
Collective Defence and Common Security

Twin Pillars of the Atlantic Alliance

Group of Policy Experts report to the NATO Secretary General, June 2014

NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept defined three objectives for the Atlantic Alliance: a continuing commitment to collective defence; the ability to prevent and manage crises beyond its shores whose effects risk undermining members' security; and deepening security cooperation with neighbours and more distant partners on challenges of common concern.

Just four years later, the risks that these three objectives were designed to confront have revealed themselves. Peace and stability in Europe are being challenged by a revisionist Russian government; political order in the Middle East, North Africa and across the Sahel is under threat; and territorial disputes in Asia pose risks to the economic interests of all members of the Alliance and challenge the security commitments of others. The emergence of a more dangerous world in the second decade of the 21st century poses a historic test for the governments of the transatlantic community.

Leaders must show the political will to confront today's security challenges today, not tomorrow. They must convince citizens that they cannot take their security for granted. Even as the scars of the economic crisis and the siren call of populist politicians tempt them to turn inwards, governments must reaffirm the value of the Atlantic Alliance. They must also acquire and deploy the necessary resources, even though this will mean making tough choices. Following its withdrawal from Afghanistan, NATO needs to reaffirm its value around the twin objectives of collective defence and common security.

Shared principles and interests

The transatlantic bond reflects a shared belief in Canada, the United States and their European allies that international peace and prosperity are best delivered through the combination of democratic institutions, open economies and the rule of law. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commits its members to ensure that their citizens can live by these principles, in freedom, and without fear of external threat.

After its creation in 1949, NATO defended the transatlantic community successfully against totalitarianism for forty years and then welcomed new European democracies into its family over the next 25. Today, this community reflects not only shared and deeply held principles, but also common strategic interests and the largest economic relationship in the world.

For much of the period since the end of the Cold War, the underlying assumption in capitals in North America and Europe has been that the world was moving in the West's direction. In 2010, there were no clear and immediate threats to European security. Countries in the Middle East were considered stable. The United States sought to rebalance its international focus towards the Asia-Pacific, where growing economic opportunities coexisted with political tensions. International terrorism persisted, but did not evolve into an existential threat. The direct impacts of new security risks, including pandemics and the dislocating effects of climate change, appeared distant.

Today, there can be no faith in the continuation of a relatively benign security context. Nor can there be confidence that the principles uniting the transatlantic community will spread either through Europe's neighbourhood or across the wider world. As a result, NATO members can no longer delay in committing the political will and resources to the Alliance's two core objectives for the 21st century. These are to provide the collective defence that will uphold peace and stability in Europe and to adopt common approaches to international security that will help the transatlantic community confront the growing risks beyond its borders.

Upholding peace and stability in Europe

Russia's current policy of coercively building a sphere of exclusive interests in the post-Soviet space poses risks for the transatlantic community that are unprecedented since 1989.

Since his return to the Kremlin in May 2012, President Vladimir Putin has imposed an ever more authoritarian form of leadership over the Russian Federation, while undertaking a significant military modernization programme. At the same time, he has established a Russia-dominated Eurasian Union, designed to involve most of its immediate neighbours, which would buffer Russia's centralized political economy from the open-market and rules-based principles of the transatlantic community.

The Russian government has had no compunction about using economic and political coercion to achieve its vision. This was the case with Ukraine as it considered the EU's offer of an association agreement. The ouster of President Yanukovich at the end of February 2014 provoked Russia to take all steps it deemed necessary to ensure that it did not 'lose' Ukraine to the West.

In so doing, Russia has chosen to undermine the basic tenets of international law and peaceful order in Europe. It challenges rather than respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of its neighbours by giving itself the right to defend Russian-speaking peoples and 'compatriots' wherever they may live. It annexed Crimea in the immediate aftermath of a flawed referendum. It has imposed arbitrary economic sanctions on Ukraine and is providing human, operational and material support to armed separatists. In sum, President Putin has adopted a revisionist position that threatens to replace a rules-based order in Europe with one governed by the application of military power and economic coercion, all in defiance of the Helsinki Final Act.

This does not presage a return to a new Cold War. Russia and the West are not engaged in a global ideological contest for influence, nor are their differences the organizing principles of international politics. To the contrary, Russia and the West share common interests on a range of international issues from nuclear proliferation to terrorism. Moreover, the transatlantic community would benefit from a true partnership with Russia, with a pan-European and Euro-Atlantic space of common security as outlined in the OSCE Charter of Paris.

However, there can be no return to a 'strategic partnership' between NATO and Russia so long as Russia's leadership carries out actions that threaten European security and are the antithesis of all that the transatlantic community believes in. Nor should NATO members trade their core commitment to collective defence in return for national economic benefits or international cooperation with Russia. Instead, NATO should adopt a more robust and coherent defensive stance designed to deter any opportunistic extension of Russian actions in other European countries.

