

Whither NATO? Defining NATO's Security Role for the mid-21st Century

A Monograph

by

LTC Marc-A. Walther
German Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
US Army Command and General Staff College
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Approved by:

//signed 03 March 2021/TEH//, Monograph Director
Thomas E. Hanson, PhD

//signed 09 March 2021/BMS//, Director, Advanced Strategic Leadership Studies
Barry M. Stentiford, PhD Program

//signed/29 April 21/BAP//, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Brian A. Payne, COL

Accepted this 20th day of May 2021 by:

_____, Assistant Dean of Academics for Degree Programs
Dale F. Spurlin, PhD and Research, CGSC

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Abstract

Whither NATO? Defining NATO's Security Role for the mid-21st Century, by LTC Marc-A. Walther, 73 pages.

NATO can look back on seventy years of history. While often challenged, NATO manages to adapt and overcome obstacles and challenges. It has evolved into an international organization, with shared values among its thirty member states, and remains committed to establishing a broad basis for multi-lateral cooperation. Today, NATO is much more than a military alliance.

NATO currently faces a multitude of complex and dynamic challenges. To provide security for its members, NATO is required to handle security threats that range from disrupted societies, civil war, and the impacts of climate change on its southern flank, to Russian hybrid actions and classic conventional threats against Western democracies. In addition, China is attempting to divide the West by malign and hybrid activities hidden within economic cooperation. Chinese and Russian actions and authoritarian tendencies in NATO member states threaten the core of NATO, its cohesion based on shared democratic principles.

By analyzing NATO's character and its inner mechanisms, this monograph describes what NATO must do to adapt and successfully counter the threats it is facing. NATO must revise its strategy by realigning ends, ways, means, and resources. As such, a new strategy gives the guidance required to develop the capabilities needed in a fair and sustainable way through burden sharing. The key is a new strategic concept to outline the strategy and to recommit NATO and the allies to democratic values.

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Abbreviations

A2/AD	Anti Access/ Area Denial
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
C2	Command and Control
CCP	Communist Party of China
DCB	Defence Capacity Building
DIP	Defence Investment Pledge
EDF	European Defense Fund
EDT	Emerging Disruptive Technologies
eFP	enhanced Forward Presence
EU	European Union
ICI	Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance
JFCN	Joint Force Command Naples
JSEC	Joint Support and Enabling Command
MC	Military Committee
MDMP	Military Decision-Making Process
MDO	Multi Domain Operations
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCRSM	NATO Crisis Response System Manual
NRF	NATO Response Force
PESCO	Permanent and Structured Cooperation
SecGen	Secretary General
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe

SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
tFP	tailored Forward Presence
VEO	Violent Extremist Organizations
VJTF	Very High Readiness Joint Task Force

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Introduction

The fundamental purpose of NATO is more demonstrably clear today than it has been for decades.

—The Reflection Group appointed by the NATO Secretary General, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era*

In 2019, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) celebrated its seventieth anniversary. Over the previous seven decades, NATO achieved overall strategic success as an alliance of Western democracies amid frequent controversy about ways, ends, means, and costs. NATO has shown a remarkable strategic and institutional resilience, an ability to adapt to new circumstances, and the self-awareness to periodically redefine itself.

NATO adapted throughout the 1945-1991 Cold War, and then shifted its focus at its end to engage in international stabilization and peace-support missions. This included combat after the terrorist attacks against the United States in 2001 and the invocation of the alliance's Article 5, "Collective Defense" provision. Then in 2014, Europe and the world faced Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and its destabilizing actions against the Ukraine. After decades, great power rivalry and the shifting of European borders by force returned. In the face of Russian revisionism, NATO adapted and returned its focus to collective defense. At the same time, NATO acknowledged and engaged other persistent threats, such as instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and the spread of violent extremist organizations (VEO) such as the Islamic State. In response, NATO initiated multiple programs to enhance its capabilities and capacities. NATO member states reconfirmed these decisions at summits in Wales in 2014, in Warsaw in 2016, and most recently in London in 2019, when the heads of states and governments ratified a new NATO Military Strategy. At the same occasion, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General, was tasked to initiate a reflection process (NATO 2030)

to answer questions about how NATO's political strength can be improved. Recommendations are expected for NATO's Summit 2021.¹

Despite adopting a new military strategy, NATO chose not to overhaul its strategic concept, in which dates from 2010. Such documents from the years 1991 and 1999 played a central role in the post-1989 transformation of NATO. The 2010 strategic concept remains valid, although variables have changed significantly. For example, the 2010 strategic concept characterized Russia as a strategic partner, not a potential threat.²

NATO faces a dynamic, complex, and rapidly changing security environment that requires further adaptation. Additionally, NATO faces internal challenges that threaten its cohesion: fissures in trans-Atlantic relations, a perceived diminution of shared values, and increasing tensions between members. Moreover, many allies no longer perceive the threats facing NATO in the same way. NATO's expanded task list and internal challenges give the impression that "the Alliance has truly become different things to different people."³ To be sure, controversy is quite normal to NATO. Historically, discord among the allies often led to constructive diplomacy. To maintain this useful discourse and to successfully adapt NATO to deal with the challenges ahead, more work is required. The ratification of the new military strategy in 2019 put the second step before the first. NATO is more than a military alliance and must be clear about its "case of action" to maintain cohesion and continue to evolve. A simple adaptation of capabilities and force posture is not enough. NATO must define its strategic role in the changing security environment in order to sustain its core, the cohesion of its members.

¹ NATO, "Nato 2030," *NATO.int*, accessed 10 November 2020, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/176155.htm>.

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010*, ed. NATO (Brussels: Headquarters: NATO, 2010), 4 no. 16, 10 no. 33, 34.

³ Tomas Valasek, ed. *New Perspectives on Shared Security: NATO's Next 70 Years* (Brussels: Carnegie Europe, 2019), 88.

This requires an answer to the question: which strategic role should NATO assume in the emerging great power competitive environment? The answers to this question will inform what capabilities NATO will need in the future. However, capability-building by its members meets only half of the objective. A strategy is required to realign ends, ways, means, and resources. NATO's credibility lies in its cohesion, either in operations or deterrence. Therefore, unity of effort is key.

NATO must acknowledge the diversified security concerns of all members. This is a core issue for NATO's future. NATO must avoid being "many things to many people" and focus on improving the community within the alliance. The connecting element must be a new strategic concept.

To answer the question of how NATO should define itself and its role to meet its members' need for security in 2021 and beyond, this paper will first analyze how NATO works as an institution. This will be followed by examining the contemporary and emerging security threats and challenges facing NATO. The analysis is followed by a discussion about NATO's core tenets and a new strategic concept. Finally, the paper addresses the necessary capabilities and capacities NATO must continue to improve on to overcome its internal fissures.

1. How NATO Functions

The assessment that NATO is in a deep crisis is nothing new. Some critiques foresaw NATO's brain death, its complete death, or at least see NATO suffering a "Strategic Malaise".⁴ While such critiques can be justified, nonetheless NATO is still very much alive. NATO is often characterized as a purely military alliance. This assessment falls short because it does not consider NATO's institutional character. In order to explain what NATO needs to do to fulfill its tasks, it is important to understand how NATO actually works.

1.1. NATO as a Malleable Tool

Gregory W. Pedlow analyzes the developments of NATO's strategies and its internal organization from the moment of NATO's foundation to the implementation of Military Committee (MC) Document 14/3, also known as "Flexible Response", in 1967.⁵ Pedlow shows that NATO changed and adapted continuously, triggered by external events or member activities. Adaptation led to the evolution of its organizational structure and functions. Strategy and structural development were always accompanied by disagreement arising from the diverging national interests of its members. Nonetheless, NATO showed the necessary flexibility, handled a changing security environment, and negotiated agreements among its members. The course of the discussion was set and driven by the leading members of the alliance, foremost the United States, but this did not exclude the other members from the decision-making.

⁴ Jonathan Marcus, "NATO Alliance is Experiencing Brain Death, Says Macron," *BBC*, accessed 19 July 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50335257>; Wallace J. Thies, *Why NATO Endures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 6; Sara Bjerg Moller, "It Will Take More than a Biden Victory to Solve NATO's Strategic Malaise," *War on the Rocks*, accessed 28 September 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/it-will-take-more-than-a-biden-victory-to-solve-natos-strategic-malaise/>.

⁵ Gregory W. Pedlow, ed. *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969* (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1997), 25.

As shown in Figure 1, NATO did not possess a formal command and control (C2) structure in the beginning. Decision-making relied on a loose network of committees and planning groups the most important of which included the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the Defence Committee (DC), the Military Committee (MC), an executive body called the Standing Group (SG), and five Regional Planning Groups (PGs).⁶ These bodies swung into action after the NATO treaty was signed in Washington on 4 April 1949. Article 3 (“Maintenance and Development of Collective Defense Capabilities”) and Article 5 (“Collective Defense”) of the NATO treaty provided the starting point for the development of the first strategy. The trigger was the need to answer the questions of how the NATO area could be defended against the conventional military superiority of the Soviet Union and the role of nuclear weapons.⁷

At first, strategy development focused on purely military matters based on political guidance.⁸ Given the security environment in Western Europe after the Second World War, its possession of atomic weapons and leading global economic role made the United States the most influential member.⁹ Nonetheless, strategy development was conducted by the existing bodies and involved all NATO members.¹⁰ Differences among the allies existed right from the start.¹¹ Because the alliance had already established that strategic decisions would only be made based on consensus, the several planning groups acknowledged such concerns and integrated them into the strategic documents.

⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸ Ibid., 11.

⁹ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11-13.

¹¹ Ibid., 13.

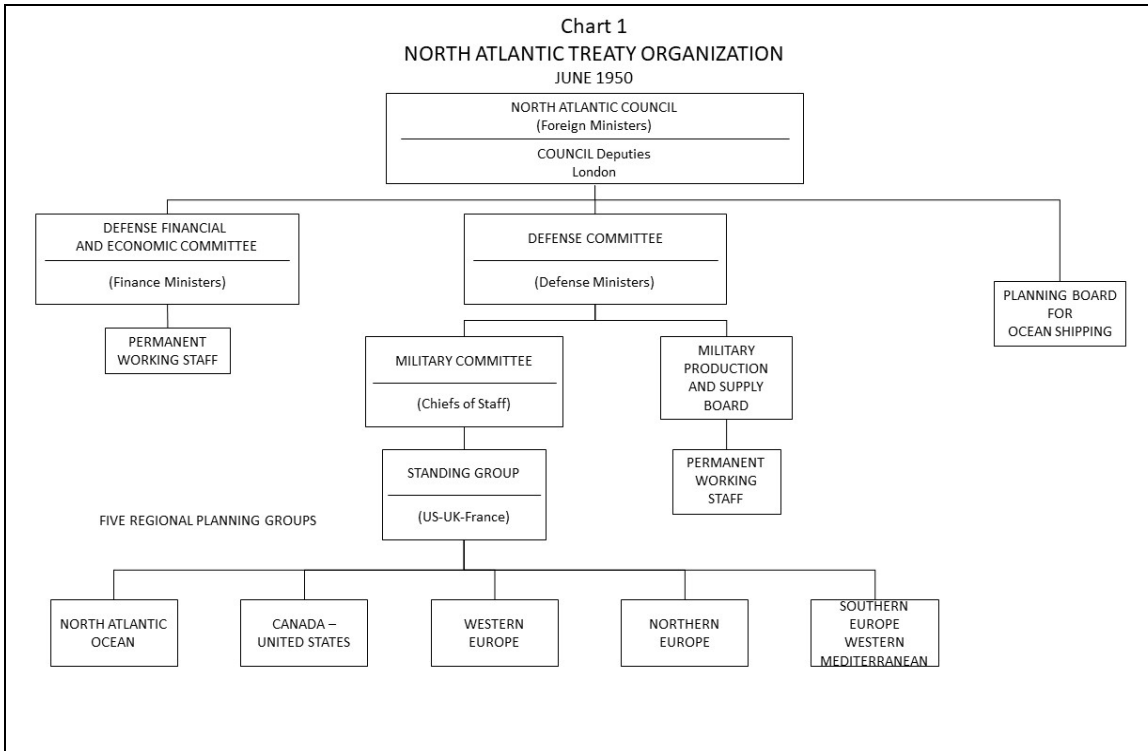


Figure 1. NATO's Organization after Foundation. Gregory W. Pedlow, ed. NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969 (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1997), 12. Created by author.

