Mexico may be the key to keeping a rapidly changing America invested in European security.

# Seek Membership for Mexico

Donald J. Trump's presidency has upended the assumption that NATO could count on support from the US commander in chief. The challenge Trump poses to the orthodoxy around the Alliance is part personal, part political, and part reflective of changing attitudes among the US public about foreign and defense policy. It also resonates, in substance if not style, with aspects of the presidencies of Barack Obama and George W. Bush, where NATO was sometimes regarded as a burden to carry rather than an asset to wield.

While this state of affairs might be dismissed as circumstantial to each administration, the questioning of NATO's centrality to US security interests should be viewed as a trend with underlying structural rationales linked to public sentiment. Like the proverbial boiling frog, progressive US detachment from NATO might result in a sudden decoupling from the Alliance—a situation NATO could not survive and which by multiple accounts almost happened at NATO's Brussels Summit in 2018.<sup>1</sup> For Europeans who view US security guarantees as critical to their sovereignty and for those in the United States who believe the US alliance system is the *sine qua non* of its power and influence globally, there is an urgent confluence of purpose to rekindle Washington's fundamental commitment to NATO.

Eventual Mexican membership in NATO may be a necessary ingredient for keeping the United States invested in European security over the long term.<sup>2</sup> This suggestion is made with an eye toward the reality that economic<sup>3</sup> and political<sup>4</sup> power in the United

States is shifting to places and populations with fewer traditional ties to Europe such that broadening NATO's appeal to a diversifying US public is imperative.

## The Case for Diversifying US Public Support for NATO

The idea that Mexico is the key to keeping the United States committed to an Alliance whose main business is deterring Russian aggression in Europe is admittedly counterintuitive. It also requires an assessment of why this would be an attractive option for Mexico and of what Mexico would bring to the Alliance in practical terms; there are compelling, if inconclusive, arguments on both counts.

Our argument starts from the premise that NATO is foundational to US global leadership such that making it relevant to emerging communities in the United States is compulsory if the Alliance is to earn their political allegiance. It also supposes that sustaining support for NATO must be more than an exercise in public diplomacy, even if that is a necessary element. Instead, ensuring US public support for the Alliance must be grounded in policies that matter to an increasingly diverse and empowered segment of the citizenry.

Making these policies relevant to a broad swath of the US public is especially tricky in a country as expansive as the United States. Regional divergences, ethnic and racial diversity, and political polarization make monolithic solutions impractical. Indeed, Russian

1 Julia E. Barnes and Helene Cooper, "Trump Discussed Pulling U.S. From NATO, Aides Say Amid New Concerns Over Russia," *New York Times*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/14/us/politics/nato-president-trump.html>.

2 While Article 10 of the Washington Treaty limits NATO membership to European nations, with the backing of NATO's members, this can be overcome through accession protocols, which have been used routinely in NATO's history to amend the treaty or to make necessary exceptions. Geographically, Mexico is roughly as equidistant to the North Atlantic area as longtime Alliance member Turkey, while a significant part of Mexican territory lies above the Tropic of Cancer, the southern demarcation line for North Atlantic territory in the Washington Treaty.

3 By our own calculations, using data from the International Monetary Fund and the Bureau of Economic Analysis at the US Department of Commerce, California, Texas, and Arizona in combination are the world's third-largest economy by GDP.

4 Kristen Bialik, "For the Fifth Time in a Row, the New Congress Is the Most Racially and Ethnically Diverse Ever," Pew Research Center, February 8, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/08/for-the-fifth-time-in-a-row-the-new-congress-is-the-most-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-ever/>.

## Seek Membership for Mexico

Mexican troops during a military parade on September 16, 2015. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



malfiance—including direct interference in US elections—is not the broad-based, animating concern it was when Moscow’s Cold War nuclear arsenal was an omnipresent concern for everyone. It is possible a US-China long-term competition could serve as a general rallying cause, but NATO’s role in such a scenario is uncertain since European publics do not feel threatened militarily by China.

Instead, an enduring US commitment to NATO is more likely to be secured by a variety of policies or missions that reflect the security interests of a diversifying US public. These undoubtedly must include deterrence of Russia—such policies must be germane to European publics as well—but might also require combatting

nontraditional threats, such as pandemics and climate change, that are increasingly important to younger citizens.<sup>5</sup> However, regional interests will remain an important part of the puzzle as well.

Just as attentiveness to the security of European allies has been a prerogative for generations of Americans with European lineage—which have heretofore dominated political and economic power in the United States—it makes sense that citizens of other backgrounds will be compelled by the security concerns of their familial homelands. For NATO, this might eventually mean more prominent roles in addressing security in Africa or Asia.<sup>6</sup> But first, the interests of the Hispanic/Latinx<sup>7</sup> community should take priority, not least

5 Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, “Harvard Youth Poll,” April 23, 2020, <https://iop.harvard.edu/youth-poll/harvard-youth-poll>; NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gave a keynote address to university students across ten NATO countries at a seminar on climate and security, where he emphasized that NATO must do its part in controlling climate change. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), “Secretary General: NATO Must Help to Curb Climate Change,” September 28, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_178372.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178372.htm?selectedLocale=en).

6 African Americans and Asian Americans represent just over 13 percent and 6 percent of the US population, respectively. United States Census Bureau, “QuickFacts,” accessed October 10, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/IPE120219>.

7 The word “Latinx” is a relatively new term used to most inclusively identify the Hispanic and Latino community. “Hispanic” traditionally refers to an individual of a Spanish-speaking background, including from Spain, residing in the United States. “Latino” generally denominates an individual of Latin American or Caribbean background. To clarify the confusing overlap between the two terms and offer a gender-neutral alternative, “Latinx” is increasingly used as a politically correct pan-ethnic alternative, although it has not been widely adopted. For the purposes of this essay, Hispanic and Latinx have been used interchangeably or in combination as necessitated by the reference material. Mark Hugo Lopez, Jens Manuel Krogstad, and Jeffrey S. Passel, “Who Is Hispanic?” Pew Research Center, September 15, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/15/who-is-hispanic/>.



because formalizing a relationship between Mexico and NATO is an attainable policy goal.

Domestic demographic trends in the United States support this logic as well. According to the Pew Research Center, the US Hispanic/Latinx population reached 60.6 million in 2019, making up 18 percent of the total US population.<sup>8</sup> Of that number, people of Mexican origin account for 62 percent of the nation's overall Latinx population or some 37 million people. Between 2010 and 2019, the Latinx community accounted for more than half of all US population growth, even as that growth has begun to slow. Overall, Latinx people are the country's second-largest ethnic group, behind white non-Hispanics.<sup>9</sup>

With the Hispanic/Latinx community projected to comprise 29 percent of the US population by 2050, their views on international relations must be accounted for.<sup>10</sup> While there is limited and conflicted polling data regarding Latinx preferences on foreign policy,<sup>11</sup> and even less on views toward NATO, anecdotally, it is a low priority. However, a 2014 Chicago Council on Global Affairs study found "that Hispanic Americans are more positive than other Americans toward Mexico. On the scale of 'feelings' from 0 to 100, with 100 being the warmest and 50 being neutral, Latinos give Mexico an average rating of 67, compared to an average of 51 among non-Latinos."<sup>12</sup>

That Mexico's NATO membership would motivate the US Latinx community to become champions of the Alliance is unknowable short of further research, but

it is a reasonable supposition based on the currently available data and common sense. Even a debate about the possibility is likely to introduce NATO to a significant number of Americans who are otherwise unacquainted with the Alliance, a beneficial outcome in its own right, and one whose effect can be measured. To that end, a structured dialogue between NATO and Mexico to explore that basis for cooperation would be a positive first step.

While NATO membership for Mexico is a generational project requiring a bevy of political and policy incentives to be aligned on all sides, a formal partnership is attainable in the short term. Such a prospect is an opportunity to determine how US Latinx attitudes toward NATO would be impacted while providing the necessary time to work through the practical benefits of eventual membership for both Brussels and Mexico City.

## Making the Case to Allied Capitals

While the central argument of this essay is that European allies should support a formal relationship with Mexico as a means of solidifying long-term US support for NATO, the traditional case for Mexico's eventual membership is reasonably strong on the merits.

In real and relative terms, Mexico would bring significant resources to the Alliance. Having spent just over \$5 billion on defense in 2019, Mexico would rank in the top half of NATO members, even though with defense

8 Luis Noe-Bustamante, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, "U.S. Hispanic population surpassed 60 million in 2019, but growth has slowed," Pew Research Center, July 7, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/07/u-s-hispanic-population-surpassed-60-million-in-2019-but-growth-has-slowed/>.

9 Jens Manuel Krogstad and Luis Noe-Bustamante, "Key Facts About U.S. Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage Month," Pew Research Center, September 10, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/10/key-facts-about-u-s-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/>; Luis Noe-Bustamante, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Jens Manuel Krogstad, "U.S. Hispanic Population Surpassed 60 Million in 2019, but Growth Has Slowed," Pew Research Center, July 7, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/07/u-s-hispanic-population-surpassed-60-million-in-2019-but-growth-has-slowed/>.

10 Jeffrey S. Passel and D'Vera Cohn, "U.S. Population Projections: 2005-2050," Pew Research Center, February 11, 2008, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2008/02/11/us-population-projections-2005-2050/>.

11 While a 2019 Pew Research Center study found that a minority of Hispanics believe the United States should be active in world affairs, a 2014 Chicago Council of Global Affairs report noted roughly equal preferences between "white" and Latinx support for US global leadership. Pew Research Center, "Large Majorities in Both Parties Say NATO Is Good for the U.S.," April 2, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/04/02/large-majorities-in-both-parties-say-nato-is-good-for-the-u-s/#views-of-u-s-relationship-with-its-allies>; Dina S. Smeltz and Craig Kafura, *Latinos Resemble Other Americans in Preferences for US Foreign Policy*, Chicago Council of Global Affairs, 2015, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/Hispanics%20and%20Foreign%20Policy%20-%20Final.pdf>.

12 Smeltz and Kafura, *Latinos Resemble*.

spending at 0.5 percent of GDP, it would rank last in NATO proportionally.<sup>13</sup> However, joining the Alliance would assuredly be conditioned on increases to the defense budget such that the \$5 billion baseline would come with a built-in upside. With nearly 237,000 active duty personnel, Mexico would be the third-largest military in NATO behind the United States and Turkey, with the army and navy accounting for the preponderance of Mexican end strength.<sup>14</sup> To put this in perspective, Mexico's accession would add more active duty military personnel to NATO's ranks than the thirteen newest NATO members combined.

While Mexico's armed forces have more limited competencies than NATO's highest-end militaries, their capabilities start from a high floor, benefiting from bilateral security cooperation with the United States. As a 2016 Wilson Center study explains, "Over the last decade, the Mexican military has been crafted into a hardened and more professional military, skilled in fourth generation warfare, operating across the spectrum of conflict from surgical small-unit Special Forces missions to division-level stability operations in areas comparable in size to Belgium."<sup>15</sup> Like most new allies or partners, Mexico would not be expected to be a significant contributor to NATO missions immediately, even as the size and aptitude of its armed forces—which have an extensive record of Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief missions worldwide—makes it capable of contributing in theory.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond the capability arguments, Mexico could serve as a gateway for an intensified NATO presence in Latin America where the Alliance is absent outside of a formal partnership with Colombia. Given Russia's criticality in propping up Nicolás Maduro's regime in Venezuela and China's growing influence throughout the Global South, an augmented NATO role in Latin America could further democracy promotion

while providing a timely deterrent effect, including on Russia's solicitation of Mexico to increase bilateral trade and security agreements. Moreover, adding a third Pacific country to the Alliance would helpfully advance transatlantic and transpacific linkages with an eye on containing China.

Over time, NATO could use its relationships with Mexico and Colombia to replicate its other regional partnership arrangements, like the Mediterranean Dialogue, to include political consultations for sharing information on local Russian and Chinese activities, and building support for policies on 5G, supply chains, or countering disinformation. In such a context, Brazil's flirtation with NATO would seem less far-fetched, and other possibilities, like a future democratic Cuba partnering with NATO, would be achievable.

Regardless of the other benefits, European allies would want assurances that Mexico City could be counted on to support decisions related to defense and deterrence in Europe. Even the prospect of keeping the United States committed to the cause of European sovereignty would be less appealing if Mexico were to wield its veto amidst a crisis with Russia, for instance. While such guarantees are hard to imagine at present, they are likely attainable with considered dialogue over time.

## Making the Case to Mexico City

Longstanding tensions between Mexico City and Washington and historical reluctance from Mexico to impose itself in global security affairs make the notion of Mexico's membership in a US-led security alliance an ostensible non-starter.<sup>17</sup> As a country without a traditional military threat, Mexico is unlikely to need Article 5 protection. In fact, joining NATO might increase risks to Mexico's security, necessitating military

13 Marina Pasquali, "Military Expenditure As Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Mexico from 2007 to 2019," Statista, June 15, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/793995/military-expenditure-share-gdp-mexico/>.

14 "Chapter Eight: Latin America and the Caribbean," *Military Balance* (2020), 120 (1): 389.

15 Iñigo Guevara, *A Bond Worth Strengthening: Understanding the Mexican Military and U.S.-Mexican Military Cooperation*, Mexico Institute, Wilson Center, October 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/bond-worth-strengthening-understanding-the-mexican-military-and-us-mexican-military>.

16 Lt Col Ricardo Reynoso, Mexican Army, "Mexican Humanitarian Assistance System: A Monograph," School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2016, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1022238.pdf>.

17 Anvesh Jain, "Canada, NATO, and the 'Dumbbell Concept,'" NATO Association of Canada, May 17, 2019, <http://natoassociation.ca/canada-nato-and-the-dumbbell-concept/>.

commitments to missions remote from its parochial security concerns while diverting resources toward defense expenditures and away from pressing social needs.

Nevertheless, a formal relationship with NATO would entitle Mexico to enhanced security sector reform (SSR)<sup>18</sup> from an organization well-versed in the subject; reinforce transatlantic trade relations through consolidation of economic and security interests in tandem with the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) and the EU-Mexico Global Agreement;<sup>19</sup> allow it to frame a foreign policy as an even closer partner in North American security on the heels of the USMCA; and underscore its status as a growing regional power<sup>20</sup> and influential example for other Latin American states.<sup>21</sup>

The most attractive of these factors might be the prestige and status that a NATO affiliation would convey. Despite Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's nationalist focus, he shares one goal with his predecessor: securing greater respect for Mexico abroad. A formal association with NATO aligns perfectly with Mexico's identities and interests as both a North American and Latin American power. Mexico can emphasize its relationship within the North American community, solidifying renewed ties with the United States and Canada through the USMCA. At the same time, membership would fortify Mexico's currently implied role as a model to other Latin American nations, granting it the opportunity to influence any expanded NATO footprint in the region.

Additionally, a number of NATO nations could offer attractive bilateral incentives for Mexico's participation,

including binational US-Canada support to Mexico's law enforcement and judicial sectors.<sup>22</sup> NATO would serve to both institutionalize and make multilateral existing defense and security dialogues with the United States in ways that might benefit Mexico City practically and politically (and which might be equally welcomed by the US Congress and policy community). NATO might also serve as a backbone for intensified security dialogues with nations, such as Spain and France, with which Mexico already has robust ties.

Finding the right collection of incentives for Mexican citizens and politicians will take time, but there are real options. A number of constituencies—including the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense (Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, SEDENA), which would realize additional resources and the ability to focus away from internal security to more traditional military tasks—might view a relationship with NATO as an attractive possibility.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

The US policy community has been focused on shoring up US support for NATO by coaxing European member states to increase burden-sharing contributions. The idea that increased European defense spending would settle US restiveness with NATO misses the point. In fact, the burden-sharing debate is serving as a proxy for underlying demographic realities at the root of waning US support for the Alliance.

While burden sharing is supposed to matter to Trump and his supporters, there is no evidence that even vast increases in European defense spending over the course of the Trump presidency have improved

18 Marina Caparini, "Security Sector Reform and NATO and EU Enlargements" in *SIPRI Yearbook 2003: Armaments, Disarmaments, and International Security* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2003), <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2003/07>.

19 European Union, "Mexico and the EU," May 12, 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mexico/14897/mexico-and-eu\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/mexico/14897/mexico-and-eu_en).

20 Mexican Defense Secretary Gen. Salvador Cienfuegos and Adm. Vidal Soberón, secretary of the Mexican Navy, signaled Mexican willingness and desire to become more involved in global affairs at the North American Defense Ministerial in 2017. On a bilateral call with both Cienfuegos and Soberón, then-Secretary of Defense Mattis "lauded Mexico's growing leadership in the region." "Mattis, Mexican Military Leaders Discuss Bilateral Relationship," February 8, 2017, DOD News, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1075465/mattis-mexican-military-leaders-discuss-bilateral-relationship/>.

21 David G. Haglund, "Pensando Lo Imposible: Why Mexico Should Be the Next New Member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," *Latin American Policy*, October 14, 2010, 1(2): 281.

22 Haglund, "Pensando," 278.

23 Rebecca Bill Chavez, "The Return of Latin America's Military," *The New York Times Opinion*, August 14, 2018, <https://www.nytimes/2018/08/14/opinion/mattis-latin-americas-military.html>.

NATO's standing with the US president or his political base. Rather than attempt to placate those that cannot be appeased, the policy community would be better served by finding new champions for the Alliance.

In discussing this proposal with European colleagues, a common retort is that building NATO's relationship with Mexico is a distraction from the many security challenges facing Europe. In fact, it may be the key to keeping a rapidly changing United States attuned to those very concerns. It is comparable to a case like Iceland, whose strategic importance (geography) outweighs other types of contributions it can make. For allies that rely on security guarantees from the United

States, it should matter little whether Mexico would send forces to an enhanced Forward Presence mission if its membership keeps the United States committed to the cause of European sovereignty.

While the idea of Mexico's eventual membership in NATO may sound implausible, so did the possibility of Warsaw Pact nations joining the Alliance before circumstances intervened to make it inevitable. As the United States experiences dramatic political upheaval related to rapid demographic realignment, circumstances may again be conspiring to write NATO's next surprising chapter.

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# Threaten Decisive Nuclear Retaliation

by David Gompert and Hans Binnendijk

NATO should thwart Russian use of nuclear weapons by threatening certain retaliation.

# Threaten Decisive Nuclear Retaliation

The danger of nuclear war in Europe is greater than it has been since the Cold War—and growing. A sputtering economy dragged down by low energy prices impedes Russia from competing with the West in advanced technology and conventional military capabilities. Yet, under Vladimir Putin, Russia is menacing its neighbors, including NATO's Baltic members, diverting attention from its domestic woes. As a result, Russia is increasing its reliance on nuclear weapons and the threat to use them *first*, and it is pursuing an advantage in nuclear forces in Europe. In the face of this challenge, NATO's stated nuclear strategy is too stale, vague, and timid to ensure deterrence. This essay offers an alternative strategy to reduce the danger of nuclear war in Europe.

Russia's growing emphasis on nuclear weapons is not confined to Europe. Russia is also fearful that the United States' missile defense, its unmatched global sensors, non-nuclear precision-strike weaponry, and cyberwar capabilities could weaken the credibility of Moscow's second-strike deterrent. At the same time, it appears to the Kremlin that the United States is walking away from arms control, including the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM), Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF), and Open Skies treaties. Taken together, Russia's adventurous foreign policy, conventional military disadvantages, and fear of US strategic nuclear intentions are causing it to develop and field new intercontinental and theater nuclear delivery systems, including hypersonic systems, which have grave implications for NATO.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, Russia's declared threat to use nuclear weapons first in the event of war should be of acute

concern, as much to US allies as to the United States. Such a policy gives Russia an escalatory option if hostilities were to occur and persist until NATO could bring to bear its conventional military superiority. While the policy is meant to warn against conventional strikes on Russian territory, in practice the policy could provide a potential sanctuary from which Russia could conduct military operations against the Baltic States, for instance. It also supports Russia's nuclear intimidation of its neighbors, including NATO members.

Russia has undoubtedly taken note of the decline of support in Europe for NATO's nuclear deterrent. While ultimately the Alliance's deterrence rests on US, British, and French national systems, US B-61 nuclear gravity bombs delivered by allied dual-capable aircraft (DCA) from sites in Europe are the first-line Alliance deterrent. But that deterrent is under political threat. In Germany, the head of the Social Democratic Party's parliamentary group has called for the withdrawal of US weapons and troops from Germany.<sup>2</sup> There is also resistance in Germany to purchasing new DCA. In the Netherlands and Belgium, parliamentary opposition to nuclear deployments there periodically result in close votes on the issue. And instability in Turkey raises questions about the safety and security of any weapons that might be deployed there. While NATO does not need to match Russia missile for missile in Europe to ensure adequate deterrence, it does need some credible capability.

NATO lacks a credible nuclear doctrine to contend with this worrying and worsening situation. The current official formulation, first set out in the 2010 Strategic

1 At the strategic level, these systems include: the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle, the Kinzhal hypersonic missile launched by the MiG-31, the RS-28 Sarmat heavy intercontinental ballistic missile, the 9M730 Burevestnik nuclear-powered cruise missile, the Poseidon underwater drone, and the Peresvet high-energy laser weapon. See Tony Wesolowsky, "Here Is What We Know: Russia's New Generation of Nuclear-Capable Weapons," *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, February 19, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/here-s-what-we-know-russia-s-new-generation-of-nuclear-capable-weapons/29778663.html>. Russia is also testing anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons. At the theater level, Russia has developed, tested, and deployed the SSC-8 (9M729) ground-launched cruise missile. It has also deployed nuclear-capable missiles in Kaliningrad.

2 Peter Rough and Frank A. Rose, "Why Germany's Nuclear Mission Matters," *Order from Chaos* (Brookings Institution), June 9, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/09/why-germanys-nuclear-mission-matters/>.

## Threaten Decisive Nuclear Retaliation

A nuclear capable B-2 stealth bomber taxis down a runway  
(Source: The National Interest)



Concept and adopted before the new Russian threat emerged, is that NATO needs an “appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional weapons” to deter aggression. This policy contemplates nuclear use only in “extremely remote” circumstances.<sup>3</sup> In 2012, NATO’s Deterrence and Defense Posture Review reiterated this basic policy, adding a reference to negative security assurances for adherents of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and noting the complementary role of missile defense as part of the “appropriate mix.”<sup>4</sup> More recently, at its 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO warned that Russia’s use of nuclear weapons would “fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict,” and stated that NATO has the “capabilities and resolve” to impose unacceptably high costs in response to threats to the “fundamental security” of a member nation.<sup>5</sup> Such woolly formulations imply that NATO is hesitant to say it would retaliate with

nuclear weapons and, indeed, could be indecisive about nuclear retaliation—a stance that is hardly conducive to deterrence. It is high time that NATO fixed this problem.

NATO can reduce the dangers inherent in growing Russian reliance on nuclear weapons by warning unequivocally of symmetrical nuclear retaliation for Russian first use. We call this “Decisive Response.”<sup>6</sup> Provided it is clear about its response if Russia were to resort to the use of nuclear weapons, NATO need not state categorically that it would refrain from using nuclear weapons for any *other* reason, thus finessing the contentious no-first-use issue. A statement by NATO that it needs nuclear weapons to deter Russian first use would be understandable and politically defensible. We use the term Decisive Response in that it conveys resolve and dispels any doubts the Russians

3 NATO, *Active Engagement, Modern Defense*, Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, November 19-20, 2010, para. 17, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_publications/20120214\\_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf).

4 NATO, Deterrence and Defense Posture Review, May 20, 2012.

5 NATO, “Warsaw Summit Communiqué,” July 9, 2016, para. 54, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_133169.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm).

6 See Hans Binnendijk and David Gompert, “Decisive Response: A New Nuclear Strategy for NATO,” *Survival*, October-November 2019, 61(5): 113-128, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396338.2019.1662119?journalCode=tsur20>. This essay develops several ideas first discussed in that article—how Decisive Response relates to NATO’s overall defense strategy, strategic nuclear deterrence, NATO’s nuclear capabilities, and arms control—and on occasion quotes directly from it. A few sentences in this essay are taken verbatim from pages 118 and 119.

might harbor about NATO's willingness to use nuclear weapons in retaliation. Though NATO's current policy does not exclude this possibility, present conditions make it necessary to eliminate any lingering ambiguity. We recognize that several nations may resist clarity on this issue, but that resistance reduces the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence.

By strengthening deterrence of Russian nuclear escalation of a conflict, Decisive Response would inhibit Russia from *any* aggression against *any* NATO member. It would help disabuse Moscow of the belief that NATO would hesitate to respond forcefully to Russian threats or acts of aggression, such as a quick "grab" of Baltic territory or an attempt to expand its control in the Arctic or Black Sea. And it would negate Russia's strategy of making itself a sanctuary from which it could project force against NATO. Indeed, even irregular aggression toward NATO members, such as the insertion of paramilitary forces and cyberattacks, could be deterred more effectively insofar as the Russian threat to escalate to nuclear war would be spiked. Thus, Decisive Response could strengthen deterrence of *all* aggression.

To support a cogent nuclear deterrent policy, NATO nations who have a nuclear mission should reiterate their willingness to continue with their missions for the foreseeable future, whether stationing or delivering the weapons. Whereas previous nuclear strategies for NATO, such as "flexible response," required nuclear weapons capabilities on every rung of the escalatory ladder, Decisive Response would not. It is only important that NATO have capabilities in theater to respond in kind to what might be a limited Russian first strike. The key to Decisive Response lies not in outsized arsenals of theater nuclear-delivery systems, but in unhesitating decision-making and action. The few hundred B-61 nuclear gravity bombs available in Europe<sup>7</sup> to be delivered by allied DCA provide an important deterrent capability provided they are linked with decisive decision-making. Of course, these systems need to be kept secure and modernized as needed.

Given continuing improvement of Russian air defenses and the need for a robust US role in retaliation, NATO DCA might, if needed, be augmented by US sea-based low-yield nuclear-tipped cruise missiles.<sup>8</sup> The United States may require new theater-range land-based missiles to deal with other threats, for example, China, but it does not require them to make Decisive Response credible in Europe.

At the same time, Decisive Response's credibility depends on having an agreed policy on how NATO would retaliate if deterrence failed. The concept of *symmetrical* response balances the need to avoid further escalation with the need to convince Russia that it will always have far more to lose than to gain by initiating nuclear hostilities. Generally speaking, symmetry implies comparable levels and targeting priorities. To illustrate, if Russia opts to demonstrate its preparedness to use nuclear weapons by detonating a single weapon far from NATO territory or forces, NATO should do likewise. If the Russians use nuclear weapons against NATO forces, NATO should respond accordingly. In the latter case, NATO would endeavor to avoid Russian targets that Moscow might interpret as a precursor to a strategic first strike.

In parallel, the Alliance should work with the United States to initiate efforts with Russia to renegotiate a modified version of the INF Treaty. If Russia is unwilling to scrap its SSC-8 missiles, there are other options to provide greater security for Europe. One option would be to limit all permitted INF missiles globally that carry nuclear warheads, something China might also be able to accept. Adding an arms control component would be consistent with NATO's long-standing tradition of having a dual-track approach to Russia.

With or without a NATO arms control initiative, the Russians will claim that Decisive Response is provocative and will gaslight the concept in Western political circles, hoping to stimulate opposition. Yet, such a strategy is irrefutably meant to *reduce* the danger of nuclear war. As such a concept is debated among and within NATO states, a harsh Russian reaction would

7 For a recent estimate of the number of B-61s in Europe, see NTI, "Nuclear Disarmament NATO," June 28, 2019, <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/nato-nuclear-disarmament/>.

8 US Department of Defense, Nuclear Posture Review, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/News/SpecialReports/2018NuclearPostureReview.aspx>.



suggest that Moscow takes such a declaratory policy seriously, which is exactly the aim. It would be unfortunate for NATO to water down its declaratory policy and thus imply indecisiveness.

Nuclear weapons were a central focus of discussions on deterrence in NATO during the Cold War. Today, similar discussions are taboo. But given the growing Russian nuclear challenge to Europe, continued silence on this topic is no longer viable. There is a path that can reverse the current unstable state of affairs. We urge NATO to follow that path.

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# Open a Bank

by Max Bergmann and Siena Cicarelli

NATO can fund critical defense investments by bringing the necessary financial tools in house.

# Open a Bank

NATO has a critical capability gap that is hindering its ability to guarantee the security of its member states: its inability to finance defense. If nothing is done, this gap will only grow in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paying for military forces and deployments has traditionally been the responsibility of individual member states, with NATO ensuring those forces are able to fight together as one. But an alliance built on collective defense must do more than just come to the defense of its members. It must also, as Article 2 of the Washington Treaty holds, “encourage economic collaboration.” As such, NATO should create its own bank.

Ultimately, money underlies any significant military endeavor. The ability to finance military investments and modernization, while paying the huge costs associated with conflict, has been a critical factor in determining success on the battlefield and in shaping the political aftermath. For example, during World War I, the Entente Powers were able to finance their massive war effort through American financial backing from financiers like J.P. Morgan. Similarly, the United States provided vital equipment to the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union through the Lend-Lease program during World War II. These were ad hoc efforts developed on the fly to address a crisis. But NATO is unique because it is not meant to be ad hoc. It is more enduring. As such, it should start thinking now about how to finance itself.

In NATO’s early days, the United States helped undergird the Alliance, both economically through the Marshall Plan, but also by rebuilding Western European militaries, providing the necessary resources to deter the Soviet threat, and building a basing infrastructure to defend Europe. After the Cold War, NATO

incorporated former Warsaw Pact members without making any significant investments. The Alliance’s new members came outfitted with aging Eastern Bloc weapons systems and infrastructure. Yet, there was never a comprehensive effort by NATO to rebuild these militaries. Instead, member states have been largely left to modernize their forces on their own. For former Warsaw Pact countries, this entails overhauling entire vehicle and fighter fleets of Soviet/Russian equipment—a hugely expensive, and almost impossible, task for them to undertake on their own.<sup>1</sup>

Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea in 2014, the decrepit state of NATO’s eastern members’ military capabilities and obvious infrastructure gaps became a clear problem for the Alliance. NATO, for instance, struggles with the basic task of moving forces to its east. The United States and Europe have sought to rectify this problem by insisting on greater defense spending, increasing joint procurements through NATO’s Smart Defense initiative, increasing US security assistance, and by expanding multilateral initiatives at the European Union (EU) level. But there is much more to do.

Adding to the challenge is that NATO’s potential rivals are increasingly using nonmilitary means, such as making strategic acquisitions and investments in European infrastructure, to gain influence and undermine the Alliance. China, through its Belt and Road Initiative and Digital Silk Road, is acquiring strategic infrastructure, much of which has dual-use purposes, especially in the transportation, energy, and telecommunications sectors. Similarly, Russia has established the International Investment Bank (IIB), which, as of 2019, is headquartered in Budapest. Cash-strapped NATO members, lacking adequate financing options, have so far appeared amenable to such investments.

<sup>1</sup> Poland has notably made an effort to modernize its forces, acquiring F-16s during the 2000s and pursuing a significant military modernization effort, including a \$4.6-billion contract for F-35A Lightning II fighter jets signed in January 2020 and an estimated \$4.75-billion Patriot missile defense system deal in 2018. However, there is much more to be done in former Warsaw Pact member states, especially those that individually lack the capital to make similar investments. For more, see: Max Bergmann, “To Help NATO Allies Get Off Russian Equipment, the United States Should Revive Defense Lending,” *War on the Rocks*, February 14, 2018: <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/help-nato-allies-get-off-russian-equipment-united-states-revive-defense-lending/>.

## Open a Bank

Two US Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcons lead a mixed formation including a Bulgarian air force MiG-29 Fulcrum and MiG-21 Fishbed over Bulgaria. (Source: Defense Visual Information Database System)



All of these deficiencies point to the need for NATO to create a financial mechanism to invest in its needs. In short, NATO should create its own bank.

There is plenty of precedent for NATO to follow when considering how to establish a multilateral bank. The World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are all examples of multilateral lending institutions that raise capital using a range of debt instruments.

A NATO bank could complement existing multilateral institutions. Allies could make an initial investment that mirrors their existing contributions to organizations like the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, likely in line with their gross domestic products (GDPs). The capital for the bank would likely be accumulated over a multiyear period. The amount of capital the bank would need to hold in liquid reserves would be a small percentage of its overall lending portfolio.

A NATO bank could also be set up with guardrails and standards similar to those followed by other lending institutions, including a governing structure and thorough due diligence practices to ensure that funds are allocated and used in line with the bank's principles.<sup>2</sup>

NATO should be encouraged by the bond market's reaction to the EU's decision this summer to issue debt on the capital markets for the first time. Investors will view EU debt as extremely safe. Achieving a AAA credit rating will be key for NATO to attract a set of institutional investors, much like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Inter-American Development Bank, and likely, the European Commission's upcoming credit lines to help member states recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This would enable inexpensive, low-interest loans to finance critical Alliance efforts.<sup>3</sup> Interest rates would likely decrease over time as investors gain confidence in the bank's ability to repay loans. Once established, the bank would likely become self-sustaining and be able

2 Project management will be critical to the functioning of the bank, and in bolstering confidence in the institution. Currently, there is no multilateral lending institution specifically dedicated to investments in defense and security. There is, however, the potential that dual-use projects will intersect with efforts funded by the World Bank, European Investment Bank, or other existing mechanisms. In that case, a solid governance and project management structure will be crucial.

3 Using the bank and benefiting from its low interest rates could be conditioned on investing in projects that benefit the Alliance. The bank's project management teams would need to certify that projects align with NATO's strategic objectives, and that the money is being used efficiently.

to reinvest its returns, which could offset any costs that NATO's military and civil budgets struggle to meet. In other words, NATO as an organization could become self-sustaining.

A NATO bank could help achieve several aims, and, importantly, allies would retain decision-making power on the mandate and scope of specific investments.

First, a NATO bank could finance defense modernization within the Alliance.<sup>4</sup> It would provide a vehicle for NATO to think beyond arbitrary spending levels and to focus on joint capabilities. Presently, the justified, yet incessant, demands for NATO members to spend two percent of their GDPs on defense may be doing more harm than good. A NATO bank could shift the conversation to focus on financing the Alliance's pressing needs, as opposed to abstract spending targets that do not efficiently address its capability gaps. The bank could provide low-interest, long-term loans to support defense modernization in Eastern Europe and former Warsaw Pact countries. The only way for these countries to overhaul their militaries is through outside financial assistance. NATO could step in to provide loans at lower rates in a way that fosters joint procurements, which often fail due to financial reasons. All members would be able to borrow at the same rate, allowing many in the Alliance to achieve a better rate through the bank itself than would be possible from another financial institution. This would also create economies of scale and increase interoperability. Having said all that, there is no reason why national deposits from allies into the bank could not contribute toward the two percent target. It could be a creative way to get allies on board with spending more on defense. It may also be politically more tenable for some allies, such as Germany, to pay into a multilateral bank that finances a collective effort rather than arming themselves.

Second, a NATO bank could make strategic investments in infrastructure. This could give NATO an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The bank could finance dual-use infrastructure needed to support the Alliance's military goals, such as improving

military mobility. This includes investing in bolstering bridges and roads and the expansion of ports and rail infrastructure to ensure NATO's forces can move quickly across the Continent. Although military mobility remains a high-profile area for NATO-EU cooperation, the EU is unlikely to fund these efforts at the level it had sought prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is where a NATO bank could step in. NATO could also use the bank to invest in partners, such as the Western Balkans or North African states, thereby supporting cooperation and stability.

Third, the bank could invest in emerging technologies. Perhaps NATO could help support joint investments in 5G technology or other advanced technology projects, similar to the role the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) plays for the US military. Other potential areas of investment could include cyber and space. These would have common value for the Alliance, and could complement efforts already underway through mechanisms like the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund. The bank could include a venture capital arm and startup accelerator that would improve the Alliance's resilience to investments from unideal partners.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, a NATO bank would provide readily available funds in case of a crisis or conflict. While the Alliance prepares militarily for potential conflict, it has not prepared for the financial implications of a crisis. Such preparation should not be an afterthought. The unstated assumption has been that the United States, potentially aided by wealthy allies, would pick up the tab. But this should not be assumed. A NATO bank should be part of larger Alliance contingency plans to support members in need and respond to a potential threat.

Lastly, a NATO bank could alleviate budgetary pressure caused by the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. As states look to fund recovery efforts and balance budgets, defense will naturally be on the chopping block. There will, rightfully, be significant pressure from constituents to focus on investing in other

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4 At the outset, the NATO bank would likely be limited to allies, with partners to be potentially included once the bank builds a solid foundation and reputation.

sectors like public health, education, and social benefits. A NATO bank could provide counter-cyclical inexpensive loans for joint procurement efforts that create jobs, improve the Alliance's defense industrial capacity, and bolster NATO's ability to execute its core mission. A NATO bank could also open lines of credit that enable member states to borrow on more favorable terms in exchange for maintaining defense spending at a certain level. Additionally, states with the financial capacity to capitalize the bank would benefit economically, as their national defense industries would likely be the source of most new defense procurement.

However, a NATO bank would not magically solve all issues facing the Alliance. Some Alliance members may continue to resist making investments, even if offered extremely low borrowing rates, and may need institutional pressure and evidence to incentivize an initial buy-in. Yet others will take advantage, especially if the United States were to shift its diplomatic energy from demanding arbitrary spending targets to supporting specific investments that allow capability gaps to be filled. States, particularly those with smaller budgets, need to be given the financial tools to make these crucial investments. Designing the proper additional incentives will encourage NATO allies to invest. If you build a bank, as history has shown, borrowers will come.

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# Disband the NATO Response Force

by John R. Deni

Replacing the NRF with a plug-and-play interoperability model increases the chance that NATO will employ its high-readiness forces.

# Disband the NATO Response Force

## Introduction

Most of the essays in this collection suggest new policies for NATO to pursue, other initiatives for it to unveil, or more things for it to do. By contrast, this essay will suggest something NATO should *stop* doing: the Alliance should disband the NATO Response Force (NRF). After nearly twenty years, the NRF is like an antiquarian book—very expensive to acquire, but once purchased it rarely leaves the shelf. Instead of continuing to invest resources in the NRF, the Alliance ought to strengthen readiness and build capabilities by pursuing a more intensified form of interoperability.

The NRF was launched in November 2002 at the Alliance’s Prague Summit. The brainchild of US defense leaders, the NRF was intended to strengthen NATO’s readiness and responsiveness as well as act as a catalyst for capability development (especially in Europe). As one of its conceptual forebears has written,<sup>1</sup> the goal was to create a “real-life force with a C4ISR structure and assigned combat units, not merely a disorganized troop list,” pulled together on an ad hoc basis. The problem is this original defining strength of the NRF has been revealed as its Achilles heel.

## Trouble from the Outset

Declared initially operational in October 2004, the NRF reached full operational capability in 2006. However, the NRF was beset with challenges<sup>2</sup> from the outset. It faced shortfalls in fixed-wing transport,

rotary wing assets, intelligence, and logistics units. A degree of this was due to extant operations in Afghanistan, but in other instances allies were simply unwilling to contribute forces.<sup>3</sup> Given these shortfalls, NATO reduced the response force’s level of ambition after one year of the NRF’s existence, essentially downsizing it from twenty-five thousand troops to about twelve thousand five hundred.

Continuing shortfalls resulted in yet another reorganization in 2009-10, leading to the creation of a thirteen thousand-strong, multinational Immediate Response Force (IRF) as the core of the NRF, but with a somewhat different mission. By shifting from a collection of specific mission types to a far more generic mission statement, the allies essentially obviated the issue of unfilled capability requirements<sup>4</sup> for any given twelve-month IRF rotation.

In the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014, NATO grew increasingly concerned about Baltic and Polish security. As a result, the Alliance initiated the Readiness Action Plan, a key element of which entailed revamping the IRF into the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), and shortening its response time. Previously, although some elements of the IRF were deployable within five days,<sup>5</sup> most of the force required thirty days to deploy. Today, there are elements of the VJTF—the centerpiece of which is a reinforced multinational brigade of roughly five thousand troops—that can deploy within forty-eight hours.

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- 1 Richard Kugler, “The NATO Response Force 2002-2006: Innovation by the Atlantic Alliance,” Case Studies in National Security Transformation, *National Defense University* (2006), <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/ocasional/CTNSP/CaseStudiesArchive/Case-1-NATO-Response-Force.pdf?ver=2017-06-16-150518-373>.
  - 2 “Money Problems Hobble NATO’s Rapid Response Force,” *DW*, October 2, 2006, <https://www.dw.com/en/money-problems-hobble-natos-rapid-response-force/a-1899166>.
  - 3 Mark John, “NATO rapid-reaction force hobbled by cuts,” *Reuters*, September 17, 2007, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-force-idUSL1790834720070917>.
  - 4 Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning, “The NATO Response Force: A qualified failure no more?” *Taylor and Francis Online*, July 31, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13523260.2017.1350020>.
  - 5 Robert J. Hendricks, *Response Forces Galore: A Guided Tour*, *Clingendael Institute*, November 1, 2014, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05332?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05332?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).



## Disband the NATO Response Force

The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, a part of the NATO Response Force, participated in NATO's large-scale exercise Trident Juncture 18, to test its readiness and capabilities. (Source: NATO Flickr)



NATO also technically increased the size of the NRF from thirteen thousand to about forty thousand, but this change essentially constituted an exercise in creative accounting.<sup>6</sup> Instead of expanding the VJTF *per se*, NATO declared that the VJTF troops that had just completed their twelve-month rotation, as well as the VJTF troops designated for the *next* twelve-month rotation, were all considered part of the NRF's Initial Follow-on Forces Group (IFFG), deployable within thirty to forty-five days.

### NRF in Action?

NATO claims, “the NRF can be rapidly tailored to meet the needs of a wide variety of missions, wherever in the world a crisis emerges.”<sup>7</sup> In practice though, the NRF has *not* been utilized in a variety of missions, nor has it played any role whatsoever in the most urgent crisis the Alliance has seen in decades.

Since the NRF's inception nearly twenty years ago, it has been used in support of Afghan elections (2004),

the Athens Olympic games (2004), and disaster relief in Pakistan (2005) and the United States (2005). Inexplicably though, it played *no* role in reinforcing the Baltic States, Poland, or Romania in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea. If there has ever been an opportunity for the NRF's employment, it was then.

Why has the NRF never been used, aside from high-visibility event security or disaster relief? Activating the NRF requires a consensus decision by all allies, a number of whom have long prevented<sup>8</sup> NATO from making full use of this capability. As Alliance membership has grown, achieving consensus on deploying the NRF has only become more difficult.

In theory, the revamped NRF—with the VJTF as its centerpiece—is meant to function as part of NATO's tripwire deterrence-by-punishment posture. The VJTF is too small to stop a determined Russian offensive, but with troops from a variety of allies participating in each twelve-month rotation there are guaranteed to

6 Jens Ringsmose and Sten Rynning, *Can NATO's New Very High Readiness Joint Task Force Deter?*, Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, January 1, 2016, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07991?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07991?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

7 “NRF Rotation 2020,” NATO JFC Brunssum, <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nrf-rotation-2016.aspx>.

8 “Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Seventh Report: Afghanistan, continued,” *UK Parliament*, July 29, 2004, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmfaaff/441/44108.htm>.

be casualties from across Europe and North America if Moscow were to send forces into one of the Baltic States, for instance. However, this presumes that the Alliance has agreed to deploy the NRF at the first indication of an incursion, and therein lies the problem.

### Why the NRF Remains on the Shelf

Many European allies have long been reluctant to devolve authority to a US Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) to employ multinational forces in the absence of a decision by the North Atlantic Council (NAC). This is perfectly understandable—sovereign allies are unwilling to cede decisions to an unelected US officer over whether to engage in war.

However, NAC deliberations and the time it might take to authorize SACEUR to employ the NRF creates serious problems for front-line allies like the Baltics, which could be overrun by the time other allied capitals weigh in. To address this challenge, the allies have granted SACEUR some additional authority to “alert, stage, and prepare”<sup>9</sup> the VJTF to be ready to go once the political decision is made. Nonetheless, the problem remains that in the absence of consensus—which may be difficult to reach in cases where evidence supporting NATO involvement remains ambiguous—the VJTF, and with it the NRF, will remain unused. Secondly, the risk remains that one or more allies whose forces are at the time assigned to the VJTF could decide that while it will not stand in the way of consensus on a decision to deploy, it will not allow its forces to participate in the deployment, potentially rendering the NRF ineffective. Given that the NRF is comprised of specific units committed for a full year, like a tower of Jenga blocks, if one piece of this multinational agglomeration is pulled out, the whole structure risks failure.

The standards for participation in the NRF are expensive to achieve and maintain over time, especially in

terms of training exercises and the supplies of ammunition and spare parts that must be built up and set aside. For example, the Netherlands—which made important but relatively small contributions to the NRF in 2017, 2018, and 2019—earmarked €10 million per year<sup>10</sup> for additional VJTF-related exercises, transportation, and supplies. Designated allied units participate in a NATO exercise program to integrate, prepare, and certify they are ready for the twelve-month NRF assignment. Allies generally also carry out national-level pre-training prior to the NRF exercise. Once on their twelve-month NRF rotation, allied units then remain in their respective countries on standby, although they can also be utilized for national-only purposes during that same period.

If they are *not* used, those units represent a well-prepared, yet expensive and underutilized defense asset. While allied units and personnel may retain a degree of the interoperability and capability development that accompanies the NRF train-up, they risk completely wasting the readiness built and maintained over that nearly two-year period of both pre-rotation training and assignment as an NRF-designated unit. This represents a significant cost at a time when most allies are likely to face increasing defense budget pressure in the wake of the COVID-19 recession.

### What Does NATO Have to Lose?

A primary argument<sup>11</sup> advanced in support of what the NRF has accomplished to date is that it has spurred multinational cooperation, interoperability, and capability development. This may be true, but the NRF is not necessarily the only vehicle through which these important objectives can be achieved.

The Alliance conducts an array of multinational exercises<sup>12</sup> every year, through which it can cultivate cooperation, readiness, and interoperability. Moreover, the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP) is a

9 “Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of NATO Defence Ministers,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 24, 2015, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_120967.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_120967.htm).

10 House of Representatives of the Netherlands, “Brief van de Minister van Defensie Aan de Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal,” December 19, 2016, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29521-335.html>.

11 Guillaume Lasconjarias, “The NRF: from a Key Driver of Transformation to a Laboratory of the Connected Forces Initiative,” *NATO Defense College Rome, Research Division*, 88 (January 2013), file:///C:/Users/rache/Downloads/rp\_88%20(2).pdf.

12 “NATO Exercises,” SHAPE NATO, July 27, 2020, <https://shape.nato.int/nato-exercises>.

well-established, increasingly effective tool for identifying the minimum military capabilities needed across all Alliance mission areas and for designating specific allies to develop them.

Therefore, to think that by eliminating the NRF the allies would do irreparable harm to their military cooperation, interoperability, capability development, and readiness is inaccurate. Nonetheless, if the NRF is disbanded, there is an alternative approach that the allies might consider to supplement existing exercises, the NDPP, and other tools.

### What Should Replace it?

The allies can make more efficient and effective use of their limited defense funds by focusing on building plug-and-play interoperability within their quick-response military formations. For example, any designated quick-response unit ought to be able to operate effectively and efficiently with and as part of *any other* ally's unit at the next echelon. A Bulgarian rapid-response airborne company ought to be able to operate under a Spanish, Italian, or Belgian rapid-response airborne battalion, which each ought to be able to operate under a French, US, or Polish rapid-response brigade, and so on up through the corps level and across all types of military forces.

This sounds much easier than it would be, especially when considering allied efforts over the last three decades<sup>13</sup> to build persistent multinational formations and establish routines of cooperation<sup>14</sup> within NATO. It also means acknowledging that NATO *per se* may not be the first responder to a crisis. Instead, some subset of willing allies would more likely be first into the

fray. This may frustrate those who argue that Alliance solidarity is critical, but such a structure would finally enable the allies to field the rapid response force packages they have invested in.

Additionally, a plug-and-play interoperability initiative represents a solution to the problem of the NAC's speed of decision-making as well as the risk that a single ally might withdraw a critical NRF capability even as it agrees on the necessity of doing *something*. It also allows the allies to retain a multinational approach, sharing risks to the degree that any particular crisis makes politically feasible. By aiming for the highest degree possible of operational, logistical, and technical interoperability—and testing it regularly through vigorous NATO exercises—a plug-and-play interoperability initiative also enables the allies to build modern military capabilities. Finally, coupling it with deployment timeline requirements established, allocated, and monitored through the NDPP would ensure the Alliance achieves and maintains its readiness goals, enabling it to stay on par with what the NRF offers today in terms of ready forces.

In sum, the NRF is, at best, achieving only one of its two goals, and even this is debatable. It would be better for NATO to steer defense resources toward tools, mechanisms, and capabilities that would serve allied interests, strengthen deterrence, and reassure all allies more effectively. Doing away with the NRF and replacing it with a plug-and-play interoperability initiative coupled with NDPP-driven readiness requirements will not necessarily result in *better* readiness or interoperability over what the alliance has today. Instead, it would enable the Alliance to better *utilize* the readiness and interoperability it builds.

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13 Dr. Thomas-Durell Young, *Multinational Land Forces and the NATO Force Structure Review*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, June 2000, <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/multinational-land-forces-and-the-nato-force-structure-review/>.

14 "1 (German/Netherlands) Corps," 1GNC, <https://1gnc.org/>.



# Listen to Women

By Lisa A. Aronsson

Twenty years after its creation, NATO should affirm the strategic significance of the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and define what it means for an era of great power competition.

# Listen to Women

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) recognized the disproportionate impact of violent conflict on women and girls, and the critical role that women play in peace and security processes. Passed in October 2000, UNSCR 1325 called for strategies to protect women and girls in conflict, and to engage women in all mechanisms, at all levels, and in all stages of conflict.

Today, the WPS Agenda is a legal and political framework for gender in international security that is based on four pillars for policy-making: prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery. Implementation is usually measured in each of these four pillars. The United Nations Security Council has passed nine additional resolutions since 2000, which have updated WPS's concepts and definitions, and reinforced the continuing importance of UNSCR 1325.<sup>1</sup> Together, these resolutions and an emerging set of global norms guide the work of security organizations like NATO, steering them toward gender equality and the promotion of women's participation, protection, and equal rights under law.

In 2007, NATO and its partners formally adopted UNSCR 1325 as allied policy, and they have since developed a set of strategies, action plans, and institutional mechanisms to implement it across all of the Alliance's activities. NATO is considered a leading regional security organization when it comes to implementing UNSCR 1325, but as WPS celebrates twenty years, it is at risk of losing momentum in NATO. The Alliance is winding down its Resolute Support Mission in

Afghanistan, the first mission to have gender perspectives incorporated into the entire planning cycle, and it is not entirely clear that lessons will be learned. The risk is that NATO comes to see WPS as "outdated" before it has achieved its objectives in Afghanistan, and before WPS has been widely understood and internalized by NATO officials.

WPS risks slipping down the priority list as out-of-area stabilization operations fade into the past and NATO focuses on threats and challenges closer to home. This could not only jeopardize improvement in women's lives in Afghanistan, which have come at great cost to the Alliance. It could also put NATO at a disadvantage when confronting the complex threats and challenges closer to home. WPS remains a core interest for NATO and a strategic imperative. NATO must reinvigorate the WPS agenda by pressing ahead with gender mainstreaming, increasing relevant training and exercises with partners, and clarifying the relevance of its WPS commitments for a new security environment.

Prior to UNSCR 1325, NATO officials worked for decades to raise awareness about women's experiences in the armed forces and to elevate their status.<sup>2</sup> In the 1990s, NATO witnessed the use of rape as war tactic in the Balkans, and recognized it as a security concern for NATO, not just a personal tragedy for those involved.<sup>3</sup> In Afghanistan, gender perspectives enhanced situational awareness and human terrain understanding. Female Engagement Teams were seen as "adding value" to counterinsurgency operations.<sup>4</sup> Gender issues also provided a focus for cooperation with local forces, operational partners, international

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- 1 The United Nations Security Council Resolutions, which combined with UNSCR 1325 collectively comprise the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda, are: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), and 2493 (2019).
  - 2 Katharine A.M. Wright, Matthew Hurley, and Jesus Ignacio Gil Ruiz, *NATO, Gender and the Military: Women Organizing from Within*, (London: Routledge, 2019).
  - 3 Swanee Hunt and Douglas Lute, "Inclusive Security: NATO Adapts and Adopts," *Prism*, 2016, 6(1), [https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism\\_6-1/Inclusive%20Security.pdf](https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism_6-1/Inclusive%20Security.pdf).
  - 4 Katharine A.M. Wright, "NATO's Adoption of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: On Women, Peace and Security Making the Agenda a Reality," *International Political Science Review Science*, 2016, 37(3): 350-61, [www.jstor.org/stable/44632286](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44632286).

## Listen to Women

A 19-year-old female Afghan sergeant is interviewed by a Dutch combat reporter during the break of a map reading class she attends with 22 other women. The course is taught as part of the 'Train-the-Trainer' concept used by NATO's Resolute Support Mission. (Source: NATO Instagram)



organizations, and civil society. Eventually the idea that NATO could help “liberate” Afghan women became part of the Alliance’s political agenda.

NATO is winding down operations in Afghanistan, but it should not lose sight of its WPS-related objectives in the country, its own organization, or in other allied missions closer to home. Those objectives are guided by two documents. The first, (adopted in 2007 and periodically updated and revised), is the NATO/EAPC (Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council) Women, Peace and Security: Policy and Action Plan.<sup>5</sup> This document guides NATO’s overall implementation with three key NATO principles: inclusion, integration, and integrity. The second guiding document, the NATO strategic commands’ Bi-strategic Command Directive 040-001: Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Gender Perspective into the NATO Command Structure,<sup>6</sup> guides military implementation. It created a gender advisory structure to help incorporate gender into all military structures and activities, from concepts and doctrine to all stages of

the planning cycle for missions and operations. The Alliance also has a high-level Special Representative for Women, Peace, and Security to guide overall implementation.

Reviews of NATO’s achievements generally conclude that the Alliance has robust policies and strategies in place, but that it has faced challenges in implementation and in organizational change. Part of the challenge lies with the member states, which have responsibility for implementation through the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs). Seven of NATO’s thirty allies still do not have a NAP,<sup>7</sup> and among those that do, many lack political will, national legislation, or budgets for implementation. Variation among the NAPs also makes widespread and consistent implementation across the Alliance difficult. NATO is not alone in this struggle, either. Other international organizations face similar challenges. The Security Council itself has struggled to implement its own resolutions consistently, and UN Peacekeeping’s record is considered

5 NATO. *NATO/EAPC Women, Peace and Security: Policy and Action Plan 2018*, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2018\\_09/20180920\\_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_09/20180920_180920-WPS-Action-Plan-2018.pdf).

6 NATO, “Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001 (Public Version): Integrating UNSCR 1325 and Gender Perspective into the NATO Command Structure,” 2017, <https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/structure/genderadvisor/nu0761.pdf>.

7 NATO member states that still do not have a NAP are: Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia. *Peacewomen, WPS Implementation*, <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

slow, if not “disappointing.”<sup>8</sup> Recent tensions in the Security Council between the United States, Russia, and China over language on sexual health, civil society, and human rights also undermine the Agenda and slow its implementation by states.<sup>9</sup>

Reviews of NATO policies and activities also highlight challenges with the dissemination of knowledge and guidance. One found that in 2013, a majority of commanders did not know about the 2009 directive on gender in military structures, though they said they valued gender perspectives.<sup>10</sup> Interviews continue to reveal misunderstandings among NATO officials about WPS. Some officials still see it as a “box-ticking” exercise and a women’s issue, rather than as an institutional and strategic imperative.<sup>11</sup> Some think women have gender expertise because of their sex and not because of their education, training, and professional experience. This has led in some cases to the appointment of unqualified gender advisors, and it leaves talented advisors feeling they cannot get their jobs done. Gender advisors point to three main challenges: lack of resources, insufficient understanding of operations and missions, and “continuing resistance from their peers in accepting gender as relevant” for their work.<sup>12</sup> These attitudes undermine the gender advisory structure, reinforce the entrenched gender dynamics at NATO, and keep WPS on the margins of the NATO debate.

Some gender advisors report a concern that gender has become a kind of currency in today’s political environment. Some have started to question whether NATO values their work for political ends, or for its concrete deliverables in missions and operations.<sup>13</sup> Highly visible work on gender policies is increasingly seen to offer some individuals and offices short-term

political capital. Over the longer term, however, this can backfire. It diverts attention from key objectives, and it undermines the advisory structure. It also invites the kind of external scrutiny that can discredit NATO by revealing the gaps between NATO’s ambition when it comes to WPS and its actual achievements. Critically, it also risks undermining the important efforts at mainstreaming gender perspectives into all of NATO’s work across departments and headquarters. Incorporating gender perspectives into the everyday processes and procedures, and into what guides the militaries (concepts, doctrine, training, etc.), are the efforts that can lead to real organizational change.

Despite all this, NATO is still considered a leader when it comes to implementing UNSCR 1325, which is why renewed commitment is so important. NATO has much to offer the WPS community as a political organization, international standard-setter, and military alliance with the ability to bring like-minded states into a command structure. If NATO can improve implementation and advance mainstreaming within its organization, others will take note. NATO should focus on improving cooperation between its civilian and its military bodies, and it should increase accountability mechanisms through expanded use of gender markers, scorecards, and other such mechanisms.<sup>14</sup> Officers from member states and partner states are constantly rotating through the Alliance, and NATO can help move the needle in all of those states by changing mindsets through its own process of organizational change. Bottom-up mainstreaming should be prioritized in the short term. It is the most effective tool for changing attitudes and opening up channels for new thinking.

NATO is merging WPS with its broader work on Human Security. The connection makes sense given that the

8 Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, “The Futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda,” *International Affairs*, 2016, 92(2): 378.

9 Catherine O’Rourke and Aisling Swaine, “Heading to Twenty: Perils and Promises of WPS Resolution 2493,” *WPS in Practice*, London School of Economics, November 2019, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2019/11/12/heading-to-twenty-perils-and-promises-of-wps-resolution-2493>.

10 Helene Lackenbauer and Richard Langlais, eds., *Review of the Practical Implications of UNSCR 1325 for the Conduct of NATO-Led Operations and Missions*, May 2013, 4, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2013\\_10/20131021\\_131023-UNSCR1325-review-final.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2013_10/20131021_131023-UNSCR1325-review-final.pdf).

11 Wright, “NATO’s Adoption.”

12 Megan Bastick and Claire Duncanson, “Agents of Change? Gender Advisors in NATO Militaries,” *International Peacekeeping*, 2018, 25(4): 554-577.

13 Ibid. 567-568.

14 Jamila Seftaoui, “Women, Peace, and Security: What it Takes to Achieve Relevant Impacts,” *Resilience and Resolution: A Compendium of Essays on Women, Peace and Security*, NATO Office of the SGSR, March, 2019: 41-45, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_03/20190307\\_190308-wps-essays-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_03/20190307_190308-wps-essays-en.pdf).

agendas are mutually reinforcing.<sup>15</sup> It can also help WPS gain political traction among allies, especially when NATO is engaged in humanitarian and pandemic relief, as well as in building cohesion and societal resilience. NATO should be careful not to let the Human Security agenda obscure the fact that allies and partners have responsibilities to stay the course on the implementation of UNSCR 1325, however. The military operationalization of the Human Security agenda is much less developed than is WPS. NATO officials should also consider the strategic relevance of WPS for its traditional collective defense and deterrence challenges. Given the complex and unstable security environment, NATO can generate more creative and successful solutions by leveraging its entire talent pool as well as emerging technologies. Providing equal security for men, women, boys, and girls can also lead to more societal cohesion and resilience and it can expand NATO's global political reach.

As NATO completes its reflection process, it should mark the twentieth anniversary of UNSCR 1325 by recommitting to the WPS Agenda, and by defining the purpose of NATO's continuing commitments in the context of a new and uncertain security environment. If NATO does not, its achievements will start to slip. The rights of women could backtrack in Afghanistan and elsewhere, divisions and inequalities closer to home will fester, and wavering commitments to values could further undermine strength and solidarity in the Alliance. NATO could open itself up to new

vulnerabilities in the conventional sense but also in information, political, and other types of warfare.

NATO officials have generally understood the relevance of WPS for out-of-area missions of the past, but few are currently thinking about its intrinsic value or its strategic relevance for an era of great power competition. NATO should invite such a debate, and ensure it takes place at the highest levels. A clear and simple vision for the future of NATO's WPS Agenda, coupled with a robust policy platform that is progressively implemented into training and exercises, including into NATO's conventional deterrence missions, would go a long way toward changing attitudes and facilitating implementation of UNSCR 1325.

In seeking to reinvigorate WPS, the Alliance needs to answer some tough questions about how to achieve success. Is NATO's commitment to WPS driven by its legal responsibilities? Does NATO value gender equality for its own sake and does it believe the armed forces should represent society? Or is NATO's work on UNSCR 1325 primarily geared toward addressing manpower shortages, modernizing its forces, or stamping out problems of sexual harassment and abuse? WPS stands at a crossroads in NATO. It could lose momentum and be a source of weakness if implementation stalls. But it could also be a source of strength for NATO—politically, militarily, and in terms of its cohesion—if the Alliance can reinvigorate WPS internally and make progress toward implementation.

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<sup>15</sup> NATO's Human Security Umbrella includes among others: Protection of Civilians, Children and Armed Conflict, Cultural Property Protection, and Youth and Security. "Introductory Resource Guide: Women, Peace, and Security," NATO, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_07/20190710\\_1907-wps-resource-guide.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_07/20190710_1907-wps-resource-guide.pdf)





# Supersize Cyber

by Safa Shahwan Edwards, William Loomis,  
and Simon Handler

NATO should adopt a digital .2 percent policy whereby member states commit to spend .2 percent of their gross domestic product on cybersecurity and digital defense modernization.

# Supersize Cyber

NATO should adopt a digital .2 percent policy, whereby member states commit to spend .2 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on cybersecurity and digital defense modernization, evoking the existing two percent guideline utilized by the Alliance for traditional defense expenditures. While some NATO members are awash in cybersecurity capabilities, others are not, preventing the Alliance as a whole from most effectively addressing adversaries increasingly focused on digital and information-centered threats. Cyber defense, collective response, adequate protection of current and future weapon systems, digital integration, leveling up Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (JISR)—the debates about burden sharing are missing critical dimensions of digital transformation. NATO is grappling with how to navigate and operate in cyberspace and must follow strategy with resources.

Since its establishment, NATO's mission has been to protect its members through political and military means. How member states finance the Alliance's efforts has remained contentious, but traditionally, funding has focused on weapons and hardware. Public debates on burden sharing within NATO for too long have focused on how much member states spend on defense in isolation, without adequate prioritization of where those funds are going. Thus, the debate over the two percent guideline already threatens to pigeon-hole cybersecurity, "cybered" weapons, and command and control systems under the "research and development" category, leaving them at risk of being cannibalized in favor of traditional defense acquisitions. Member states should be reimagining how to spend on defense, and where that spending is relative to emerging threats and collective security challenges. To ensure funding for cybersecurity is appropriately prioritized, NATO should adopt a .2 percent commitment to digital defense spending, building on the strong base it has developed in terms of doctrine, standards, and requirements.

A modern force, like an innovative technology company, must be able to harness, store, secure, analyze,

and share vast amounts of data from anywhere on demand. Relative speed has always been a warfighting necessity, and the adaptation of commercial cloud services—the backbone of digital transformation—is critical to equipping forces with data to make quick, informed, and coordinated decisions. But digital transformation does not come cheap. For example, take the US Department of Defense's Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure (JEDI) project—the price tag for commercially-built cloud services is as much as \$10 billion. Smaller-scale examples of critical investment in digital transformation across NATO include the British Ministry of Defence's £17.75-million contract for Microsoft's Azure private cloud services. Proportional investment is required across the Alliance to transform how forces interact amongst themselves and in turn interoperate more effectively with allies.

The proposed .2 percent target would increase by two to three times the amount most NATO member states spend on cybersecurity and offensive and defense cyber capabilities—providing the capital base for long-term investment, training, and workforce expansion to meet operational demands. This approximates to 15-20 percent of many countries' defense budgets. Considering just how frequent the use of digital networks and technology are across all aspects of the defense mission, and the need to consider the cost of IT modernization as well across the defense enterprise in each state, this .2 percent target falls right in line with an aggressive yet purposeful strategy.

As governments, militaries, and adversaries increasingly rely on cyberspace and digital tools, a reexamination of priorities and funding benchmarks is needed. The .2 percent target will enable NATO to best position itself for the digital future of conflict and warfare. Forgoing such a mandate would be a missed opportunity as member states' appreciation for cyber defense and digital capacity is increasing, and this move would complement NATO's nascent cyber doctrine and Cyber Defence Pledge. This new initiative also has the flexibility to be championed both by NATO leadership through the NATO Defence Planning Process (DPP),

## Supersize Cyber

An allied soldier relies on multiple sophisticated technology systems, all requiring cyber defense, during a military exercise (Source: NATO Allied Command Transformation)



which establishes spending priorities for member states, *and* outside of the Alliance structure through a public commitment by member states to invest in cyber capabilities.

Where current defense planning goals for cybersecurity and digital transformation are qualitative requirements, an aggressive quantitative target will make considerably more possible. NATO's digital transformation requirements could be broadened and enhanced to complement national efforts on cyber capabilities and know-how. For instance, NATO could be aggressive about pooling knowledge, research, intelligence, and personnel at the NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA), Alliance Command Transformation, and the NATO Collaboration Support Office. In doing so, NATO could serve as a force multiplier for aggressive national investments in cybersecurity and digital defense modernization.

Perhaps most importantly, this mandate is unlikely to be hijacked, spearheaded, or politicized by any one member state, like we have seen with burden sharing, but would exemplify NATO committing itself as an organization to maintaining relevance and value for years to come. Increasingly, public-facing materials from Brussels emphasize the importance of cyber

defense in the face of evolving and increasingly complex cyberattacks and member states' reliance on technology. No one member state is telling NATO to do this—in fact, NATO is telling NATO to do this.

The .2 percent should be spent in three distinct areas—enabling offensive capabilities on the battlefield as “cybered” war becomes the norm, defending digital systems from laptops to combat aircraft, and transforming the information technology infrastructure of the Alliance and its members' defense organizations to meet evolving demands.

First, enabling offensive capabilities on the battlefield. NATO has made it clear that its cyber priorities are to “protect its own networks (including operations and missions) and enhance resilience across the Alliance.” This has manifested itself mostly as enforcing best practices for basic cybersecurity, developing consensus on collective defense in cyberspace, and creating an offensive cyber framework. NATO must evolve this focus and invest in playbooks that integrate cyber with traditional capabilities, and top-level training on how to utilize them.

To achieve this, NATO must invest in “cybered” operations. “Cybered” conflict is any conflict of national

significance in which success or failure for major participants is critically dependent on digitized key activities along the path of events. One of the biggest challenges when it comes to integrating these types of capabilities is trust. When NATO agreed in 2018 to integrate allied cyber capabilities into Alliance operations, it laid a foundation for building trust and shared ties that will help alleviate this challenge. The long-term trajectory for the use of these capabilities is not for them to be shared across national armies but coordinated closely and communicated through joint exercises and regular operational collaboration.

NATO must strategically shift resources to directly address emerging threats—and that means more than traditional cybersecurity. The Alliance must work to develop doctrine, training modules, operating concepts, and technical capabilities to conduct “cybered” operations to achieve its strategic goals. With Russia continuously demonstrating its expansionist agenda, leveraging hybrid capabilities, pushing boundaries, and accusing the Alliance of aggression, NATO must be able to respond to hybrid threats with hybrid solutions. China’s increasingly assertive foreign policy and long history of digital foreign adventurism pose a challenge as well.

Second, NATO must more aggressively invest in the defense of its digital systems. The Alliance is already engaged in a pitched battle across cyberspace to defend devices and networks from regular intrusion. Without adequate resourcing of the defense of these systems, no member state can have confidence in their utility in a fight. Where there is an emerging role for cyber capabilities to complement and enable traditional kinetic systems on offense, there is an overwhelming need today for defense. Resourcing this fight requires nations to commit to supporting the hiring of personnel, new technology acquisitions, and cost-intensive interoperability, including operational information sharing, joint exercises and incident response, and standardized security tools and practices.

Finally, NATO and its members must invest in digital transformation. NCIA has endorsed digital transformation—the concept of unlocking digital potential across its thirty member states—to maintain the Alliance’s relevance for decades to come. However, in order for

NATO to meet the challenges associated with modern adversary capabilities, member states must be not only willing to appreciate, but sufficiently fund, digital transformation.

The ability of NATO forces to best leverage data to constantly learn and improve security requires new approaches and investments in people, processes, and technologies. Preliminary investments in establishing technical teams and best practices to constantly evolve to adapt to the shifting threat landscape can contribute to long-term savings, freeing up funding for other security challenges. For example, by investing in new software development processes like DevSecOps—the practice of incorporating the development, security, and operations teams as integral components throughout the course of a continuous development cycle, rather than integrating security at the end—defense organizations can leverage data to become more efficient, secure, and responsive to operational requirements, while saving time and money in the long run.

The .2 percent commitment is a means of driving member states to help the Alliance make long-term commitments and prepare for a future cyber-enabled war and conflict by establishing a digital bedrock comprised of personnel networks and innovative capacity to maintain an upper hand in offense and defense. Programs like the Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence (CCDCOE) in Tallinn are exemplars of the kind of investments that can yield long-term advantages if properly nurtured. Expanding the Locked Shields exercise to include real-world military units and battalion-size maneuver units will bring together technical security measures and real-world capabilities in line with the threats of contemporary battlefields.

Raising the debate over a digital .2 percent would help keep NATO valuable and relevant for the next decades of conflict. Soldiers deployed today haul cell phones and laptops, and headquarters relies on high-bandwidth connections to subordinate units, orbiting drones, and higher-echelon intelligence and command and control organizations. The modern battlefield is awash in connectivity and computing power which stitch together frontline units, support organizations, and central military administration in a single digital web. Taking advantage of these capabilities such

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that they enhance NATO's lethality, maneuverability, and capacity in the decades to come requires member states to publicly commit themselves to spending targets on cybersecurity.

Mitigating emerging digital risks requires resources and long-term investment. The modern battlefield environment compresses front line and rear area; requires a combination of civilian, diplomatic, and military capabilities; and demands continued evolution of the means and modalities of collective defense. NATO can prepare itself for the conflicts of today while investing for those of tomorrow, but to do so requires public certainty of the willingness to engage in burden sharing and a collective commitment to positive evolution in the face of stagnation. The digital .2 percent commitment offers such a visible pledge and anchors states to a meaningful contribution toward continual modernization.

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# Revitalize its Grand Strategy

by Amb. Timo Koster and Ivanka Barzashka

Collective strategic analysis is the pathway to a more inclusive, transparent, and systematic process for creating NATO's next strategic concept.

# Revitalize its Grand Strategy

NATO needs “a grand strategy” that draws on “all the tools at its disposal—economic, political, diplomatic as well as military” to counter emerging security threats, NATO’s deputy supreme allied commander, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, told the BBC months before he stepped down from his role in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, the problem has gotten worse as a global pandemic challenges nearly every aspect of our societies, Russia has become even more belligerent, and China has emerged as a competitor in a number of areas. Allies still lack, but badly need, a grand strategy to address current and emerging challenges together. While all allies acknowledge this gap in theory, they see the development of a collective grand strategy as politically risky in practice.

A new NATO grand strategy should ideally be reflected in an update to its 2010 Strategic Concept (SC), the political document that outlines the security challenges facing the Alliance and its responses. Allies view SC development, which relies predominantly on political negotiations among NATO’s now thirty members based on their respective local and regional threat perceptions, as Pandora’s box. They have tacitly agreed that kicking the can down the road is preferable to confronting political differences about the role of the Alliance in a changing world. But delays only perpetuate the doubts of those who think NATO is not doing enough and those who worry it is not focusing on the right priorities. The result is an organization struggling to remain fit for purpose in an increasingly dangerous world and that could find itself preparing for yesterday’s war.

To make progress on grand strategy, allies should rethink the process for SC development. NATO can inform political debate with a new inclusive, transparent, and systematic process for collective strategic analysis (CSA). This process will help advance allies’

understanding and build consensus on what success could look like in a complex security environment and what it would take to achieve it.

## Piecemeal Adaptations Are No Longer Enough

The strategic environment has changed considerably since the adoption of NATO’s most recent SC in 2010. The Alliance has addressed emerging security challenges largely through bottom-up, piecemeal adaptations to its policies, structures, and posture. For example, in response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has been incrementally adapting toward deterrence and defense to deal with a potential conventional force-on-force conflict with a single state adversary. Leaders have formally endorsed new military initiatives, like enhanced Forward Presence and an expanded exercise program, which were seen as achievable within the established political consensus.

While deterring Russian overt conventional military aggression remains important, the Alliance is prepared only for some of the security challenges that would likely require a collective response. Individual allies are preparing for long-term competition with Russia and China and have been developing whole-of-government responses to aggressive hybrid campaigns below the threshold of armed conflict. However, the Alliance does not have the remit to effectively respond to emerging challenges short of war. Similarly, allies will face a difficult set of dilemmas if Russia prepares for limited nuclear use to escalate out of failed conventional aggression against a NATO member.

## How NATO Makes Grand Strategy

NATO leaders have recognized that a top-down holistic strategic approach is needed to respond to the

<sup>1</sup> Beale, Jonathan. “NATO Needs a Grand Strategy for Russia, Says UK General.” BBC News. March 3, 2017. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-39151192>.

## Revitalize its Grand Strategy

General Raymond A. Thomas III at the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) War Game Center (Source: NATO Flickr)



full spectrum of security challenges. At the London Summit in 2019, they agreed to a “forward-looking reflection process under the auspices of the Secretary General,” which “will offer recommendations to reinforce Alliance unity, increase political consultation and coordination between Allies, and strengthen NATO’s political role.”<sup>2</sup> NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has appointed a Reflection Group, co-chaired by Wess Mitchell and Thomas de Maizière, that will outline the main challenges facing the Alliance in a report by the end of 2020. He will then propose next steps to the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which may include opening formal SC negotiations.

These activities follow the steps of the 2010 SC development process but are unlikely to produce the needed results. The establishment of a Reflection Group is an effort to start managing political consensus within the Alliance until the US presidential elections in November, after which actual work on a SC will likely begin. However, the group has a much more difficult task than its predecessors in 2009. Also, the inclusivity of having public seminars that provided input

into the 2010 SC is lacking this time around. The divide in threat perceptions among allies has grown, resulting in differences in priorities, levels of defense investments, and even in the appreciation of the continued relevance of the Alliance. The Reflection Group will represent the private assessment of ten individuals, not the views of all thirty governments. To help build consensus, NATO needs a bridging step between the informal, exclusive reflection process currently underway and the formal, inclusive, but potentially divisive political negotiation at the NAC level.

### Collective Strategic Analysis Can Support Grand Strategy

NATO should establish a new systematic, inclusive, and transparent process for collective strategic analysis (CSA) to inform political negotiations on a new SC. In practice, this means designing a novel process within established NATO structures that clearly connects premises to conclusions, incorporates the views of all thirty allies, and does so in an auditable way that allows for external review. CSA should be forward-looking

2 NATO, Secretary General appoints group as part of NATO reflection process, press release, March 31, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_174756.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_174756.htm).



and focus on strategic decision making in a dynamic security environment characterized by both military and nonmilitary threats across all domains.

To meet these criteria, the main organizing concept for CSA should be a NATO theory of success. CSA should be based on a strategic net assessment that develops and tests national and collective theories of success in different scenarios, including peacetime, crisis, and war, using a range of analytical methods, including wargaming.

CSA could help support the development of a NATO grand strategy by advancing understanding and creating consensus among allies. Take for example one of the most controversial issues for the Alliance—characterizing the overarching political relationship with Russia. While relations between Russia and many NATO allies are becoming increasingly competitive and could turn adversarial in some circumstances, there remain shared interests even in crisis and war. As Thomas Schelling wrote, “‘winning’ in a conflict does not have a strictly competitive meaning; it is not winning relative to one’s adversary. It means gaining relative to one’s own value system; and this may be done by bargaining, by mutual accommodation, and by the avoidance of mutually damaging behavior.”<sup>3</sup>

Seeking to counter Russian aims in every circumstance is not feasible and may be counterproductive. A strategic net assessment can help allies understand what they are competing over in the short to long term and under what circumstances competition could transition to war. Unlike a military threat assessment produced by the intelligence communities that focuses on Russian capabilities (and possibly intentions), a strategic net assessment would reveal how NATO is likely to measure up to Russia in the broader geopolitical competition over time.

This is not simply a matter of comparing military balances; it entails comparing evolving national and collective theories of success in different contexts to measure the balance of strategic advantage. Theories of success are the principles and logic that describe, explain, and evaluate how NATO allies can achieve strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis, and conflict, taking into account the interactions with other actors. These theories are not strategies; they reflect a fundamental understanding of underlying phenomena in a competitive environment, and their logics of interaction to allow allies to act strategically to change.<sup>4</sup>

How could this assessment be done? Theories about future conflict cannot be reliably tested only against real-world historical cases. To have predictive power, these theories should also be tested against collective human judgment about future events.<sup>5</sup> Here, novel analytical wargaming methods hold potential.<sup>6</sup> These methods can be used to crowdsource subjective judgments on political and military strategic decisions and outcomes in complex contexts involving multiple actors.

For example, a wargame could involve a realistic gray-zone scenario involving Russia.<sup>7</sup> This would set the context for individual allies to develop national and collective strategic objectives and courses of action based on their own values and perceptions. Policy makers and experts can systematically identify and evaluate a range of possible impacts on allied decision-making, and potential consequences of action and inaction in different circumstances. Repeating the wargames multiple times with a range of stakeholders and different scenarios could help allies better anticipate when their national and collective strategic objectives are likely to conflict or align with those of other stakeholders. The outcome would be a better understanding of the possibility space and the logic of

3 Thomas Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

4 On the difference between strategy as a plan and acting strategically, see: Lawrence Freedman, “Strategic Theory” in *Ukraine and the Art of Strategy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019).

5 Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner, *Superforecasting: The Art and Science of Prediction* (New York, NY: Random House Books, 2016).

6 Wargaming is beginning to emerge as a social science and is highlighted as one category of methods of inquiry that involves collecting and analyzing human judgment about the future. Other categories of methods include decision and risk analysis, structured analytical techniques, and futures methods originally developed for engineering, intelligence, and business applications, respectively.

7 See, for example, Ivanka Barzashka, *Crisis in Southeast Europe 2023* (London, UK: Centre for Science and Security Studies, School of Security Studies, King’s College London, 2018).

strategic interactions with Russia that can provide a common baseline for political discussions among allies.

Who would do this analysis? CSA fits closely with the remit of NATO Allied Command Transformation, but should be an allies-driven process, closely connected to headquarters in Brussels. NATO staff have begun conducting net assessments intended to look at competition with Russia in the Euro-Atlantic region, but this initiative is still in its infancy and is not yet an inclusive collective endeavor.

### Building a Political Bridge

For political reasons, allies are unlikely to reopen the SC before a new US administration settles into office in 2021, if at all. The Alliance should use this time wisely to set up a new systematic, inclusive, and transparent process of CSA.

This process can serve as a political bridging device in three ways. First, it will connect the reflection process that is underway with the actual drafting of the SC. A new SC will need to marry the various security challenges with national preferences and perceptions. CSA will allow all thirty allies to start owning the security assessment presented by the Reflection Group.

Second, it will bridge the military and political sides of NATO by conceptually linking military threat assessments to political negotiations. CSA based on developing and testing theories of success will allow allies to craft a strategic approach that meets their own goals

and values rather than one that counters the unknown or uncertain behavior of potential adversaries alone. Such an analytical baseline would allow the Alliance to build negotiations on a transparent collective process that is explicit about core assumptions and trade-offs to serve as reference points throughout the discourse. Military planners sometimes find political documents that are based on compromise difficult to operationalize into a military strategy. CSA can improve strategy implementation by providing the necessary understanding and background going forward.

Third, an inclusive CSA could build capacity across the Alliance to advance strategic thinking at the national and Alliance levels. While the United States has had an advanced net assessment capability since the 1970s, the United Kingdom created a Strategic Net Assessment Unit in 2019. Some allies, including the United States, the UK, Canada, and the Netherlands, are increasingly using wargames to improve “understanding of complex, uncertain environments and the changing character of warfare” and “identify how to exploit new opportunities, hedge against discontinuities and craft long-term strategies.”<sup>8</sup> Yet these methods remain out of reach for many Alliance members.

Of course, CSA is not a silver bullet that will make all differences among allies disappear, but it could yield political benefits and help cement the various building blocks of a NATO fit for purpose for the twenty-first century. CSA could be a powerful tool to reinforce Alliance unity and strengthen coordination between allies for years to come.

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<sup>8</sup> USNI News, “Document: Memo to Pentagon Leadership on Wargaming,” March 18, 2015, <https://news.usni.org/2015/03/18/document-memo-to-pentagon-leadership-on-wargaming>.



# Design a Digital Marshall Plan

by The Hon. Ruben Gallego and The Hon. Vicky Hartzler

NATO allies, led by the United States, must cooperate in securing national 5G communications systems in Europe and beyond against malign Chinese influence.

# Design a Digital Marshall Plan

The hard power of the United States and its NATO allies is a deterrent of last resort against very real military threats in Europe and well beyond it. But a growing concern is the creeping, quiet influence of China on democratic societies, especially with respect to critical 5G infrastructure under development across the world.

The transatlantic community is rightly concerned about the threat that Chinese investment in critical infrastructure poses to our nations. At NATO's London Summit in December 2019, allied leaders for the first time recognized the challenges posed by China and the need for secure and resilient 5G communications systems.

As Representatives on the House Armed Services Committee, we have warned for years that Chinese investment leads to undue influence in democracies around the world, whether through political and economic leverage and subversion or technological espionage and trade secret theft. In other words, China isn't selling—it's buying. In response, the transatlantic community, led by the United States, needs to create a Digital Marshall Plan to secure its communications in a modern, free ecosystem.

NATO allies are increasingly presented with a stark choice: embrace the economic benefits of Chinese investment while accepting risk to national security and sovereignty, or cut out Chinese firms in key industries, ensuring security but at a much higher cost. Simply put, democracies must pay that cost. To not do so would erode the very things that make them free societies. In accepting these costs, we must take steps to guarantee that these expenditures are used efficiently and result in immediate benefits for the populations shouldering them.

We and the entire United States government have been emphatic in pushing for European nations

to bar Huawei and other firms that systematically shunt information and data to Beijing. This effort has seen some success, with the recent decision by the United Kingdom to reverse itself and ban Huawei, a de facto ban by France and other nations in favor of a European option, and laudable efforts by allies like the Czech Republic and Slovenia to maintain digital independence. These are important steps on a path to next-generation communications systems free from the spies of the People's Liberation Army, but they must be supported with coordinated leadership from technologically advanced nations.

We propose that starting in 2021, the United States lead a Digital Marshall Plan for NATO allies to secure national 5G communications systems. Borrowing the successful framework nations concept employed in NATO operations, allies with vulnerable networks will be grouped with those on the cutting edge to determine the risks of existing or planned Chinese 5G infrastructure and to find innovative ways to finance alternatives. While NATO must address the military dimensions of 5G, it is not the right institution to drive the replacement of national telecommunication infrastructure which encompasses commercial enterprises. Nevertheless, habits of cooperation born at NATO can be applied to building secure telecommunication networks, even as work on the military aspects of the problem is conducted in parallel inside the Alliance.

A Digital Marshall Plan is not a program in which the United States subsidizes the telecommunication firms of allies and partners to remove and replace dangerous infrastructure. Instead, the United States and other leading nations will help countries analyze the risks of Chinese or other "strongman state" control over critical communication networks and build requirements for a secure network. In the case of the United States, the Intelligence Community, as well as the State, Commerce, and Defense Departments, could

## Design a Digital Marshall Plan

5G telecommunications systems will offer unprecedented benefits for commercial and government sectors. (Source: Defense Visual Information Database System)



then collaborate with allied counterpart institutions to improve existing network security and develop plans to replace or find alternatives for vulnerable infrastructure.

While allies must pay for their own infrastructure, framework groupings can seek out additional investments from national governments, institutions like the European Union (EU), and private industry. Used collectively, these investments can advance adoption of a secure 5G regime while ensuring allied and partner sovereignty. As with any novel technology, as more countries buy in and economies of scale develop, costs will go down for all involved.

For its part, the United States could support investment through the modernization of its own Europe-based infrastructure and installations via the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), through security assistance funding to allies, or through development assistance and loan tools, such as those supplied by the Export-Import Bank of the United States and the US International Development Finance Corporation, made possible with congressional authorization and appropriations.

Unlike the original, a Digital Marshall Plan cannot begin and end with the United States. If a successful US-led

pilot program were to be effective in one grouping within NATO, it could provide a blueprint for other NATO allies to copy until all allies adopted a comprehensive and vendor-neutral approach to 5G network security. Though perspectives on Huawei among allies are varied at present, right-minded nations such as the UK, Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Poland, and Romania could be immediate contributors, and in some cases serve as a bridge to the EU's work on 5G.

Close coordination with EU regulators will be important for securing buy-in from nations like France and Germany and to the overall success of the effort—as will complementarity with the strategic and technical measures contained in the EU's toolbox for 5G security. On the funding side, the European Investment Bank and other joint investment projects have already seen significant success on infrastructure development, while efforts like the Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund can unlock other sources of financing.

This type of approach would lay the groundwork for the United States and likeminded nations to unlock the benefits of the 5G regime, bilaterally and multilaterally, while pushing back on predatory Chinese investment and involvement in critical areas of our economies and national infrastructures. It would additionally prove to responsible telecommunication companies

like Ericsson, Nokia, Samsung, and AT&T that there is money to be made in an environment previously dominated by a state-owned entity too risky to trust. Even other innovative options that don't prioritize any one company could be prospects for investment, such as the vendor-neutral and disaggregated Open Radio Access Network.

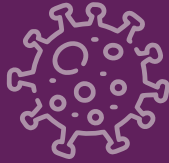
NATO allies are well-placed to assure the security and readiness of the Alliance against joint threats. It is a

NATO specialty for freely associating democracies to wield their immense joint power to overcome challenges which might seem insurmountable alone. We will advance the concept of a Digital Marshall Plan in the next Congress while seeking out able and willing partners in allied and partner capitals, the EU, NATO, and within the administration. In this way, we can build on the rich history of collaboration and cooperation across the Atlantic, reinvigorate the Alliance, and ensure a transatlantic community, whole and free.

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# Build Resilience for an Era of Shocks

by Jim Townsend and Anca Agachi

NATO needs a fourth core task to protect allied populations from nontraditional threats like COVID and climate change.

# Build Resilience for an Era of Shocks

## The Chronicle of a Threat Foretold

The novel coronavirus is one of the most formative events of the twenty-first century. Despite warnings about pandemics from public health and intelligence officials, the world was caught off guard by COVID-19. Though they had experience containing MERS and SARS, scientists and doctors had to learn about COVID-19 while trying to control it. Further, governments across the globe were forced to make impossible decisions between saving lives and saving economies.

Unfortunately, threats like COVID-19 might be a blueprint of the future. A rise in environmentally destabilizing human activity and extreme economic inequality, coupled with patchy investments in social safety nets and frail governance, have degraded human security conditions around the world. This combustible combination will likely result in a rise in *non-traditional security threats*. By definition, these threats are transnational, impacting entire regions or continents; systemic, resulting from an accumulation of widespread permissive and causal factors; and outside the realm of traditional military concepts and operations, in that they are normally associated with development issues. Non-traditional security threats include climate change, irregular migration, resource scarcity, criminality, and of course pandemics. Their pattern is similar: in the short-term, they lead to loss of life in catastrophic events; however, more perniciously, they undermine societal functioning and therefore weaken deterrence capabilities in the long-term. In light of this trend, COVID-19 might be just the canary in the coal mine.

Non-traditional threats are particularly complex because they can have a threat-multiplying effect,

leading to cascading economic, political, and security shocks, as COVID-19 has shown. They can also decrease the efficacy of conventional deterrence measures by showing potential adversaries that an attack in the midst of such destabilizing circumstances would achieve more significant destruction. The rise of non-traditional security threats therefore can exacerbate existing conventional challenges, such as those posed by Russia and China. In this world, disruption will become the norm, not the exception.

The scope, scale, and impact of future non-traditional threats require NATO allies to think outside the framework of traditional security concepts and prepare the Alliance for missions that do not neatly fit an Article 5 scenario. To this end, the Alliance should approve a fourth core task focused on resilience, preparing the Alliance to protect the populations of member states against novel threats while reinforcing collective defense.

## NATO and the Resilience Challenge

Resilience is enshrined in NATO's DNA through Article 3 of the Washington Treaty,<sup>1</sup> and has been developed through additional guidelines at NATO Summits, namely the 2016 baseline resilience guidelines (and associated 2017 evaluation criteria).<sup>2</sup> These guidelines are meant to support continuity of government, the provision of essential services in member states, and civil support to the military, in the event of a major shock.<sup>3</sup> While initially devised to prepare for traditional military attacks, recent events such as Russian hybrid activities and terrorist attacks have put a greater

1 Article 3 calls for the Allies to "separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." The North Atlantic Treaty, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 4, 1949, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm).

2 Ibid.

3 "Resilience and Article 3," NATO, March 31, 2020. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_132722.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_132722.htm).



## Build Resilience for an Era of Shocks

Allied troops unload 10,000 protective medical suits donated by the Czech Republic to Spain, as part of allied efforts to combat the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. (Source: NATO)



emphasis on civilian preparedness as a key component of resilience.<sup>4</sup>

However, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, NATO's current resilience architecture cannot cope with multiple disruptive events, especially those of a non-traditional nature. In response to the pandemic, NATO jolted into action its emergency response capabilities to support allies with logistics and planning, set up field hospitals, transport patients, and disinfect public areas and border crossings.<sup>5</sup> Allied institutions such as the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) helped to coordinate allied requests for supplies and made military assets available for the pandemic response. Even though NATO's existing mechanisms helped member states respond to the crisis, they failed to achieve the fundamental aims of resilience: minimize damage, restore stability quickly, and catalyze improved strategies for similar challenges.<sup>6</sup>

The pandemic showed that NATO's resilience framework suffers from several shortcomings. First, it is highly state-centric, while effective resilience-building measures should employ extensive cooperation with the private sector. Businesses, not governments, own many of the assets that could be deployed to respond to a major strategic shock. Further, civil society's trust and cooperation is essential for any effective disaster response. Second, NATO's current framework uses a traditional security lens, focuses on states first, and stipulates that the response to a threat should only take place once a certain level of risk has been met. However, the instability created by pandemics, climate change, or cyber-attacks is slow-moving, making long-term prevention a more effective strategy than crisis response. Finally, even though resilience has become increasingly relevant, it is still under-resourced. NATO does little to enforce investment levels or allocation of output, compared to traditional defense spending. Combined, these issues leave NATO with a weak mandate to task allies

4 Wolf-Diether Roepke, Hasit Thanky, "Resilience: The First Line of Defence," NATO Review, February 27, 2019, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/27/resilience-the-first-line-of-defence/index.html>.

5 "NATO's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," NATO, accessed September 9, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/200401-factsheet-COVID-19\\_en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/200401-factsheet-COVID-19_en.pdf). More recently, the United States donated ventilators for the NATO stockpile in anticipation of a second COVID-19 wave. "Coronavirus response: United States delivers ventilators for NATO stockpile," NATO, September 18, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_178096.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178096.htm?selectedLocale=en).

6 Resilience is "the capacity of a community or system to meet disruption or shock by minimizing damage and quickly restoring stability, while also using the experience to develop strategies for future challenges and opportunities." Peter Engelke, *Crafting a Resilient World: A Strategy for Navigating Turbulence*, Atlantic Council, 2017, <https://publications.atlanticcouncil.org/crafting-a-resilient-world/>.

to enhance prevention and national preparedness, the inability to mitigate the deep and wide impact of non-traditional security threats, and insufficient capacity to manage and quickly scale a response to upcoming strategic shocks.

## A New Conceptualization of Security

To meet this new security environment, NATO needs to help allies build a functional, forward-looking, and funded resilience architecture. To do so, the next NATO Strategic Concept should approve a fourth core task focused on resilience. This would allow the Alliance to help member states strengthen their resilience at home and acquire national (or NATO-owned) resources to assist each other in an emergency. This would prepare NATO to respond to upcoming non-traditional security threats while also reinforcing conventional defense and deterrence.

The new, strengthened resilience framework should be guided by several principles. NATO should continue to build on the concept of resilience as being on the “left side” of a shock<sup>7</sup> and shape the security environment before another catastrophic event takes place. Second, this effort should be more holistic, looking beyond existing resilience baseline requirements to the protection of coastal areas, water management systems, etc., and enhancing cooperation with private sector stakeholders and civil society. Finally, NATO should conceptualize resilience as a peacetime effort, which empowers people and societies within member states to work together continuously to address sources of vulnerability, especially those areas below the threshold of the use of force.

In order to move forward, new ministerial guidance must be given to NATO headquarters to evaluate the cascading effects of non-traditional threats and assess NATO’s level of ambition in implementing this fourth core task.<sup>8</sup> However, properly resourcing this new resilience framework will require the development of resilience capability goals for each ally to meet, at the national and collective level, as part of the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP). These goals should then be tailored to the needs of individual allies, allocated based on fair share and reasonable burden, and reviewed as part of a process that holds allies accountable to their commitments. Common funds can also help allies acquire NATO-owned assets when needed. Finally, the Framework Nations Concept could be used as a model for developing resilience capabilities.<sup>9</sup>

Because non-traditional threats require civil-military coordination, an emphasis on NATO-European Union (EU) cooperation should be at the heart of the Alliance’s efforts to deal with this adapted approach to the security environment. The European Union already has strategies and capabilities to prevent and address the underlying causes of strategic vulnerability, as well as immense civilian regulatory power in sectors ranging from energy to technology. Harnessing that capacity and aligning it with NATO’s goals is essential for a strong resilience framework. Therefore, the NATO-EU Joint Declaration of 2018<sup>10</sup> should be updated to include resilience in the face of non-traditional security threats, developed through cooperation on capability development and operational coordination. The updates might emphasize, among other issues, aligning investments in innovative green technologies (which can be transferred across

7 The concept of “left side” of a shock refers to the building of readiness before a major disruptive event. Wolf-Diether Roepke, Hasit Thankey, “Resilience: The First Line of Defence,” NATO, February 27, 2019, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/27/resilience-the-first-line-of-defence/index.html#:~:text=The%20current%20unpredictable%20security%20environment,impact%20societies%20and%20critical%20infrastructure>.

8 *Analytic Implications of the NATO Defence Planning Process*, NATO, April 2010, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/12fc/08cfbbe9d763f1115ff5d665957a1ec24df5.pdf>.

9 Rainer L. Glatz, Martin Zapfe, “NATO’s Framework Nations Concept,” CSS ETH Zurich, December 2017, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse218-EN.pdf>

10 “Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization,” NATO, July 10, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156626.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156626.htm). It must be noted that progress has been made in building resilience against hybrid threats, terrorism and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear threats. See “Fourth progress report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by NATO and EU Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017,” NATO, June 17, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl12014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_06/190617-4th-Joint-progress-report-EU-NATO-eng.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl12014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_06/190617-4th-Joint-progress-report-EU-NATO-eng.pdf).

the civil-military divide) and implementing common standards for public health trainings.

What would this look like in practice? Consider, for example, climate change—a non-traditional threat whose consequences will occur at far greater frequency than pandemics, and for which the Alliance should start preparing now. NATO should study the impact of climate change and its resulting crises on allied security, following the model of seminal studies like those by the Center for Naval Analysis.<sup>11</sup> NATO should also examine its own impact on climate change and how the Alliance could minimize its environmental footprint. Instead of waiting to respond to extreme weather events and drought-enabled conflicts that may take place in allied countries, NATO could leverage its new core task and expanded NDPP to prepare for disaster by acquiring and building stockpiles of emergency equipment and necessary assets. Working alongside the EU and national emergency management agencies, NATO could help European allies plan measures ranging from decentralized energy systems to coastal hazard protection methods to blunt the impact of the next climate disaster. A consistent schedule of natural disaster training exercises would guarantee that when a crisis does occur, clear responsibilities and required information exist within the system, including a defined role for NATO. Finally, a reinforced EADRCC should help coordinate immediate relief efforts, while NATO's Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC) should develop a continuous, dynamic “lessons learned” program. Such a program would integrate the knowledge gathered from NATO's responses to various strategic shocks into existing strategies.

This shift in the Alliance's culture and architecture would yield several benefits. First, by adding an adequately resourced fourth core task focused on resilience, NATO could effectively conceptualize how to address non-traditional security threats, and do so in time to prevent and mitigate future COVID-like scenarios. Threats like climate change are a certainty; the only unknown is the level of damage they will cause. This variable depends on current efforts to adapt and bolster allies' resilience, a capacity thus far underutilized at NATO headquarters.<sup>12</sup> By starting now and using an improved and expanded resilience framework, NATO will be better prepared for *and* better able to bounce “forward” from future non-traditional threats.

Second, improving resilience is essential across the entire threat spectrum and reinforces traditional defense and deterrence.<sup>13</sup> Proactive investments in community resilience are helpful not only in preventing non-traditional threats, but also in ensuring societal and state continuity and resistance in the case of an armed attack. Such measures can also serve to deter aggression by convincing adversaries their plans will not have the desired impact. In this new security environment, civilian and military components are intrinsically connected. As an ETH Zurich report notes, “solutions that mix military and non-military elements,” and cooperation across silos are necessary to achieve a “whole-of-society approach to security.”<sup>14</sup>

Finally, investing in resilience saves significant taxpayer money. Estimated savings resulting from the implementation of resilience frameworks vary between \$4 to \$6 in return for every \$1 invested.<sup>15</sup> The alternative, as COVID-19 has shown, is untenable. According to estimates, the pandemic will “end up costing between \$8.1

11 CNA Military Advisory Board, “National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change,” *Center for Naval Analysis*, 2014, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/pdf/MAB\\_5-8-14.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/pdf/MAB_5-8-14.pdf). Recent efforts at NATO HQ seem to suggest the Alliance is moving to consider the operational impacts of climate change. For more context, see “Secretary General participates in NATO seminar on security and the environment”, September 17, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_178028.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178028.htm?selectedLocale=en).

12 Rickard Söder, “NATO in a Climate of Change,” SIPRI, February 14, 2020, <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2020/nato-climate-change>.

13 Roepke, Thankey, “Resilience: The First Line of Defence.”

14 Tim Prior, “NATO: Pushing Boundaries for Resilience,” CSS ETH Zurich, September 2017, <https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/CSSAnalyse213-EN.pdf>.

15 “\$4.2 Trillion Can Be Saved by Investing in More Resilient Infrastructure, New World Bank Report Finds,” World Bank, June 19, 2019, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/06/19/42-trillion-can-be-saved-by-investing-in-more-resilient-infrastructure-new-world-bank-report-finds>; Benjamin Schneider, “Disaster Resilience Saves Six Times as Much as It Costs,” *Bloomberg*, January 17, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-17/disaster-mitigation-saves-even-more-than-we-thought>.

and \$15.8 trillion globally—roughly 500 times as costly as what it would take to invest in proposed preventive measures.”<sup>16</sup> The conclusion is clear: responding to crises instead of preventing them is exceptionally more expensive. While this holds true in any economic environment, it is particularly relevant in the post-COVID-19 world defined by slumping economic growth, ballooning debt, and decreasing defense budgets.<sup>17</sup> While nearly incalculable, these numbers do not consider intangible losses, such as strained NATO political cohesion or waning public support for the Alliance when it cannot adequately handle a crisis. When every dollar counts, the smart investment is resilience.

In a complex environment where it must grapple with multiple, interrelated strategic shocks and a combination of traditional and non-traditional threats, NATO has only one option: transform to meet the moment. As the Alliance considers how to adapt today for tomorrow’s challenges as part of the NATO 2030 process,<sup>18</sup> one solution can help it “stay strong militarily, be more united politically, and take a broader approach globally”<sup>19</sup>: including resilience as a fourth core task.

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16 Jeremy Shwab, “Fighting COVID-19 Could Cost 500 Times as Much as Pandemic Prevention Measures,” WEFForum, August 3, 2020, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/08/pandemic-fight-costs-500x-more-than-preventing-one-future/>.

17 Doug Berenson, Dominik Kimla, and Alix Leboulanger, “Defense Spending and COVID-19: Implications On Government Finance and National Security,” Avascent, April 15, 2020, <https://www.avascent.com/news-insights/white-papers/defense-spending-and-covid-19-implications-on-government-finance-and-national-security/>.

18 In June 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg launched NATO 2030, an ambitious new effort to transform the alliance for the future (see “Secretary General Launches NATO 2030 to Make Our Strong Alliance Even Stronger” NATO, June 8, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_176193.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_176193.htm)). In recent speeches on the effort, the Secretary General has emphasized the importance of resilience in an environment dominated by unpredictability (see “NATO Secretary General highlights the importance of resilience”, NATO, October 7, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_178624.htm?selectedLocale=en%20-%E2%80%93resilience](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_178624.htm?selectedLocale=en%20-%E2%80%93resilience)).

19 David A. Wemer, “NATO Secretary General Unveils His Vision for the Alliance’s Future,” *New Atlanticist*, Atlantic Council, June 8, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nato-secretary-general-unveils-his-vision-for-the-alliances-future/>.



# Ramp Up on Russia

by Amb. Alexander Vershbow

NATO needs to increase the costs for Russian aggression while building back crucial dialogue if there is any prospect for improved relations with Moscow.

# Ramp Up on Russia

Six years after suspending “business as usual” with Moscow, the Alliance’s Russia policy is largely static and reactive.

NATO has done well in reestablishing deterrence against Russian aggression in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine in 2014. However, in the years since, the Alliance has been less effective at countering Moscow’s ongoing political warfare against NATO members’ societies and democratic values. There is sustained Russian interference in the internal affairs of the NATO member states, little meaningful dialogue in the NATO-Russia Council, an unraveling of arms control constraints, provocative Russian military activities in NATO air and sea space, aggressive disinformation and propaganda campaigns against the West, and unchecked adventurism in the Middle East, Africa, and Afghanistan. Russian-led forces in occupied Donbas continue their attacks on Ukrainian forces and civilians despite numerous ceasefires, a daily reminder of Moscow’s rejection of the Helsinki principles of respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all European states. Belarus also faces sustained Russian pressure and possible military intervention to suppress the mass protests triggered by the falsified elections in August 2020. And Russia has once again thumbed its nose at the international community by using an illegal chemical weapon to poison opposition leader Alexei Navalny. NATO’s failure to halt Russia’s aggressive behavior puts the future of the liberal international order at risk.

As part of the NATO 2030 initiative, allies need to develop a more dynamic policy toward Russia. The Alliance needs to retake the initiative, increase the costs for Moscow’s disruptive activities, and put real pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin to change course, while reducing the risk of escalation resulting from Russia’s provocative military behavior.

Putin’s hostility to the West may, in fact, be difficult to diffuse. Relations between the West and Moscow had begun to deteriorate even before Russia’s watershed invasion of Ukraine, driven principally by Moscow’s

fear of the encroachment of Western values and their potential to undermine the Putin regime. With the possibility of a further sixteen years of Putin’s rule, most experts believe relations are likely to remain confrontational for years to come. They argue that the best the United States and its allies can do is manage this competition and discourage aggressive actions from Moscow. However, by pushing back against Russia more forcefully in the near and medium term, allies are more likely to eventually convince Moscow to return to compliance with the rules of the liberal international order and to mutually beneficial cooperation as envisaged under the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act .

Strategy toward Russia is admittedly a sensitive subject within the Alliance. Allies have considered it “too hot to handle” since they papered over their differences at the 2016 Warsaw Summit and settled on the current dual-track policy of “defense and dialogue.” This decision was the lowest-common-denominator approach, meant to assuage German, Italian, and other allies’ concerns that NATO was focusing too heavily on military deterrence at the expense of other priorities. Increased dialogue is a noble goal, but it was a strategy without a defined end point. NATO never agreed on what the dialogue was meant to achieve.

This is a debate the Alliance can no longer afford to postpone. Indeed, encouraging difficult debates on issues where NATO strategy is not working will more likely strengthen Alliance solidarity in the long run. Accordingly, launching a review of NATO’s Russia policy should be a priority for 2021. While NATO must also do more to address rising threats from China and Europe’s southern neighborhood, Russia remains the most immediate threat to transatlantic security and deserves top billing on NATO’s agenda for next year.

## Raising the Costs

If NATO is to turn Putin away from confrontation, the first requirement is to increase the costs to Russia for its aggressive actions. Sanctions imposed since 2014 have not been tough enough to force a real change in

Ramp Up  
on Russia

NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Wolters, meets with Russian Chief of General Staff, General Gerasimov (Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class William Dodge, NATO)



Russian behavior. Moscow continues to probe for divisions among allies in the hope that the transatlantic community will grow weary of confrontation and normalize relations. The Kremlin's latest gambit has been to cite the battle against the coronavirus pandemic as justification for an end to Western sanctions against Russia. To convince Russia that the Alliance will not tolerate aggression and that wedge-driving will not succeed in breaking NATO resolve, allies must push back more aggressively on Russian political warfare.

Key to raising the costs to Russia is a more proactive transatlantic strategy for sanctions against the Russian economy and Putin's power base, together with other steps to reduce Russian energy leverage and export revenue. A new NATO Russia policy should be pursued in tandem with the European Union (EU), which sets European sanctions policy and faces the same threats from Russian cyberattacks and disinformation. At a minimum, EU sanctions resulting from hostilities in Ukraine should be extended, like the Crimea sanctions, for one year rather than every six months. Better yet, allies and EU members should tighten sanctions further and extend them on an indefinite basis until Russia ends its aggression and takes concrete steps toward de-escalation.

In this regard, allies should consider using sanctions as a deterrent, for example, by spelling out the specific sanctions that would be imposed if Moscow steps up its aggression by attacking the port of Mariupol or illegally seizing Ukrainian ships in the Kerch Strait or Sea of Azov. Allies should be equally specific on what sanctions would be eased if Moscow ends the aggressive activities that led to their imposition.

With respect to defending its own societies, NATO should require that every allied member state strengthen its resilience against cyberattacks, disinformation, and election interference, extending NATO's traditional remit to these gray-zone threats. While NATO allies may never convince Russia to stop these activities, there is much nations can do to reduce their vulnerabilities, curb the misuse of social media, debunk Russian propaganda in real time, and expose Russian techniques for maintaining plausible deniability. Some of these activities are ongoing, but dedicated resources and a coherent effort with respect to strategic communication from NATO are lacking. In particular, allies should strengthen efforts to engage with the increasingly restive younger generations of Russians—who could someday become advocates of renewed partnership with the West—via radio, television, and social media, as well as traditional exchange programs.

## Denying Spheres of Influence

A more dynamic NATO strategy for Russia should go hand in hand with a more proactive policy toward Ukraine and Georgia in the framework of an enhanced Black Sea strategy. The goal should be to boost both partners' deterrence capacity and reduce Moscow's ability to undermine their sovereignty even as NATO membership remains on the back burner for the time being.

As part of this expanded effort, European allies should do more to bolster Ukraine and Georgia's ground, air, and naval capabilities, complementing the United States' and Canada's efforts that began in 2014. NATO should also step up its support for domestic defense reforms and efforts to meet NATO interoperability standards, together with programs to reinforce their resilience against cyberattacks. To underscore the durability of NATO's commitment, the Alliance should establish a permanent military presence at Ukrainian and Georgian training centers close to Russian-occupied territories. At a minimum, NATO should hold more frequent exercises on both countries' respective territories and in the Black Sea to counter Russia's military build-up since the illegal annexation of Crimea.

On the information front, Putin has been increasingly successful in suppressing information about combat casualties among Russian "volunteers" fighting in Donbas and the economic costs of propping up the occupation regimes in Donbas and Crimea. To raise the domestic political costs to Putin and increase the pressure for a negotiated end to the war, NATO should use open-source and declassified intelligence more strategically to refocus the spotlight on Russia's brutality and reign of terror in Donbas. NATO should also work more closely with Ukraine to debunk Russian propaganda that falsely portrays Ukraine as a right-wing failed state and to connect with Russian-speaking audiences in the occupied territories and Russia itself through social media, online media, and other channels.

In Belarus, where the opposition does not seek NATO or EU integration, the Alliance needs to walk a fine line: opposing violence and encouraging political dialogue—perhaps mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)—that could lead to early new elections and a change in government without giving Moscow a pretext for military intervention.

If Moscow does use force, however, allies will need to consider new sanctions as well as consider adjustments to NATO's force posture in the Baltic region.

Beyond Europe, under renewed US leadership, NATO should work to forge a unified response to Russian adventurism in the Middle East and North Africa. Libya is the place to start. A new effort by allies to broker a political compromise between the United Nations (UN)-recognized government in Tripoli and General Khalifa Haftar's forces in the East could deny Russia a new strategic foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean and open the way to a negotiated end to Libya's civil war. It would also offer a way to get Turkey back on the same page with the rest of the Alliance and curtail Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rapprochement with Putin.

## Using Dialogue to Reduce Risks

There are several steps that the United States and its allies could take toward reducing risks posed by Russia and building a more stable relationship with Moscow, despite the underlying strategic competition. In the realm of security, allies could look at the Cold War toolbox—namely arms control and confidence-building measures—for ways to increase transparency and predictability while lowering the risk of unintended conflict. The aim should be to give substance to the dialogue half of NATO's two-track strategy of defense and dialogue.

Though Moscow has so far rebuffed the idea, NATO should challenge Russia to adopt the allies' proposals for strengthening the OSCE Vienna Document. These include lower thresholds for notifications and inspections of exercises, a cap on the aggregate size of exercises in proximity to the NATO-Russia border, and a ban or low quota on no-notice "snap" exercises, to name a few. These steps could be accompanied by reciprocal political commitments to reduce the frequency of aggressive air operations close to each other's airspace. Allies and Russia could also agree to multilateralize bilateral US-Russian agreements on the prevention of Incidents at Sea and Dangerous Military Activities—both of which could ensure real-time, military-to-military communications amid a crisis.



NATO could go further and offer to renew the military-to-military dialogue in the OSCE and NATO-Russia Council. The Alliance could make clear this measure does not constitute a full return to business as usual, but rather a move needed to minimize misperceptions about each side's military activities and promote agreement on new risk-reduction measures. It would also offer a way to increase both sides' understanding of the implications of new weapons technologies and artificial intelligence before they have fundamentally changed the nature of war.

On the nuclear side, NATO allies should encourage the United States and Russia to preserve the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) for at least another one to two years, which would buy time to negotiate a new, broader agreement encompassing non-strategic nuclear weapons and the forces of other nuclear powers. As part of an extension, both sides should make a binding political commitment that new weapons like hypersonic missiles and Russia's nuclear-powered drones will be subject to New START limits while they work on a longer-term agreement.

While the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty cannot be brought back from the dead, allies and Russia could agree that neither side will introduce nuclear-armed cruise or ballistic missiles in Europe and, in Russia's case, that it will remove from Europe any nuclear-armed versions of its 9M729 missile that precipitated the demise of the INF Treaty. The intrusive measures needed to verify these commitments could be part of the follow-on agreement to New START.

At the same time, the United States and Russia should continue strategic stability talks and try to work more closely together on non-proliferation (in particular, denuclearization of North Korea) and the fight against terrorism—both areas where Moscow's and Washington's interests still overlap.

## To Restore Partnership, Ukraine Is the Litmus Test

Raising the costs for Russian aggression and reducing the risks of military conflict may be the most that the United States and its allies can achieve in the short term. NATO allies should make clear, however, that their longer-term vision remains a return to the path of cooperation and partnership that NATO and Russia pursued—to mutual benefit—in the immediate post-Cold War decades. However, this can only happen when Russia is willing to recommit—in deed as well as word—to the basic principles of Euro-Atlantic security that have guided all NATO nations in the past, and which Moscow previously pledged to uphold as well.

The essential first step and litmus test would be for Moscow to work with Ukraine and its international partners to find a durable solution to the conflict in Donbas, based on full implementation of the Minsk agreements. While NATO has thus far not been directly engaged in Minsk diplomacy, it could support the process by assisting non-NATO countries in setting up an international peacekeeping force (potentially under the authority of the UN Security Council or OSCE) to establish and oversee the implementation of the Minsk accords, to include holding free and fair local elections under Ukrainian law in the now-occupied Donbas. Although NATO and Russia would not be part of the peacekeeping force, the NATO-Russia Council could be the venue for discussing the parameters of the force and lining up troop contributors from among NATO's partners.

To encourage Moscow to get serious about ending its undeclared war in Eastern Ukraine, allies could signal a readiness to negotiate a new Code of Conduct for European security in tandem with the lifting of sanctions that would follow the implementation of Minsk. That agreement could take the form of an update to the NATO-Russia Founding Act, and would enter into force when Russia had fully withdrawn its forces and proxies from Donbas. While returning Crimea to Ukraine would remain a long-term challenge, a just settlement in Donbas would enable the sides to turn the page and begin to rebuild NATO-Russia cooperation.

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# Christen a Carrier Strike Group

by Michael John Williams

Using the HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Prince of Wales* as its backbone, a NATO carrier strike group is an opportunity for high-end interoperability under European leadership.

# Christen a Carrier Strike Group

Long before the coronavirus battered European economies, NATO's European allies were finding it difficult to produce the cash or the political will to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense. Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic straining government budgets, defense spending is likely to be on the chopping block. This will have serious implications for transatlantic security. Even as budgets shrink, security challenges will remain. China has shown an increasing willingness to intimidate democracies, while Russia remains a spoiler in Europe and the Middle East. Financial calamity does not mean that European cooperation within NATO should take a step back. In fact, now is the perfect time for European militaries to work together and no better opportunity exists than to use HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Prince of Wales* as hubs for a NATO carrier strike group (CSG). A NATO CSG would be a powerful symbol of Alliance unity and would bolster the Alliance's force posture and interoperability.

## Return of the Carriers

For the better part of the last two centuries, the Royal Navy (RN) was the world's most potent fighting force with a peak power of 332 warships. Today, the United Kingdom's Ministry of Defence estimates only thirty ships are fit for service. For the first time since the decommissioning of the HMS *Ark Royal* in 2011, the RN once again has an aircraft carrier back in service—the 65,000-ton HMS *Queen Elizabeth* (R08). Her sister ship, the HMS *Prince of Wales*, is now in sea trials. These ships are *highly automated and extremely advanced*, needing a core crew of only 800 due to automation, and capable of deploying up to thirty-six F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters. One immediate challenge for the RN is that the UK buy rate for the F-35Bs is such that it will take until 2024 to get to just twenty-four British F-35Bs on the decks of the carriers. Furthermore, it will not be possible for the UK to operate both vessels simultaneously due to staffing shortfalls.

It has long been rumored that the UK plans for the carriers to serve as part of a combined CSG with the United States. Such plans would build on cooperation

stretching back a century, including on naval nuclear issues that are a critical feature of the US-UK “special relationship.” A report from an RN-US Navy study group, *Combined Seapower: A Shared Vision for Royal Navy-US Navy Cooperation*, highlighted shared strategic goals and outlined future avenues of cooperation. In 2018, after completing her sea trials, HMS *Queen Elizabeth* promptly steamed westward to the United States and also took part in exercises in the United States in 2019 in order to advance true integration. When HMS *Queen Elizabeth* goes on her first deployment to Asia in 2021, her twelve British F-35Bs will be joined by a squadron of US Marine Corps F-35Bs flown by US pilots, giving the carrier a more robust complement of combat aircraft. Beyond a lack of combat aircraft, the RN also doesn't really have the ships, billets, or personnel to complement a full-scale CSG on near continuous deployment.

The RN's Westlant 19 exercise in 2019 consisted of HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, flanked by the air defense destroyer HMS *Dragon*, the anti-submarine frigate HMS *Northumberland*, and the fleet tanker RFA *Tideforce*. For her 2021 deployment, the RN plans to deploy HMS *Queen Elizabeth* with additional escorts: two Type 45 destroyers, two Type 23 frigates, a nuclear submarine, plus a tanker and fleet supply ship. In the long term, the RN cannot continue to deploy a full CSG without negatively impacting other commitments. The RN only has six destroyers, thirteen frigates, and six fast-attack submarines. However, due to refit and repair, the number of deployable vessels at any one time is about 66 percent of the total—give or take twelve vessels available. The solution is to not just advance interoperability with the United States, but to include European NATO allies as well.

## Britannia and Europa, Hand in Hand

It is entirely reasonable that the first mission for the UK's first-ever CSG be a sovereign endeavor (although the presence of US F-35s qualifies sovereign to some degree), but going forward, pride should take a back seat to capability, effectiveness, and enhanced NATO

## Christen a Carrier Strike Group

The HMS Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier (Source: Wikimedia Commons)



interoperability. Bilateral naval cooperation between the United States and the UK is a step in the right direction, which will account for not just UK budget constraints. The US Navy's plan for 435 ships is also a pipe dream, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and an increasing awareness in the United States about the cost of militarization. Cooperation with European allies is necessary and would also allow a post-Brexit UK to resume its highly valuable role as a bridge between the Continent and the United States. Utilizing the British carriers with a European supported task force would seriously bolster the capability of the entire Alliance. Such a move should be compatible with the UK's strategic goals and will enhance the Global Britain concept, whilst advancing NATO cohesion and relations with the United States.

As then British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson argued in 2016, although the UK was leaving the European Union, it was not leaving Europe. Brexit was not, according to Johnson, "any kind of mandate for the country to turn in on itself, to haul up the drawbridge to detach itself from the international community." The UK has also consistently maintained that NATO is the preferred forum for European security issues and establishing a NATO CSG comprised mostly of European contributions would be a major leap forward for the Alliance. It would allow the United States to reposition forces and would grant the UK and European NATO allies a truly

global reach. Creating a UK-led NATO-Europe CSG would be relatively easy functionally and builds on training exercises such as Brilliant Mariner, Poseidon, Joint Warrior, Dynamic Mongoose, and Formidable Shield. Furthermore, the UK and France have been ramping up military cooperation since signing the 2010 Lancaster House Treaties, and cooperation through a CSG would build on the maritime cooperation exhibited in the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF).

Collectively, the naval capabilities of Europe are immense and hard to ignore during NATO exercises. The challenge to increased joint capability remains the friction between national and multinational commitments, which will be exacerbated as a result of the pandemic in an era of constrained national budgets. It would behoove all involved to accept the reality that working together is the best way forward. Forming a NATO-Europe CSG is a major way to advance collective action within NATO, demonstrate European solidarity on defense capabilities to Washington, and utilize limited resources most effectively for power projection globally. Such solidarity is necessary in a world in which China will outstrip the US Navy in the coming decades. European allies cannot simply depend on the United States—they must contribute actively to global security.

The navies of Europe have some excellent force options to support HMS *Queen Elizabeth* with air, surface, and

subsurface defense. The Danish Iver Huitfeldt-class frigate *Peter Willemoes* passed the British Flag Officer Sea Training test in 2015 and the Iver Huitfeldt class is the basis for the forthcoming Arrowhead 140 Type 31 frigate that the UK will begin building shortly. The Dutch De Zeven Provinciën-class frigates are also up to the task with a highly advanced weapons and sensor suite. Optimized for air defense, these ships can also serve in an anti-submarine and anti-surface combatant capacity. The Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen-class frigates, the French La Fayette-class frigates, and the Álvaro de Bazán-class frigates of the Spanish Navy can also serve in the same role. The Italian and French Horizon-class destroyer, designed with the intent of carrier escort, is another, lighter escort option. Germany is, for a number of reasons, perhaps a more difficult partner, but its F124 Sachsen-class frigate could handily fill the role of the destroyer escort. And, of course, just because it is a predominately European CSG doesn't mean that, in addition to US Marine Corps F-35s aboard the RN vessel, the strike group cannot incorporate US vessels such as Virginia-class fast-attack submarines for subsurface escort.

### From Theory to Practice: Command and Control Issues

Overcoming command and control (C2) issues will be critical. Cooperation amongst European navies is not new. The French carrier *Charles de Gaulle* has utilized Spanish, Italian, Danish, and German frigates as part of its CSG. But this is on a sovereign basis, meaning that control of the asset remains with the home country. In 2019, a Spanish frigate was recalled from the French CSG mid-mission from the Indian Ocean because Madrid needed the ship elsewhere. Such arrangements won't work if NATO is to develop a credible carrier strike force capability. This NATO CSG would be a one-star command with a dual-hatted Commander United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group. This could be nestled in the existing Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM)

and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) concepts with a UK Marine Forces Command (UKMARCOMFOR) functioning as the NATO CSG Task Group (TG) commander. This commander would report to either the Joint Force Commander (JFC) or MARCOM and then the JFC. Given that the carriers are British assets, this new group would be based at Portsmouth with allied contributions forming the task force there.

### Conclusion

NATO's European allies are capable of continuously deploying a UK-led NATO CSG, but given the requirement to abandon sovereign lines of responsibility, the most critical challenge is political will. For many years, interoperability in Europe has occurred in smaller regional groupings. The UK, in particular, has focused on close cooperation with Denmark, the Baltic states, and on some issues with the Netherlands. It would be logical for the first deployment of a UK-led NATO CSG to involve these partners and then expand with subsequent deployments. The reality is that the United States will not be able to match emergent peer competitors alone. Strong European capabilities are necessary both to ensure stability, but also to stave off isolationist tendencies in Washington and combat the sentiment that the United States carries too much of the burden of transatlantic defense. A UK-led NATO CSG would deal a serious blow to the argument that Europe fails to substantially contribute to NATO capabilities. A UK-led NATO CSG would serve as an example for future CSGs centered on the French carrier *Charles de Gaulle* and the Italian carrier *Giuseppe Garibaldi*. Flying NATO's flag and integrating HMS *Queen Elizabeth* into F-35 operations would also help other European allies equipped with F-35Bs or F-35Cs (currently only Italy) integrate into the project, in addition to supporting other UK-led defense efforts such as the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and the CJEF. Such integration would be a serious step forward for allied defense cooperation in NATO.

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# Set its Sights on the High North

By Jim Danoy and Marisol Maddox

Security in the Arctic is waiting on no one. NATO needs a strategy for defense and deterrence in the High North before it is outflanked.

# Set its Sights on the High North

Sun Tzu, the Chinese military strategist from the sixth century BC, in his classic work *The Art of War* emphasized the importance of securing the “precipitous heights” before one’s adversary, due to the advantages elevated positions afforded a defending army. There is no “higher ground” on Earth than the Arctic. The Arctic is rapidly changing as it experiences climate change at a rate greater than twice the global average and polar sea ice recedes and thins.<sup>1</sup> The first ice-free Arctic summer, under a high-emissions scenario, could occur as soon as 2042.<sup>2</sup> These changes are resulting in increased human activity in the region as global actors explore opportunities to exploit its natural resources and strategic geographic location.

These developments suggest the Arctic is likely to be one of the twenty-first century’s most contested arenas. Yet, NATO lags significantly behind its global competitors, Russia and China, both of which have quickly recognized the economic and security implications of an increasingly ice-free Arctic and have engaged in a long-term effort to enhance their respective positions there. The criticality of the Arctic terrain to the emerging domain of space and acknowledged interdependencies between the two operating spheres—the US Air Force’s Arctic Strategy promises “to develop new technologies and modernize existing assets in the Arctic necessary to ensure access to and freedom to operate in space”—add an additional layer of relevance of the Arctic to the future strategic environment.<sup>3</sup>

These dynamics, if not properly anticipated and planned for, will increasingly challenge the concept of “Arctic Exceptionalism,” borne of former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s call in 1987 that the Arctic be a “zone of peace.”<sup>4</sup> The question, therefore, is not whether NATO should be actively engaged in Arctic issues, but rather what is to be the form of that engagement. The answer to that question needs to be shaped by an accurate understanding of the intentions and operations of NATO’s competitors.

## Assessing Russian and Chinese Objectives

Russia undertook an ambitious refurbishment and expansion of its Arctic military infrastructure between 2013 and 2017, which was focused on increasing its air assets and air defense footprint. This effort has effectively provided Russia an improved anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capability encompassing the strategic Northern Sea Route (NSR) across Russia’s northern coast and its bastion of naval operations east of the Kola Peninsula.<sup>5</sup>

The NSR, which Russia claims as an internal waterway—a claim the United States and a number of other nations dispute—is central to Moscow’s Arctic economic development strategy. Similarly, the Russian Navy’s bastion defense concept is key to the Kremlin’s nuclear doctrine and the security of Russia’s strategic ballistic missile submarines. While these military

- 1 NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), “The Changing Arctic: A Greener, Warmer and Increasingly Accessible Region,” NOAA, December 15, 2017, <https://www.noaa.gov/explainers/changing-arctic-greener-warmer-and-increasingly-accessible-region>.
- 2 National Centers for Environmental Information, “Predicting the Future of Arctic Ice,” National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, February 28, 2020, <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/news/arctic-ice-study>.
- 3 Atlantic Council, “North Star: The first Department of the Air Force Arctic strategy,” July 21, 2020, video, 58:31, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/event/north-star-the-first-department-of-the-air-force-arctic-strategy/>; the Department of the Air Force, Arctic Strategy, July 21, 2020, <https://www.af.mil/Portals/1/documents/2020SAF/July/ArcticStrategy.pdf>.
- 4 Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, “Mikhail Gorbachev’s Speech in Murmansk at the Ceremonial Meeting on the Occasion of the Presentation of the Order of Lenin and the Gold Star to the City of Murmansk,” speech in Murmansk, Russia, October 1, 1987, [https://www.barentsinfo.fi/docs/Gorbachev\\_speech.pdf](https://www.barentsinfo.fi/docs/Gorbachev_speech.pdf).
- 5 Heather A. Conley and Matthew Melino, America’s Arctic Moment: Great Power Competition in the Arctic to 2050, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2020, [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/Conley\\_ArcticMoment\\_layout\\_WEB%20FINAL.pdf?EkVudAIPZnRPLwEdAIPO.GlpyEnNzIN](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/Conley_ArcticMoment_layout_WEB%20FINAL.pdf?EkVudAIPZnRPLwEdAIPO.GlpyEnNzIN).

## Set its Sights on the High North

Vessels from NATO escort an amphibious task group to conduct an amphibious assault during Exercise Trident Juncture 18. (Source: NATO Flickr)



improvements have legitimate defensive purposes, they also effectively extend Russian A2/AD capabilities into the strategic North Atlantic chokepoint at the GIUK (Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom) Gap.

Moreover, the revitalization of Russia's military footprint in the Arctic has been accompanied by increased Russian naval and air patrols in the region, robust Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic, and the routine use of electronic warfare tactics, such as GPS jamming, against allied forces.

China, for its part, has declared itself a “near Arctic state”—a concept that defies meaning. Nevertheless, this self-designation reflects Beijing's significant interests in the Arctic, including its aspirations to create the Polar Silk Road for commerce through the Arctic as an extension of its Belt and Road Initiative. In service of its Arctic ambitions, China has conducted regional scientific exploration, established research facilities in the High North, and is developing a constellation of twenty-four polar observation satellites, all of which are

dual-purposed to provide valuable domain awareness with potential military applications.<sup>6</sup>

### A Strategy for Defense and Deterrence in Warming Waters

While these developments may seem far away and far off to many NATO allies, a Russian A2/AD bubble along the Alliance's northern flank should be a critical concern for an Alliance with an obligation to defend its Arctic member states. That different Arctic allies have different views on the role NATO should play makes a consensus approach difficult.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the absence of an overarching security concept for the Arctic is an obvious and increasingly urgent lacuna for the Alliance. NATO's Article 5 requirement for collective defense makes it imperative that it take a more active role in confronting actions that jeopardize its ability to protect its member states.

To that end, NATO should develop a comprehensive Arctic strategy that is focused on deterrence of competitors and defense of its member states.

6 Gu Liping, “China's Polar-Observing Satellite Obtains Over 2,500 Images,” ECNS, September 14, 2020, <http://www.ecns.cn/m/news/sci-tech/2020-09-14/detail-ifyzykiy4584353.shtml>.

7 Canada has resisted a NATO role, viewing Arctic security as a national issue, while Denmark has been cautious to support NATO activity so as not to disrupt dialogue with Russia. On the other hand, Norway has traditionally favored a prominent role for the Alliance and, alongside the United States, has had some success in reframing Arctic issues as North Atlantic issues.



This strategy should be one that is sensitive to and accounts for the diverse array of unique Arctic equities, such as environmental issues and the rights of indigenous peoples. Such a strategy would have military, political, and environmental components and should detail approaches for establishing and maintaining a concept for credible deterrence in the Arctic. In the military dimension, specifically, the Alliance should undertake a number of actions to advance the following priorities:

**Build political consensus.** As recommended in 2017 by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's Political Committee, in order to address Arctic security matters, NATO should establish an Arctic Working Group to settle disagreements on the Alliance's role in the Arctic. It might also sponsor an Arctic Security Forum for Arctic stakeholders both inside and outside government.

**Enhance domain awareness.** Increasing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations in the North Atlantic and establishing mechanisms to enhance information sharing on Arctic matters is both necessary and noncontroversial.

**Ensure allies can operate effectively and jointly.** There are several avenues for building Arctic competency and interoperability. These include:

- Conducting a feasibility study on the utility of establishing a NATO Joint Force Command for the Arctic or Arctic Command to coordinate NATO military operations in the Arctic region;
- Establishing a specialized NATO Arctic Rapid Reaction Force comprised of air, ground, and maritime assets from Canada, Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, and others capable of responding to both military and humanitarian crises in the region;
- Increasing the frequency and complexity of NATO military exercises, such as Trident Juncture 2018, in the region; and

- Focusing on polar icebreaker capabilities and encouraging Arctic allies to build additional icebreakers to address Russia's large numerical advantage and China's in-progress icebreaker program.

**Maintain stability.** Establishing an Arctic security dialogue with Russia through the NATO-Russia Council will promote transparency about NATO's actions in the Arctic and mitigate adverse reactions. Such a dialogue could explore the development of a "military code of conduct" for the Arctic with the goal of reducing the risk of confrontation or miscalculation. This could include advance notification of military exercises as well as routine air and naval activity, in addition to protocols for respecting the region's biodiversity.

## Finding a Credible Voice

An effective defense and deterrence posture for the Arctic must draw on successful approaches and activities in NATO's east and south while accounting for the Arctic's unique, historic disassociation from security issues. To be an accepted and credible actor in the Arctic, NATO must utilize both its political and military tools. It must serve as a bridge between the security community and an array of longstanding Arctic stakeholders which have a vested interest in promoting regional stability and prosperity. For instance, NATO's credibility will be strengthened by acknowledging the Arctic strategies of indigenous groups and by incorporating their insights on regional trends, including their ideas on habitation and presence that are conducive to longevity.<sup>8</sup> NATO must equally account for the importance of efforts such as environmental protection, scientific exploration, and natural resource development.

Even as the changing security environment necessitates ramping up NATO's role in the Arctic, the Alliance must also respect the unique set of existing Arctic consultative fora, which serve productive purposes and where NATO's presence would be counterproductive and antithetical to the purpose of keeping Russia, and occasionally China, constructively engaged. Nevertheless, the eventual establishment of a formal Arctic Security Forum where NATO as an institution

8 Aleut International Association, Arctic Athabaskan Council, Gwich'in Council International, Inuit Circumpolar Council, Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North and the Saami Council, "VI Arctic Leaders' Summit Declaration," Arctic Leaders' Summit, Rovaniemi, Finland, November 13-15, 2019, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58b6de9e414fb54d6c50134e/t/5dea325f7367373ce5087580/1575629412149/Final+ALS6+and+ALYS+Declaration+%28secured%29.pdf>.

is an accepted actor should be a long-term goal. To that end, NATO should encourage the development of these talks through a forum such as the Arctic Security Roundtable, held annually at the Munich Security Conference through joint efforts by the Wilson Center and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI). This off-the-record, high-level setting includes China and could be utilized to facilitate a candid Arctic security dialogue geared toward the establishment of a formal security forum.

Overall, the growing military-security dimension in Arctic affairs requires NATO to urgently shore up its defense and deterrence posture in the region lest it risk losing relevance and the ability to protect its members.

NATO's recent agreement to establish operational coordination mechanisms between NATO Maritime Command (MARCOM) and the Danish Joint Arctic Command (JACO) which has responsibility for the defense of Greenland and the Faroe Islands is a step in the right direction.<sup>9</sup> But moving forward comprehensively will require the Alliance to navigate the complex and politically sensitive interlocking relationships among existing Arctic stakeholders. To do this successfully, NATO needs a carefully planned Arctic strategy that can forge consensus among Arctic allies around specific military activities that guarantee access to the region in any circumstance. The time is now for NATO to be an Arctic actor.

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9 NATO, "NATO Begins Cooperation with Danish Joint Arctic Command in Greenland", October 1, 2020, <https://mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2020/nato-begins-cooperation-with-danish-joint-arctic-command-in-greenland>



# Rethink and Replace Two Percent

By Derek Chollet, Steven Keil, and Christopher Skaluba

NATO's two percent metric is reductive and politically fraught but offers lessons for better ways to measure burden sharing.

# Rethink and Replace Two Percent

The frustrations of NATO's burden-sharing debate are well-worn. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper is the eighth consecutive Pentagon chief to prod allies to do more. Yet over six years after NATO allies formalized their commitment to spend at least two percent of GDP on defense by 2024, only nine of the thirty member states meet the target, with bleak prospects for adding many more. As this debate rages on, we should ask: is this benchmark still serving its fundamental purpose to make the Alliance stronger and better able to address the threats of the future?

The answer, on balance, is no. Looking to 2021, the time has come to retire two percent as the principal metric for measuring NATO burden sharing.

This does not mean conceding total failure. There has been clear progress since 2014 on increasing defense spending and in getting US allies to carry more of NATO's operational burden. Nevertheless, the two-percent target has also undermined Alliance credibility and solidarity. That not even a third of NATO members have lived up to the pledge is a black eye to NATO's public image. And that the Trump administration has weaponized this fact to denounce European governments has frayed the solidarity so critical to NATO's identity and effectiveness. For the sake of the Alliance's future, we need to do something different.

## Deficiencies and Perverse Incentives

Spending targets for NATO members date to the height of the Cold War, but the specific debates around two percent began after 9/11. As US defense spending rocketed upwards in the early 2000s, much of Europe continued to reap the post-Cold War peace dividend, drawing down armed forces and reducing defense

budgets. The disparity between US spending levels and those of other allies became too stark to ignore, leading to calls for a specific spending target to recapitalize dwindling budgets. At the time, half of NATO allies were spending above two percent of GDP on defense and half below, making it a reasonably attainable measure.<sup>1</sup>

At NATO's 2014 Wales Summit, allies pledged "to move towards the 2 percent guideline within a decade."<sup>2</sup> Policymakers at Wales understood the benchmark was imperfect, even unachievable for many, but believed it was a necessary public call to action to create accountability, especially in light of Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine and the unfolding crisis involving the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

This made sense at the time. Unfortunately, politicians in democratic countries making budgetary promises for successors a decade down the road without any sort of binding mechanism is a poor recipe for success.

While the two-percent metric is a perennial bipartisan talking point in the United States, the grievances over burden sharing resonated with US President Donald J. Trump's political style in a way few anticipated. Combined with a basic misunderstanding of NATO (which is not like a club where members owe dues as he has asserted on multiple occasions), Trump uses the fact that most member states have not yet met the two-percent target as proof that the United States is being taken advantage of by its allies. This perception is now commonplace in US political discussions and is at the center of what is widely viewed as a damaged transatlantic relationship.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the political challenges, the metric remains an arbitrary and inefficient tool for defense planning. It

1 As Sten Rynning notes: "... [T]he 2/20 yardsticks were intended to be easily reachable. When looking at defence spending 1991-2003, staff at NATO headquarters in Brussels noted that the median was 2.05%—so half the allies already spent over 2%. The 2% target was thus a soft target intended to get the bottom half to make a greater effort." Sten Rynning, "Why NATO's Defence Pledge Matters," Friends of Europe, July 29, 2015, <https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/why-natos-defence-pledge-matters/>.

2 NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, press release, September 5, 2014, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm).

3 It is worth noting that the intensity of this political debate is disproportionate to its actual importance. Approximately eighty-five percent of NATO defense spending is done by the four largest allies (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States), of which the United Kingdom and the United States meet the two-percent target and France is just below.

## Rethink and Replace Two Percent

US President Donald Trump meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the London Leaders' Meeting in December 2019. (Source: White House Flickr)



does little to indicate the effectiveness of the output it enables, even if the NATO Defense Planning Process is in place to do exactly that. Relying on the two-percent metric to measure NATO's health is tantamount to eating an apple a day to keep the doctor away—it's not a bad idea, but neither is it a good indicator of fitness nor the key to lasting health.

The fatal flaw of the two-percent target is laid bare by the economic devastation wrought by COVID-19.<sup>4</sup> Tying spending measures to GDP comes with enormous downside risk. This fact was borne out pre-pandemic by Greece, whose ability to surpass the two-percent threshold—in 2019, Greece spent 2.28 percent of its GDP on defense—was tied to its absence of economic growth and its high spending in areas like personnel.<sup>5</sup> As the economic crisis deepens, this problem will be multiplied across NATO member states where total euros spent on defense is likely to decline

while nations move closer to the two-percent target. For instance, Germany now expects to be at 1.6 percent of GDP in defense spending in 2020 after peaking at 1.38 percent in 2019, due mostly to its shrinking GDP, not an increase in spending beyond previous projections.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the moral high ground on which the United States stands to shame allies on defense spending is partly an illusion. There is no question Washington spends significant resources on defense, but likening total US defense expenditures to those of its allies is not an appropriate comparison. Unlike most other NATO nations, the United States is a global actor with commitments extending to the Middle East and Indo-Pacific as well as Europe. Most European defense capabilities are expended in theater or in direct support of NATO missions like in Afghanistan, whereas only a portion of the US defense budget is dedicated to

4 "Combined European defense spending dropped by about \$27 billion in the six years following the Great Recession. Jane's now forecasts that European defense expenditure will amount to \$270.9 billion by 2025, down nearly 20 percent from the pre-COVID-19 estimate of \$324.4 billion." James Goldgeier and Garret Martin, "NATO's Never-Ending Struggle for Relevance," *War on the Rocks*, September 3, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/natos-never-ending-struggle-for-relevance/>.

5 NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019)*, press release, 13, November 29, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_11/20191129\\_pr-2019-123-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191129_pr-2019-123-en.pdf).

6 *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2013-2019)*, NATO, November 29, 2019, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_11/20191129\\_pr-2019-123-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_11/20191129_pr-2019-123-en.pdf).

transatlantic security.<sup>7</sup> Parsing an exact number is difficult given the benefit to European allies of US global investments (e.g., the US strategic nuclear umbrella), but the common pretense in US policy circles that the entirety of US defense spending is counted toward European security is logically unsound.

Lastly, it is important to realize that unlike NATO allies like Germany—which is legally obligated to pass a balanced budget each year—the United States funds its defense expenditures by running massive budget deficits. The US defense budget in 2019 was \$686 billion, while the deficit stood at \$984 billion.

## A Shifting Geopolitical Context

To the extent transatlantic defense spending has been increasing, it is less about meeting some political commitment on paper than it is driven by the need to adapt to a changing geopolitical landscape—namely a European security environment that has rapidly deteriorated since 2014 and an increasingly assertive China, countering which is requiring attention and resources from Washington.

It is doubtful leaders would have signed onto the Wales pledge absent Russia's invasion of Ukraine and illegal annexation of Crimea earlier in 2014. These events made Alliance discussions of defense capabilities, which sometimes could seem theoretical, much less so. As a result, it is hardly surprising that the greatest increases in defense spending have occurred in nations that feel directly threatened by Russia.<sup>8</sup> The nature of that invasion mattered as well, as NATO allies were forced to build new aptitudes for an era of hybrid warfare. Moreover, China's rise as an economic and military heavyweight led directly to the Obama administration's "rebalance" to Asia and the Trump administration's focus on "great power competition."

In both cases, there is an evident consensus to prioritize US military resources for the Indo-Pacific.<sup>9</sup>

So the burden-sharing debate is not simply about fairness and principle. With growing threats in Europe's east and south, new types of warfare to address, and a preoccupation in Washington with deterring China, European security will increasingly require European resources and leadership. In no way does this equate to the United States abandoning NATO or transatlantic security; it is against its interests to do so. But neither can Washington afford to be primarily focused on transatlantic matters.

This is where there is some good news. Europeans are working to do more through NATO, the European Union (EU), and ad hoc arrangements like Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF), the French-led European Intervention Initiative (EI2), and other regional security formats. Avoiding duplication and prioritizing coordination through NATO remains important, but there is tangible evidence that European allies (and Canada) are stepping up—from leading battlegroups in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) mission, to the training mission in Iraq, to important roles in the global counter-ISIL mission, to addressing security issues in the Sahel and the Maghreb.

These activities are forms of burden sharing too. While not all the arrangements are explicitly conducted through the Alliance, NATO creates a high standard for operations and interoperability, enabling European nations and partners to tackle security challenges outside of explicitly NATO frameworks. What we see is an interest-driven reaction to emerging geopolitical realities, not an obligation to spend a certain amount of GDP. The United States should continue to urge NATO allies in this direction.

7 Lucie Béraud-Sudrea and Nick Childs, "The US and its NATO Allies: Costs and Values," Military Balance Blog, July 9, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2018/07/us-and-nato-allies-costs-and-value>.

8 According to NATO's national defense expenditures report, Bulgaria, Estonia, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland are among the nine NATO allies currently meeting the 2 percent spending guideline, and the only allies to have moved from below the threshold to above it. See, NATO Public Diplomacy Division, Defence Expenditure, November 29, 2019.

9 Even in the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Crimea, the United States supported NATO allies through emergency funding in the form of the European Reassurance Initiative, all the while debating the removal of troops from Europe to address threats in Asia. The most recent decision to remove 12,000 troops from Germany chiefly highlights the tension in US-German relations under the Trump administration, and the president's continued confrontational approach toward Berlin.

## New Principles for Sharing Burdens

During the past two decades, there has been meaningful progress on European contributions to deterrence and defense. Yet, much remains to be done. For this, we need to move beyond two percent. Scrapping the metric altogether may prove counterproductive or politically infeasible in the short term, but it is no longer much use as the principal yardstick for Alliance burden sharing as it exists today.

NATO has other metrics, such as the “Three Cs”—cash, capabilities, and commitments—that seek to broaden the focus beyond defense spending. NATO also conducts internal assessments as part of its defense planning process to get a more granular sense of the outputs of allied defense spending as compared to the inputs. Presenting some of this information publicly so there is a form of accountability should be considered.

Indeed, the two-percent target’s greatest virtue is that it is easily understandable. As a pass-fail metric, it lends itself to a quick and accessible assessment of achievement. But such simplicity is also its flaw. Too often, it obscures the meaningful progress Alliance members have made to enhance and modernize their forces. When most countries fail to reach the goal, public faith in the institution is disproportionately undermined and credibility problems compound.

In many ways, the two-percent era has been a lesson in how not to make policy or do public relations. As NATO rethinks its formula for burden sharing, the two-percent experience can lend itself to the following principles that should inform any serious effort at reform:

**Don’t set up for failure.** Any public metric for NATO burden sharing must be one most allies can realize. NATO should not dumb down burden-sharing expectations for the sake of public consumption, but neither should it consciously choose goals that are unachievable. We need something more than a simple pass-fail standard.

**Establish burden-sharing metrics analytically.** Choosing two percent because it was a median

measure of allied spending was a choice of political expedience. An analytically based metric or set of metrics derived through rigorous examination will result in better policy.

**Measure output as well as input.** If increased spending does not result in meeting actual NATO requirements, there is little point. Examples abound of allies that spend relatively little but spend it efficiently and for necessary purposes. Those allies are more valuable than allies who meet the benchmark but are incapable of or unwilling to contribute to Alliance missions.

**Standardize the definition of defense spending.** That different allies can count different defense expenditures, including personnel and pensions, toward their balance sheets is analytically unsound and allows for accounting shenanigans. Every ally must count the same things in the same way if measuring burden sharing is ever to be a serious enterprise.

**Credit more valuable contributions.** High-end or exquisite capabilities that provide unique value to NATO—such as surveillance drones, precision-guided munitions, mobile air and missile defense, and aerial refueling tankers—should count for more in burden-sharing calculations than, say, another infantry company. As cyber and hybrid threats increase, lower-threshold coding skills or know-how to counter disinformation make uniquely valuable contributions accessible to all allies.<sup>10</sup>

**Emphasize trendlines rather than headlines.** Measuring contributions at a point in time has utility, but it misses more valuable information like whether those contributions are increasing or decreasing. For example, the fact that Germany has increased defense spending by more than thirty-five percent since 2014 should be celebrated but is overlooked because of the concomitant rise in German GDP.

**Reconsider what counts for burden sharing.** In an era of new and expanding threats, investments in emerging tech or even pandemic preparation might

<sup>10</sup> Allies like the United States, the United Kingdom, and France will always provide the Alliance with the preponderance of its high-end capabilities, but other allies should be duly credited where they are able to contribute to high-end war fights or uniquely difficult challenges.

reasonably be included in NATO burden-sharing figures. Investments in railways, ports, and other transportation infrastructure, while not normally funded through defense budgets, are critical to ensuring the mobility of allied reinforcements to the eastern flank.<sup>11</sup> Nonmilitary issues like the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are actively changing the concept of security for many NATO allies. It will be a difficult discussion, but NATO should reconsider the nature of twenty-first century security.<sup>12</sup>

**Introduce proportionality.** NATO membership must come with responsibilities for all allies, but pretending the same standards that apply to the United States should apply to Croatia is logically disingenuous. Tiering allies by the size of their economies or militaries and selecting burden-sharing standards proportional for each tier is likely to produce better results, even if it comes with political challenges.

**Promote solidarity.** NATO's legitimacy and power stems from thirty nations speaking and acting in unison. Any burden-sharing metric must do more to strengthen cohesion than to unravel it.

## Conclusion

In an ideal world, NATO could keep discussions about burden sharing out of the public eye altogether, granting that any organization with thirty democratic members will inevitably have disparities. This would require the US public and political community to recognize what is self-evident to much of the policy community—that the benefits the United States accrues from NATO are worth the costs.

To be clear, NATO's effectiveness requires capable militaries, and this will be expensive. Tough decisions will always be required. Real work needs to be done to expand defense investment in equipment, readiness, emerging technologies, digitalization, and research and development. Substantial and targeted spending to create effective deterrence, particularly by large European countries like Germany, must remain a priority. We need to do all this in a way that avoids the pitfalls of oversimplification and acrimony that have too often defined the two-percent debate over the last decade.

The point of two percent was to get Europe to do more. That is happening. Now the discussion must move forward in a different way, and 2021 is the time to start.

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<sup>11</sup> Former commanding general of US Army Europe, Ben Hodges, has argued on multiple occasions that dual-use infrastructure investments should count toward the two-percent defense spending goal. See, Octavian Manea, "A Tour of Horizon Interview with Lieutenant General Ben Hodges on NATO Adaptation and the Russian Way of Warfare," Small Wars Journal, August 7, 2018, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/small-wars-journal-interview-lieutenant-general-ben-hodges-nato-adaptation-and-russian-way>.

<sup>12</sup> Karen Donfried and Wolfgang Ischinger, "The Pandemic and the Toll of Transatlantic Discord," Foreign Affairs, April 18, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-18/pandemic-and-toll-transatlantic-discord>.





# ‘Game Out’ Decision Making

by AM Sir Christopher Harper, KBE, RAF (Ret.)

In an era where the distinction between peace and conflict is increasingly complex, NATO should retain its competitive advantage by using synthetic environments and virtual worlds to support rapid, efficient, and effective strategic decision making.

# ‘Game Out’ Decision Making

As the world reenters an era of great power competition, many of the geopolitical and ideological certainties that lend NATO its sense of purpose are dissolving. However, the Western democratic values on which the Alliance was founded, on which its success has been built, and from which it continues to derive its moral authority, endure. The principles of consensus and mutually assured security are as important as ever.

As challenges proliferate, one of the greatest threats to NATO could be a lack of confidence—not in the organization’s central purpose or relevance, but in its ability to succeed in an increasingly fluid, fast-moving, and ambiguous world.

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*“We remain configured for joint operations in the era of industrial warfare and have not shifted at the pace needed to be an integrated force able to operate and fight in the Information Age.”*

*Gen. Sir Patrick Sanders, commander, UK Strategic Command*

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NATO faces a diverse array of challenges ranging from conventional defense and security threats, to climate change, migration, political polarization, and a global pandemic. From an operational standpoint, the corresponding intricacies of subthreshold and hybrid warfare present NATO’s most urgent challenge. Actions and reactions are spilling over from the traditional domains of land, sea, and air into the realms of space, cyber, and information, and vice versa. The lines between competition and conflict, between adversaries and enemies, are blurring—and so are ethical and legal boundaries.

## **The Need for Swift, Well-Informed Consensus Building and Fast, Effective Decision Making**

Potential adversaries such as Russia, China, and Iran have a crucial advantage. They are unencumbered by the need for consensus. Their decision making is

centralized and they are, as a result, quicker and more agile. They can thus act with greater confidence, however ill-placed that confidence may be. NATO, by comparison, is institutionally sclerotic. It’s slow to react and slow to act. The moral and legal authority conferred by operating through consensus has always been one of the organization’s greatest strengths, yet in a fast-moving world it has the potential to be a serious vulnerability.

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*“It doesn’t help to have a force which is ready to move within forty-eight hours if we need forty-eight days to take a decision to make it move.”*

*NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg*

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To account for this while maintaining a competitive edge, it is essential that NATO improve the speed, efficiency, and effectiveness of its strategic and operational decision making. The organization must be confident that it has an accurate, all-domain, and up-to-date understanding of its threats, that it has explored the full spectrum of operational options, and that it has analyzed the likely cross-domain consequences—intended and unintended—of each one.

In essence, NATO must move away from the slow, cumbersome production of static plans. Instead, at every level, from the North Atlantic Council and the Military Committee down to individual field units, it must embrace a culture of perpetual readiness and rehearsal.

## **Translating a Technological Lead Into a Strategic Advantage**

In this respect, NATO’s contemporary technological lead and industrial sophistication offer a potentially priceless advantage. The technology-driven upheaval that is transforming our industries, economies, and societies—the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution—will transform defense and security equally profoundly. This revolution is characterized as much by the convergence of existing technologies as the creation

## 'Game Out' Decision Making

Student pilots train on a virtual reality flight simulator as part of the Pilot Training Next program (Source: Defense Visual Information Database System)



of new ones. Innovations across and between the fields of robotics, bioscience, automation, data analytics, machine learning (ML), and cloud computing are opening extraordinary opportunities. Social media platforms, e-commerce, driverless cars, and the Internet of Things are all products of this revolution. It is not hard to see that, in the coming years, military power will increasingly be derived from computer software as much as military hardware or head count; it will rely as much on technologies that help integrate capabilities as on individual weapons platforms.

*“For NATO, BDAA [Big Data and Advanced Analytics] will enable increased operational efficiency, reduced costs, improved logistics, real-time monitoring of assets and predictive assessments of campaign plans. At the same time, it will generate significantly greater situational awareness at strategic, operational, tactical and enterprise levels. These applications will lead to a deeper and broader application of predictive analytics to support enhanced decision making at all levels. It has the potential to create a knowledge and decision advantage, which will be a significant strategic disruptor across NATO’s spectrum of capabilities.”*

*NATO Science & Technology Organization,  
Science & Technology Trends 2020-2040:  
Exploring the S&T Edge*

When it comes to improving the speed and accuracy of decision making, and building well-informed consensus among allies, one of the more promising technologies is the Single Synthetic Environment (SSE).

### From Models and Simulations to the Single Synthetic Environment

For decades, organizations of all kinds have been using models and simulations, fueled by ever-larger amounts of data and supported by ever-increasing computing power, to gain a better understanding of the world around them. From financial forecasts to digital wind tunnels and flight simulators, models and simulations provide insights into the challenges organizations face and how best to meet them.

Currently, however, these models and simulations are siloed. They are increasingly expensive to develop and procure. Most importantly, they are also failing to keep up with the burgeoning sophistication of the world they are designed to represent because they tend to serve narrow purposes.

An SSE, like the one under development now for the United Kingdom’s Ministry of Defence, is designed to address these shortcomings. It is a virtual world where models, data, and artificial intelligence (AI)/ML technologies from a range of sources and suppliers can converge to represent any real-world operating environment in enormous detail.

This environment can represent every military domain and an operating environment of any size, from a street or city block to a country or entire region. It can bring physical elements like terrain and weather together with abstract social, demographic, political, and economic systems and help users understand cross-domain effects.

Unlike “digital twins” (digital representations of physical systems), an SSE can be used to run sophisticated simulations that are probabilistically predictive in nature as well as descriptive. Not only can it help users visualize and interpret scenarios as they are, it can also provide insights into how those scenarios could unfold. By playing out multiple options simultaneously, planners, policy makers, and leaders can explore probable cross-domain consequences (intended and unintended) in a virtual world before taking action in the real one.

### **Integrated Planning, Training, Mission Rehearsal, and Decision Support**

One of the more powerful features of an SSE is its ability to accommodate hundreds or even thousands of users simultaneously, whether that’s in a collective training exercise or each fulfilling a different function in the analyzing, planning, and response process. What is more, an SSE allows different users to interact with this virtual world in different ways, each according to their function or mission.

Some personnel may need to see their environment in terms of graphs and data via a live, geospatial dashboard. Others may wish to see two-dimensional, tabletop maps via a course-of-action editor that enables collaborative planning. Some still may elect to experience their area of operations from a three-dimensional aerial standpoint or via a wargaming platform that combines the simulated environment with user-controlled adversarial interactions. Those on the ground

can view the SSE from a first-person perspective in order to train and rehearse.

All this means there is a coherent, tightly integrated decision workflow from the first indication of a crisis through strategic assessment, response option evaluation, planning, rehearsal, and to final execution.

In this way, an SSE can help organizations integrate vertically and horizontally, and so deliver major improvements in preparedness across an entire enterprise, whether that’s a military unit, a joint headquarters, or even an integrated, multinational alliance.

### **Shared Costs, Shared Benefits, and Shared Opportunities**

If adopted by NATO, an SSE would act as a digital backbone along which a whole new generation of capabilities could be assembled and integrated. Thanks to open development standards, it could accommodate a wide variety of the most relevant, up-to-date content from suppliers across different governments, academic institutions, and industries. The SSE would be deployed within an approved NATO hosting environment—on secure cloud or on-premises servers, for example—to ensure the highest security and control measures. It would be updated continuously, quickly, and economically, and thereby overcome the limitations of many current siloed, single-supplier solutions. It is an exciting opportunity for the Alliance to reduce costs whilst also improving the speed and quality of decision making.

As allies’ economies come under pressure from competition and the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of cost-efficiency is difficult to overstate. It is imperative, therefore, that NATO share the financial burden between the allies just as they share its benefits. There is no escaping the fact, however, that the transformation that is so essential to retaining its competitive advantage will require an increased appetite for the relatively modest financial risks associated with technological progress. Experimentation is, after all, essential to genuine innovation.

This transformation will also require a less bureaucratic and more agile approach to development. The pathway to a fully functional SSE would be first to develop

a proof of concept through experimentation and joint development. This would then be stress tested through demanding, high-level exercises. If successful, this proof of concept would be built out into a fieldable capability, which would, in turn, be rapidly deployed throughout NATO's Command Structure.

### **Leveraging Technology to Promote Human Imagination, Experience, and Intuition**

As NATO looks ahead, innovations like the SSE promise something far more profound than mere digital augmentation. They offer a means of organizational transformation. NATO's technological lead, like the peace that it is dedicated to preserving, is not assured; it is, for the moment, a fortunate state of affairs. As competitors redouble their efforts to dominate the realms of information and cyber warfare through innovation in emerging technologies like AI and ML, staying ahead will demand imagination, radical innovation, and significant ongoing investment.

As with any technology, the value of a system like an SSE lies not in its power or sophistication but in how wisely NATO uses it. It is not a "magic box." It will neither take humans out of the loop nor make decisions on their behalf. What synthetic environments can do, however, is give us intuition for ambiguous environments and help us quickly achieve well-informed consensus. They can help senior leaders apply their intuition and experience and give them confidence in their ability to act fast and effectively—whatever the threat.

Using such technology to improve the speed, efficiency, and effectiveness of decision making will be crucial to retaining and boosting confidence throughout NATO. Our all-important Alliance should act now to adopt and integrate all the advantages that an SSE would confer.

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# Put Itself Back in the Narrative

by Bridget Corna and Livia Godaert

NATO can recapture the imagination of allied publics by telling its own story better and in new ways to new audiences.

# Put Itself Back in the Narrative

NATO is vitally important; but unless you work there, or at the Atlantic Council, you wouldn't necessarily know that. For those who don't work for NATO or follow it closely, the organization can seem like an indecipherable blob of bureaucracy and acronyms, a mysterious realm of complicated elite politics, or a major strain on national budgets. The Alliance has a strong and active presence on the European continent. But it has become a political punching bag for the Trump administration, and the misunderstandings about NATO, its mission, and its role in today's world run deeper than campaign rally rhetoric. To secure its future, NATO must speak to its future—both in terms of its mission and its audience.

To build a multigenerational coalition of engaged transatlanticists, NATO needs to look beyond the students, experts, and practitioners who are already aware of the Alliance and its mission. NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) should reach out beyond its current network to the next generation of voters and leaders who often don't see themselves as direct beneficiaries of the Alliance in the same way people did at the time of NATO's founding more than seventy years ago and throughout the Cold War. Young Americans in particular, attuned to critiques of NATO in their political discourse and a whole ocean away from all but one other member state, are largely unaware of the impact the Alliance has on their daily lives. NATO should design a long-term, sustainable campaign to tell the story of its success—of what the organization is, what it stands for, and why it's still relevant in the twenty-first century.

The first step is honing the story itself. For most of the Alliance's history, the dividing lines between friend and foe were clear. That bipolar system no longer exists—and hasn't for decades. Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO has tried to redefine its role in the international system with mixed success. Today, when the principal threat to member states comes not from an invasion by foreign troops, but from a global pandemic, climate change, and unattributed cyberattacks,

it is more challenging for NATO to promote its core tenet of collective security.

Getting the story right is more than a matter of political necessity or public relations. With the rise of disinformation, digital authoritarianism, natural disasters due to climate change, and a globalized society, younger generations are less concerned with military power as a source of security and instead think about security more holistically, incorporating matters such as civil defense, societal resilience, and technological and digital literacy. National—and transatlantic—security, moreover, no longer refers solely to military operations. It also includes developing and maintaining influence through soft power and tackling a diversity of nontraditional threats. As responsible consumers of information and voters for political leaders whose decisions have consequences for NATO's collective defense, citizens of all ages and backgrounds have a part to play in addressing these problems.

Just as the terrain where NATO is operating has shifted, so too should its messages. NATO's StratCom Centre of Excellence, established in 2014, is a step in the right direction. It highlights strategic communication as a vital tool in NATO's "evolving roles, objectives and missions" and recommends the terms for NATO's public diplomacy strategies. Unfortunately, these strategies do not go far enough in creative messaging and are too narrowly focused on existing NATO stakeholders. We therefore recommend supplementing existing public diplomacy efforts with three specific ideas for turning millennials and Generation Z into NATO supporters: cultivating the next generation of diverse transatlantic leaders through targeted recruitment efforts; embracing nontraditional storytelling mediums to reach young leaders in non-defense sectors like business, finance, technology, entertainment, and education; and using the relationships NATO has with outside actors to amplify creative messages and track the impact of its outreach.

## Put Itself Back in the Narrative

Olivia Seltzer, editor of *The Cramm*, speaks at NATO Engages London, a conference with over 50% next-generation participants. (Source: Atlantic Council)



To be clear, these efforts are not about obscuring NATO's military purpose, but to recognize that the Alliance's essence has always been political in nature and focused on securing democracies. Promoting these dimensions of NATO's mission will resonate better with those outside the Alliance's traditional orbit.

### Cultivating the Next Generation of Leaders

NATO has two opportunities to exploit ready-made tools to share its narrative with the next generation of national security professionals. The first is to tap into existing national military recruitment campaigns that are already adjusting to the fact that young adults have a broader understanding of security. PDD should work with national recruiters in member states to add NATO to their pitches. The military is inherently mission-driven—recruits know why they're joining and what they are fighting for—and NATO fits into this ethos.

The second opportunity is to cultivate the Young Professionals Programme (YPP), NATO's new initiative to build its expertise and recruitment base. YPP participants should be required to engage with peers through social media and other platforms to share the

behind-the-scenes reality of NATO's employees and stakeholders. NATO PDD can also connect YPP participants to journalists, government officials, think tanks and nonprofit organizations, and social media influencers to share their experiences through interviews, published essays, question-and-answer sessions, and other nontraditional storytelling formats. This serves two purposes: first, it gives NATO a greater voice among young professionals as they decide on career trajectories. Second, these storytelling methods allow NATO to broaden its future candidate pool, leading to increased diversity that will make the Alliance stronger, nimbler, and more responsive to crises.

### Embracing Nontraditional Storytelling Methods to Reach New Audiences

While enhancing recruitment is key, it is equally important for NATO to rethink its outreach strategy. At the moment, NATO is deeply involved in curating new methods of engagement with existing stakeholders through efforts like the #WeAreNATO social media campaign, the Atlantic Council's #StrongerWithAllies hashtag, and dynamic elements of the #NATO2030 campaign such as the video contest. But how far does NATO reach beyond the bubble of transatlantic policy wonks? Do young people in other sectors understand



the value of NATO? In the past, NATO was a core part of the lives of people across sectors because conflict with the Soviet Union overshadowed all other national security concerns. Now, young professionals outside of the policy world—even those in sectors that are integral to combatting the security challenges of this century—are not as engaged in national security debates. More importantly, they are voters who elect the leaders making decisions on foreign policy, appropriations, and defense priorities.

If NATO is to remain relevant, it has to convince young leaders across professions that it is dynamic and responsive to modern threats, as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg did recently during an event dedicated to NATO's role in combating climate change. In short, NATO needs to go on a charm offensive. To that end, there are a slew of creative methods to tell NATO's story to new audiences, including:

**Bringing the archives to life:** NATO has painstakingly collected and made available to the public decades of historical records, memos, and documents that are full of rich stories from its past. By partnering with historians, librarians, and other archival specialists, NATO has constructed a comprehensive visual history. Now, NATO should tap into its next-gen talent pool to bring the archives to life. Building on the boom in “aesthetic” social media accounts, NATO should launch “NATOCORE” (a Gen Z term for “superfan”) Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter accounts. Emphasizing engaging visuals paired with informational text can pull in a wider audience who may not have known how to find these documents and stories on their own.

**Bringing the organization to life:** For many young people, NATO may seem like an unwieldy international organization run by older, military people with whom they do not share life experiences. Making the Alliance more than a faceless bureaucracy is critical to combating this perception. To that end, NATO should seek out online magazines, publications, and other media opportunities with millennial and Gen Z audiences to introduce the Alliance's missions, values, and people through interviews and photo essays.

**Bringing the nonmilitary dimensions of NATO to life:** Specifically, NATO can project itself as a dynamic organization of people from all walks of life by highlighting

its nonmilitary staff. NATO has an incredible corps of engineers, programmers, accountants, legal practitioners, and information technology professionals who are integral to the organization's success. NATO should highlight these individuals in trade publications and magazines—and leverage influencers in these fields—through interviews, essays, videos, and other media that will reach beyond the military domain.

### Using Outside Actors to Amplify Creative Messages and Evaluate Outreach

Vital to this endeavor of turning millennials and Gen Z into NATO supporters is a network of actors that fall in between established NATO stakeholders and those uninitiated with the Alliance. Beyond direct outreach efforts to younger citizens, NATO must use heads of state and government, other elected officials, and academic and think tank partners to serve as positive influencers of the NATO brand. These actors have large constituencies and established methods of outreach that can be tapped to reach audiences more efficiently than NATO can achieve directly.

NATO might also employ politicians, research organizations, and consulting firms with the technical ability to collect data to assess the effect of outreach efforts. Where successful, NATO can use such data to demonstrate to member states that creative, innovative storytelling methods are worth the time and money because they expand the base of support for the Alliance.

### Endgame

There are direct parallels to the effort we describe in other areas of international relations. The world of international development was transformed in the 1980s and 1990s by the realization that if it was to succeed, it needed support and understanding way beyond its professional base. Humanitarian aid, support for refugees, and assistance to those living with HIV/AIDS have all been the topic of large-scale coordinated public campaigns that engaged younger people worldwide. These campaigns stemmed in part from a realization that these could not remain issues that engaged only those disposed to support aid: younger generations needed to be engaged as well.

For NATO, the challenge is reframing the messaging as well as changing the delivery. Security is being redefined, whether by hybrid warfare, disinformation, climate change, energy security, or the rise of new world powers with authoritarian strategies that reach beyond their borders. Young people are aware of these issues, but NATO's relevance in tackling them has not been made clear to them.

NATO should work to gain the understanding and support of younger generations that rely on the latest forms of communication, place a premium on transparency, don't automatically defer to experts or politicians, and won't be taken for granted. This effort should also be about ensuring that NATO itself changes the way it thinks about security and what it means—moving from the language of battlefields and committees to focus on highlighting the outcomes for citizens, voters, workers, and families.

To remain effective, NATO must engage the generations that are stepping into leadership roles. Policy and public diplomacy are a two-way street. NATO needs to use public diplomacy to understand which policies matter to future leaders across sectors and pursue those policies such that there is a broad coalition of support for the Alliance across sectors, urban and rural areas, generations, and political affiliations.

This must start with new and creative storytelling methods. NATO must clarify how it advances a holistic view of national security, explain its relevance in the twenty-first century, and, most importantly, demonstrate how younger generations fit into its present and its future.

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# End the Russian Veto on Georgian Accession

by Luke Coffey and Alexis Mrachek

Admitting Georgia to NATO without extending an Article 5 guarantee to Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region can fulfill the promise of the Bucharest Summit.

# End the Russian Veto on Georgian Accession

At NATO's 2008 Bucharest Summit, the allies refused to go along with a US push to offer Georgia a Membership Action Plan (MAP), but agreed that it would someday become a member of the Alliance.<sup>1</sup> Germany and France intended for this equivocation to allay Russian objections, yet it was seized upon by Vladimir Putin as an opportunity to block Georgia's path to the Alliance. In August 2008, a mere four months after the Bucharest Summit, Russia invaded Georgia and occupied twenty percent of its internationally recognized territory. With some creativity and bold political will, however, Georgia's accession into NATO is still feasible, despite the Russian occupation.

The consequences of the five-day war in 2008 are still felt today. Thousands of Russian troops occupy Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region (more commonly known as South Ossetia),<sup>2</sup> which Moscow recognized both as sovereign states after the war in flagrant violation of international law and the principles of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). To this day, Russian aggression continues with "creeping annexations"<sup>3</sup> of even more Georgian territory. Russia also carries out cyberattacks<sup>4</sup> and disinformation campaigns<sup>5</sup> in an attempt to discredit the Georgian government and undermine state institutions. However, the most lasting negative impact of the 2008

war has been the de facto veto Russia now holds over Georgia's NATO membership.

To be sure, NATO members have legitimate concerns about Georgia joining the Alliance. For example, considering its geography, could NATO develop a realistic plan to reinforce and defend Georgia if called upon? Turkey is very important to this issue. There are also concerns about whether Georgia's democracy and political stability have developed enough to justify membership. One of the biggest concerns shared by North American and European policy makers alike is Russia's occupation of Georgian territory. Many allies are worried that if Georgia were to be granted membership, then NATO's Article 5 security guarantee could mean an immediate conflict with Russia over these occupied regions. However, this challenge is not insurmountable.

One idea worth considering is inviting Georgia—including the Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region—to join NATO, but only covering the areas outside of the two occupied regions under NATO's Article 5 security guarantee. This would persist for at least the foreseeable future and strike a reasonable compromise between a Georgia "whole and free" in NATO and addressing concerns over security guarantees in the contested regions.

1 Hugh Williamson, "Germany Blocks Ex-Soviets' NATO Entry," *Financial Times*, April 1, 2008, <https://www.ft.com/content/ab8eb6a6-ff44-11dc-b556-000077b07658>.

2 The term "South Ossetia" is commonly used to describe the area north of Tbilisi that is under illegal Russian occupation. This name is derived from the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast created in 1922 by the Soviet Union. In 1991, the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast declared independence from the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, which resulted in the 1991-92 South Ossetia War. When Georgia regained its independence from the Soviet Union later in 1991, it established eleven internal subdivisions (two autonomous republics and nine regions). The area in Georgia that attempted to break away in 1991, that now has been under Russian occupation since 2008, is commonly referred to as "South Ossetia." However, "South Ossetia" is not one of the eleven subdivisions of Georgia, but instead includes parts of Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli, Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi, and the Kvemo Svaneti regions. Since using the term "South Ossetia" feeds into Russia's propaganda, this essay will refer to this region as the "Tskhinvali Region." (Tskhinvali is the largest city under Russian occupation.)

3 McCain Institute, "McCain Institute Unveils Tracker of Russian 'Borderization' in Georgia," October 16, 2019, <https://www.mccaininstitute.org/news/mccain-institute-unveils-tracker-of-russian-borderization-in-georgia/>; McCain Institute, Heritage Foundation, and Economic Policy Research Center in Georgia, "Russian Borderization in Georgia," October 2019, <https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/183ab9d69fc702c33a79bfc27b7b4d8/russian-borderization-in-georgia/index.html>.

4 Ryan Browne, "US and UK Accuse Russia of Major Cyber Attack on Georgia," CNN, February 20, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/20/politics/russia-georgia-hacking/index.html>.

5 McCain Institute, "Tracking and Refuting Disinformation in Georgia: Social Media Monitoring and Analysis Final Report," November 2019, [https://www.mccaininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/final-report\\_disinformationgeorgia.pdf](https://www.mccaininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/final-report_disinformationgeorgia.pdf).

## End the Russian Veto on Georgian Accession

US Soldiers wait near their Stryker vehicle during the tactical road march for the Noble Partner 20 exercise in Georgia. (Source: Defense Visual Information Database System)



To make this work, NATO would need to amend Article 6 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, which defines where Article 5 applies, to temporarily exclude Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region. This amendment could be made during Georgia's accession-protocol process. Accession protocols are essentially "amendments or additions to the Treaty, which once signed and ratified by Allies, become an integral part of the Treaty itself and permit the invited countries to become parties to the Treaty."<sup>6</sup> However, it should be made clear that the amendment to Article 6 would only be a *temporary* measure until Georgia's full and internationally recognized territory is restored by peaceful means.

Despite sounding quixotic, the proposal has merits. In 2010 Georgia unilaterally pledged not to use force to restore its control over the two regions under Russian occupation.<sup>7</sup> If Georgia will not use its own armed

forces to liberate these regions, there is no need for an Article 5 security guarantee that covers Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region.<sup>8</sup>

This would not be without precedent as Article 6 has been amended and modified before. In 1951, just two years after NATO's formation, it was modified prior to Greece and Turkey joining the Alliance. In 1963, Article 6's meaning was amended when the North Atlantic Council acknowledged that the "Algerian Departments of France" no longer applied since Algeria had gained independence. The Council decided to keep the wording but stripped the words "Algerian Departments of France" of their legal impact.<sup>9</sup> Similar modifications could be made for Georgia.

Moreover, there are countless examples of NATO members that do not have all their territory under the protection of Article 5, including the United States with its

6 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), "NATO Enlargement," last updated May 5, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/summit2009/topics\\_en/05-enlargement.html](https://www.nato.int/summit2009/topics_en/05-enlargement.html).

7 *Civil Georgia*, "Georgia Makes 'Unilateral Pledge' of Non-Use of Force," November 23, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22880>.

8 A similar proposal would not apply to Ukraine because Kyiv does not have a non-use of force pledge regarding Russian-occupied Crimea and the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine. While the fate of NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine were linked in 2008, more than a decade later, it is time for a decoupling. This is not meant to be a criticism of Ukraine; NATO should aspire to bring Ukraine into the Alliance someday. This is merely a reflection of the different realities in the two countries.

9 Antoaneta Boeva and Ivan Novotny, "Scope and Historical Developments of Article 6," *Emory International Law Review*, 34 (2019): Rev. 121, <https://law.emory.edu/eilr/content/volume-34/issue-special/articles/scope-historical-developments-article-6.html>.

## End the Russian Veto on Georgian Accession

territory of Guam and the state of Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean, the United Kingdom with the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean, and France with Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean.

At the time of admitting Greece and Turkey into NATO in 1952, World War II hero and US Army Gen. Omar Bradley, while serving as the first chairman of the NATO Military Committee, made the case to US senators that Greece and Turkey would bolster [US Army Gen. Dwight D.] Eisenhower's southeastern flank and would "serve as powerful deterrents to aggression."<sup>10</sup> Today, the same case could be made for Georgia. Georgia's geostrategic location in the South Caucasus, its professional and capable military (and its political will to use it), and its commitment to liberty and democracy would make it a powerful addition to the stability of the transatlantic community.

However, the onus to make this case does not fall solely on the United States and its NATO allies. Georgians, too, must take action to speed along their nation's membership prospects. First, the Georgian government should, at least privately, acknowledge to NATO members that it is willing to join the Alliance without Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali Region under Article 5 protection until these occupied regions have been peacefully returned to Georgia. Tbilisi must first find the political will to support the idea of amending Article 6. Until signals are sent to allied capitals that the Georgian government is on board, do not expect movement on this issue from the Alliance.

Second, the issue of NATO membership must remain above domestic party politics in Georgia. It must be perceived as a unifying national effort. The leaders of all of Georgia's major political parties should sign a joint letter that explicitly states their support for the country's transatlantic aspirations and temporarily amending Article 6. In addition, the official Georgian delegation to the next NATO Summit should include the leaders from opposition parties who support Georgian membership in the Alliance—something that should become routine practice. These measures will show NATO members that even though Georgia is a politically divided country (like most democracies

around the world), there is political unity on the issue of NATO membership. These proactive efforts from Georgia would energize NATO capitals on the issue.

Unfortunately, this proposal is not without its challenges. Russia is likely to launch a disinformation campaign to claim that amending Article 6 to temporarily exclude the occupied regions is proof that the Georgian people do not want them back. While Russian tactics are a legitimate concern, it should not prevent policy makers from pursuing this proposal. Russia is conducting perpetual disinformation campaigns against the Georgian people and will continue to do so, regardless of whether or not Article 6 is amended. Further, countering Russian disinformation will be crucial for the success of this proposal.

Instead of succumbing to Russian efforts to mislead, Georgian and NATO authorities can get ahead of the debate by launching a public relations campaign to explain the proposal and how it would mutually benefit Georgia and the Alliance. It should be made crystal clear that NATO and both the Georgian and US governments are not changing their policies on Georgia's territorial integrity. Such a decisive response will imbue the proposal with a spirit of defiance and clear political will, extend the collective security umbrella against Russia's de facto veto, and at the very least, surprise Moscow. At best, it would welcome a new member into the transatlantic community that is fiercely committed to enduring deterrence. Equally valuable, admitting Georgia would cement NATO's open-door policy for qualified countries as an important contribution to transatlantic security since the first round of enlargement in 1952. This policy has helped to ensure the Alliance's central place as the prime guarantor of security in Europe and admitting Georgia would extend that guarantee further in the contested Black Sea region.

Some NATO members may not immediately support amending Article 6. Since NATO makes all of its major decisions by consensus, the process of welcoming Georgia into the Alliance under the terms outlined here would require strong leadership, intense diplomatic negotiations, and, perhaps most importantly, patience.

<sup>10</sup> George McGhee, *The US-Turkish-NATO Middle East Connection: How the Truman Doctrine and Turkey's NATO Entry Contained the Soviets* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), p. 88, [https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-1-349-20503-5\\_6.pdf](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-1-349-20503-5_6.pdf).

## End the Russian Veto on Georgian Accession

Policy makers should not expect universal support overnight. As the NATO powers historically most reluctant to offer Georgia a MAP, Germany and France will likely object to this proposal early in the process. This is to be expected, but if nothing else, there will finally be a meaningful debate about a responsible and realistic way to welcome Georgia into the Alliance. The debate would push Germany and France to put forward an alternative proposal, which thus far they have failed to provide.

Finally, it is crucial that the United States play a leadership role by building a coalition of support for this proposal inside the Alliance. Washington can leverage its “special relationship” with the UK and focus on outreach to NATO’s Central and Eastern European member states, which will be generally supportive. This should also include working with Turkey, one of the Alliance’s strongest supporters of Georgian membership.<sup>11</sup>

Key to selling NATO members on the proposal will be dispelling the myth that Georgia cannot join the Alliance until the issue of its disputed territory is peacefully resolved. This is a common misconception that has its roots in the 1995 *Study on NATO Enlargement* carried out by the Alliance. A closer reading of this document shows that a territorial dispute does not necessarily prevent a country from joining the Alliance. Here is what the study says on the matter:

“States which have ethnic disputes or external territorial disputes, including irredentist claims, or internal jurisdictional disputes must settle those disputes by peaceful means in accordance with OSCE principles. Resolution of such disputes would be a *factor* in determining whether to invite a state to join the Alliance.”<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added)

While it is in NATO’s best interest that any outstanding border disputes be resolved before members join the Alliance, the last sentence of the aforementioned paragraph clearly states that the resolution of such disputes would be “a factor,” and not *the* factor, in determining whether to invite a country to join NATO.

Russia likely will not end its occupation of Georgian territory in the near future, so creativity regarding Georgia’s future NATO membership is necessary. Amending Article 6 to state that Russian-occupied regions would be temporarily excluded from the Article 5 security protection is a realistic, responsible, and reasonable way to admit Georgia into NATO while accounting for concerns on both sides of the Atlantic. Equally important, it will send a strong message to Moscow that it no longer has a de facto veto on NATO enlargement.

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<sup>11</sup> Luke Baker, “Turkish Foreign Minister Calls for Enlarged NATO, Georgia Membership,” Reuters, January 23, 2020, <https://mobile.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKBNIZMIHB>.

<sup>12</sup> NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), “Study on NATO Enlargement,” last updated November 5, 2008, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_24733.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_24733.htm).



# Reimagine the Washington Treaty

by Damon Wilson and Will O'Brien

Reexamining NATO's founding charter  
can be an exercise in creating an  
Alliance fit for a new geopolitical era.



# Reimagine the Washington Treaty

A transatlantic alliance became a reality in 1949 only when the promise of the end of war was overshadowed by the threat of communism. The North Atlantic Treaty, also known as the Washington Treaty, was an effective answer to an inflection point in the history of the international order,<sup>1</sup> founding an alliance that succeeded in safeguarding the free world.

More than seventy years later, the global system sits at another inflection point.<sup>2</sup> Increasing challenges from authoritarian regimes, namely Russia and China, combined with democratic erosion, abandonment of norms, and a dramatically changed geopolitical and technological landscape demand a reexamination of the only alliance capable of organizing free nations' defense and guaranteeing their prosperity.

What would the Washington Treaty look like if it were written today? How should NATO meet today's new and more complex geopolitical challenges while maintaining the elegant simplicity and flexibility of its founding treaty? In answering these questions, we propose four recommendations:

- Bolster NATO as an alliance of free, democratic states;
- Ensure NATO can compete in an era of geo-economics by protecting allies' economic security in the midst of rapid technological change and great power competition;
- Rebalance the transatlantic bargain and bolster NATO's role as the forum for political consultation to ensure common strategies; and
- Put NATO at the center of a global network of democratic alliances and strategic partnerships.

This reimagined NATO would position the Alliance as the backbone of the free world. It can set us on a path to adapting the most successful alliance in history to ensure its relevance in the twenty-first century. It could also serve as the starting point for a new Strategic Concept to replace the outdated 2010 version.

## NATO as an Alliance of Free Nations

The Washington Treaty's preamble underscores that freedom is at NATO's core: the parties "are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law." Article 2 commits NATO allies to "contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded..."

As Soviet occupation led to communism's spread through Central and Eastern Europe, NATO became the anti-communist bulwark. It protected the independence of its members and their democratic way of life. While the founders of the Alliance pointed to democracy and free institutions as a basis for unity, it was the threat of communism's expansion that held them close. During the Cold War, NATO accepted undemocratic developments in its members as long as they remained committed to anti-communism.

The fundamental geopolitical divide today is between free peoples and those who live under authoritarian regimes. As democracy erodes globally,<sup>3</sup> a declining Russia has become revanchist, a rising China grows more confident, Iran remains aggressive, and North Korea continually bellicose. These regimes are the principal source of security threats to global democracies (excluding climate change). A divide manifests

1 Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969).

2 John F.W. Rogers and Frederick Kempe, *Annual Report 2019/2020: Introduction*, Atlantic Council, July 21, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/annual-report-2019-2020introduction/>.

3 Larry Diamond, "Democracy's Deepening Recession," *Atlantic*, May 2, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/05/the-deepening-recession-of-democracy/361591/>.

## Reimagine the Washington Treaty

Raising of the flags at the handover ceremony for the new NATO Headquarters in 2018 (Source: NATO Flickr)



itself between allies and partners who seek to adapt, revitalize, and defend a rules-based international order, and revisionist powers who seek to bend those rules (China) or destroy them altogether (Russia).

In response, NATO should extol the freedom of its members—sovereignty of the nation combined with liberty of its citizens—as its defining attribute in the twenty-first century. Democracy, individual liberty, rule of law, and free institutions would form the explicit basis for what binds allies together. This reimagination would require allies to recommit to meeting democratic standards at home and to stand in solidarity in the face of authoritarian challenges to free peoples.

### NATO in an Era of Geoeconomics<sup>4</sup>

NATO's founders understood the link between security and prosperity. They captured this in Article 2: allies "will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage collaboration between any or all of them." Informed by the lessons of post-World War I punitive economic policies, the Washington Treaty recognized the need to harness cooperation among former adversaries as well as the

need for prosperity to ensure democracies could compete with emerging communist regimes.

NATO provided a security umbrella under which European nations could rebuild their economies by cooperating through the Marshall Plan, laying the basis for the process of European integration culminating in today's European Union (EU). Yet, the economic dimensions of the Alliance remained narrowly focused on supporting military cooperation.

Today, competition with the free world's adversaries, especially China, is primarily fought in the economic battlespace. The attractiveness of the democratic, free-market model is being challenged by state-directed, corrupt capitalism and the economic success of the Communist Party of China, which has delivered historic numbers of people out of poverty without granting them individual liberties. Many allies and NATO partners are increasingly dependent on imports and investment from China; economic dependence breeds political influence. Over time, China will represent the single most significant challenge to NATO allies. Some degree of economic interdependence is inevitable and beneficial. Yet, in this new era of geoeconomic

4 David H. McCormick, Charles E. Luftig, and James M. Cunningham, *Economic Might, National Security, and the Future of American Statecraft*, Atlantic Council, July 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/economic-might-national-security-and-the-future-of-american-statecraft/>.

competition, NATO must learn to compete.

Allies should reimagine their treaty to bring life to Article 2, developing the economic clause into a stand-alone article that binds them in a common strategy to ensure the success of free markets and provide for economic security. This would require a concerted strategy around ensuring security through coordinated international trade and investment policies, blending national security and economic interests. This mindset demands a much closer and structured NATO-EU relationship to align members' policies around promoting the rule of law for free and fair trade, negotiating trade terms together with authoritarian regimes such as China, and developing compatible investment-screening regimes (see below).

With this approach, NATO would also step up its efforts to bolster the resilience of its members' economies against cyber threats, ensure the security of telecommunications networks and critical transportation infrastructure, safeguard critical supply chains, boost energy independence, and help set standards for the use of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and other new technologies.

### **NATO Embodies a New Transatlantic Bargain**

Article 3 commits the parties “separately and jointly, by means of continuous self-help and mutual aid” to “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” It reflects the concept of burden sharing within NATO and an understanding that members would be contributors, not only consumers, of security.

Through much of the Cold War, the United States was the undisputed security power within NATO. Today, the capabilities and the ambitions of NATO's European members have grown significantly. In turn, the US political appetite and fiscal capacity to shoulder most of the Alliance's security responsibilities is waning. NATO requires a modernized Article 3 that provides its European members more equal responsibilities and a more equal voice. While the premise should remain that the allies will act together, European allies should assume greater responsibility for security in their neighborhood, including through a modernized relationship with the EU.

This new transatlantic bargain should, however, go

beyond capabilities and burden sharing to commit the parties to closer political consultation and the development of common strategies to address global challenges. Article 4 commits the allies to “consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened.” This requirement for consultation helped lead to the creation of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as a venue for such political discussions.

While NATO developed habits of military cooperation among its members, the Alliance has atrophied as the primary venue for transatlantic consultation. Consultation is the key ingredient for forging a common view of issues, which is a prerequisite for developing comparable, if not common, strategies. Too often, allies limit the nature of what is discussed at the NAC to issues on which NATO has a direct role. This undermines the power of an alliance which is well suited to help allies develop common national approaches.

Accordingly, a reimagined treaty should ensure that NATO is a forum in which allies can consult and seek solutions for any major issue that has implications for allies, not specifically military ones or ones limited to Euro-Atlantic geography. Such consultation should not imply NATO action, rather it should demonstrate NATO as the default venue for transatlantic consultation. Ensuring NATO as the venue for political consultations, which should include the EU, will guarantee a NATO relevant to twenty-first-century challenges which are inherently global and require a broader conceptualization of security.

### **NATO at the Center of a Network Of Alliances**

Article 10 allows allies “by unanimous agreement” to “invite any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area to accede to this Treaty.” NATO should remain committed to enlargement, helping to ensure a Europe whole, free, and at peace that includes new allies (who seek membership) in Scandinavia, the Western Balkans, and Europe's east. At the same time, an adapted Article 10 or subsequent article should pave the way for NATO to go well beyond its current partnership tools to form “alliances with the Alliance,” a pathway that could be open to the EU, a democratic Russia, and non-European democratic

states. This would put NATO at the center of a global network of alliances that would help ensure peace and security.

NATO has already developed an effective security network with partner nations and organizations. This is out of recognition that threats to its members can originate from anywhere, that NATO needs partners in its operations, and that allies benefit from regional expertise and advice to inform their own decision-making. Yet in today's interconnected world, the scale of the challenge allies face is global. A reimagined NATO would open the door to formal alliances with leading democracies such as Japan, Australia, and, potentially, India.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, this new clause could provide a pathway in the future for a democratic Russia, not to join NATO, but to forge an alliance with the Alliance.<sup>6</sup> It could also provide for the strategic partnerships that NATO is building with other organizations, such as the African Union. The EU is a special case as it reflects the shared sovereignty of many European nations, most of which are NATO allies.

The task of completing a Europe whole, free, and at peace cannot be left to NATO or the EU alone. Rather, it requires a fundamentally different relationship between the two institutions. Any consideration of the North Atlantic region today demands that the Alliance of the future be more effective at safeguarding freedom and advancing security in Europe's east and North Africa, the two areas of the transatlantic region most troubled by insecurity and instability. To do so requires a comprehensive approach in which transatlantic nations integrate NATO and EU approaches. To overcome the barriers to closer cooperation, a reimagined treaty should envision the EU as an ally and strategic partner that has a seat at the NAC table and delivers integrated strategies for NATO's east and south.

## Conclusion

The Washington Treaty has stood the test of time. Its simplicity has provided for the adaptations NATO needed to remain relevant to the challenges of different eras. Today, the Alliance is strained by transatlantic political tensions. The Trump administration's approach is leading some allies to hedge against their reliance on the United States, making it risky to reopen the Washington Treaty.

In a scenario of renewed US leadership and a new allied consensus, however, adapting the treaty to the twenty-first century could be not only possible, but beneficial. Article 12 provides a pathway to review the treaty. Indeed, the treaty has been amended before.<sup>7</sup> Membership for each nation that has joined the Alliance under Article 10 has required an amendment to the treaty in the form of accession protocols. While enlargement is not on the short-term agenda, by the time consensus emerges to deliver on the Bucharest Summit commitment to welcome Georgia and Ukraine into the Alliance, the allies may be in a position to coalesce around a modernization of the Washington Treaty to ensure it is as effective in this century as it was in the previous one.

The NATO of this reimagined Washington Treaty is an adaptable, multifaceted alliance that can address the political, economic, and security concerns of a new era by serving as the relationship of first resort for North America and Europe while simultaneously being the center of a global network of alliances of democratic nations. As the spine of the free world, NATO would be prepared for the generational threat of authoritarianism by employing all the capabilities of an expanded assembly of allied nations.

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5 George W. Bush, "Address by George W. Bush, President of the United States of America" in *NATO Russia Council: Rome Summit 2002*, 19, May 28, 2002, <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2002/0205-rome/rome-eng.pdf>.

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