- 1.1 *Each member must contribute to the Alliance's overall capacity to deter and defend against direct threats to NATO territory.* The commitment under NATO's Article V to treat an attack against one as an attack against all cannot be rhetorical; it must be credible. Tallinn should be as secure as Toronto. To this end, the Alliance needs to bolster its capacities for defence and deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of conventional, nuclear and missile defence forces. More specifically, the Alliance collectively and all allies individually should consider the following concrete steps:
 - a. *Halt the decline in defence spending*, with all members committing to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence by the end of this decade and to invest a significant share of their defence budget (in the range of 20%) in acquisitions of critical capabilities and in research and technology;
 - b. *Improve the Alliance's capability to defend all of its territory* by expanding investment in scalable infrastructure and prepositioning military equipment;
 - c. *Bolster the NATO Response Force* to ensure it is more responsive and ready to be deployed at shorter notice;
 - d. *Conduct more regular live exercises*, at scale and including 'snap' exercises to test readiness, and undertake contingency planning adapted to the new situation and new types of threats;
 - e. *Forward deploy air, ground and naval assets to the east of NATO territory for as long as the situation requires.* Sharing the burden of deploying forces is as important as the total numbers of forces deployed;

f. *Address the recent deterioration in the capability of NATO command structures caused by the failure of national commands to fill human resource shortfalls.*

- 1.2 *European governments bear a particular responsibility for ensuring their territorial security.* They must invest in high-technology assets, such as ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance), drones and precision munitions, as well as ‘strategic enablers’, such as strategic and tactical airlift, without which their ability to operate alongside US forces will ever more rapidly erode. No amount of political commitment to smarter defence, pooling and sharing, or specialization – helpful as these steps may be – will compensate for a failure to reverse the decline in defence spending. European members of NATO must reinvest in critical, deployable military capabilities based upon a willingness to share the burden of their security.
- 1.3 *The crisis in Ukraine has revealed the threats to NATO members from ‘non-linear’ forms of aggression,* which combine mass disinformation campaigns, cyber-measures, the use of special forces, sometimes disguised as local partisans, mobilization of local proxies, intimidation through displays of strength, and economic coercion. NATO needs to develop the doctrines, instruments and techniques to be able to defend its members against these threats. Rapidly reconstituting command and control, ensuring the resilience and continuing interoperability of cyber systems, counter-propaganda and defining the role of special forces are just some of the challenges ahead for NATO members.
- 1.4 *However, NATO alone cannot confront such types of non-linear aggression. Within Europe, the EU must take the lead* in helping its members and neighbours embed systems and practices of good governance and transparency that will reduce corruption and influence-peddling and, thereby, their vulnerability to external destabilization. The EU can also help strengthen Ministries of the Interior and gendarmerie-type forces. Non-linear risks will put a premium on enhanced NATO–EU cooperation and contingency planning for Europe’s collective defence.
- 1.5 *Europe’s energy relationship with Russia can, if based on market principles, remain mutually beneficial. But reducing the total or near-total reliance of certain European countries on Russia for their energy imports,* by diversifying supplies and building physical interconnections with EU support, will be critical to the future security of the whole transatlantic community. Again, this cannot be the responsibility of NATO. Rather, the transatlantic community needs to think of energy security as a shared goal. Russia’s main strength should no longer be Europe’s main vulnerability.
- 1.6 *NATO’s door should remain open to all European democracies that share the values of the Alliance,* recognizing that enlargement did and can enhance the security and prosperity of both new entrants and existing members. Prospective members must meet the full responsibilities and obligations of membership, including a vibrant and institutionally secure system of democratic government; civilian control of military and intelligence services; and the ability to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. For their part, existing members must be ready, willing and able to extend the full benefits of Alliance membership to them, including Article V, before concluding negotiations. In the current European security context, the Alliance should focus its efforts on enhancing its political and military cooperation with the countries that are currently involved in Membership Action Plans and Intensified Dialogues, including through training and other programmes tailored to their needs and capacities.

The emergence of a more dangerous world

Maintaining European security is critical for the transatlantic community. But it is also essential that the transatlantic community responds to the emergence of a more dangerous world beyond its borders by strengthening its capacities for crisis management and the ability to draw partners into common security responses.

A Middle East and North Africa in turmoil

The imminent withdrawal of most Western forces from Afghanistan is bringing to a close a period of atypical, large-scale military intervention by NATO beyond its members’ shores. The near-term results of this and other recent interventions have been mixed, and their long-term effects are uncertain. What cannot be doubted is the extent to which they have sapped public support on both sides of the Atlantic for future military interventions.