NATO adopted its first strategy, MC 14, in April 1950, one year after NATO was founded.¹² Strategy revision became a continuous process, triggered primarily by changes in the security environment but also by initiatives of its members. For example, the accession of Turkey and Greece as members caused a re-evaluation in 1952.¹³ The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 and the fear of Soviet aggression along the Iron Curtain in Europe stressed the necessity for effective command structures. As a consequence, the allies approved a centralized command structure with the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), subordinated commands, and integrated national military forces under a unified command as well as other institutions like the secretary general (SecGen.). Figure 2 depicts how the revision of the first

¹² Ibid., 14. NATO's strategies are named after the MC document they are based on. Nonetheless, the military strategies were always accompanied by a strategic concept. In case of MC 14 the strategic concept was DC 6/1.

¹³ Ibid., 15.

strategy caused a reorganization of NATO's structure. The SecGen served as the chief operating officer for the international staff and helped to establish consensus among the allies.¹⁴

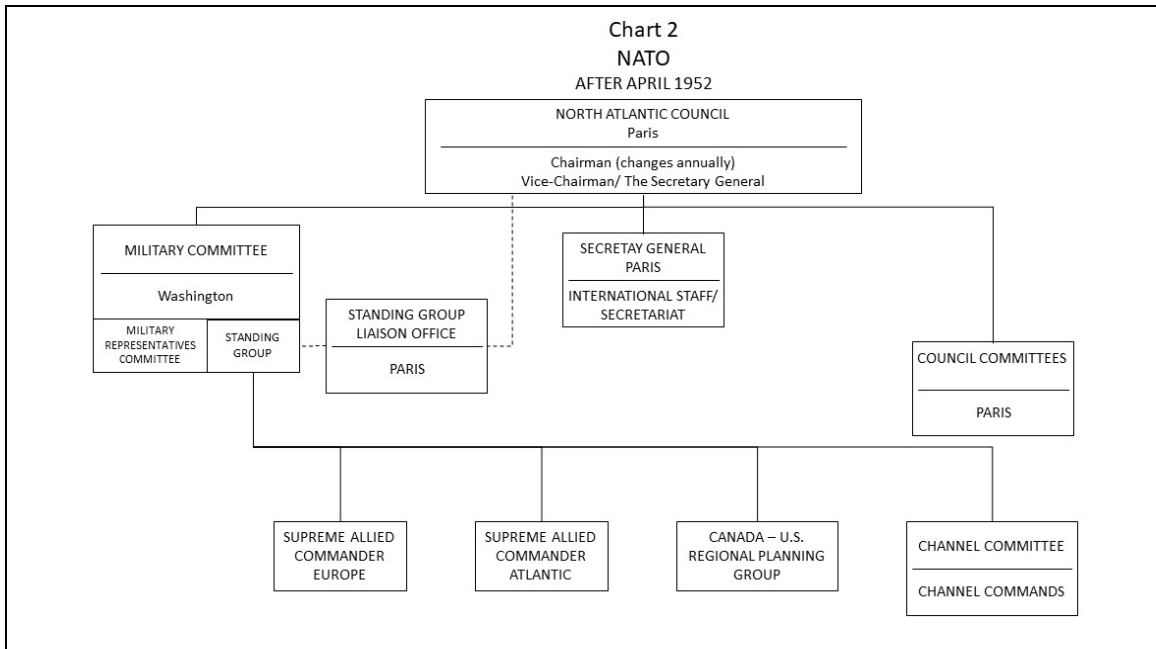


Figure 2. NATO's Organization 1952. NATO's Organization after Foundation. Gregory W. Pedlow, ed. NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969 (Brussels: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1997), 16. Created by author.

These changes, and intelligence assessments of Soviet capabilities, also led to changes in force level planning, which in turn triggered further revisions of NATO's strategy.¹⁵ Political and financial constraints among the member states rendered the force structure goals for NATO's strategy in the early 1950s unviable.¹⁶ In part to compensate for this shortfall, the Eisenhower Administration adopted the "New Look" military strategy, which prioritized the use of nuclear weapons.¹⁷ This led to a full integration of nuclear weapons into NATO's planning and the

¹⁴ Ibid., 15.

¹⁵ Ibid., 15-17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17, 18.

concept of “Massive Retaliation”, which foresaw an immediate use of nuclear weapons in case of Soviet aggression.¹⁸

Financial and political constraints, as well as controversial viewpoints, continued to influence decision-making. However, members did reach a consensus on strategy, implementation, and resources by working through the established organizational structures.¹⁹ External events also drove member states to improve NATO’s effectiveness. While the 1956 Suez crisis led to discord among the United States, Great Britain, and France, it was the suppression of the Hungarian democracy movement by the Red Army later that year which brought them back together. Two other events also led to a significant change in strategy, namely, the Second Berlin Crisis (April 1961) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962). The Second Berlin Crisis showed the limitations of relying on nuclear weapons because their use to deter Russian interference in Berlin would have been inappropriate. Likewise, the Kennedy Administration learned from the Cuban Missile Crisis that conventional forces could be used to accomplish strategic goals while nuclear forces remained in the background.²⁰ Both lessons led to demands for an increased conventional NATO strength.²¹ As a consequence, a new strategic concept was adapted in 1967: “Flexible Response”. It foresaw a flexible use of military capabilities in response to aggression. Together with the Harmel report, which recommended the use of deterrence and *détente* as equal instruments, Flexible Response provided a more adaptable interpretation of defense for NATO members, which eased financial and political constraints.²²

The evolution of NATO’s strategy shows the interdependency of strategic decisions and organizational developments. NATO’s military structure evolved based on decisions that were

¹⁸ Ibid., 18.

¹⁹ Ibid., 18-20.

²⁰ Ibid., 22.

²¹ Ibid., 21-22.

²² Ibid., 23-25.

driven by assessed requirements, thereby creating an enduring framework for implementing military operations and establishing institutional actors. NATO evolved from a military alliance into a political organization, putting greater emphasis on shared principles in addition to a common threat assessment as a factor for cohesion. Figure 3 shows NATO Headquarters current organizational structure.

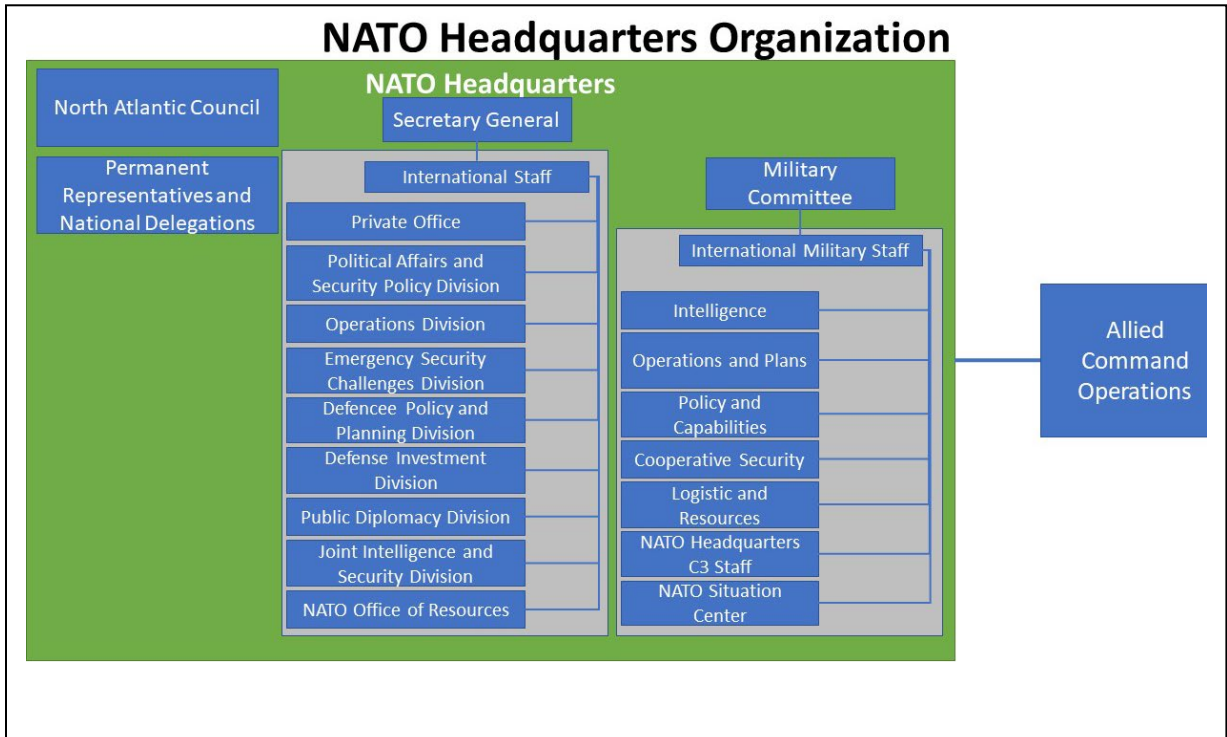


Figure 3. NATO Headquarters Organization 2020. NATO, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization," NATO.int. Accessed 19 July 2020. <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/organisation.htm>. Created by author.

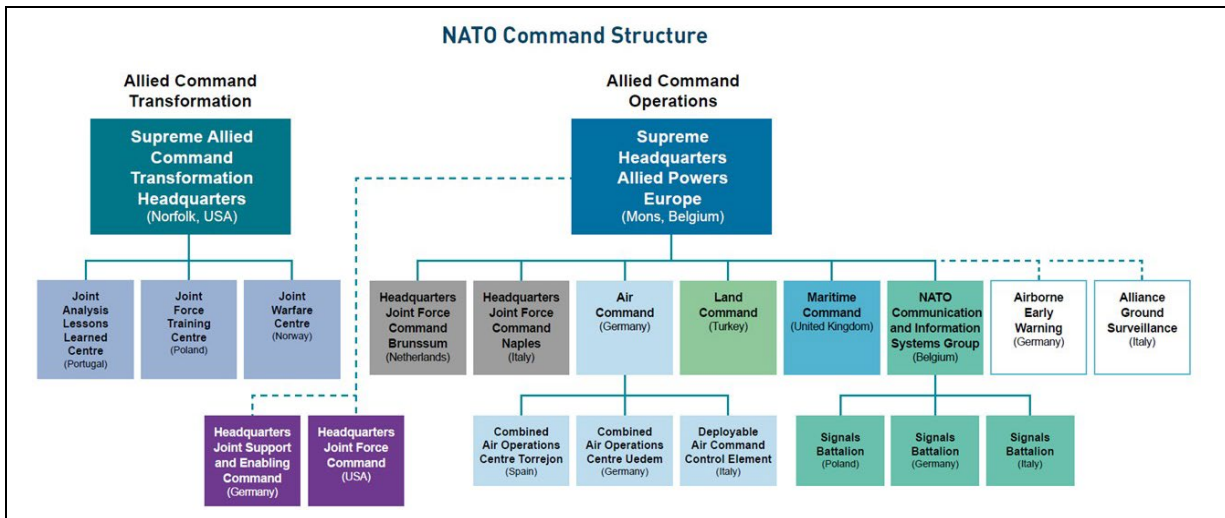


Figure 4. NATO Command Structure 2019. NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019," North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Accessed 23 July 2020. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/3/pdf_publications/sGAR19-en.

NATO's committees and later its integrated command structure (Figure 4) became the basis by which consent could be reached, although disagreement among members was not unusual. Discussion in NATO was driven by key allies, but all allies were included in the decision-making. Based on shared values and common interests, the consensus rule worked.²³ These evolving structures were flexible.²⁴

Ian Q. R. Thomas confirmed NATO's adaptability in his 1997 book *The Promise of Alliance*. He argues that "the malleable nature of NATO has given the alliance an ability to change to meet the changing requirements of international political life and, ultimately, to survive."²⁵ Thomas explains how NATO achieved unity by analyzing its conceptions. Conceptions are defined as "ideas, images, notions, or plans that have been used to describe, rationalize, or justify NATO."²⁶ He identifies approximately forty conceptions of NATO between

²³ Pedlow, ed. *NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969*, 20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁵ Ian Q. R. Thomas, *The Promise of Alliance. NATO and the Political Imagination* (Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1997), 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

1949 and 1995, highlighting NATO's flexibility.²⁷ These conceptions reflect the fact that NATO was founded on the basis that it represents and defends democratic values.²⁸ The conceptions were driven by the primary allies (Thomas stresses the United States, Great Britain, France, and Germany) and NATO itself.²⁹ The allies adopted them because doing so furthered the alliance's long-term goals and it helped to explain NATO's values to the population. Ultimately, NATO and democratic values claimed victory in the Cold War competition.³⁰ The intensive degree of consultation and cooperation enabled the alliance to adapt and shape its narrative, as necessary.³¹ Other important factors are the values and common interests NATO represents. NATO was the basis upon which allies could come to common solutions, which in turn allowed the development of conceptions for adaptation and vice-versa.³² NATO's institutionalized mechanisms (permanent bureaucracy, work mechanisms, and the decision-making processes) foster cooperation and consensus among allies and allow the conceptions to bear fruit because the allies can rally behind it.