But turning inwards after 2014 is not an option for NATO. Much of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as parts of the Sahel, are facing at least a decade of turmoil. The Arab Spring unfolded very differently from the way many inside and outside the region had hoped. Extremists are taking advantage of the chaos in Syria, with dangerous consequences for already fragile Iraq and Lebanon and placing huge pressure on parts of Jordan and Turkey. Libya is struggling with the most basic fundamentals of state-building. The overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and subsequent crackdown have derailed the prospect for a more democratic political system based on an inclusive social contract. Interconnections between the Sahel and Algeria and between Somalia and Yemen could pose new dangers.

The transatlantic community cannot ignore the rising and likely persistent instability in Europe's southern and south-eastern neighbourhood. Radicalized fighters are returning to European cities, where some may turn on their own societies or plot attacks to be carried out in the United States and Canada. Migration into Europe will grow, adding fuel to popular grievances and prejudices. And, successful or not, the wider impact of the negotiations under way to put Iran's civil nuclear programme onto an acceptable footing may add to the instability.

Increased instability in Asia and beyond

The rebalancing of economic power from West to East and North to South has been accompanied by the desire of rising countries to reassert their sovereign prerogatives, especially in Asia, and most notably by China. Unresolved territorial disputes, historical animosities and the lack of an institutionalized security architecture have come together to drive dramatic rises in defence spending across the region, including investment in offensive capabilities from fighter jets to submarines. In 2012, defence spending in Asia overtook that by European states. These developments serve as a reminder that the Pacific Ocean is the western flank of NATO. European governments need to consider how best to collaborate with the United States and Canada in protecting their shared interests in this vital region.

Rising tensions in Asia coincide with an increasingly strained international security system. Even before the crisis in Ukraine, Russia and China blocked efforts in the UN Security Council to impose tougher sanctions on Syria. And, after the Libya experience, rising democracies such as India, Brazil and South Africa are also more cautious about supporting UN-mandated military intervention. The UN Security Council will find it increasingly difficult to agree on how to address future crises.

On the other hand, this more competitive international environment coexists with deepening economic interdependence between all nations and societies. The growth of international trade in goods, services and essential commodities continues to outpace and, to a large extent, drive global growth. Rising levels of foreign direct investment tie companies and their customers into global supply chains. The transatlantic community relies upon these flows, even as they impose painful challenges of domestic structural economic adjustment.

Confronting international insecurity

These international challenges will have direct and indirect effects on all members of the transatlantic community. While they cannot expect to resolve each problem, allied nations should ensure that they are as prepared as possible to confront them, including by using the Alliance's capability to stabilize crisis situations. Consequently:

- 2.1 *There should not be a division of responsibilities on crisis management* under which the United States and a handful of others are responsible for deploying hard power beyond NATO's borders, while most European countries focus on tackling security risks mainly through civilian capabilities. Individual NATO members will of course continue to play distinctive roles in particular regions. But free-riding on US power projection will erode the foundations of the transatlantic bond over time, not least as America's and Europe's demographic profiles continue to change. European investment in more flexible, agile and deployable forces for their collective defence will also provide the strategic flexibility for transatlantic partnership on crisis management more broadly.
- 2.2 *The North Atlantic Council (NAC) should espouse more clearly its role as the political and military institution underpinning the security of the transatlantic community.* The NAC is the only institutional forum where the United States, Canada and twenty-six European nations meet regularly to discuss the full spectrum of risks and threats to their security. From the situation in

Transnistria to tensions in the East China Sea or the Strait of Hormuz, to piracy off the Horn of Africa or the effects of climate change on resource competition, the topics debated in the NATO Council need to reflect the full scope of the interests and responsibilities that all NATO members share. Such consultations, taking place under NATO's Article IV if necessary, need not always involve decisions or actions, but would demonstrate a recognition and acceptance of a shared transatlantic security outlook. The transatlantic community's ability to harness its combined military capabilities via NATO's integrated military command is one of its most powerful assets.