More recent analysis confirms NATO's flexibility. Joe Burton argues "...that there are two competing but interrelated explanations of NATO's ongoing role and its durability, which constitute contrasting historical narratives in and of themselves."³³ The International Relations Theory approaches of realism, liberalism, and social constructivism by themselves only partially explain NATO's resilience. To fully understand NATO, any approach must include NATO's

²⁷ Ibid., 178-181.

²⁸ Ibid., 176. Examples for conceptions are: Guarantee Western Europe Defense; Promote German unification; act as a force for stability.

²⁹ Ibid., 182.

³⁰ Ibid. 182, 184-185.

³¹ Ibid., 186.

³² Ibid., 187.

³³ Joe Burton, *NATO's Durability in a Post-Cold War World* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), p. 22.

history because its durability cannot be explained without the development of its structures and “...its overarching post-Cold War narrative...”³⁴ By analyzing NATO’s enlargement; engagement in the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan; the emergence of new threats and challenges from Africa; and threats from Russia, Burton shows that NATO remains able to address different standpoints at the same time, and that the pendulum swings between support for approaches based on realism and those based on liberalism.

At the end of the Cold War, NATO had to address a changed security environment, the impacts of globalization, and emerging threats in the form of intra-state conflict.³⁵ Circumstances pointed to needed changes to NATO’s strategy. German reunification proved that democratic enlargement was possible. Aided by US President Bill Clinton, NATO promoted liberal ideas to handle new challenges and situations. The newly-independent Eastern European countries sought NATO membership, enticed by the prospect of democratic standards, protection, and higher living standards. NATO evolved from a simple defensive alliance into an engine for democratization, founded on shared values and interests that allowed NATO to take in new members.³⁶ While enlargement was not undisputed, the decision for enlargement supported the liberal idea that the spread of democracy increases stability, whereas realist concerns were addressed by the shared interest of the allies to maintain NATO as a means for security against threats.³⁷ The perceived geo-strategic benefits that would accrue to NATO’s primary members supported both narratives.³⁸ NATO was thereby able to achieve consensus among allies and to address different concerns risen by changes in the security environment.

³⁴ Ibid., 19-20; 20-21.

³⁵ Ibid., 40.

³⁶ Ibid., 4, 17-19, 42.

³⁷ Ibid., 21, 41-42.

³⁸ Ibid., 110.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 (9/11) and the subsequent 2003 invasion of Iraq, NATO overcame discord among the members. Although sharply split over America's invasion of Iraq and the Bush Administration's drive for more unilateral action, alliance members' shared interest in security allowed them to disagree without withholding all cooperation.³⁹ This was also enabled by NATO's institutional strength, due to the allies' long-term commitment to a common cause, which helped to overcome discord.⁴⁰ Simultaneous crises in North Africa, the Middle East, and Ukraine show how the pendulum swung towards the realist narrative. NATO had to address a dynamic security situation on its southern flank while at the same time handling the threat of Russian aggression on its eastern flank. NATO assumed different roles in addressing the challenges, thereby keeping allies together by addressing all concerns.⁴¹ From a realist point of view, NATO acted in response to security threats against its members. From a liberal point of view, NATO responded in accordance with its democratic principles, such as in Libya, where it attempted to support the civil uprising against an onslaught of Moammar Gaddafi's forces. NATO's response to emerging threats led to changes in the organization, which in turn improved NATO's institutional strength and strong loyalty among the allies.⁴² Burton shows the importance of the shared and agreed-upon values. Promoting democracy provides security for its members, is a unifying element, and an incentive for adopting domestic democratic policies. These liberal dynamics lead to a mutual commitment of the allies to each other.⁴³

Effective response to the dynamic multitude of emerging threats and challenges required multilateral responses, so collective engagement was in the interest of all members. NATO's

³⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 111.

⁴¹ Ibid., 166, 168.

⁴² Ibid., 168.

⁴³ Ibid., 169-171.

military capabilities remained a strategic asset with a continued value for its members.⁴⁴ NATO is a learning organization which enables the integration of liberal and realist standpoints. For example, the evolved role of the secretary general: the titular head of alliance structure represents and sustains NATO's values, and connects these liberal beliefs with the necessary leadership of the United States.⁴⁵ NATO's resilience, endurance, and credibility result from recognition of long-term common values and interests, thereby enabling cooperation and a concerted response to threats.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, this is no panacea. The increasingly complex, diffuse, and dynamic security environment makes it harder for appropriate NATO responses, and antidemocratic tendencies threaten NATO from within.⁴⁷

1.2. NATO is an Institution

Seth A. Johnston highlights NATO's character as a formally organized international institution. As such, it develops institutional actors and autonomous capacities which enable adaption and change by itself.⁴⁸ Institutional actors include the secretary general and the international staff at NATO Headquarters, with its directors and directorates. Institutional actors and dynamics play an important role in the alliance and are an important factor for NATO's endurance.⁴⁹ While decisions in NATO are ultimately made by the members via consensus, institutional actors possess some power and can influence decisions and initiate organizational changes to handle changed circumstances.⁵⁰ Johnston applies the framework of "critical junctures" to show how NATO was able to adapt, thereby sustaining itself. A critical juncture is

⁴⁴ Ibid., 171 – 172.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 174.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 175-177.

⁴⁸ Seth A. Johnston, *How NATO Adapts: Strategy and Organization in the Atlantic Alliance since 1950* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017), 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 17, 27, 34.

“a situation in which the structural... influences on political action are significantly relaxed for a relatively short period, with two main consequences: the range of plausible choices open to powerful political actors expands substantially and the consequences of their decisions for the outcome of interest are potentially much more momentous.”⁵¹ Examples that created a critical juncture are the 1948 Berlin Crisis, the Second Berlin Crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the end of the Cold War, the Kosovo air campaign, and the terror attacks of 9/11 and their aftermath.⁵²

Johnston shows the importance of NATO’s internal actors for NATO’s ability to adapt and maintain its viability. They are able to influence decision-making and initiate change, either by strategy revision or by organizational change. For example, the end of the Cold War created an insecure and unstable environment that was perceived to have an impact on the security of NATO.⁵³ However, this perception did not initiate action to amend NATO’s strategic concept.⁵⁴ NATO’s actors initiated the analysis that led to the development of a new strategic concept. Tasked by the MC, it was the International Military Staff (IMS) which set the agenda for NATO’s strategic adaptation. The IMS conducted a study led by German Colonel Klaus Wittmann, which “had a ‘catalytic’ impact on the need to adapt NATO strategy to the emerging post-Cold War era.”⁵⁵ The IMS’ agenda-setting enabled the development of a new strategic concept that was ratified in Rome 1991.⁵⁶

Wallace J. Thies shows that NATO’s foundation as a permanent alliance based on democratic values and cooperation among democracies provides NATO with internal strength

⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

⁵² Ibid., 177.

⁵³ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 136.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 136-140.

and self-healing mechanisms, ensuring its endurance.⁵⁷ Discord, disagreements and tensions among allies are to be expected.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, member states have an interest in not disrupting their relations with those allies with whom they are not in agreement; therefore they avoid bringing tensions to a breaking point.⁵⁹ Collective defense holds a strong appeal for democracies. Democratic governments must play a two-level game, balancing their military contributions to NATO against domestic political priorities. The fact that democracies work together makes NATO's cause honorable and can be justified in domestic politics. Additionally, NATO's structures for collective defense enable a high level of transparency among its members.⁶⁰ The integrated command structures contributed to holding allies accountable to each other. Allies want to be perceived as reliable because it gives them influence.⁶¹ If an ally becomes stronger, it serves the common cause and does not inspire fear.⁶² NATO endures because democracies have an intrinsic motivation to cooperate in that the alliance's success legitimizes their leaders. NATO became a symbol of this successful cooperation.⁶³ Moreover, NATO is never only doing one thing. Different issues are on the member's agendas simultaneously. While disagreeing on one thing, cooperation on another topic is possible and likely. The continued cooperation in Afghanistan despite the discord over the 2003 Iraq invasion is but one example of that.⁶⁴ That does not mean that working on issues in NATO and reaching a consensus is easy. The daily work of bringing members together is hard, slow, and often painstaking. Nonetheless, NATO provides a forum for cooperation, even when allies do not agree on all topics.

⁵⁷ Thies, *Why NATO Endures*, 20, 22, 23.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20-22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 294-295.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 295-296.

Other studies confirm the importance of NATO's bureaucracy and institutionalism.⁶⁵ Sebastian Mayer and others shows that NATO internationalized its decision-making processes to some degree.⁶⁶ For example, the position of SecGen has evolved into an institutional actor.⁶⁷ The SecGen now exercises some of the internationalized responsibilities of NATO. The position enables an effective SecGen (such as Javier Solana in 1999) to foster consensus among the allies or direct the course of discussion in NATO by setting the agenda.⁶⁸

Dieter Krüger describes NATO's bureaucracy as continuously evolving.⁶⁹ While the consensus rule remains the strict basis for decision making, this bureaucracy enables decision shaping, because it "offer[s] a platform for politicians, diplomats, militaries, and civil servants to exchange their views and ideas...Involved actors reciprocally [take] into account their interests, but also the authority and activities of international bodies."⁷⁰

Leo G. Michel stresses the value of NATO's consensus rule. "It reflects its structure as an alliance of independent and sovereign countries."⁷¹ Therefore, every decision NATO makes is the expression of the will of all members.⁷² Consensus is a tool to maintain cooperation and to find a

⁶⁵ Sebastian Mayer, ed. *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014b).

⁶⁶ Sebastian Mayer, "Introduction: NATO as an Organization and Bureaucracy," in *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, ed. Sebastian Mayer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014a), 3.

⁶⁷ Ryan C. Hendrickson, "The Changing Role of NATO's Secretary General," in *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, ed. Sebastian Mayer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 136.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 126-128; Ryan C. Hendrickson, "NATO's Secretary General Javier Solana and the Kosovo Crisis" *Journal of International Relations and Development* 5, no. 3 (September 2002): 240-57.

⁶⁹ Dieter Krüger, "Institutionalizing NATO's Military Bureaucracy: The Making of an Integrated Chain of Command," in *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, ed. Sebastian Mayer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 65-66.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 66.

⁷¹ Leo G. Michel, "NATO Decision-Making: The 'Consensus Rule' Endures Despite Challenges," in *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, ed. Sebastian Mayer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 109.

⁷² Ibid., 109.

compromise, even if allies cannot find common ground. NATO's support of Turkey with Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) airplanes for surveillance and missile defense in 2003 is an example.⁷³ The problem with consensus is that it is a slow process.⁷⁴ Experts recommend maintaining consensus because, in addition to its utility, it is the expression of NATO's character as an alliance of democracies and its ethos of "one for all".⁷⁵ The consensus rule is far from perfect, but it is an integral part of NATO's identity and therefore better than the alternatives.⁷⁶

Mayer and Olaf Theiler show that the structure of NATO Headquarters itself contributes to flexibility and structural resilience.⁷⁷ It allows allies to interact closely and supports formal consensus and decision making. Likewise, it provides the basis for informal political forums, which add flexibility through additional discussion and exchange among allies.⁷⁸ This also enables mediation between conflicting opinions and provides the opportunity to address new ideas and initiatives.⁷⁹

Celeste A. Wallander highlighted the need for NATO to maintain democratic standards while offering membership to eastern European nations.⁸⁰ A loss of fidelity to democratic principles would pose a threat to NATO's core.⁸¹ Wallander stresses that "rule-breaking"

⁷³ Ibid., 111, 115.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 108.

⁷⁵ Leo G. Michel, "NATO Decision-Making: The 'Consensus Rule' Endures Despite Challenges," in *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, 120-122.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁷ Sebastian Mayer and Olaf Theiler, "Coping with Complexity: Informal Political Forums at NATO's Headquarters," in *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics. The Changing Provision of Security*, ed. Sebastian Mayer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 140, 146.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 147-149.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁸¹ Celeste A. Wallander, "NATO's Price - Shape Up Or Ship Out," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, no. 6, 2002, accessed 15 January 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2002-11-01/natos-price-shape-or-ship-out>.

behavior is a domestic problem which NATO as an institution cannot sanction directly.⁸² The fallout from un-democratic practices creates a “moral hazard” that negatively impacts NATO’s core, its cohesion.⁸³ It contradicts NATO’s treaty and the standards outlined in its strategic concepts, and disrupts NATO’s mechanisms. A nationalistic agenda alters the calculations of why members participate in NATO. As shown above, NATO’s consensus decisions carry political and strategic weight and convey legitimacy on member states’ governments. Consensus would become less meaningful were it seen to be co-opted by authoritarian governments as a means of enforcing their rule. Moreover, NATO’s effectiveness would suffer because its military and political dimensions are intertwined. The integrated command structure can only work on the basis of agreed-upon values, principles, transparency and trust.⁸⁴ Therefore NATO must protect its very core while upholding its principles.

1.3. Take Away

NATO derives its strength and durability from its shared values and interests, its organizational strength and flexibility, its cooperation mechanisms, and its structural adaptability. Seven points stand out: First, NATO is a permanent, international political institution which combines the benefits of collective security with the usefulness of a platform on which democracies can work together. Second, because it is based on democratic principles, it fosters cooperation and agreement among members, even if allies disagree on other topics. Third, its institutionalized form and its processes provide the organization itself with resilience, flexibility, learning and mediation capabilities to overcome discord and to adapt. Fourth, NATO remains a strategic asset which benefits outweighs the cost, because allies continue to have more shared interest than differences. Fifth, NATO is an international organization that allows its members to protect each other, addressing their interests while keeping their sovereignty at the same time.

⁸² Ibid., 2.

⁸³ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁴ Celeste A. Wallander, “NATO's Price - Shape Up Or Ship Out,” 2.

Sixth, NATO itself is a symbol of successful cooperation between democracies. Seventh, the interdependence of NATO's political and military mixture of democratic principles, interests, benefits, and mechanisms is at risk if democratic conduct declines in a member state.

2. NATO's Security Environment

Today's security environment is characterized by complex and dynamic developments. Threats and challenges span all domains (air, land, sea, space, information, cyber) and remain unpredictable. NATO also faces a threat to its core from the rise of populism and extreme nationalistic policies. Not all threats and challenges are of military nature but have impacts on the economic or societal security of its members.

2.1. Threats by great power competition: Russia

Russia currently poses the most obvious external threat to the alliance. With the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, Russia challenged the rules-based international order put in place after World War II. Russian President Vladimir Putin showed he is willing to use a variety of measures to weaken Russia's perceived opponents and reach its objectives. His strategy is based on four interests: First, maintain Russian as a great power. Second, maintain Russia's position as regional hegemon. Third, ensure national sovereignty. Fourth, secure regime survival.⁸⁵ Russia combines these interests with the understanding that neighboring countries are integral to its security.⁸⁶ It wants to control a sphere of influence at its periphery and deny Western influence in this area. Russia's understanding of the world order and the Western interpretation of the rules-based world order is incompatible. While the West saw the post-Cold-War implementation of a liberal international order as a beneficial stabilization measure for all, Russia interprets this order as an aggression. Russia perceives NATO as a threat, and its enlargement towards Russian borders as containment aimed against Russia.⁸⁷ Therefore,

⁸⁵ Jack Watling, *By Parity and Presence. Deterring Russia with Conventional Land Forces* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2020), 15.

⁸⁶ Stephen J. Flanagan et al., *Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2020), accessed 20 October 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA357-1.html, 10.

⁸⁷ Jeffrey Michaels, ed., "Russia Brief Issue 6," *The University of Oxford Changing Character of War Centre*, accessed 25 October 2020,

increased tension and threats to NATO's eastern flank are likely to endure. Russian interests are not compatible with the liberal international order. Its activities are directly aimed at destabilizing and then reshaping the Western European order.⁸⁸

Russia's strategic approach is best defined as asymmetric balancing.⁸⁹ It takes a very flexible approach, acting quickly after an opportunity presents itself or is shaped.⁹⁰ Russia uses a panoply of diplomatic, military, and economic means. This includes covert activities and destabilizing activities in the information and cyber domain. In the Middle East, Russia aims at maintaining its status as a major player, preventing the spread of Islamic extremism into Russia, and presenting itself as a benign mediator in the region. These activities also support Russia's aim to destabilize NATO, for example by cooperating with Turkey and selling Russian air defense systems in NATO territory.⁹¹ Along its periphery, Russia seeks to achieve hegemony over its neighbors, using engagement, dependence, coercion, and disruption, as it has done in the Ukraine and Belarus.⁹² NATO expansion, putting member states on the very borders of Russia, supports Russia's official narrative of a deliberate policy of containment by NATO to interfere with its objective of peripheral hegemony.

Russia directs a strong military force posture against NATO. Since 2008, Russia has embarked on an extensive modernization program. It has significantly improved its conventional

<http://www.cw.ox.ac.uk/blog/2020/4/29/xwkpokuwmsuu7rv095aonrvon81sp4-lxr5m>, 6; Daniel S. Hamilton, "Why NATO Needs a New Strategic Concept, what it should Say, and how to Achieve It," in *Transatlantic Futures: Towards #NATO2030*, ed. Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis, The Riga Conference Papers 2020 ed. (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2020), 20; Watling, *By Parity and Presence. Deterring Russia with Conventional Land Forces*, 19.

⁸⁸ Flanagan et al., *Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security*, accessed 20 October 2020, 10.

⁸⁹ Nicole Peterson, ed. *Russian Strategic Intentions* (Boston: NSI, 2019), 9.

⁹⁰ Watling, *By Parity and Presence. Deterring Russia with Conventional Land Forces*, 22.

⁹¹ Peterson, ed. *Russian Strategic Intentions*, 58-60; Watling, *By Parity and Presence. Deterring Russia with Conventional Land Forces*, 22.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 24.

offensive capabilities.⁹³ While the Russian military decision-making process (MDMP) remains “top-heavy”, its command-and-control systems have greatly improved and now enable “information-strike” operations.⁹⁴ The modernization includes anti-access/ area denial capabilities (A2/AD, especially electronic warfare, long-range precision fires, and air defense capabilities). Its geostrategic position allows Russia to restrict NATO’s freedom of movement and deny access in the eastern Baltic Sea, the Baltic states, and the Black Sea. Concurrently, Russia can contest the Arctic Region and the North Atlantic.⁹⁵ Moreover, Russia is modernizing its nuclear arsenal and lowering its threshold for the use of tactical nuclear weapons.⁹⁶

Russia’s greatest threat to NATO and its members is its “grey zone” influence, disinformation, and destabilizing activities. These activities aim directly at NATO’s cohesion. Russia has a strong interest in weakening the Western European democracies, NATO, and the European Union (EU). Exploitation of anti-democratic tendencies in NATO member states can create sharper divisions within NATO. It could lead to more Russia-friendly policies; optimally it might even lead to the collapse of NATO and a degradation of the EU’s comprehensive economic power and military capabilities.⁹⁷ Under Putin, Russia employs propaganda, cyber-attacks,

⁹³ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁴ Roger N. McDermott and Charles K. Bartles, *The Russian Military Decision-Making Process & Automated Command and Control*, GIDSresearch No. 2/2020 (Hamburg: German Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies, 2020), 7, 12.

⁹⁵ Justin Bronk, "Status and Future of Russian A2/AD Capabilities," in *Beyond Bursting Bubbles: Understanding the Full Spectrum of the Russian A2/AD Threat and Identifying Strategies for Counteraction*, ed. Michael Jonson and Robert Dalsjö (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2020), 23-37; Andreas Puck Nielsen, "Defeating the A2/AD Umbrella – Concepts for Exploitation of Russia’s Operational Weaknesses," in *Beyond Bursting Bubbles: Understanding the Full Spectrum of the Russian A2/AD Threat and Identifying Strategies for Counteraction*, ed. Michael Jonson and Robert Dalsjö (Stockholm: Swedish Defense Research Agency, 2020), 95-106; Flanagan et al., *Russia, NATO, and Black Sea Security*, accessed 20 October 2020, 10; Peterson, ed. *Russian Strategic Intentions*, 85-86.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁷ Marek Menkiszak, "Between War and Integration: NATO and Russia Towards 2030," in *Transatlantic Futures: Towards #NATO2030*, ed. Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis, The Riga Conference Papers 2020 ed. (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2020), 46-47; Mark Galeotti, *The Navalny Poisoning Case through the Hybrid Warfare Lens* (Helsinki: The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, October 2020), accessed 20 October 2020,

disinformation, and murder to shape the international security environment. Russia spreads influence via the Russian diaspora, and by directly influencing key European leaders and regional actors.⁹⁸ It utilizes proxies like Western European right-wing and populist movements to shape public opinion toward Russia, discredit and destabilize democratic institutions, and sow discord among allies, thereby threatening the unity of NATO.⁹⁹ The level of interference via social media during the 2016 US presidential election is an example. In addition, Russia supports greater European strategic autonomy at the expense of NATO cohesion.¹⁰⁰ Russia poses a military and a destabilizing threat against NATO.

2.2. Challenges by Global Competition: China

China poses a special challenge for NATO and its members because it poses both an indirect threat and opportunity. China's activities in Europe and the trans-Atlantic region threaten the democratic order and cohesion, but are not foremost of a military nature for now. China aims to reconfigure the international order into one that accords to the world view held by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).¹⁰¹ The CCP "plans for China to achieve effective global dominance by 2049."¹⁰² To ensure a foothold in Europe, China wants to ensure a "China-friendly" political situation. A united Europe which cooperates with the United States is not in the CCP's interest. Therefore, China seeks to "divide and rule" in Europe by disrupting the political cohesion of

<https://www.hybridcoe.fi/publications/hybrid-coe-paper-4-the-navalny-poisoning-case-through-the-hybrid-warfare-lens/>.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 49-50.

⁹⁹ Peterson, ed. *Russian Strategic Intentions*, 22-23, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Menkiszak, "Between War and Integration: NATO and Russia Towards 2030," 47.

¹⁰¹ Jonathan Broder, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Does it Pose a Threat to the West?" *CQ Researcher* 29, no. 4 (2019), 4.

¹⁰² Didi Kirsten Tatlow, *How "Democratic Security" can Protect Europe from a Rising China*, Vol. DGAP Policy Brief No. 13 (Berlin: German Council on Foreign Relations, 16 July 2020), accessed 23 July 2020, <https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/how-democratic-security-can-protect-europe-rising-china>, 1.

European states.¹⁰³ In the Asia-Pacific region, China is using its expanding military capabilities and force posture to support its strategy. In Europe, China tries to exercise its influence in a more indirect approach. It utilizes aggressive diplomacy, propaganda, indirect influence via business deals, and outright disinformation campaigns.

Another approach is directed investments that come with China's Belt and Road Initiative.¹⁰⁴ Analysis shows China's massive investment in a wide variety of economic projects in Europe, with a special focus on control of the energy supply.¹⁰⁵ By investments and shares in projects, China gains access to and influence over political decision-makers. It continues to exploit the benefits of the current economic order while trying to subvert that order to support its strategy. In addition to influencing, China employs hybrid cyber activities together with information campaigns to achieve its objectives.¹⁰⁶

China disregards the democratic foundations of Western governments and champions alternative frameworks for partnerships and cooperation.¹⁰⁷ While China has established itself as an important economic partner through these activities, it simultaneously poses a threat to Western democracy. Parallels can be found in the security domain, where China is trying to expand relations with EU and NATO members by offering products like 5G networks. While the use of Chinese technology would speed up digital modernization, such technology poses profound security risks, too. It is virtually certain that the CCP can exploit for its own ends likely

¹⁰³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁵ Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Reconnecting Asia," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, accessed 30 November 2020, <https://reconnectingasia.csis.org/map/>.

¹⁰⁶ Lauren Speranza, "A Strategic Concept for Countering Russian and Chinese Hybrid Threats," *The Atlantic Council*, accessed 23 July 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/a-strategic-concept-for-countering-russian-and-chinese-hybrid-threats/>, 6-8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

security vulnerabilities in the technology.¹⁰⁸ Technological exploitation, combined with China's foothold in critical infrastructure and the adoption of emerging disruptive technologies (EDT), give China the opportunity to severely degrade the resilience of society and key institutions among the allies. Particularly energy supply security, information, and supply chains.¹⁰⁹

China is neither an immediate military threat nor only an economic factor that can be disregarded for NATO's security. China combines economic power and trade opportunities with a global strategy underpinned by the threat and use of force, intimidatory diplomacy, and economic coercion.¹¹⁰ That makes China a hybrid challenge, one that can easily switch from opportunity to threat. Its growing authoritarianism and increasing global reach place it at odds with the open societies and democratic principles of the alliance.¹¹¹ China rejects the democratic values which underpin NATO and the European and trans-Atlantic order. Therefore, every option for cooperation or partnership that China proposes comes with the risk of undermining NATO. NATO's description of China fits: "We recognize that China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an alliance."¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova, "The China Factor – a Push for NATO2030 Strength and Purpose," in *Transatlantic Futures: Towards #NATO2030*, ed. Andris Sprūds and Mārtiņš Vargulis, The Riga Conference Papers 2020 ed. (Riga: Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2020), 131-132.

¹⁰⁹ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General* (Brussels: NATO, 25 November 2020), accessed 2 December 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf, 27.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹¹² NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "London Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London 3-4 December 2019," *NATO.int*, accessed 23 July 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm, 2; NATO, "Foreign Ministers Meet to Discuss NATO's Continued Adaptation and Global Security Challenges," *NATO.int*, accessed 1 December 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_179799.htm.

2.3. NATO's Southern Flank: Complex Threats

Terrorism "...in all its forms and manifestations remains a persistent threat to us all. State and non-state actors challenge the rules-based international order. Instability beyond our borders is also contributing to irregular migration. We face cyber and hybrid threats."¹¹³ This statement, from NATO's 2019 summit declaration, depicts the situation at NATO's southern periphery well.

Studies document the volatile, extremely dynamic situation on NATO's southern flank. The sources of the crises ravaging the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and sub-Saharan Africa are mostly non-military. Global challenges like climate change, pandemics like the COVID-19 outbreak, and failing economies impact the situation. Demographic changes, inter-ethnic tensions, disrupted societies, competing interests, regional and international policies, and the use of disinformation add to the complexity.¹¹⁴ This leads to persistent disorder, intra-state conflict, civil war, destabilization and terror by VEOs, like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Some countries like Egypt face an uncertain future.¹¹⁵ The warring factions themselves are unlikely to directly confront NATO, but the conflicts create a multitude of challenges and threats that spill over into NATO's territory. For example, terror attacks in Europe remain a direct threat to the open societies of NATO.¹¹⁶ Russian and Chinese activities in the MENA region and

¹¹³ NATO, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "London Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London 3-4 December 2019," 1.

¹¹⁴ Alexander R. Vershbow and Lauren Speranza, "More in the Med: How NATO can Refocus its Efforts in the South and Italy can Lead the Charge," *The Atlantic Council*, accessed 23 July 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/more-in-the-med-how-nato-can-refocus-its-efforts-in-the-south-and-italy-can-lead-the-charge/>, 4, 5; Stephen J. Mariano, "NATO Defense College Policy Brief no. 12-June 2020: NATO's Strategic Redirection to the South," *NATO Defense College Research Division*, accessed 29 July 2020, <http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1449>, 1; Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operating Environment 2035. The Joint Force in a Contested and Disordered World*, 36.

¹¹⁵ Alexander R. Vershbow and Lauren Speranza, "More in the Med: How NATO can Refocus its Efforts in the South and Italy can Lead the Charge," 4.

¹¹⁶ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 18; Joint Chiefs of Staff,

Africa add great power competition to the complexity of the security situation on NATO's southern flank.¹¹⁷ NATO must address all of these challenges, even though it is not well equipped for the task. While NATO is already engaged with regional partners, such engagement is not undisputed, primarily because the positive perception of democracy as a desirable form of government is in decline.¹¹⁸

2.4. NATO's Internal Challenge: Differences in Understanding

The good news is that *NATO 2030* addresses many of the problems NATO must overcome to endure. Nonetheless, the report of the reflection group installed by the SecGen is, by itself, not the remedy. The most pressing threats to NATO are those with an impact on NATO's core, its identity. This core is also under pressure from internal challenges. NATO's capability to adapt is based on shared values, principles, purpose, and shared interests. However, that does not mean that problems can be left unchecked, especially when they potentially disrupt the cohesion of NATO. This distinguishes the current situation from other junctures in NATO's history, like between 1989 and 1991. The current situation has the potential to damage NATO.

The risk to NATO's identity became especially visible during Donald Trump's presidency.¹¹⁹ Stemming from the variety of threats they expect NATO to tackle, the allies developed different understandings of what needs to be done, and focused more on national

Joint Operating Environment 2035. The Joint Force in a Contested and Disordered World (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2016), 2, 3.

¹¹⁷ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 18.

¹¹⁸ Alexander R. Vershbow and Lauren Speranza, "More in the Med: How NATO can Refocus its Efforts in the South and Italy can Lead the Charge," 4-6.

¹¹⁹ Nicholas Burns, "Foreword," in *NATO's Return to Europe: Engaging Ukraine, Russia and Beyond*, ed. Rebecca R. Moore and Coletta Damon (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 10. Former President Trump criticized NATO already during his election campaign. He agitated against NATO right from the start of his tenure.

interests.¹²⁰ The reflection group's report shows that this situation is further complicated by the fact that relations among allies are strained because of differences in basic values and interests.¹²¹ An example is Turkey's purchase of Russian air defense systems and adoption of a visibly undemocratic agenda.

These strains are amplified by discussions about different approaches to security. The Policy Department for External Relations of the EU Parliament highlights the interdependency between the United States and Europe for their collective security. But it also highlights the fact that the ongoing discussion about greater European strategic autonomy risks rupturing trans-Atlantic relations, if that autonomy is understood as "Europe alone".¹²² Although EU President Ursula von der Leyen stresses the importance of the trans-Atlantic alliance, President Macron's assessment of NATO shows that other interpretations possess significant backing among Europeans. This is also true for intensified European defense cooperation, with initiatives like the European Defense Fund (EDF) and Permanent and Structured Cooperation (PESCO). These initiatives increased suspicions in the United States about an EU-sponsored competitor to NATO. Although these initiatives seek to improve defense investments in Europe and thereby bolster European defense capabilities in NATO, a misperception or misuse can negatively impact the cohesion of the alliance.¹²³ On the other side, the Trump Administration's "America First" policy led to fears in some European countries that the United States would return to isolationism. Such a divergence from shared interests and efforts, be it perceived or real, can damage NATO's self-

¹²⁰ Sara Bjerg Moller, "It Will Take More than a Biden Victory to Solve NATO's Strategic Malaise," 2.

¹²¹ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 5, 9, 21.

¹²² Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department for External Relations, *No Way Back: Why the Transatlantic Future Needs a Stronger EU* (Strasbourg: European Parliament, 2020), accessed 6 December 2020, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/653619/EXPO_IDA\(2020\)653619_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2020/653619/EXPO_IDA(2020)653619_EN.pdf), 9.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

understanding and identity.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the America First policy convinced European nations like Germany to continue increasing their defense capabilities.¹²⁵ In itself that is a positive result; but if NATO member states focus too much on their singular security interests, a decline of trust in the mutual will to collective defense could occur.¹²⁶

Another risk is the rise of illiberal political trends in Europe and the United States. The issue at stake is NATO's very identity.¹²⁷ Many NATO members experienced surges of illiberal, partially-authoritarian trends in recent election cycles.¹²⁸ To date, the democratic principles of NATO have remained relatively unchallenged, but that could change if a major member state's political philosophy turns sharply to the right. In 2018 Wallander revisited the claims she made in 2002.¹²⁹ Then she stressed the importance of NATO's underlying democratic principles;¹³⁰ today she acknowledges that NATO's history is not a purely democratic one. During the Cold War, the threat posed by the Soviet Union was a unifying factor. Additionally, NATO's democratic

¹²⁴ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf, 5.

¹²⁵ Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, "Speech by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer: Presentation of the Steuben Schurz Media Award," *Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, accessed 30 October 2020, <https://www.bmvg.de/en/news/speech-akk-presentation-steuben-schurz-media-award-3856630>, 3.

¹²⁶ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf, 5, 21.

¹²⁷ Rebecca R. Moore and Damon Coletta, eds., *NATO's Return to Europe: Engaging Ukraine, Russia and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 237.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6; Constanze Stelzenmüller, "The West must Live Up to its Own Principles on Democracy," *Financial Times*, accessed 6 December 2020, <https://www.ft.com/stream/0a5a4a47-a323-404b-b9aa-bfe2e1e84911>, p.2.

¹²⁹ Celeste A. Wallander, "NATO's Enemies within. How Democratic Decline could Destroy the Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 97, no. 4, 2018, accessed 15 January 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-06-14/natos-enemies-within>.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

principles functioned as an incentive for democratization, and became even more important after the Cold War.¹³¹

Wallander points to the problem that anti-democratic movements and tendencies can be found all over Europe; Poland, Hungary, and Turkey are actively dismantling democratic institutions and mechanisms and turning toward authoritarian governments. She describes this process as “back-sliding”.¹³² Because today’s strategic environment differs significantly from that of the Cold War, this back-sliding can have significant impacts on NATO if they remain unchallenged. It harms NATO’s credibility, since by treaty and strategic concepts NATO committed itself to democratic values.¹³³ Turning away from democracy would likely be followed by a renewed cost-benefit analysis regarding continued membership in any member state that adopts undemocratic or anti-democratic policies. This would degrade NATO’s effectiveness, since the consensus for NATO operations or activities below the threshold of Article Five is based on the shared understanding of values and the rule of law.¹³⁴ Back-sliding opens the door for Russia to intensify its destabilization efforts because “illiberal and nondemocratic countries are more vulnerable to subversion.”¹³⁵ These anti-democratic trends have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹³⁶ While US President Joseph R. Biden’s inauguration on 20 January 2021 is a sign of strength for democracy, NATO has to find a way to

¹³¹ Ibid., 3.

¹³² Ibid., 2,3. While Turkey cannot be considered as a liberal democracy, it undertook significant efforts towards democratization to become an EU member. This course was reversed under President Erdogan.

¹³³ For example, NATO’s 2010 strategic concept, no. 2. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010.*

¹³⁴ Celeste A. Wallander, “NATO’s Enemies within. How Democratic Decline could Destroy the Alliance,” 2.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁶ Constanze Stelzenmüller, "The West must Live Up to its Own Principles on Democracy," 1.

address this threat from within. The problem is that back-sliding is a domestic problem, within the responsibility of each member state. Therefore, NATO cannot take direct action.

NATO is also facing challenges to its military capabilities. After the illegal Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, NATO reacted quickly. NATO revived its response force, positioned NATO forces on a rotational base at its eastern flank (enhanced Forward Presence, eFP) and south-eastern flank (tailored Forward Presence, tFP) to assure its eastern allies. At the summit in Wales in 2014, the allies also agreed on a Defence Investment Pledge (DIP) to increase their efforts in modernizing capabilities.¹³⁷ In 2018, NATO launched the Readiness Initiative to further increase its flexibility and responsiveness.¹³⁸ NATO's efforts to modernize also included its command-and-control (C2) structure, although without adaptations to decision-making processes.¹³⁹ Members like Germany continue to rebuild resilient and effective structures and capabilities to improve their contribution to collective defense.¹⁴⁰ However, the work is far from done. Although defense investments are still increasing, there is an imbalance in defense spending when measured in accordance with the DIP goal of two percent of each state's gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁴¹ The DIP two percent goal is misleading, because it does not show what percentage is actually contributed to NATO's military capabilities. Moreover, it is not tied to any strategy or means. Without a doubt, the adaptation of NATO requires continued sufficient investment and that the improvement of capabilities in all domains must also continue.

¹³⁷ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "*The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*," 20, 21, 39.

¹³⁸ NATO, "Strengthening EU-NATO Relations," *NATO.int*, accessed 22 December 2020, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/07/16/strengthening-eu-nato-relations/index.html>.

¹³⁹ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "*The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*," 97-100.

¹⁴⁰ Kramp-Karrenbauer, "Speech by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer: Presentation of the Steuben Schurz Media Award," 4-5.

¹⁴¹ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "*The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*," 39,40.

Nonetheless, the two percent goal is the wrong tool to enable fair burden sharing and leads to controversy and distrust among allies.¹⁴²

NATO operations are another aspect of capabilities. “During the Cold War NATO faced many challenges to its internal cohesion..., but after each the NATO members... fully recommitted to the alliance, a signal of its geostrategic importance. However, after the end of the Cold War this strategic ‘glue’ was lost, with less to unify the member states and more to pull them apart.”¹⁴³ NATO compensated by assuming other tasks out of strategic necessity. After 2014 its core mission, collective defense, prominently reemerged, while its other tasks remained.¹⁴⁴ Now NATO must redefine its identity, while the array of threats it has to address becomes more complex. Simultaneously, while increasing its capabilities, NATO will only have one single set of forces at its disposal. Whether NATO can maintain the three core tasks assigned in the 2010 Strategic Concept (collective defense, crisis management, cooperative security) is in doubt.¹⁴⁵ It is also questionable if NATO allies would muster the will and forces for a renewed and lengthy crisis management operation like Afghanistan.¹⁴⁶

British General Sir Graeme Lamb addresses the complexity of the future security environment in relation to an enlarged NATO. He argues that today’s security environment leads to quite different threat perceptions and conflicting security interests within the alliance. He is

¹⁴² Anthony H. Cordesman, "NATO’s Pointless Burden Sharing Debates. The Need to Replace a Mathematically Ridiculous 2% of GDP Goal with Real Force Planning," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, accessed 3 August 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/natos-pointless-burden-sharing-debates-need-replace-mathematically-ridiculous-2-gdp-goal>, 1-7.

¹⁴³ Joanna Spear, "Organizational Survival: NATO's Pragmatic Functionalism," in *Charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Together with Scholarly Commentaries and Essential Historical Documents*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Adam Tooze (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 283.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁴⁵ Ian Shapiro and Adam Tooze, eds., *Charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Together with Scholarly Commentaries and Essential Historical Documents* (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 164.

¹⁴⁶ John R. Deni, *NATO and Article 5. The Transatlantic Alliance and the Twenty-First-Century Challenges of Collective Defense* (MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 4, 10, 119.

skeptical that a larger number of allies will be able to decide and act as one if their individual security assessments significantly differ. Moreover, NATO's structures and capabilities are not fit to cope with the future challenges.¹⁴⁷ While this argument neglects NATO's core tenets about cohesion and managing disagreements, it stresses the fact that NATO faces a security environment to which it will be difficult to respond if NATO members cannot muster the will to act, share the burden, and act in unity.

2.5. Take Away

An overview of the current security environment shows that "business as usual" is not an option for NATO. NATO's ongoing modernization and capability build-up is necessary but not sufficient to address the complex security environment. NATO must work on several issues simultaneously: Secure its core democratic values and maintain cohesion. That requires a new strategic concept. It is not enough to renew the 2010 strategic concept. The concept needs to realign values, ends, ways, and means. It must set the conditions to be sufficiently resourced and can be implemented. This requires a revision of and re-prioritization among NATO's core tasks. Thereby, the underlying strategy will address all challenges and can be sufficiently resourced. Moreover, NATO requires the appropriate capabilities and capacities to handle emerging threats; NATO must improve its structure and the integration of capabilities to foster anticipation, responsiveness, and flexibility. It needs improved capabilities as a military alliance and also the capabilities as a political institution, thereby ensuring that its strategic objectives can be implemented by employing the right means. As NATO's SecGen states, "...we must stay strong militarily, be more united politically and take a broader approach globally."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ General Sir Graeme Lamb, "Is NATO a Force Fit for a New Century?" in *Charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Together with Scholarly Commentaries and Essential Historical Documents*, ed. Ian Shapiro and Adam Tooze (London: Yale University Press, 2018), 258-261.

¹⁴⁸ Jim Garamone, "Secretary General Launches 'NATO 2030' Effort to Strengthen Alliance," *US Department of Defense*, accessed 11 November 2020, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2211673/secretary-general-launches-nato-2030-effort-to-strengthen-alliance/>, 1.

3. Aligning Values-Ends-Ways-Means: NATO's New Strategic Concept

In March 2020, NATO SecGen Jens Stoltenberg appointed an independent group of experts to consider NATO's situation in 2030 and offer recommendations on how to boost NATO's political dimension. On 25 November 2020 the group submitted its report to the SecGen ("reflection report").¹⁴⁹ The reflection group envisions NATO in 2030 "defined by vitality, utility, relevance, and endurance."¹⁵⁰ The report embraces the timeless validity of NATO's democratic foundations and stresses that NATO's basic mission remains unchanged: "...safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law..."¹⁵¹ It acknowledges the fact that disagreement is normal among democracies, but that the foundation allows consensus and therefore unity. It stresses the importance of NATO's cohesion as a primary prerequisite for NATO's credibility.¹⁵²

Overall, the report gives 138 recommendations. The key points are:

"...**update the 2010 Strategic Concept** (original emphasis)...
...continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue with **Russia**...
...devote much more time, political resources, and action to the security challenges posed by **China**...
Emerging and disruptive technologies are a challenge but also opportunity ...
Terrorism poses one of the most immediate, ...threats ...
...consistent, clear, and coherent approach to **the South**, ...
...reaffirm its support for **arms control** while maintaining an effective **nuclear deterrence**.
Climate Change will continue to shape NATO's security environment.
Maintaining **political cohesion and unity** must be an unambiguous priority...
...transatlantic **consultation** to be strengthened in a systematic, credible, and powerful manner...
NATO and the EU should seek to reinvigorate trust and understanding..."

¹⁴⁹ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 66, 3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9, 7, 11.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 20.

...global blueprint for better utilizing its **partnerships** to advance NATO strategic interests...
...principle of consensus is a cornerstone of the Alliance, ...
...NATO needs a strong political dimension to match its military adaptation.¹⁵³

All these recommendations are valid. Besides the ongoing push to modernize and improve its capabilities, NATO must revise its strategy and realign its ends, ways and means. Colin S. Gray defines grand strategy "...as the direction and use made of any or all among the total assets of a security community in support of its policy goals as decided by politics."¹⁵⁴ Moreover: "[s]trategy is a practical business. If the troops cannot do it, policy is mere vanity."¹⁵⁵ The report correctly addresses the importance of NATO's political dimension and identifies the correct measures to be taken. It puts the revision of the strategic concept as a starting point. Moreover, it highlights the fact that the very process of updating the strategic concept is in itself important. It would allow the allies to discuss their different perspectives and reach consensus. The strategic environment demands that the allies return to discourse and do not shy away from critical topics due to fear of disagreement.¹⁵⁶ As shown in chapter one, the ability to agree to disagree is one of NATO's strengths.

NATO foreign ministers received the reflection report and its recommendations during a meeting in December 2020. While it is not yet known how much support the report received, it will frame negotiations and discussions in preparation for NATO's summit in 2021. The work on

¹⁵³ Ibid., 12-15.

¹⁵⁴ Colin S. Gray, *War, Peace and International Relations. an Introduction to Strategic History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 2; Hans Binnendijk, Daniel S. Hamilton, "Four Factors to Consider in Keeping NATO Relevant," *Defense News*, accessed 24 November 2020, https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/11/24/four-factors-to-consider-in-keeping-nato-relevant/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2011.24.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Colin S. Gray, *The Future of Strategy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 39.

¹⁵⁶ Klaus Wittmann, "Schluss Mit Der Sprachlosigkeit! Die NATO Braucht Eine Neue Strategie - Und Eine Debattenkultur," *Der Tagesspiegel*, Friday, 14 February 2020, 6.

the new strategic concept can be expected to start after the summit.¹⁵⁷ The strategic concept is the expression of NATO's revised strategy; it connects NATO's foundation, its members, purpose, ends, ways, means, and finally, resources. Additionally, the strategic concept enables a common threat perception, which will allow the allies to adopt a united stance and approach. The revision of the strategic concept is of utmost importance if NATO is to successfully adapt to the emerging strategic environment. A reiteration of the 2010 strategy is not enough. The strategic concept is NATO's visible expression of purpose and direction. It explains who NATO is and how NATO will engage now and in the future.

3.1. End, Ways, and Means – the Core Tasks

The reflection report correctly puts NATO's democratic values at the center of NATO's cohesion. A new strategic concept must stress this important fact. This allows NATO to put its political identity at the basis of its concept, before analyzing the ends and ways. A politically unified alliance requires a fixed point, an identity from which the alliance can develop its strategic vision.¹⁵⁸ Three other effects develop from that. First, the alliance maintains credibility in changing circumstances. It acts in line with its narrative, stays politically predictable, transparent, and addresses the domestic and international audience. Second, NATO can counter disinformation more easily. Third, it is the common basis for allies. NATO must counter antidemocratic tendencies among its members, although it cannot enforce democratic values.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, confirming democratic principles as the bedrock of the alliance helps to support democracy in problematic member states (Poland, Hungary, Turkey) and binds them to a

¹⁵⁷ Dr. Ian Davis, "Briefing Paper no. 80: NATO Seeks a New Political Path but Continues to March to Old Military Tunes," *NATO Watch*, accessed 16 December 2020, <https://natowatch.org/default/2020/nato-seeks-new-political-path-continues-march-old-military-tunes>.

¹⁵⁸ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 7, 20, 50.

¹⁵⁹ The North Atlantic Treaty, Article 1. Shapiro and Tooze, eds., *Charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Together with Scholarly Commentaries and Essential Historical Documents*, 3.

minimum standard if they seek to retain their influence.¹⁶⁰ Reconfirming its democratic foundation also can enable the establishment of other mechanisms in NATO, for example a committee for democratic principles.¹⁶¹

The identity of NATO's ultimate mission – the end – becomes understandable. The reflection report correctly stresses that the original intent of the 1949 foundation of NATO remains valid.¹⁶² The mission can be translated into the ways, NATO's core tasks. They are the central point of the strategic concept. Their description provides the guidelines for how NATO will achieve the end — how NATO will provide security. They assure allies that their security concerns are being addressed. Moreover, they must be prioritized to allow sufficient resourcing. The reflection report calls for a preservation of the 2010 core tasks (collective defense, crisis management, cooperative security).¹⁶³ Preserving the core tasks is not enough to meet the challenges, however; they must be reformulated. This includes the question of whether responses to threats of terrorism need to be more integrated. In general, there are two tendencies in NATO tasks: more global tasks are demanded, and a narrower focus on collective defense is assessed as the solution.¹⁶⁴ The challenge is that a more global stance is likely to strain NATO's available capabilities, while a narrow stand on classic territorial defense will likely fail to address all the challenges NATO faces. The security environment demands a comprehensive approach to the

¹⁶⁰ Hamilton, "Why NATO Needs a New Strategic Concept, what it should Say, and how to Achieve It," 23.

¹⁶¹ This idea was addressed by Celeste A. Wallander. Celeste A. Wallander, "NATO's Price - Shape Up Or Ship Out," 3.

¹⁶² NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 9.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 12; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010*, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Hans Binnendijk and Timo S. Koster, "NATO Needs a New Core Task," *Defense News*, accessed 23 July 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/07/22/nato-needs-a-new-core-task/>; Moller, "It Will Take More than a Biden Victory to Solve NATO's Strategic Malaise".

complexity of threats. The core tasks must reflect this, while at the same time allow for resourcing. They are interdependent and must be executed simultaneously.

3.2. Collective Defense

This core task is without doubt NATO's central task. It is the expression of NATO's unity and will to provide security for all members. It stresses NATO's character as a defensive alliance. In the 2010 Strategic Concept collective defense is described only in respect to Article 5 of the NATO treaty.¹⁶⁵ Collective defense focuses on military threats and includes the conventional and nuclear military capabilities to deter and to respond to attacks. That is no longer sufficient. Collective defense must include all dimensions. NATO correctly began to include cyber, space and the "grey zone" of hybrid activities in its considerations.¹⁶⁶ These dimensions must now be incorporated into the description of collective defense. Collective defense requires the collective use of all member states' instruments of national power in the service of the alliance. The capabilities must be ready to ensure credible deterrence, and respectively be ready to be employed. While collective defense in a classical understanding was aimed against Russia, this is no longer exclusive. Collective defense not only requires a military posture and contingency planning against the threat from Russia, it must also include pre-planning, response planning and coordination against attacks in all domains. It is important that an adapted collective defense is resourced not only with military capabilities. Additionally, collective defense will need to include at least coordination with other entities, like the EU, because attacks and negative effects are more likely to affect both. Collective defense requires the highest priority because it is resource intensive and requires the most effort and coordination among allies.

¹⁶⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010*, 2.

¹⁶⁶ NATO, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016," *NATO.int*, accessed 21 December 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm. no. 70-72; NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *"The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019,"* 27-28.

3.3. Crisis Management

This core task requires the most adaptation. The idea of a comprehensive approach to solve a crisis remains valid. In general, there is no purely military problem. The current concept sees the employment of NATO's capabilities to respond to one crisis (similar to NATO's engagement in the Balkans). This likely includes a long-term engagement and relies on the advantage of preempting a crisis before it becomes volatile.¹⁶⁷ However, the concept of crisis management as outlined in the 2010 strategic concept no longer fits the circumstances. First of all, the security environment is too dynamic to focus NATO's efforts on only one crisis. Second, the most pressing crises (Libya or Syria, just to name a few) are far beyond the option of preemption. The effects of the crises include long-term instability, societal disruption, refugees, spread of VEOs, and terror attacks; they require input from more actors than NATO to solve. The crises affect not only NATO but also other entities, such the EU and neighboring countries. This requires a broad approach and not a singular effort. Third, Chinese and Russian activities in the region highlight the fact that challenges and threats emerging on the southern flank cannot be handled in isolation from other NATO decisions regarding Russia or China. Fourth, and most importantly, the 2010 concept of crisis management is no longer sustainable. While the outcome of NATO's involvement in Afghanistan still awaits assessment, it is unlikely that the allies would consent to a new large-scale, long-term involvement. Allies are focusing their efforts on conventional military capabilities and less on crisis management. Nonetheless, challenges need to be addressed. The 2010 concept assesses correctly that it is best to address crises where they emerge. NATO is already engaged in the region with Defense Capacity Building (DCB) in Iraq

¹⁶⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010*, 2, 6.

and partnerships with seven nations in the region via the Mediterranean Dialogue and an additional four via the Istanbul Cooperation initiative (ICI).¹⁶⁸ What is most required is stability and political consolidation. By providing DCB training and equipment support to partners in the regions and troubled nations, NATO can support stability without fixing resources for a long term. The trainer portion is sustainable in its scale. Additionally, NATO can contribute to the reconstruction efforts of other entities like the UN and counter Russian or Chinese influence at the same time. Within NATO, a capability-focused burden-sharing mechanism on a rotational basis would allow nations to focus their contributions to the south, while other members fill the gaps elsewhere. While DCB is not a perfect solution, it allows NATO to adapt crisis management (the way) as a tool that can be resourced and employed effectively. With a newly-defined crisis management task that focuses on enabling partners to stabilize the security environment, an alignment with collective defense and cooperative security, contribution to NATO's mission, and sustainability is possible.

3.4. Cooperative Security

This core task requires the least adaptation because it builds and continues to use NATO's existing partnership network. Nonetheless, it is not less important because it is the way in which NATO can utilize its political dimension to respond to challenges which do not pose an immediate threat to NATO. The report correctly recommends that better coordination and partnerships between allies and partners would encourage the partners to follow NATO's interests.¹⁶⁹ That does not necessarily mean undertaking combined operations with partners or NATO's global expansion, rather an increase in the exchange of information, and coordination to establish a framework within the existing international order that allows for more cooperation. A

¹⁶⁸ NATO, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization," *NATO.int*, accessed 29 April 2020, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/organisation.htm>.

¹⁶⁹ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 57-58.

combined stand of NATO with international partners would help contain the malign influence of China or the impacts of hybrid activities, like cyber-attacks. Moreover, intensive exchange links directly to crisis management. It allows for a better focus of DCB to the needs. Integrating other partners in DCB also internationalizes the efforts. Thereby, NATO can increase its credibility because it is acting as a partner. A coordinated use of partnerships underlines NATO's core value of cohesion. The cooperative security task nests into collective defense and crisis management because its effect support both of them.

An aspect that requires attention is NATO's open-door policy. The report recommends that, "the door should remain open to all European democracies that aspire to join NATO."¹⁷⁰ The "open door" underlines NATO's democratic principles. However, NATO should restrain itself from increasing in size too quickly. NATO must ensure that its consensus-driven decision-making process remains viable within the dynamic security environment. In the adaptation to the new circumstances (which includes writing the new strategic concept), NATO must achieve consensus from all thirty current allies. It is easier to do this without new members. Second, NATO must secure its core democratic values and address authoritarian tendencies among its members. Therefore, NATO must adhere to its membership action plan to ensure that potential candidates actually meet the democratic requirements to join the alliance. The example of Poland shows that NATO can contribute to establishing democratic principles, but also that a lasting democracy is not guaranteed.¹⁷¹ A new strategic concept must stress the democratic requirements for continued NATO membership.

Regarding cooperative security, the partnership with the EU requires intensification. As chapter two shows, security concerns can no longer be divided between NATO and EU; twenty of

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁷¹ Deni, *NATO and Article 5. the Transatlantic Alliance and the Twenty-First-Century Challenges of Collective Defense*, 37-38.

twenty-seven EU member countries are also NATO allies.¹⁷² Two aspects highlight the interdependence of EU and NATO security requirements: resilience and hybrid threats. The SecGen's 2019 *Annual Report* correctly states that resilience is a national responsibility. NATO defined seven baseline requirements, but the individual nations have to implement them.¹⁷³ The EU addresses resilience with several regulations, too.¹⁷⁴ Any impact on resilience by an EU member or a NATO ally will have direct or indirect implications for both entities. Moreover, because NATO and the EU are so closely intertwined, any cyber-attack or disinformation campaign will impact both entities. The reflection report correctly stresses the importance for deepened, more institutionalized coordination. Improved political coordination would also provide more inclusion of defense development.¹⁷⁵ Another aspect related to resilience and the ability to counter hybrid threats is that closer NATO – EU cooperation can foster democratic resilience. Closer cooperation highlights the democratic principles upon which both organizations are based. The cooperation supports democratic resilience because both organizations can promote democracy and motivate its members to adhere to it. Moreover, the EU possesses better mechanisms to sanction authoritarian tendencies, as its actions against Poland and Hungary show.¹⁷⁶ A new strategic concept must outline the interdependency and cooperative needs between NATO and the EU.

3.5. Take Away

The strategic concept is the tool by which NATO develops the guidance necessary to implement its strategy. It explains how means are aligned to ways, to achieve the ends. The

¹⁷² NATO, "Strengthening EU-NATO Relations," *NATO.int*, 2019, accessed 22 December 2020, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/07/16/strengthening-eu-nato-relations/index.html>.

¹⁷³ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*, 25.

¹⁷⁴ European Union Law, "EUR-Lex," *European Union*, accessed 22 December 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/search.html?scope=EURLEX&text=resilience&lang=en&type=quick&qid=1608651819658>.

¹⁷⁵ NATO, "Strengthening EU-NATO Relations".

¹⁷⁶ Celeste A. Wallander, "NATO's Enemies within. how Democratic Decline could Destroy the Alliance," 4.

depicted core tasks and central elements of a new strategic concept are critical parts of the concept. A new strategic concept must acknowledge the reality of the contemporary security environment and emphasize the importance of NATO's democratic foundation, which is the basis for NATO's collective security. A mere reiteration of the 2010 core tasks cannot explain how NATO will provide security for its members. The revised and adapted core tasks will facilitate a common threat assessment and explain how NATO aligns its democratic foundation with its mission and how it will approach this mission. The core tasks are no longer parallel but independent lines of effort; instead, their interdependent nature suggests a need for comprehensive implementation. This allows for a new approach to burden sharing. Fair burden sharing must measure what is actually contributed to NATO's capabilities and can be directly linked to the tasks, thereby aligning ends, ways, means, and available resources. Moreover, the concept lays out the guideline for strategy implementation. It highlights NATO's character as a defensive trans-Atlantic alliance with a European hub that will engage its global interests in cooperation while securing and defending its shared values and principles.

4. What NATO Needs: More Integration

What are the means by which NATO might enable its ways? NATO must answer how its capabilities can be used effectively to implement its strategy. The answer lies in more integration. Not in terms of an integrated command structure, which already exists, but in terms of using existing and emerging capabilities in a way that all three core tasks can be executed simultaneously. The reflection report recommendations focus on NATO's political dimension. It stresses the importance of effective and timely decision-making. The reflection report acknowledges the importance of the consensus rule but gives some recommendations how to speed up decision-making, for example, with new guidelines about vetoes and more delegated authorities for the SecGen.¹⁷⁷ The recommendations are useful, but decision-making is but one element of the means NATO requires to implement its strategy.

4.1. What is needed for collective defense?

In today's security environment, high-intensity large-scale combat operations are still possible, even though major war in the European theater is not imminent. Russia and China continue their conventional and nuclear military modernization programs, developing and employing EDT and A2/D2 capabilities. Both utilize disinformation and destabilization activities. To meet these challenges, NATO must be able to engage, enforce, and prevail in all domains (Land, Air, Sea, Space, Cyber, Information). Moreover, due to the dynamics of hybrid activities, NATO must anticipate and act quickly. The US Army defined this approach as Multi Domain Operations (MDO), with the integration of allies and interoperability as an integral part.¹⁷⁸ MDO remains primarily a concept, the full dimensions of which are not yet grasped.¹⁷⁹ What is obvious

¹⁷⁷ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*. Accessed 2 December 2020, 60-62.

¹⁷⁸ Jack Watling and Daniel Roper, *European Allies in US Multi-Domain Operations* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, 2019), 2, 9.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

is that the MDO concept can provide NATO with an intellectual framework to comprehensively approach threats simultaneously in all dimensions. NATO needs to interlace the domains, define which dimension must be addressed at all levels (like the operational and tactical level in the land domain) and which dimension requires only one level. For example, does cyber as a domain require elements down to the tactical level, or is it more centrally executed and contributes to tactical success only with effects? Similar determinations are required regarding the space domain.

The 2019 SecGen annual report shows that NATO has already started addressing these issues. Cyberspace and space are acknowledged as dimensions in which NATO operates and must be integrated into NATO's core tasks.¹⁸⁰ NATO is aware of the importance of strategic communications and engages in public diplomacy, although the reflection report recommended further improvements.¹⁸¹ NATO must also improve its few organic assets. For example, NATO established its own intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. It improves and secures its own communications and invests in innovation and research. Moreover, NATO already adapted its command structure to enable speed and flexibility. It established a new Joint Force Command in Norfolk, Virginia, and a Joint Enabling and Support Command (JSEC) in Ulm, Germany. In doing so, NATO improved its strategic mobility capabilities, to ensure that forces and capabilities can be deployed quickly and effectively throughout Europe.¹⁸²

A full adoption of the MDO concept requires force modernization by the member states. That includes capabilities like long-range precision fires, airlift, digitalized communications and

¹⁸⁰ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "*The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*," 27-28.

¹⁸¹ Examples are the media coverage of NATO's Trident Juncture exercises since 2015 or the #NATO2030 initiative. NATO, "Nato 2030," *NATO.int*, 5 November 2020, accessed 10 November 2020, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/176155.htm>.

¹⁸² NATO Public Diplomacy Division, "*The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*," 53,46-50.

networks, and soldier lethality, among other things.¹⁸³ For example, the German Army is expanding the number of its divisions while simultaneously modernizing its equipment to improve interoperability with Allied forces.¹⁸⁴ In November 2020, the German General Staff Course studied how to enable a German armored division to operate in a US MDO-configured formation.

Interoperability is also improved through NATO's intensified exercise schedule, as well as through NATO's force posture like NATO Response Force (NRF) or eFP, where Allied forces are integrated with each other.¹⁸⁵ These brief examples show that NATO and the allies acknowledge the need to adapt and to improve capabilities. This is the right approach and must be continued, but it is not enough. To operate and succeed in all dimensions, NATO must actually implement MDO or develop its own concept of "all domain integrated operations". The means, NATO's capabilities have to be aligned to the ways, the core tasks, to be employed in line with the intended outcome. NATO needs to explain how MDO will be executed. This must be planned beyond how capabilities are integrated in domains, or how Allied forces can communicate with each other and fight alongside each other. NATO must ensure that its levels of command are seamlessly linked together. This requires its headquarters to work together in all domains, contribute to each other, and enable the echelons below. Thereby, domain capabilities can be employed at the right level, and their combined effects contribute to a defined end. That is easy in the domains of land, air, and sea, with long-established and proven levels of command. But the relatively new cyber and space domains must also become fully integrated. Cyber and space permeate all other domains, thereby creating effects that have impacts across the full spectrum.

¹⁸³ Jack Watling and Daniel Roper, *European Allies in US Multi-Domain Operations*, 6.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Schlechtweg and Elmar Schulz, "German Army - View to the Division in 2027," *Europäische Sicherheit & Technik*, accessed 23 December 2020, <https://esut.de/en/2019/08/fachbeitraege/streitkraefte-fachbeitraege/14126/deutsche-heer-ausblick-auf-die-division-2027/>; Deutsches Heer, "Digitalisierung Im Heer," *Bundeswehr*, accessed 23 December 2020, <https://www.bundeswehr.de/de/organisation/heer/organisation/faehigkeiten/digitalisierung>.

¹⁸⁵ NATO Public Diplomacy Division, *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2019*, 60-63, 15.

NATO's exercise schedule shows that the alliance has a series of exercises that address specific areas. For example, the Crisis Management Exercise (CRM) addresses the NAC, strategic headquarters, and capitals in the alliance. The Trident Juncture series trains the NRF. The problem is that not all exercises are fully integrated. For example, the American joint exercise Defender 2020 relied mainly on US headquarters and bilateral cooperation. Enabling NATO to be responsive and fast requires all levels of command to work together to put capabilities in the right place at the right time. Moreover, it requires intensive coordination within the alliance member states because uninterrupted strategic deployment relies on resilient national networks. The same counts for closer cooperation with the EU, because every deployment will be conducted through or in EU territory. It is similar within the cyber domain. If strategic mobility is impeded by a cyber-attack, it requires cross-domain, cross-headquarters, multi-echelon, inter-allied, and NATO-EU cooperation to negotiate and manage the impacts. NATO does not need more headquarters to operate in all domains but should find a way to integrate all necessary echelons and aspects in planning, training and execution. "Train as you fight" remains a valid principle in MDO. Therefore, NATO's exercises must aim for more holistic training objectives that include all domains and all levels simultaneously.

NATO requires tactical capabilities for credible deterrence and to prevail in high-intensity conflict.¹⁸⁶ Interoperability on the tactical level moves in the right direction. NATO's framework nation concept, in which Allied members cooperate closely together in formations or to improve capabilities, is promising. For example, the Netherlands integrated a regiment into the German Airborne division, and Germany and the Netherlands established a combined tank battalion. Another example is the institutionalized cooperation of nations in preparing and providing the NRF Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Germany, the Netherlands,

¹⁸⁶ While nuclear capabilities remain an integral part of NATO, they are not covered in this monograph due to classification.

and Norway provided the very first VJTF, and institutionalized their cooperation in preparing and providing rotational VJTF forces. MDO will benefit from the framework nation concept because it allows continuous innovation and interoperability. Moreover, MDO and the framework nation concept can support a fair burden-sharing system and can incentivize improved utilization of existing mechanisms like PESCO to develop solutions together. However, it must be ensured that this cooperation benefits NATO as a whole. President Trump's unilateral decisions to reduce US forces in Europe and deploy a forward element of the US V Corps headquarters to Poland are negative examples.¹⁸⁷ While they might improve cooperation between the US and Poland, they have a negative impact on NATO. The V Corps headquarters is not integrated into NATO's chain of command on the eastern flank. Its deployment contradicts NATO's chain of command and unity of effort. Moreover, it gives the authoritarian-leaning Polish government an incentive to ignore NATO's agreed and shared democratic principles.

When looking at collective defense, it is clear that NATO works in the right direction. What is needed is a continuous modernization of national capabilities that are or can be integrated into NATO's command and control structure. It must be ensured that interoperability enables NATO as a whole and does not lead to different entities in NATO that are not interoperable. Moreover, interoperability must not lead to bilateral engagements that do not benefit NATO as a whole or risk contradiction of NATO's shared values. NATO needs to close the seams between the domains and has to define how MDO will be approached and integrated. Most importantly, NATO must determine how domains capabilities will be translated into effects to provide security.

¹⁸⁷ As of January 2020, the new Biden administration put the implementation of the decision on hold and is currently revising it.

4.2. What is required for crisis management?

Currently, NATO members focus almost exclusively on adaption and modernization of military capabilities. The expected economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic will put additional strain on the finances required for modernization. NATO has only a single set of forces with which it can engage its tasks. Therefore, it is unlikely that NATO will find consensus for renewed, large-scale, long-term expeditionary deployments. Moreover, the security situation itself requires a redefined crisis management core task. As depicted, the situation on NATO's southern flank is volatile, dynamic, complex, and does not originate from a single country or cause. What is needed is a general stabilization on the ground. That includes all aspects of public life, including public services, public order and security, economy, and administration. The cessation of armed conflict is just one aspect. The disruption of societies must be stopped. The 2010 strategic concept intent of promoting stability is still valid, but future crisis management will require a much more holistic response, for which military capabilities will not be best suited.¹⁸⁸

The 2010 strategic concept correctly identified the need for closer cooperation with partners in the region.¹⁸⁹ This is significant because stability requires regional partners to provide the necessary prerequisites on their own (e.g., public order, stable societies, counterterrorism). This is not nation-building; in this scenario, legitimate regional governments and administrations are already in place but require external assistance to be strengthened. Such missions required specific types of support to build capacity enhancement. Instead of massive contingents of conventional combat forces, trainers are needed to build organic capacities. NATO is well-

¹⁸⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operating Environment 2035. The Joint Force in a Contested and Disordered World*, p. 3; Vershbow and Speranza, "More in the Med: How NATO can Refocus its Efforts in the South and Italy can Lead the Charge," 4-6; Mariano, "NATO Defense College Policy Brief no. 12-June 2020: NATO's Strategic Redirection to the South," 1.

¹⁸⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010*, 7.

positioned to establish, build, or strengthen military and related capabilities through DCB; it can be tailored to specific needs and aims, depending on the organic capabilities in the region.

NATO has the right command tools at hand. In 2017, the Strategic Direction South Hub was established and placed adjacent to NATO's Joint Force Command Naples (JFCN). Its tasks are to connect, consult, and coordinate NATO's activities in the south. However, the hub is not integrated into NATO's command structure, which places it somewhat at odds with NATO's level of command.¹⁹⁰ NATO must realign means – in this case its command-and-control structure – to serve the ways to achieve desired ends. The southern hub can provide operational-level direction to DCB activities on NATO's southern flank. Based on strategic-level partnership cooperation at NATO headquarters it can direct DCB activities according to partner needs. This includes coordination with other entities that are promoting stability, like the United Nations (UN) or the EU. This highlights the importance of intensified cooperation between NATO and the EU.

The security activities of both entities are intertwined, and both actively promote stability on their shared southern flank. To create the desired effect, both need to better coordinate what they are doing. While NATO can help building security capabilities, the EU has better tools and the mandate to address shortfalls in the legal and socioeconomic sectors.¹⁹¹

NATO does not necessarily need new capabilities for the core task of crisis management. Instead, it should reorganize how it engages the problems at its southern flank. The different approach is the institutionalization of DCB for crisis management. Providing small numbers of trainers for specific missions to resolve identified shortfalls helps partners in place to become more effective in providing stability independently. In coordinating these efforts with other

¹⁹⁰ Mariano, "NATO Defense College Policy Brief no. 12-June 2020: NATO's Strategic Redirection to the South," 1, 2, 3.

¹⁹¹ Vershbow and Speranza, "More in the Med: How NATO can Refocus its Efforts in the South and Italy can Lead the Charge," 8, 10.

entities, stability can be promoted in all required areas. With a reorganized C2 structure, NATO ensures that the means (DCB activities) are aligned with the ways (core task crisis management) and can be resourced sufficiently.¹⁹²

A more coordinated and aligned approach also supports MDO because effects could be utilized for all core tasks and domains. By supporting regional partners, NATO strengthens cooperation and promotes stability beyond its boundaries, thereby adding to its credibility and containing influence originating from Russia and China. At minimum, this supports NATO's activities in the information domain by countering disinformation. This again supports the maintenance of NATO's core values.

4.3. What is needed for cooperative security?

Cooperative security is the most visible example of NATO's political dimension. It is the expression of NATO's unity of effort. As the 2010 strategic concept states, "The Alliance will engage actively to enhance international security, through partnership with relevant countries and other international organisations..."¹⁹³ Due to its core values and shared principles, NATO is first and foremost a trans-Atlantic alliance, not a global one. Nonetheless, NATO needs to engage globally to prevent security threats and challenges from impacting its members. Partnerships are the centerpiece of cooperative security. NATO need not develop new capabilities for these tasks, besides acknowledging the likelihood that it will form new partnerships in the future. NATO has already established a dense network of cooperation and partnerships around the globe.¹⁹⁴ It must reorganize how it utilizes its partnerships. The reflection group outlines the right measures.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁹³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Active Engagement, Modern Defence. Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Adopted by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Summit in Lisbon 19-20 November 2010*, 2.

¹⁹⁴ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 57; NATO, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization," *NATO.int*, accessed 19 July 2020, <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/organisation.htm>.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 58.

NATO needs a more coordinated approach to partnership, so they can contribute to the overall desired effect. It needs to identify which interests must be addressed in which region and how to best work with partners to achieve these interests. This includes negotiating expectations with its partners. This allows NATO to better align partnerships with other activities, as the DCB example shows. Additionally, it would counter influence from Russia and China, such as in the Arctic region or the Balkans. NATO partners can be offered an alternative to a dependency on Russia or China.¹⁹⁶ This contributes to NATO's credibility, because it gains legitimacy by acting with other international partners. Another effect is that NATO gains speed in countering disinformation, because it can proactively engage with trusted networks.

4.4. Take Away

A new strategic concept must address NATO's core tasks in a more holistic way. They must be understood as interdependent, thereby aligning towards the same end, and implemented by resourced means that can be coordinated in their use. Collective defense underlines the need for a real burden sharing mechanism. This includes the members' responsibility to increase, improve, and modernize their capabilities. But collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security also show that integration means more than interoperability of tactical units. What is needed is strategy implementation based on a strategic concept that allows for aligning ends, ways, means, and resources. Lastly, NATO already engages a host of issues with the proper approach. Often, reorganization and definition of roles, tasks, responsibilities, and level of execution might prove more effective than the establishment of new organizational elements.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 58.

5. Conclusion

NATO is much more than a military alliance. It has matured into an international political organization, with wide-ranging interests, roles, functions, and mechanisms. Nonetheless, it remains an alliance of independent nations. NATO's maturity allows consultation and negotiation among peers. It allows members to disagree on issues, while agreeing on the general aim of collective security and continued cooperation. Its foundation is the members' acceptance of NATO's bedrock of shared democratic values and principles. This enables trust among the members. This paper showed that NATO does not face an existential crisis but does face risks and a threat to its core values. Disagreement among its members is quite normal, as NATO's history shows. The benefits of collective security, of credible reliance upon each other, outweigh the cost of breaking away due to a disagreement. NATO's consensus, painfully slow though it might be, expresses the will of independent nations to engage problems together. NATO proved and proves to be a highly adaptable organization, able to successfully adapt to changing circumstances. It is important to keep in mind that this always includes the confirmation of NATO's democratic values and principles.

NATO will remain what it is: an international organization and military alliance that provides security for its members and provides a platform for collective cooperation. The analysis of the security situation shows that NATO has once again reached a point in time where it must adapt to maintain its relevance and fulfill its purpose. This task becomes more difficult because the number of contemporary challenges dwarf the singularity of the Soviet threat at the alliance's founding. NATO's members perceive these challenges and impacts differently. The complexity is increased by modernization demands, incorporation of new technologies, all domains, and interoperability, while at the same time countering adversaries who also possess new technologies. The need to adapt does not emerge only from these external conditions. As this paper shows, hybrid activities like disinformation campaigns and authoritarian tendencies in

member governments are challenging NATO's bedrock of shared democratic values. If not addressed, these trends can erode NATO's cohesion, hamper consensus, and render NATO ineffective.

The 2020 reflection report to the SecGen correctly identifies the need to embrace “a political role, in unifying allies behind a common strategic vision, a community of shared values, shared interests, and shared destiny... NATO in 2030 is one of an alliance defined by vitality, utility, relevance, and endurance.”¹⁹⁷ It stresses the importance of a new strategic concept as the starting point.¹⁹⁸ The process of developing the concept itself will serve as a means to revive consultation and discussion, and help to address disagreements. It allows allies to come together, to reconfirm shared democratic values, and address different threats and challenges together in consensus. This can also help NATO to address its biggest challenge: antidemocratic trends in its member states. NATO cannot act directly, therefore a strategic concept is no panacea but it can help incentivize democratic conduct.

The strategic concept can help realign tasks with threat perceptions and describe how NATO can implement its strategy. The new strategic concept would assimilate NATO's multiple activities into one concept. Thereby, NATO can assign the right means (capabilities), in sufficient numbers, to the right tasks, at the right time and the right place. NATO cannot rely on only a single set of resources. To be flexible, innovative, active, and successful, it must be clear what resources are to be used to which purpose. This would allow progress in fair burden sharing because contributions could be aligned to real tasks and not just artificial numbers. NATO's political role and its utility are therefore connected.

NATO has much work to do. Writing a new strategic concept is the crucial first step. But to successfully implement its strategy, NATO members must continue to modernize and increase

¹⁹⁷ NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, accessed 2 December 2020, 7, 11.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

their capabilities and contribute to NATO. All tasks and resources must be addressed. Recent initiatives and the self-assessment of the SecGen's reflection group are optimistic signs that NATO will be able to complete this overhaul if allies muster the will to agree and implement a new strategy and continue to improve their capabilities to that end.

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