- 2.3 *The transatlantic community's ability to bring a truly comprehensive range of capabilities to confronting or managing a crisis is another major asset.* From market access to development assistance, and from military intervention to post-conflict civilian support, the transatlantic community is uniquely capable of delivering a comprehensive response to challenges to its security. But for this potential to be realized, NATO and the EU must work more closely together, not just through increasing and regularizing current political consultations, but also through creative new arrangements where NATO could rely on the EU's civilian assets in crisis management operations, and vice versa. In this context, it is essential that members of the transatlantic community now help resolve once and for all the stand-off between Turkey and Cyprus.
- 2.4 *The changed situation in Europe and the rebalancing of global economic power make it imperative that the United States and EU overcome their differences and complete as soon as possible the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).* With TTIP in place – including its likely structures for future transatlantic regulatory coordination – alongside the Canada–EU Trade Agreement, members of the transatlantic community will be in a stronger position to promote a rules-based, transparent global system for trade and investment. They will also be better placed to support one another on strategic priorities, such as energy diversification and dealing with the challenges of an integrated transatlantic digital market. It will also be important to have a sufficiently open architecture for other members of the transatlantic community, such as Norway, Iceland and Turkey, to participate later in any agreement. TTIP should not end up creating new divisions within the transatlantic community; on the contrary, it should serve to cement its cohesion.
- 2.5 *As noted in the 2010 Strategic Concept, the transatlantic community's ability to ensure its future security will depend also on its international partners, some of which are highly capable militarily and politically important in regional terms.* However, the number of partners has expanded significantly in recent years, and NATO's institutional framework for cooperative security needs to be better differentiated. Simply grouping the countries geographically in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, the Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, and listing others as 'global partners', does not do justice to the changed international context. For example, NATO should:
 - a. *Develop enhanced long-term cooperative arrangements with the small number of countries in Europe and beyond, such as Finland, Sweden and Australia, that share the transatlantic community's principles and that have demonstrated the interest and military sophistication to participate in a closer association in collective security short of membership.* This would also cement the benefits of joint operations with them in recent years.
 - b. *Focus on improving the capacity to deploy interoperable forces with all partners, while building defence capabilities, training and intelligence-sharing on a case-by-case basis.*
 - c. *Expand exercises and confidence-building activities with other relevant powers, such as India or China, despite their different perspectives on broad principles and interests.* Deeper cooperation may also be possible with them on areas of common concern, such as maritime security and humanitarian response.
 - d. *Sustain the NATO–Russia Council's operation at ambassadorial and higher levels so as to help the two sides coordinate responses to international issues of shared concern.* This will help it remain a forum for rebuilding trust and meaningful cooperation on pan-European security, once Russian leaders decide to return to the principles of the Paris Charter.
 - e. *Build on the leadership role of the UN and the growing importance of regional organizations, such as the African Union, in many conflict zones.*
 - f. *Preserve NATO's organizational capacity to engage with this large and complex network of partners.*

Strengthening the foundations

The challenge of protecting the transatlantic community is not one of design. The 2010 NATO Strategic Concept laid out a set of strategic objectives that remain a good benchmark for NATO's ambition. But whereas the critical risks to transatlantic security four years ago appeared either to be abating or to lie in the future, their imminence now makes action urgent. The challenge is to come to agreement and to implement.

In the absence of a major crisis, it is always difficult to rally public opinion and political leadership around investing in security. Developments in Ukraine are a great source of concern for many in the transatlantic community, but not to all and not to most North American or European citizens. They evoke neither the existential danger and drama of the Cold War nor the fear and horror of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States and those that followed in Europe.

As a first step, therefore, political leaders on both sides of the Atlantic will need to make the time to communicate to their publics the deterioration of the security situation in Europe. They must be clear and united about the undeniable risks that Russia's recent actions pose to the principles upon which the transatlantic community and European security are built. At present, NATO is not the best vehicle to strengthen the transatlantic community's relationship with Russia. But unless the transatlantic community uses NATO to reassure all members about their security, it will find it difficult to build a new relationship with Russia when the opportunity arises.

Second, political leaders must also raise the awareness of this and the next generation about the importance of a stable neighbourhood and a secure international environment to the future welfare and prosperity of the transatlantic community. Having returned from an extended period of major international deployment, NATO members must reconcile themselves to their new dual mission; to assure the security of their own transatlantic community and to contribute to the security of the wider world. This will mean acquiring the right mix of defence capabilities; deepening cooperation between NATO and the EU; and reaching out to a wide variety of countries and organizations to manage complex international crises.

Finally, political leaders should remind their publics of the values that underpin the Alliance. NATO is not simply a mutual defence arrangement; it is a community of nations that share a deep commitment to democratic institutions, open economies and the rule of law. These shared beliefs have long defined the transatlantic bond. They are all the more important as the world becomes less secure. Members now need to invest the appropriate resources and political will to protect them.

Group of Policy Experts

Martin Butora, Head, Institute of Public Affairs, Bratislava

Ivo Daalder, President, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Chicago

Camille Grand, Director, Foundation for Strategic Research, Paris

Robin Niblett (Chair), Director, Chatham House, London

Ana Palacio, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and Member of the Council of State, Madrid

Roland Paris, Director, Centre for International Policy Studies, Ottawa

Volker Perthes, Director, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

Nathalie Tocci, Deputy Director, Institute of International Affairs, Rome

Sinan Ülgen, Director, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, Istanbul

Marcin Zaborowski, Director, The Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw