

SPECIAL REPORT

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Since its inception, NATO has done more than any other multilateral organization to promote democracy, peace, and security in Europe and the broader transatlantic community with benefits that have rippled out to the broader global community. Ensuring that NATO can face the challenges of the 21st century while safeguarding and vitalizing collective defense—the heart of the Alliance—is the charge of the upcoming reflection period. In this important moment, American leadership cannot be replaced. The United States must ensure that the reflection outcome firmly moors a future NATO to both sides of the Atlantic, refocuses the allies on the *raison d'être* of collective defense (including the associated necessities of robust defense spending and vigorous capabilities in increasingly vital spheres like cyber warfare and information warfare), while at the same time ensuring NATO's readiness to address a range of growing challenges. Getting this balance right requires an understanding of where the Alliance has been, where it is now, and where it is headed. The outcome of the reflection process will provide vital guideposts for striking the proper balance and ensuring the vitality of NATO for the next 70 years and beyond.

Executive Summary

The foundation of the transatlantic community is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a multilateral organization that has done more to promote democracy, peace, and security in Europe than any other—including the European Union—since its inception in 1949. Far from being outmoded, NATO today is more relevant and crucial for maintaining transatlantic security than it has been since the end of the Cold War.

At NATO's leaders meeting in December 2019 in London, the Alliance agreed to undergo a "period of reflection" to chart a path for the organization's future. On March 31, 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced the appointment of a group of experts "to support his work in a reflection process to further strengthen NATO's political dimension." They are expected to report their findings by the end of the year. This period of reflection is needed. The last time the Alliance conducted a comprehensive review was in 2010 with NATO's Strategic Concept.

The debate about the future of NATO is nothing new. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there has been much debate about what the role of NATO should be. Since the last Strategic Concept, there have been extensive geopolitical changes, which have driven much of the current debate about NATO. However, today the mainstream debate about NATO has shifted from whether the Alliance is relevant to a debate about what the Alliance should be doing. Some argue, as the authors of this *Special Report* do, that Russia remains NATO's biggest threat, and collective and territorial defense remains its top core task. Others argue that NATO must re-tool to become a counterterrorism force. Some even argue that NATO is no longer needed. This is why NATO had no choice but to carry out a reflection period. In sum, the Alliance and its members need strategic guidance for the near future. The Secretary General hopes that his reflection period will do this, and this *Special Report* is intended to inform that process.

This *Special Report* will also contribute to the larger debate about NATO's future. It will examine almost every aspect of NATO in the 21st century and offer more than 100 policy recommendations on a wide range of issues. The first section will serve as a reminder of why security and stability in Europe matters to the U.S., and make the case for NATO's importance in the 21st century. This section also offers a foundation on which the reflection process should be built, by prioritizing NATO's core tasks for the first time and establishing a set of guiding principles to which a team of 10 experts should adhere during the reflection process.

The second section will look at NATO's number one task—collective and territorial defense—while examining the threats and challenges to the Alliance from Russia, transnational terrorism, and China.

The third section closely examines NATO's external relations. The multipolarity of the 21st century differs greatly from the bipolar world at the time of NATO's founding. Not every country in the world qualifies to be a member of NATO. Not every country that does qualify wants to be a member. This means that the Alliance has to be flexible, creative, and adaptable in its external relations with other countries and international organizations.

The fourth section addresses in detail the five key regions on which NATO must focus in order to undertake its number one task of collective and territorial defense—the Arctic, the Balkans, the Baltic region, the Black Sea region, and the Middle East and North Africa region. After all, NATO need not be everywhere in the world doing everything, but it does have to be in the North Atlantic region able to defend its territory.

The fifth section addresses some of NATO’s most basic, yet most contentious, issues within the context of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty. The main focus is on Article 3 and Article 10 which address the importance of defense investment and Alliance enlargement, respectively.

Finally, this *Special Report* examines NATO’s role in specific evolving threats and challenges, such as cybersecurity, combatting disinformation, energy security, and hybrid warfare. NATO’s role in dealing with global pandemics, such as COVID-19, is also addressed.

During this reflection period, the U.S. must demonstrate leadership. NATO needs to refocus on its *raison d’être* on collective defense. The U.S. needs to lead the Alliance back to basics, and focus the Alliance on its eastern flank where the threat from Russia remains the number one challenge. The U.S. needs to also ensure that NATO remains fully capable of collective defense with robust defense spending and capabilities in areas including cyber warfare and information warfare. At the same time that it is focusing on basics, NATO must be capable of addressing a range of growing challenges, from China to transnational terrorism, without losing sight of the Alliance’s competencies and purpose. Getting this balance right requires an understanding of where the Alliance has been, where it is, and where it is going. This *Special Report* will provide vital guideposts for striking the proper balance, and ensuring the vitality of NATO for the next 70 years and beyond.

NATO in the 21st Century: Preparing the Alliance for the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow

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Section One: Why NATO and Europe Matter to the U.S.

A secure, stable, and prosperous Europe benefits the United States. Some of America's oldest and closest allies are in Europe. The U.S. shares with this region a strong commitment to democracy, free markets, human rights, and the rule of law. Many of these ideas, the foundations on which America was built, were brought over by the millions of immigrants from Europe in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. During the course of the 20th century, millions of Americans fought for a free and secure Europe.

A stable, secure, and economically viable Europe is in America's economic interest. For more than 70 years, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the U.S. military presence in Europe have contributed to European stability, which has economically benefited both Europeans and Americans. The economies of Europe, along with that of the United States, account for approximately half of the global economy. The U.S. and Europe are each other's principal trading partners. The U.S. and Europe are each other's top source of foreign direct investment. All of this brings untold benefits to the U.S. economy and, by extension, the American worker.

In addition to shared economic ties, the U.S. and Europe enjoy familial bonds of shared values and a knowledge that a world structured to maximize human liberty and prosperity is far better than a world structured under autocratic dictates. Recently, former U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis succinctly stated for the U.S., "Our greatest strength in the world is our network of alliances."¹ At the top of the list for America's alliances is NATO. U.S. policymakers must do all in their power to maintain this advantage.

At the NATO's leaders meeting in December 2019 in London, the Alliance agreed to undergo a "period of reflection" to chart a path for the organization's future.² On March 31, 2020, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg announced the appointment of a group of 10 experts³ "to support his work in a reflection process to further strengthen NATO's political dimension."⁴

The press release that NATO issued to announce the names of the 10 experts that will lead this process stated that the reflection period will offer "recommendations to reinforce Alliance unity, increase political consultation and coordination between Allies, and strengthen NATO's political

role,”⁵ and that the group of experts will “engage with Allied capitals and the North Atlantic Council, NATO’s decision-making body, and other relevant stakeholders.”⁶

Now a decade old, NATO’s most recent Strategic Concept is woefully outdated.⁷ Since its publication at the 2010 NATO Summit in Lisbon, the Alliance has had to deal with, either directly or indirectly, the so-called Arab Spring and its aftermath, NATO’s intervention in Libya, the end of NATO-led combat operations in Afghanistan, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the rise of the Islamic State, the migrant crisis in Europe, and Russia’s intervention in Syria. In addition to these geopolitical challenges, advancements in hybrid warfare, especially in the cyber and disinformation realm, have posed new challenges for NATO. At the same time, some in the U.S. are questioning the purpose of NATO and some in Europe are questioning America’s role in European security. The COVID-19 global pandemic will have an impact on military readiness and Alliance priorities for the foreseeable future. The word “pandemic” is not even found in the last Strategic Concept, a document meant to guide the Alliance on how to deal with future challenges.

This is an important period for NATO and it is important that this reflection be comprehensive and focused. To help establish a framework for the reflection, NATO should prioritize its core tasks, follow a set of guiding principles, and focus on key critical regions.

Core Tasks. The 2010 Strategic Concept listed three “core tasks” for NATO:

- **Collective defense.** The Alliance should be able and willing to fulfill, the collective defense guarantee in Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty.⁸
- **Crisis management.** The Alliance must use all the tools at its disposal “to address the full spectrum of crises—before, during and after conflicts” where it “contributes to Euro-Atlantic security.”⁹ Expeditionary and out-of-area operations, such as NATO’s missions in Libya and Afghanistan, fall under this category.
- **Cooperative security.** The Alliance must build and maintain relationships with countries and international organizations around the world. For democratic countries in Europe, this could mean eventual membership in the Alliance.

TEXT BOX 1

1949 North Atlantic Treaty

Article 6.¹ For the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack:

- on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France,² on the territory of Turkey or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer;
- on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.

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1. "The definition of the territories to which Article 5 applies was revised by Article 2 of the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the accession of Greece and Turkey signed on 22 October 1951." (Footnotes 1 and 2 are part of Article 6.)
 2. "On January 16, 1963, the North Atlantic Council noted that insofar as the former Algerian Departments of France were concerned, the relevant clauses of this Treaty had become inapplicable as from July 3, 1962."

While these core tasks remain relevant today, they should be ranked in terms of importance to the Alliance. This was a shortcoming in the 2010 Strategic Concept when the Alliance refused to acknowledge that one core task could be more important than the other two. As the old saying goes, "If everything is a priority, nothing is a priority."

While all three are important NATO functions, it is not logical to believe that an organization, which was founded for the primary reason of collective defense like NATO, would treat these tasks equally. NATO should use the reflection period as an opportunity to prioritize these core tasks and then to devote adequate resources. Considering the current geopolitical circumstances, the order of priority should be:

1. **Territorial and collective defense.** There is only one military threat to the Alliance in the North Atlantic region: the Russian Federation. For some in Eastern Europe, Russia even poses an existential threat. Everything else NATO does should be secondary to ensuring the territorial and collective defense of its member states.
2. **Cooperative security.** History shows that many of the problems originating in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have a tendency to spill over into Europe. The MENA region must be the main

focus of this core task. Since the MENA region is outside NATO's area of responsibility as described in Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the Alliance must build relationships and help to improve regional capabilities. This will make Europe safer.

3. **Crisis management.** NATO should focus on crisis management closer to home. The Alliance's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is a good example. NATO's commitment in Afghanistan should also remain a top focus until the mission ends there. Thereafter, the Alliance should think very hard before leading another major out-of-area combat operation.

10 Guiding Principles. As they carry out their reflection process, the Secretary General and his team of experts should allow the following 10 principles to guide their thinking:

1. NATO's number one mission must be collective defense, everything else the Alliance does is secondary to this task.
2. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO must remain a nuclear alliance.
3. The strength and resilience of NATO rest on the Alliance's firm roots on both sides of the Atlantic. This is known as the Transatlantic Bargain and it is essential for NATO's future.
4. While there are some areas that require EU–NATO cooperation, NATO should have the right of first refusal for all matters pertaining to the defense of Europe.
5. There is much for NATO to do in the “the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.” The Alliance should not create a problem looking for a solution elsewhere in the world.
6. As a multilateral alliance, NATO is only as strong as its member states. This is why proper defense spending is so important.
7. NATO's open-door policy is the world's most effective tool for democratic change, economic reform, and improvements in military capability among its members. The Alliance must remain open to new members.

8. Four regions in the Euro-Atlantic region need constant NATO attention to deter Russian aggression: the Arctic, the Balkans, the Baltic Sea, and the Black Sea. A fifth, the MENA region, requires NATO's focus and attention to increase local capacity building, improve interoperability, and strengthen relations.
9. As policymakers want NATO to take on more tasks, they must realize that there are limits to what NATO, as an intergovernmental institution, can do. When policymakers expect or want NATO to do what it was never designed to do, that is when the Alliance risks failure.
10. While many of the challenges posed by China in Europe are outside NATO's remit, Chinese technology, propaganda, offensive cyber capabilities, and control over critical infrastructure in Europe affect NATO's member states. NATO should approach relations with China with extreme caution, viewing China as an adversary until proven otherwise.

Ranking NATO's core missions, and then using the aforementioned guiding principles, will ensure that the outcome of the reflection process is built on a solid foundation.

Five Critical Regions. With the main threat to NATO coming from Russia, there are five critical regions near, or in, the North Atlantic area that require focused NATO attention, albeit for different reasons.

- NATO must focus on the (1) Arctic, (2) Baltic Sea, and (3) Black Sea regions because they are under the direct threat of Russian aggression. Also, some of NATO's most important partners—Finland, Georgia, Sweden, and Ukraine—are located in these regions.
- NATO must focus on the (4) Balkans because the region remains the unfinished business of Euro-Atlantic integration and is susceptible to malign Russian influence. The social and economic conditions in some places in the Balkans makes the region ripe for Islamist extremism.
- Finally, NATO must focus on the (5) MENA region. While not part of NATO's area of responsibility in terms of collective defense, problems originating in this region have a tendency to spill over into Europe.

Section Two: Collective and Territorial Defense

NATO was founded in 1949 with the mission of protecting the territorial integrity of its members and—if required—defeating the Soviet Union. While NATO’s members are no longer worried about the spread of Communism, many current NATO members are certainly worried about protecting their territory from Russian aggression.

The United States should work to ensure that NATO’s collective defense mission and the threat from Russia are the main focus of the Alliance. While the Alliance faces challenges emanating from an unstable Mediterranean basin and terrorism originating from the Middle East, the fact remains that Russia continues to be the only existential threat to member states. NATO must send a strong signal that it is strengthening deterrence measures explicitly in response to Russia.

NATO must be able to deter aggression and defend the territorial integrity of its members. Everything else that NATO might do is secondary to the No. 1 mission of collective territorial defense. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty states that “an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.” Any deviation from this commitment will only invite aggression. This mutual defense clause is what makes Article 5 the cornerstone of the Alliance. Everything that NATO does stems from this critical point.

Often, NATO members do not share the same concerns in terms of threats and security challenges. Usually, this divide inside the Alliance is geographical. In general terms, Eastern Europeans see Russia as the main threat to the Alliance. In contrast, Southern Europeans see spill-over from the Middle East and North Africa, usually in the form of refugees and transnational terrorism, as the main cause for concern. At other times, the divide is more about NATO’s functional role. Some want NATO to be more expeditionary with a focus on counterterrorism and out-of-area operations. Others want the Alliance to focus on non-traditional threats to cybersecurity, energy security, and truthful information.

In reality, NATO must deal with all of these threat concerns—both geographical and cross-functional. However, policymakers must realize that there are limits to what NATO, as an institution, can do. When policymakers expect NATO to do something it was never designed to do, that creates a perception of failure, frustration, and weakness of the Alliance. For example, NATO lacks legislative powers and policy competency on key issues, such as energy security, immigration, and border control. Yet in the past few years, these are issues on which some have wanted NATO to take the lead. (See

“Hybrid Warfare” in Section Six for more information how NATO should deal with hybrid threats.

Some of NATO’s recent out-of-area operations, as in Libya, and the International Security Assistance Force operation in Afghanistan, have shown that expeditionary operations for a military alliance that was originally created for, and is institutionally designed for, the purpose of collective and territorial defense have been challenging at best and close to failure at worst.

In the 21st century, NATO needs to return to basics, with territorial defense as its primary goal. NATO does not have to—and cannot—be everywhere in the world doing everything all the time, and it should think long and hard before leading and conducting additional out-of-area military interventions. If the member states of NATO believe that an out-of-area military operation is needed, then it should probably be led by a coalition of the willing outside the formal NATO command structure. After all, there is plenty to keep NATO busy in the “North Atlantic region north of the Tropic of Cancer”—namely, the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s actions are often described as Cold War behavior reminiscent of the Soviet Union. Such a characterization is by and large incorrect: Today, the West is dealing with an imperial Russia, not a Soviet Russia. Under Putin’s leadership, Russian policy is more reminiscent of what was seen in the time of the czars before the 1917 revolution. Putin is an imperial leader—under his leadership Russia is a 21st-century country with 19th-century ambitions. Due to Putin’s constitutional changes, he has been either prime minister or president of Russia since 1999, and can remain in either of these positions as long as he lives.

Russia poses a conventional, non-conventional, and nuclear threat to NATO, in particular its members on the Eastern flank: the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania. Although a conventional Russian attack against a NATO member is unlikely, it cannot be entirely discounted. Russia continues to use cyberattacks, espionage, its significant share of the European energy market, and propaganda to sow discord among NATO member states in an attempt to undermine the Alliance. The Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service’s “International Security and Estonia 2019” report states clearly: “The only serious threat to regional security, including the existence and sovereignty of Estonia and other Baltic Sea states, emanates from Russia. It involves not only asymmetrical, covert or political subversion, but also a potential military threat.”¹⁰

Russia has demonstrated an ability and willingness to change borders by force: in 2008, by invading Georgia and occupying 20 percent of its territory; likewise in 2014, when Russia invaded Ukraine, illegally annexed Crimea,

and instigated and supported a separatist movement in eastern Ukraine, backed by Russian funding, troops, and weaponry. Today, around 11,000 Russian troops are operating in eastern Ukraine,¹¹ and Russia continues to fortify Crimea, deploying 28,000 troops alongside long-range cruise missiles and air defense systems.¹² Russia has also embarked on a major program to build housing, restore airfields, and install new radars there.¹³

The war in Ukraine has cost 13,000 lives and left 30,000 people wounded.¹⁴ Despite cuts in 2018, Russian defense spending remains high, and the impact of more than a decade of ongoing military modernization can be seen across Russia's military, including in Syria and Ukraine. In January 2018, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford noted, "There is not a single aspect of the Russian armed forces that has not received some degree of modernization over the past decade."¹⁵ In 2019, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense, Russia spent \$21.5 billion on procurement.¹⁶ Taking into account total military expenditure, Russia spent 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) on defense in 2018.¹⁷

Russia maintains the world's largest nuclear arsenal and has repeatedly threatened U.S. allies in Europe with nuclear deployments and even pre-emptive nuclear strikes.¹⁸ Under Russian military doctrine, the use of nuclear weapons in conventional local and regional wars is seen as de-escalatory because it would cause an enemy to concede defeat. In May 2017, for example, a Russian parliamentarian threatened that nuclear weapons might be used if the U.S. or NATO were to move to retake Crimea or defend eastern Ukraine. Russia's national security strategy describes NATO as a threat to the national security of the Russian Federation, and clearly states that Russia will use every means at its disposal to achieve its strategic goals.

For instance, Russia consistently uses misinformation to undermine NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) deployments in the Baltic states and Poland. Recent examples of Russian propaganda targeting the U.S.-led battalion include false stories that Poles would be evicted from their homes by U.S. troops during exercises, and that U.S. soldiers were getting drunk and beating up locals.¹⁹ Russian propaganda campaigns similarly target the other NATO EFP battalions in the Baltics.²⁰ Russian cyberattacks have targeted energy infrastructure including in Germany, Ukraine, and the United States. Russian cyberattacks have also frequently targeted Western elections and sought to undermine public faith in democratic institutions. In addition to cyberattacks and propaganda, Russia has employed diplomatic leverage, energy coercion, espionage, influence operations, political assassinations, provocative flights, and snap exercises to undermine the U.S. and NATO and aggressively advance its interests.

The U.S. should work with like-minded allies to ensure that Russia, specifically the threat it represents to member states in Eastern Europe, is the top agenda item for the reflection period. With this clear understanding, the Alliance can move toward discussing the specific measures it is taking and implementing to deter the threat from Russia.

Also, NATO's continued focus on territorial defense does not mean that the Alliance gives up its expeditionary warfare capability. NATO's expeditionary capability is often seen in terms of deployments to Africa or Afghanistan. However, NATO's area of responsibility, which according to Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty is "the north Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer,"²¹ alone is large enough to require its members to maintain robust expeditionary capability. For example, Spain and Portugal responding to a contingency in northern Norway would require the deployment and sustainment of troops almost 2,700 miles away. This is no easy task and is why an expeditionary warfare capability is required by NATO.

From the Arctic to the Levant, Russia remains an aggressive and capable threat to NATO and the interests of its members. Russia is likely to use a host of tools in unison to pressure the Alliance, expose differences between member states, and undermine NATO deterrence measures.

During the reflection period NATO must:

- **Ensure that deterring Russian aggression is an explicit—and the top—focus of the Alliance.** Russia represents a real and potentially existential threat to NATO members in Eastern and Central Europe, and a significant threat and challenge to the rest of the Alliance. As NATO continues its transition back to collective defense, now is not the time to be coy about why defense is necessary. Allies should talk openly and frankly about the threat from Russia, and which steps are being taken to deter Russia and bolster defensive capabilities.
- **Make collective defense the Alliance's number one mission.** NATO does not have to be everywhere in the world doing everything, but it does have to be, according to Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty, "in the North Atlantic region, north of the Tropic of Cancer" able to defend its members' territory. Everything else the Alliance does to its mission should be secondary to collective and territorial defense.
- **Make large-scale reinforcement exercises the norm.** The U.S. and Canada must have the ability to reinforce Europe quickly. Countries in Western and Southern Europe must also have the ability to deploy

forces to Eastern and Northern Europe. During the Cold War, the U.S. conducted an annual military exercise called Operation Reforger (Return of Forces to Germany). Operation Reforger was designed to prove that the U.S. could move conventional military forces rapidly from the U.S. to Germany in the event of a war with the Soviet Union. In 2020, a similar exercise called Defender Europe, which was to be “the U.S. Army’s largest exercise in Europe in 25 years,”²² was planned but then curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. NATO should consider holding a similar exercise focused on defending and reinforcing the Baltic and Black Sea regions by

- **Carrying out military exercises that help member states better understand different threats.** NATO should conduct a series of exercises during which members from Eastern Europe train in Southern Europe and vice versa. This will foster a culture of understanding of the different regional security drivers among military planners and the different armed forces. It will also allow member states to rehearse deployment to different regions of the Alliance’s area of responsibility.
- **Being willing to invoke Article 4 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty more often.** Invoking Article 4 allows emergency consultations among NATO’s members. Article 4 has been invoked only five times in NATO’s history. Four of these occasions have been by Turkey, and of these, three have been because of Syria. The fifth time was by Lithuania over Russia’s actions in Ukraine. By invoking Article 4, a member state can push a particular security issue onto NATO’s agenda—this way forcing a better understanding of a particular issue.

NATO and Counterterrorism. The Arab Spring failed to usher in an era of democratic reforms for which many Western policymakers were naively hoping. Nine years on, the civil wars in Libya and Syria have become a breeding ground for non-state extremist groups. Islamist groups, such as Jabhat Fatah al-Sham and ISIS, and non-Islamist terrorist-linked groups, such as the People’s Protection Unit (YPG) in northern Syria, have flourished in the ensuing chaos. Much of the same can be said about Libya, too.

Islamist terrorism has plagued Europe since 2014. As Heritage research has shown: “In Western Europe, there has been a steady pace of ISIS-inspired and ISIS-directed terrorist attacks over the past five years. In total, 1,749 people were injured and 371 were killed in Islamist plots between January 2014 and June 2019.”²³

In the United States, there have been more than 100 Islamist-inspired plots or attacks since 9/11.²⁴ It is only natural that the citizens of NATO members want more to be done to fight terrorism. This desire is reflected in President Donald Trump's rhetoric. He has used his presidency to trumpet the idea that NATO should be re-tooled into a counterterrorism force.²⁵

However important the issue of terrorism is, calls for NATO to be re-tooled to focus first and foremost on counterterrorism operations are misguided for a number of reasons:

- **NATO was never designed as or meant to be a counterterrorism force.** Although terrorism did exist at the time of the Alliance's founding in 1949, the architects of NATO focused the Alliance on territorial defense for good reason.
- **NATO lacks the required tools for counterterrorism operations.** NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance. NATO does not possess legislative powers to confront terrorism, nor does it have the ability to implement sanctions and block terrorist funding. It also lacks many other capabilities required to fight terrorism, such as policy competency over law enforcement and border and immigration control.
- **While terrorism poses a major threat to NATO members, it is not existential in the same way** as a nuclear-armed and aggressive Russia.

NATO's focus on territorial defense instead of counterterrorism does not mean that the members inside NATO should not be working together on counterterrorism operations—but NATO as an institution should not be the leader or main actor in these operations. Instead, if a military operation is required to fight terrorism, it should be led by a coalition of the willing, formed and led by NATO members, but not by NATO itself.

During the reflection process, NATO must:

- **Resist temptation to rebrand or retool itself as a counterterrorism force.** NATO's number one mission should remain the collective and territorial defense of the 30 member states. It is Russia, not any existing transnational terrorist group, which poses an existential threat to Europe.

- **Acknowledge the threat from Islamist terrorism while recognizing NATO’s institutional limitations.** Many in North America and Europe are reasonably concerned about the terrorist threat. While NATO needs to be aware of this concern, as an Alliance it must be realistic about what it can do to conduct counterterrorism operations. Since NATO lacks many of the key policy competencies to fight terrorism, it must ensure that it conducts counterterrorism operations in a responsible and realistic manner.
- **Encourage counterterrorism cooperation outside the NATO framework.** The individual members of NATO should be concerned about terrorism, but NATO as an institution should not lead on this issue. NATO should be considered one of many tools that are required to fight terrorism, not the primary tool for doing so.

NATO and China. At the 2019 NATO leaders meeting in London, the Alliance stated in its declaration: “We recognize that China’s growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that we need to address together as an Alliance.”²⁶

The question of which approach NATO should take with China is a controversial and complex one. Those advocating that NATO take on China as a military challenge fail to see how divisive this issue is inside the Alliance, while also failing to recognize the geographical limitations for NATO’s area of responsibility as stated clearly in Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

That there is little agreement inside the Alliance on how to deal with China was evident by the fact that here was only *one sentence* devoted to China in the lengthy joint statement released in London. Although this was the first time that NATO mentioned China by name as a “challenge,” in the same sentence it also described Beijing as an “opportunity” for the Alliance.

However, merely mentioning China, much less as a “challenge,” in an official document was quite the departure from previous official statements from NATO. The 2010 Strategic Concept, which runs 40 pages long and was meant to serve as a guide for NATO dealing with future challenges, does not mention the word “China” once. Neither do the subsequent declarations resulting from the Chicago Summit (2012), the Wales Summit (2014), the Warsaw Summit (2016), or Brussels Summit (2018).

As an organization made up of countries from North America and Europe, there are several aspects of China’s behavior that should concern NATO and its members:

- China's attempts through technology giant Huawei to fund and integrate itself into certain parts of Europe's digital infrastructure. This is particularly relevant to the ongoing debate in Europe about fifth-generation (5G) wireless technology.²⁷
- China's increasing investments in critical infrastructure—especially ports.
- China's attempts at dividing European opinion and positions on policy issues using dependence created through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).²⁸
- China's oppressive crackdown and mass internment of its Uighur population in Xinjiang province.²⁹
- China's cover-up of the COVID-19 outbreak, which led to a global pandemic costing trillions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of lives.³⁰
- China's increasing closeness with Russia—especially as it pertains to military cooperation.

Besides the issue of budding Russian and Chinese military cooperation, these are all mainly economic and political challenges. China's desire to invest in ports and other infrastructure has more to do with its goal of changing Western norms of economic processes by introducing, however gradually and subtly, a system that benefits China.

China is patient, and measures its competition with the West in longer horizons. Chinese investments are, in part, meant to build a reservoir of influence to be drawn upon at a later date, and which, in the interim, may erode the democratic political systems of susceptible nations. Chinese loans as part of the BRI threaten to trap countries in a cycle of never-ending debt, which, at times, as in the case of Sri Lanka, ends in Chinese control over strategic infrastructure.

In Europe, Chinese investments have targeted the most vulnerable and fragile nations, especially in the western Balkans. Chinese companies, with Chinese labor, build infrastructure projects funded by Chinese loans, without regard for workers' rights and transparency that characterize American and European investments.

Europe is only now beginning to address the risks inherent in Chinese companies taking part in key technology projects. Both the U.S. and Europe

continue to grapple with China's drive to obtain sensitive technologies via company acquisitions, and to outdo the West on future technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI).

Beijing's drive to invest in, and partially own, key European ports and technology infrastructure requires an economic or political response—something that NATO is not well equipped to do. Policymakers should not pretend otherwise.

Russian–Chinese military cooperation remains limited. In 2015, three ships from the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) joined six ships from the Russian navy in the eastern Mediterranean Sea for the Joint Sea 2015 naval exercise that lasted five days.³¹ This was the first time that such an exercise took place between the two countries, and at the time of this writing, is the only time it has occurred in the Mediterranean Sea.

In 2017, a Chinese destroyer, frigate, and supply ship visited Kaliningrad as part of an exercise called Joint Sea 2017 that lasted eight days.³² Again, this was the first and only time that such a military exercise has taken place in the Baltic Sea. In 2018, China's participation in Russia's large-scale Vostok-18 military exercise received considerable media attention. However, China only contributed just over 3,000 soldiers of the 300,000 soldiers that participated in the exercise. Also, China's military presence during the exercise was confined to the regions east of Lake Baikal.

Individual NATO member states, and even the supranational EU with its particular policy competencies, have more tools to deal with an emboldened China than does NATO as an institution. NATO can deepen its existing engagements with Indo-Pacific countries. This will ease cooperation with these governments and militaries in the future and strengthen them (marginally) against Chinese encroachment. It may also contribute to the governments involved reaching common diplomatic positions, on freedom of navigation for instance. Until China poses a military threat in the North Atlantic Region, as an institution created for the purpose of collective security, NATO should have a very limited role when it comes to dealing the challenges posed by Beijing.

The reflection period offers NATO an opportunity to state clearly what its responsibilities are when it comes to China, and what its approach will be. To ensure that NATO does not lose focus on actual military threats closer to home it must:

- **Acknowledge the Alliance's limitations when confronting some of China's non-military threats and push member states to do more.** Some of the biggest challenges posed by China to NATO's

member states deal with investments in critical infrastructure, dis-information campaigns, and encroachments in the technology sector using Huawei's 5G. NATO should not pretend to lead on an issue for which it lacks the needed policy competencies. Therefore, while policymakers should look to NATO to provide a robust conventional and nuclear deterrence for members of the Alliance, only the national capitals, and in some cases the EU, have the political and economic tools that can reduce the economic and political threats posed by China.

- **Not let itself be distracted.** With the BRI creeping inside Europe's borders, the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, the mass internment of the Uighur population, and the ongoing 5G debate in Europe, it is no surprise that China is a major concern for Western policymakers—and rightfully so. However, for NATO, the most immediate threat, and the threat for which it was created and for which it has the tools, is Russia. NATO should focus first and foremost on this threat.
- **Be realistic about the military threat facing the Alliance in the North Atlantic area.** At the time of this writing, Russian–Chinese military activity in NATO's area of responsibility as described in Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty has amounted to two different exercises, spanning a total of 13 days, consisting of a total of six PLAN ships over the course of the past five years. While NATO should monitor Russian–Chinese military cooperation, the Alliance must recognize that its number one priority is Russia.
- **Not let China divide the Alliance.** As seen in the single sentence devoted to China in NATO's joint statement, there is no agreement inside the Alliance on what role, if any, NATO should play in dealing with Beijing. When Alliance unity in the face of Russian aggression is vital, now is not the time for NATO to divide itself over the issue of China. This only benefits Moscow and Beijing.
- **Ensure that NATO remains a nuclear alliance.** China is a nuclear power with strategic reach. The threats associated with nuclear proliferation make the world more dangerous today than it was during the Cold War, making it critical that NATO maintain its “nuclear culture.” As long as the West could face a nuclear threat from any part of the world, including Asia, NATO needs to remain a nuclear alliance.

- **Encourage the member states to coordinate military strategy regarding China.** While NATO as an institution should limit its military focus on China, for certain member states, China is a main driver of foreign and defense policy. This is particularly true of the U.S., and to a lesser extent, Canada, France, and the U.K. Military training exercises in the Indo–Pacific, or Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea, should be coordinated on a multilateral or a bilateral basis at the member-state level.

Section Three: NATO’S External Relations

As the world’s leading security alliance, it is only natural that NATO, as an institution, maintains bilateral relationships with other important global actors. Some of these relationships are a mere formality and have little substance, but others are very broad, close, and deep.

On one end of the scale, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the Partnership for Peace form the basis of NATO relations with Euro-Atlantic partners that are not formally part of the Alliance. Countries as diverse as Ireland and Tajikistan participate in these formats with different levels of engagement and enthusiasm. On the other end of the scale, NATO’s relationship with nonmembers Finland and Sweden means that those two countries are about as close as they can get to NATO without becoming members.

As NATO develops, maintains, and builds relationships with different actors around the world, it should assess the importance of such relationships by ensuring that at least one of three criteria are met:

1. Any relationship that NATO has with a country or organization outside the “North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer” must first and foremost help to make NATO’s members safer and more secure. An example of this would be NATO’s engagement with the countries in the Middle East and North Africa. (See “NATO and the Middle East and North Africa” in Section Four.)
2. Any relationship that NATO has with a country or organization outside the “North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer” must bring a clear, global, and strategic benefit to the Alliance. An example of this kind of relationship is NATO’s engagement with global powers Japan and Australia through the Partnership Interoperability Initiative.

3. Any relationship that NATO has with a country or organization inside the “North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer” should lead to closer cooperation, interoperability (Finland and Sweden), and possible membership in the Alliance (Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, and Ukraine).

NATO and Georgia. Georgia is a staunch ally of NATO. It is located in a dangerous and important geopolitical neighborhood for the Alliance. Georgians have proven themselves to be gallant in combat. They are also undertaking a defense transformation program that is an example to all of NATO. The reflection period provides the Alliance with a perfect opportunity to strengthen the relationship with Tbilisi and keep Georgia on the path toward membership.

After the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the subsequent occupation of 20 percent of its territory, Georgia has transformed its military and has been steadfast in its support of NATO as well as non-NATO U.S.-led overseas security operations. Georgia has contributed thousands of troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, and hundreds of peacekeepers to the Balkans and Africa. Even with the Russian invasion and its aftermath, Georgia has not been deterred from getting closer to the West. This has made Georgia a net contributor to transatlantic security.

Georgia is important to the Alliance for three main reasons:

1. **Georgia is a proven and dependable ally in Iraq and Afghanistan.** It is not well-known that, at the time of the 2008 Russian invasion, Georgia had the second-largest number of troops in Iraq after the U.S. In 2012, when many NATO countries were rushing for the door in Afghanistan, Georgia added hundreds of troops to the mission there. At the height of the Georgian contribution to Afghanistan, it had more than 2,000 troops serving in some of the deadliest places in the country, if not the world, in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Today, Georgia has 870 troops in Afghanistan, making it the largest non-NATO troop contributor to the NATO training mission.
2. **Georgia’s strategic location makes it important for NATO’s geopolitical objectives in the Caucasus and Black Sea regions.** Located in the South Caucasus, Georgia sits at a crucial geographical and cultural crossroads and has proven itself to be strategically important for military and economic reasons for centuries. Today, Georgia’s strategic location is just as important. For

MAP 1

Russian-Occupied Territory in Georgia



SOURCE: Heritage Foundation research.

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example, Georgia offered its territory, infrastructure, and logistic capabilities for the transit of NATO forces and cargo to Afghanistan. Over the years, Georgia has modernized key airports and port facilities in the country. This is particularly important when it comes to the Black Sea region. Key pipelines transit through Georgia, as do important rail lines. The oil and gas pipelines are particularly important to Europe's energy security and therefore NATO's interest in the region.

- 3. Georgia's journey to democracy is an example for the broader Eurasian region.** Since regaining independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia has been on a journey to democracy. For the sake of regional stability, it is in NATO's interest that Georgia

remain on this path. Over the years, successive Georgian governments have pursued an agenda of liberalizing the economy, cutting bureaucracy, fighting corruption, and embracing democracy. Since the peaceful Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia has been firmly committed to the transatlantic community. Georgia is also a country that represents the idea in Europe that each country has the sovereign ability to determine its own path, and to decide with whom it has relations, and how, and by whom it is governed. Territorial integrity must be respected and no outside actor (in this case, Russia) should have a veto on membership or relationships with international organizations like the European Union or NATO.

The NATO–Georgian relationship has never been closer, but more work remains to be done. Georgia was first promised eventual membership at the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008. Since then, this commitment to membership has been reaffirmed at each subsequent NATO summit. Not all members of the Alliance have been as supportive as they could be. This is especially true of those NATO members that have an uncomfortably close relationship with Russia—such as Italy and Hungary.

During the four most recent NATO summits, Georgia had hoped to receive a Membership Action Plan (MAP) but did not. The MAP is a NATO program that offers assistance and practical support tailored to the individual needs of countries wishing to join. A MAP was first used in 1999, but there is no requirement for a candidate country to either receive or complete a MAP before joining the Alliance. While Georgia does not need a MAP to someday join the Alliance, Russia uses the repeated failure of Georgia to receive a MAP as a propaganda victory.

Even though Georgia has not received a MAP, it has a relationship with NATO that far exceeds the traditional MAP. The relationship includes the Annual National Program, the NATO–Georgia Commission, and the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package. The NATO–Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Centre (JTEC) was opened in August 2015. Georgia also has twice contributed an infantry company to the NATO Response Force—quite a commitment for a country that is not a member of the Alliance. As NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg said in December 2016: “Georgia has all the practical tools to become a member of NATO.”³³

Some NATO members are concerned that Georgia’s entry into NATO would trigger an automatic war with Russia over its occupation of the Tskhinvali region³⁴ and Abkhazia. Georgian officials privately say that they are happy to accept a NATO membership arrangement or compromise

TEXT BOX 2

A Creative Solution for Georgia

The Russian occupation makes Georgia's NATO membership a remote possibility unless there is a new and creative approach to the situation.

All of Georgia's internationally recognized territory, which includes the occupied Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia, could be invited to join NATO. NATO could then amend Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty (which defines the territory that NATO is responsible for defending) to temporarily exclude the Russian-occupied regions from NATO's Article 5 protection. This could be done during Georgia's accession-protocol process.

So, all of Georgia would join NATO, but only the regions of Georgia that are not under Russian occupation (approximately 80 percent of the country) would receive NATO's collective security guarantee, for now.

This would be a temporary measure until Georgia's full, internationally recognized territory is re-established by peaceful means. With the right leadership, this plan will work because:

- There is a precedent for amending or changing Article 6. It was done in 1951 as part of the accession protocol for Turkey and Greece when the two countries joined NATO.¹

- In 1963, the North Atlantic Council noted that the original inclusion of the Algerian Departments of France in Article 6 was no longer applicable due to Algeria's independence.²
- There are countless examples of NATO members that do not have all of their territory under the protection of Article 5. Examples include the U.S. (its territory of Guam) and the U.K. (the Falkland Islands). Even West Germany and East Germany during the Cold War offer an interesting example.
- This plan is consistent with Georgia's non-use-of-force pledge for regaining control of the occupied regions.³
- This proposal would not work for Ukraine, for example, because Kyiv does not have a non-use-of-force pledge regarding Russian-occupied Crimea and Ukraine's Donbas region, where Russians are also fighting Ukrainian soldiers. Since the Georgian government has already pledged not to use force to regain its occupied regions, it does not need an Article 5 security guarantee for these two regions if it joins NATO.

1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty on the Accession of Greece and Turkey," October 22, 1951, last updated September 29, 2009, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17245.htm (accessed June 6, 2019).
2. The North Atlantic Treaty, April 4, 1949, last updated April 10, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm (accessed June 6, 2019).
3. "Georgia Makes 'Unilateral Pledge' of Non-Use of Force," Civil Georgia, November 23, 2010, <https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22880> (accessed June 6, 2019).

that excludes the two occupied territories from NATO's Article 5 security guarantee until the matter is resolved peacefully with the Russians. (See Textbox 2.)³⁵

Keeping Georgia on its Euro-Atlantic path will require effort by the Alliance. It is important that NATO's reflection period recognizes Georgia's commitment and sacrifices to transatlantic security. To this end, NATO should use the reflection period to:

- **Ensure that each Alliance member is clear about Georgia's future membership.** The outcome of the reflection period should make it clear that Georgia's successful completion of subsequent Annual National Programs, the close relationship through the NATO–Georgia Commission, and the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package are the true markers of progress that will bring Georgia closer to ultimate membership.
- **Think creatively about routes to membership.** Georgia's NATO limbo has lasted too long, and the Alliance must develop a demonstrable way forward for Georgian membership. Due to Russia's partial occupation, most Europeans are lukewarm at best about Georgia joining NATO. The U.S. will have to convince Europeans that amending Article 6 to temporarily exclude the occupied regions is a viable option that addresses their concerns about an automatic war with Russia if Georgia joins NATO.
- **Make it clear that a MAP is *not* required.** It is a common misconception that a MAP is a requirement for joining the Alliance. NATO members should not use this technicality as a roadblock for Georgia's future membership. With the Annual National Program, the NATO–Georgia Commission, and the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package, Georgia's relationship with NATO is closer now than it would have been under the traditional MAP.
- **Be sure to call the Russian military presence an occupation..** NATO should refer to the unwanted presence of several thousand Russian troops in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia as what it is. To date, many European countries have failed to use this terminology. Given events in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, it is more important than ever that NATO send a united and clear message.

NATO and Ukraine. NATO's reflection process is an opportunity for the Alliance to provide realistic and meaningful support to Ukraine. In 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine. Russia illegally occupies Crimea. Russia provoked and now supports a separatist movement in eastern Ukraine that did not previously exist. Russia is the aggressor, and Ukraine is the victim. Realistically, Ukraine has a long way to go before NATO membership, but that does not mean that the Alliance should disengage from Ukraine. On the contrary, NATO should deepen its partnership with Ukraine at the upcoming summit.

MAP 2

Conflict Areas in Ukraine



SOURCE: Information Analysis Center, National Security of Ukraine, “MAP ATO – 23.02.2017,” <http://mediarnbo.org/2017/02/23/map-ato-23-02-2017/?lang=en> (accessed April 21, 2020).

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It is in NATO’s best interest to assist Ukraine in countering Russian aggression and to work toward the nation’s long-term peace and stability.

Ukraine is in the midst of a national struggle that will determine its future geopolitical orientation: the West or Moscow. The outcome of this struggle will have long-term implications for the transatlantic community and the notion of national sovereignty. Since 2014, almost 5 percent of Ukraine’s landmass and more than half of its coastline have been under illegal Russian occupation in Crimea.

In eastern Ukraine, Russia and Russian-backed separatists continue to propagate a war that has resulted in more than 13,000 lives lost, tens of thousands wounded, and an internally displaced population of almost 2 million people; has inflicted heavy damage on the Ukrainian economy; and has slowed down Ukraine’s progress toward deepening ties with the transatlantic community.

Modern Ukraine, like Georgia, represents the idea in Europe that each country has the sovereign ability to determine its own path and to decide with whom it has relations and how, and by whom it is governed. No outside

actor (in this case Russia) should have a veto on a country's membership or closer relations with the European Union or NATO. In many ways, the future viability of the transatlantic community will be decided in the Donbas, the region in eastern Ukraine where the fighting has been taking place.

It is in NATO's interest that Ukraine remains independent and sovereign and maintains the ability to choose its own destiny without outside interference.

When Kremlin-backed Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich failed to sign an association agreement with the European Union in 2013, months of street demonstrations led to his ouster in early 2014. Russia responded by violating Ukraine's territorial integrity, sending troops aided by pro-Russian local militia, to occupy the Crimean Peninsula under the pretext of "protecting the Russian people." This led to Russia's eventual annexation of Crimea.

Russia's annexation of Crimea is an unprecedented act of aggression in the 21st century. The annexation has de facto cut Ukraine's coastline in half and has essentially turned the Black Sea into a Russian-controlled lake. Russia has since claimed rights to underwater resources off the Crimean Peninsula previously belonging to Ukraine. Furthermore, Russia has launched a campaign of persecution and intimidation of the ethnic Tatar community there.

In addition to the exploits in Crimea, Moscow took advantage of political grievances held by the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine's east to stoke sectarian divisions. Backed, armed, and trained by Russia, separatist leaders in eastern Ukraine declared the so-called Lugansk People's Republic and the Donetsk People's Republic. Since then, Russia has continued to back separatist factions in the Donbas region with advanced weapons, technical and financial assistance, and Russian conventional and special operations forces. Two cease-fire agreements—one in September 2014 and another in February 2015, known as Minsk I and Minsk II—have come and gone. Today Ukrainian soldiers are wounded almost daily and killed almost weekly—proof that Minsk II is a cease-fire in name only.

Ukraine joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1991 and the Partnership for Peace in 1994. In 1997, the NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) was established to direct relations between Ukraine and NATO, providing a forum for discussion of security topics of mutual concern. NATO has also established six temporary trust funds to assist Ukraine in providing its own security. The trust funds cover (1) command, control, communications, and computers; (2) logistics and standardization; (3) cyber defense; (4) military career transition; (5) countering improvised explosive devices; and (6) medical rehabilitation.

Ukraine is a contributing nation to the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, and regularly hosts NATO training exercises.

Even though NATO stated in 2008 that someday Ukraine would be invited to join the Alliance, until recently, the Ukrainians made little effort to help make this invitation a reality. In light of Russia's aggression, the Ukrainian people have demonstrated, whether on the streets of the Maidan or through the ballot box, that they see their future connected to the West, not under Russian domination. This is especially true under the leadership of former President Petro Poroshenko and his successor and current president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Even so, the country has a long way to go before NATO membership becomes a serious possibility.

Nevertheless, the Alliance continues to have an interest in helping Ukraine defend itself and institute necessary political and economic reforms. Russia's continuing aggression undermines Ukraine's transatlantic aspirations and regional stability. NATO simply cannot afford to ignore Ukraine. During its reflection process NATO should:

- **Speak with a clear and united voice.** NATO must continue to present a united voice against Russia's aggression, reiterating the need for a complete restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity. Furthermore, the NATO-Ukraine Commission should meet at the head-of-state or head-of-government level at the next summit as a sign of Alliance commitment.
- **Improve the quality of non-lethal support to Ukraine.** While the U.S. sale of Javelin missiles to Ukraine is helpful, NATO needs to improve the quality of non-lethal equipment, especially in terms of secure communications and more capable unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).
- **Continue joint exercises with Ukrainian forces.** NATO-led training exercises in western Ukraine have helped to create a professional and capable Ukrainian military. This is in NATO's long-term interest. More training opportunities should be considered. In addition, NATO countries should continue robust participation in exercises in or near Ukraine, especially the Rapid Trident and Sea Breeze exercises.

- **Reaffirm NATO's open-door policy for Ukraine.** NATO should reaffirm that its open-door policy remains in place and that Russia does not have a veto right, including for potential future Ukrainian membership.
- **Evaluate NATO's trust funds for Ukraine.** NATO should evaluate the effectiveness of the six trust funds established at the 2014 Wales Summit. For example, NATO's devoting resources for counter-improvised explosive device (IED) training makes little sense when IEDs are not a major threat to the Ukrainian military. If others are deemed effective, Alliance members should be encouraged to increase voluntary contributions to the trust funds.
- **Ensure that NATO's trust funds are fully funded.** The total budget of these new funds is \$40 million. To date, only half of this amount has been raised from NATO's members.
- **Focus NATO's Centers of Excellence on the war in Ukraine.** NATO should encourage NATO's Centers of Excellence to assist Ukraine in facing Russian aggression, especially at the centers focusing on countering propaganda (Latvia), cyberspace (Estonia), and energy security (Lithuania). The Alliance should consider inviting Ukraine to become a Contributing Participant in each of these three centers.
- **Work with NATO to open a NATO-certified Center of Excellence on Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine.** There is no precedent for a Center of Excellence in a non-NATO country; however, doing so can improve NATO-Ukraine relations and show how important the war in the Donbas has become for Europe's overall security. The Center of Excellence would provide an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and training in how to address the challenges associated with hybrid warfare, using lessons learned from the fighting in the Donbas.
- **Help Ukraine improve its maritime domain awareness capability.** Most of the nonlethal support provided by NATO members to Ukraine since 2014 has focused on the land war in the east of the country. NATO should expand this help to improve Ukraine's maritime security by providing improved radar and appropriate surveillance capabilities, such as UAVs.

NATO and Finland and Sweden. While not members, Finland and Sweden are close cousins of NATO. Their close partnership with the Alliance has only deepened in recent years as both seek new and stronger ties to NATO without taking the final step toward membership. NATO's strategic review must make clear that, until they become full-fledged members, Finland and Sweden should not automatically expect NATO members to come to their aid in the event of a potential future hostility. Regardless of how close the partnership becomes; membership has its benefits. However, membership for either or both Finland and Sweden would greatly contribute to the Alliance, and as such should be enthusiastically supported by NATO. The review should recognize that Finnish and Swedish membership in NATO would enhance security in the Baltic region, and put to rest any lingering doubts about the role of these two nations in any potential future conflict.

NATO should also seek continued ways to work closely with both nations to enhance Arctic and Baltic security. Finland and Sweden both are critical for NATO's ability to defend and, if necessary, retake the Baltic states from potential future Russian aggression. While not impossible, it would be extremely difficult for NATO to respond to an incident in the Baltic region without the acquiescence of these two nations. Furthermore, as Finland and Sweden are both Arctic nations, addressing the growing importance and challenges of the Arctic along with rectifying the glaring need for NATO to draw up an Arctic Strategy must be done in close cooperation with these important allies.

A recent paper from the International Centre for Defence and Security elucidated the current state of Finnish opinion regarding NATO membership: "Finland's political leadership has, from one president to another and from one government to another, opted for a general consensus on the question of membership: 'Finland is a militarily non-aligned country that keeps an option open to join the NATO Alliance.'"³⁶ Since this is Finland's official position extending over several presidents and governments, public opinion has tended to follow suit. Consequently, anywhere between 20 percent and 30 percent of Finns support NATO membership, roughly half are against it, and the rest do not have an opinion on the issue or do not want to express it. However, it is interesting that, according to a recent poll, 67 percent of the professional military support Finnish membership. Almost 80 percent of general staff officers would like Finland to be in NATO.³⁷ Support for NATO membership is slightly stronger in Sweden where a 2018 poll found that 43 percent of Swedes supported NATO membership while 37 percent were opposed to membership.³⁸ Many of Sweden's political parties have come

out in support of NATO membership.³⁹ A poll released in February 2020 found that 63 percent of Swedes had a favorable view of NATO.⁴⁰

While for domestic political reasons neither nation has yet sought NATO membership, the partnership between Finland and Sweden and NATO is the closest of any non-member states. This partnership goes back decades; even during the Cold War, while officially neutral, Sweden secretly cooperated with NATO and was jokingly referred to in NATO headquarters as its secret “17th member.”⁴¹ The end of the Cold War saw an end to Finnish and Swedish efforts to keep partnerships with NATO allies under wraps.⁴² Both nations joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace program in May 1994. Since that time, official ties and cooperation have increasingly intertwined Finland and Sweden with NATO.⁴³ Swedish troops continue today to take part in NATO’s KFOR mission,⁴⁴ and Swedish forces contributed to NATO’s Operation Unified Protector (OUP) in Libya and NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF),⁴⁵ and continue to support the Resolute Support Mission with 25 troops.⁴⁶ Finnish forces similarly took part in ISAF, deploying 20 troops to the peacekeeping Kosovo Force (KFOR),⁴⁷ as well as retaining 63 troops in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support Mission.⁴⁸ Both nations take part in a number of NATO Centres of Excellence, and have solidified their partnership with Alliance members through joint exercises and planning, as well as through key defense acquisitions with important partner nations.⁴⁹

Following the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO introduced a category of “Enhanced Opportunity” partners within the pre-existing Partnership Interoperability Initiative for deepening cooperation with non-NATO partner countries. Finland and Sweden were two of the five Enhanced Opportunity Partners. Both have signed host nation support agreements with NATO. In recent years, Sweden has signed bilateral defense agreements with Denmark, Finland, Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁵⁰ In May 2018, the defense ministers of Finland, Sweden, and the U.S. signed a Trilateral Statement of Intent to strengthen defense cooperation. The agreement, according to the Pentagon, will “enhance the defense relationship in seven areas including defense policy dialogue, policy and military-level interoperability, expanded regional situational awareness, strengthened capabilities and posture, combined multinational operations, strategic communications, and U.S.–NATO–EU cooperation.”⁵¹ Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu responded to the Trilateral Agreement by threatening retaliation, stating: “I emphasize that these kind of steps by our western colleagues lead to the destruction of the current security system, increase mistrust and force us to take counter-measures.”⁵²

Sweden has recently begun reinvesting in defense after years of steep defense cuts. Sweden, which spent 2.5 percent of GDP on defense in 1990,⁵³ will only spend 1.25 percent of GDP in 2020, rising to 1.5 percent by 2025.⁵⁴ Sweden's changing defense posture is exemplified by its air force, army, and naval commands recently moving from Stockholm to more remote spread-out locations. Most strikingly in September 2019, the naval command moved back into its old Cold War underground headquarters at Muskö, designed to withstand a nuclear attack.⁵⁵

Similarly, Finland will only spend 1.27 percent of GDP on defense in 2020.⁵⁶ While Finnish defense spending remains well below NATO standards, the country had not disarmed to the same degree as its western neighbor. One recent analysis notes that Finland has a formidable military capability. Its equipment is second to few in Europe: It flies over 60 American F-18s; it has sufficient naval power and mines to defend its coasts; it has the second-largest main battle tank fleet in Europe; and it has one modern artillery piece for every mile of its long border with Russia.⁵⁷

An important facet of Finland and Swedish contributions to regional security is their direct and indirect role in guaranteeing the security of the Baltic States. Militarily speaking, the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are isolated from other NATO members. It would be extremely difficult, but not impossible, for NATO to respond to an incident in the Baltic region without the acquiescence of non-NATO Finland and Sweden. Russia knows this—and exploits this weakness to its advantage. The Alliance must plan for any contingency in the Baltic region, including one in which Finland and Sweden refuse to acquiesce to a NATO request for support in a time of war.

The countries in the Nordic region have direct and indirect roles in guaranteeing the security of the Baltic states. Historically, the Baltic states have had a very close relationship with the Nordic countries. Denmark and Norway have played an important role in developing Baltic military capabilities since the end of the Cold War, and Sweden and Finland also have a close security relationship with the Baltic states.

While any NATO intervention in the region would be challenging without Swedish and Finnish support, this challenge should not be overblown. With the right planning and preparation, NATO could sustain large-scale operations in the Baltics, even with Russia's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategy in the region, without Sweden's or Finland's support.

The Baltic Sea region is the primary security focus of both Finland and Sweden. Both are also Arctic nations, despite Finland and Sweden preferring to play down security tensions in the region, and focus on cooperation

and multilateralism. The 2016 update to Finland's "Strategy for the Arctic Region" states: "Finland promotes stability and security in the region by developing broad-based multilateral cooperation."⁵⁸ Security concerns hardly factor into the strategy; rather, the Finnish Arctic Strategy focuses on environmental protection, promotion of indigenous interests, and deployment of Arctic expertise to increase tourism and sustainable economic development. These themes strongly informed the program for Finland's chairmanship of the Arctic Council from 2017 to 2019. Finland has also championed a role for the European Union in the Arctic.⁵⁹

Likewise, Sweden's Arctic Strategy, published in 2011, states: "Sweden will work to ensure that the Arctic remains a region where security policy tensions are low. In bilateral and multilateral contexts, Sweden should emphasize the importance of an approach based on a broad concept of security, and that the use of civil instruments is preferable to military means."⁶⁰

Still, Swedish actions do denote concern over Russian aggression, including in the Arctic. Assessing Sweden's Arctic Strategy, one analyst stated: "The Arctic, it appears, is more seen as a collective Northern or Scandinavian policy area that is best dealt with in cooperation with the EU and NORDEFECO [Nordic Defense Cooperation], whereby the former should be utilised for soft foreign policy issues while the latter is best suited for hard, security issues in tandem with the United States."⁶¹ Sweden's priorities for its chairmanship of NORDEFECO in 2019 included "enhancing the Nordic-Transatlantic relationship," as well as, "[p]lan[ning], conduct[ing] and continu[ing] to develop the Arctic Challenge Exercise into a recurring high intensive Air Combat Flag Level Exercise."⁶²

The U.S. has taken part in a number of recent Arctic exercises with Finland and Sweden. In May 2019, the annual "Bold Quest" exercises, led and organized by the United States Joint Staff⁶³ and intended to improve interoperability among allied nations, took part on Finnish territory. The "Riekkö 19" exercises saw 100 U.S. soldiers taking part in exercises alongside 2,200 troops and equipment from 14 nations.⁶⁴ The exercises took place at an airbase in Central Finland and in Rovajärvi and Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland.⁶⁵

In March 2019, U.S. forces participated in the "Northern Wind 19" exercises alongside British, Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish troops. The exercises took place above the Arctic Circle in Sweden and focused on cold weather warfare and testing "national supply chains, embarkation points and re-supply."⁶⁶

Finnish and Swedish forces and territory were also part of NATO's Trident Juncture 18 exercises in October and November 2018. The two nations

were the only non-NATO allies to take part, contributing around 2,600 forces to the exercises, which took place in part above the Arctic Circle and were “designed to test NATO’s ability to plan and conduct a major collective defense operation—from troop training at the tactical level, to command over large elements of a NATO force.”⁶⁷ The exercise was seen in part as a response to Russia’s militarization of the Arctic.⁶⁸ Russian GPS jamming during the exercises affected Norway’s Finnmark and Troms regions in particular, causing civilian aviation authorities in both Finland and Norway to issue a notice to their airmen about the disturbances to GPS in the region.⁶⁹ Additionally, in November 2018, Russia announced that it would conduct rocket “test firings” in the Norwegian Sea, 20 miles to 40 nautical miles from the Norwegian coast. The test firings, with little advance notice (just over a day) were designed to send the message that Russia can operate in the region with impunity, as they took place in an area through which NATO ships were sailing during the “Trident Juncture” exercise.⁷⁰ Finnish and Swedish troops were taking part in NATO’s Norwegian-led “Cold Response” exercise before it was called off in March due to the coronavirus pandemic, with Finland hosting an exercise in March, “Northern Griffin 2020,” with 740 soldiers training inside the Arctic circle.⁷¹

NATO’s partnership with Finland and Sweden will endure and remain strong. The strategic review should focus on key areas of cooperation on Arctic security, Baltic security, and continued support for Finnish and Swedish NATO membership. NATO should:

- **Encourage Finland and Sweden to join NATO.** Ultimately, the Swedish and Finnish populations will decide whether to join NATO, but the Alliance should outline a policy that encourages NATO membership for these two Nordic countries. Until they join NATO, they will not benefit from the Alliance’s security guarantee.
- **Encourage Finland and Sweden to invest in defense.** To differing degrees, both Finland and Sweden cut defense spending after the end of the Cold War. NATO should encourage both to spend adequately on defense. Not only will spending 2 percent of GDP on defense ease a potential future path to NATO membership, it will also increase the available defense capabilities in the Baltic region.
- **Work with the Nordic countries to improve relations with the Baltics.** Historically, the Baltic states have had a very close relationship with the Nordic countries. Good U.S. relations with the Nordic

countries will mean closer relations with the Baltics. Although not members of NATO, Sweden and Finland have a close security relationship with the Baltic states.

- **Prepare contingency operations to defend the Baltics that do not include support from Finland and Sweden.** NATO should plan and rehearse defense of the Baltic states without the cooperation of Finland and Sweden. However unlikely this might be, until Finland and Sweden become full members of NATO, it would be irresponsible for U.S. and NATO military planners not to plan for this scenario. This training should include scenarios in which Russian forces capture the Åland Islands and Gotland.
- **Work with allies to develop a NATO Arctic strategy.** The Alliance should agree to develop a comprehensive Arctic policy to address security challenges in the region. This should be done in cooperation with Finland and Sweden.

NATO and the European Union. The strength of the transatlantic alliance revolves around the axis of NATO, which has done more to promote democracy, peace, and security in Europe than any other alliance—including the European Union—since its inception in 1949. Far from being outmoded, NATO today is more relevant and crucial for maintaining transatlantic security than it has been since the end of the Cold War. While some in Brussels and across the halls of power in Europe may have dreams of an independent EU Army or an independent EU defensive apparatus capable of replacing NATO and the U.S. military, true EU “strategic autonomy” in defense is a chimera.

The EU will never be able to provide the peace and stability that NATO—with feet firmly rooted in *both* North America and Europe for the past 70 years—has delivered, and will continue to deliver. While EU-led defense initiatives may be able to provide some defense improvements at the margins, the outsized costs include decisions that enervate NATO, exacerbate existing fractures within Europe, and severely stress the transatlantic link.

NATO’s reflection should approach further NATO–EU initiatives cautiously. While the EU undoubtedly maintains competencies that will be necessary and useful for responding to the challenges associated with a return to great power competition, the EU cannot fulfill the security role in Europe currently performed by the U.S. and NATO. For peace and security, it is essential that NATO maintain its keystone role in European defense

policy. This means firmly pushing back against EU defense integration efforts that are not in the interests of the Alliance.

When it comes to EU strategic autonomy, NATO should insist that former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's "3Ds" continue to be respected—(1) no decoupling of U.S. security from European security, (2) no duplication of structures or initiatives that already exist within NATO, and (3) no discrimination against non-EU NATO members.

One important example of duplication is the drive toward an EU operational military headquarters: On June 8, 2017, the European Council approved the creation of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) to oversee all EU "non-executive military missions"⁷² or training missions, including their operational planning. Today, the MPCC oversees EU military and civilian training missions in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Somalia.⁷³

NATO should be leery of the duplication of existing structures that the MPCC represents. The MPCC will have a permanent staff of 60 people, with a possibility for 94 additional "augmentees"⁷⁴ to support a potential executive military operation. As the MPCC continues to envelop additional responsibilities, one can expect its staffing to increase, along with a ballooning of its budget.

While the MPCC may represent an unnecessary financial burden, even more destructively, it is a future permanent EU operational defense headquarters being constructed in plain sight. The EU already has access to the full range of NATO's military headquarters (the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Casteau, Belgium) under the Berlin-Plus arrangement. Furthermore, the EU has access to five national headquarters⁷⁵ for use for EU-led military missions.

When it comes to EU strategic autonomy, NATO should ask the following questions:

For operations:

- Does NATO have the right of first refusal?
- For procurements:
- Can the EU achieve the same end through existing NATO structures?
- Does strategic autonomy unfairly prevent non-EU partner nations from taking part?

For institutional structures:

- How could neutral-member access to EU-flagged capabilities hamper the effectiveness of NATO deterrence in the future?

Twenty-one NATO members are also members of the European Union, and institutional cooperation driven by the bureaucracies in Brussels has in recent years accelerated. At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO and the EU issued a joint declaration which amongst other things stated an ambition to cooperate on countering hybrid threats, maritime situational awareness, cybersecurity, and “[d]eveloping coherent, complementary and interoperable defence capabilities of EU Member States and NATO Allies, as well as multilateral projects.”⁷⁶ Since the joint declaration, a set of 74 proposals have been laid out to implement the joint declaration.⁷⁷ While there has been some operational cooperation, especially in the area of maritime awareness, an evaluation of the proposal’s implementation cites political dialogue and staff interaction most often as signposts of success.⁷⁸

One area for fruitful collaboration is in the realm of military mobility. As former U.S. Commander of European Command Lt. General Ben Hodges described the importance of military mobility for deterrence: “We need to think how fast the Russians are moving. We must be able to move as fast or faster than them so that they do not make the mistake of thinking that they could launch an attack of some sort in an area before we could respond.”⁷⁹ The European Union retains competencies that are critical to improving military mobility across Europe, particularly in regards to overcoming legal and regulatory hurdles. In March 2018, the EU published an Action Plan on Military Mobility, which “identifies a series of operational measures to tackle physical, procedural or regulatory barriers which hamper military mobility.”⁸⁰ Cooperation with the EU has helped bring about some beneficial legal and regulatory changes,⁸¹ but notable challenges remain. A recent report identified that both NATO and the EU have embarked on what one interviewee described as “parallel, almost competing processes,” with the European Defense Agency-led (EDA-led) process in the EU being somewhat more advanced. Clearly, such a duplication of effort is wasteful and potentially confusing. A related issue is that the EDA product has not been made available to non-EU states, notably the U.S. (although three of the four EFP framework nations are not EU members).⁸²

The European Union’s 2016 Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy states: “The Strategy nurtures the ambition of strategic autonomy for the European Union.”⁸³ While it is fairly clear

that the answer to the question “Autonomy from whom?” is “from the U.S.,” what exactly the EU means by “strategic autonomy” is left intentionally imprecise—allowing a myriad of understandings as to its meaning to be simultaneously correct, while also conferring a level of deniability from member states or outside actors concerned with the EU’s consolidation of control over defense matters, or their desire to break free from U.S. defense leadership on the continent.

Some in Europe are less coy about the goals and meaning of EU strategic autonomy: “By encouraging EU member states to enhance their financial and operational investments in defence, the hope is that the EU will be better positioned to undertake military missions and operations without needing to rely on the political and military support of NATO or the US.”⁸⁴

In recent years, the European Union has initiated a series of initiatives to jump-start a realization of strategic autonomy including Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). PESCO seeks to consolidate the European defense industry, streamline procurement, leverage economies of scale to produce competitive armaments, and break down cultural and political barriers on the continent that protect domestic defense industries from outside competition. The EU has also established a European Defense Fund (EDF) to spur European defense industrial integration while allowing the EU a greater say in defense matters. It has already become clear that PESCO will not alleviate gaps in crucial high-end military capabilities in Europe—and may instead become a venue for individual nations to secure supplementary EU funding for pet projects, while the EU leverages PESCO in support of more overt and dangerous political goals.⁸⁵ As to the EDF, EU spending on defense continues to account for a paltry percentage of member states’ overall defense spending (less than 2 percent), and restrictive EDF rules are poised to delink the U.S. and European defense sectors while also undermining cooperation and interoperability with non-EU NATO members, such as Canada, Norway, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.⁸⁶

NATO has helped to safeguard the security and prosperity of its member states for 70 years. NATO remains the most effective and sole security alliance capable of deterring Russian and Chinese threats to Europe. By dint of its competencies, the EU will be a key player in addressing threats from terrorism, Chinese technology and investment in Europe, energy security, and instability brought on by mass migration. The EU, however, cannot replace the security role played in tandem by the United States and NATO. In fact, the U.S. and NATO have long provided the security umbrella under which the EU was able to take hold, grow, and expand. NATO would exist without the EU; the same cannot be said of the reverse. In April 2019, Dutch

Prime Minister Mark Rutte succinctly stated the obvious when speaking about Europe, saying, “We cannot guarantee our own security.”⁸⁷ Recognition of this reality makes it all the more unfortunate that the EU has continued its drive toward “strategic autonomy.” Partly underlying this drive are economic concerns (desire for cost-saving joint procurements) and military interests (EU flagged forces to deploy in crisis management situations apart from the U.S.); the swift undercurrent remains the desire of many in Europe to finally and firmly place defense under the supranational purview of the EU bureaucracy in Brussels.

While bureaucratic inertia within NATO lends itself to further political declarations with the EU, the strategic review is an opportunity to carefully assess the desirability of NATO–EU cooperation in defense, evaluate the tangible outcomes of recent increased cooperation, and to lay down red lines for the EU that NATO would consider detrimental to its interests and to transatlantic security.

On the subject of NATO–EU relations, NATO should:

- **Reaffirm NATO’s lead security role.** The EU will never be able to provide the peace and stability that NATO—with feet firmly rooted in *both* North America and Europe for the past 70 years—has delivered, and will continue to deliver. The strategic review should clearly state that NATO will remain the central and indispensable guarantor of security in Europe.
- **Voice consistent and strident opposition to the creation of an EU army.** Although there is not currently an EU army, the creation of one is clearly the goal of many in Europe, whether outwardly or by stealth. It is not in the interest of NATO to have a European army under the control of unelected European bureaucrats—and the strategic review should be clear that this is a red line the EU should not cross.
- **Insist on NATO’s right of first refusal for all European security operations.** The strategic review should insist that NATO be given the right of first refusal for all European security operations before any EU-coordinated operations. If it is deemed appropriate for the EU to launch a military mission instead of NATO, it should be done under the auspices of the Berlin-Plus Agreement.
- **Push back against discrimination in PESCO projects.** Restrictive EU rules that limit or greatly hamper the involvement of non-EU defense

firms from taking part in PESCO projects would not only hinder cooperation and interoperability with the United States, but also non-EU NATO members, such as Canada, Norway, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, thus discriminating against non-EU NATO member states.

- **Resist any duplication of NATO planning and procurement coordination responsibilities.** NATO has dedicated significant resources and structures to coordination procurements and ensuring interoperability through shared standards. The strategic review should carefully consider whether EU initiatives duplicate work already done through NATO.
- **Focus cooperation with the EU on non-defense security vectors.** NATO should focus its cooperation with the EU on security vectors in which the EU can play a constructive role, including counterterrorism, energy security, investment screenings, and military mobility.

Section Four: Five Critical Regions for NATO

With the main threat to NATO coming from Russia, there are five critical regions near or in the North Atlantic area that require focused NATO attention albeit for different reasons.

- NATO must focus on (1) **the Arctic**, (2) **the Baltic Sea**, and (3) **the Black Sea** regions because they are under the direct threat of Russian aggression.
- NATO must focus on (4) **the Balkans** because the region remains the unfinished business of Euro-Atlantic integration and is susceptible to malign Russian influence. The social and economic conditions in some places in the Balkans makes the region ripe for Islamist extremism.
- NATO must finally focus on (5) **the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**. While not part of NATO's area of responsibility in terms of collective defense, problems originating in the MENA region have a tendency to spill over into Europe.

1. NATO and the Arctic. The Arctic, commonly referred to as the High North, is a strategically important region. The possibility of decreasing ice coverage during the summer months, and advances in technology, mean

that shipping, natural resource exploration, and tourism will bring an increase of economic activity.

Although the Arctic region has been an area of low conflict among the Arctic powers, NATO should consider the implications of Russia's recent aggressive military behavior. NATO is a collective security organization designed to defend the territorial integrity of its members. Five NATO members (Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, and the United States) are Arctic countries, and each has territory above the Arctic Circle. In addition, two closely allied nations (Finland and Sweden) also have Arctic territory.

NATO has no agreed common position on its role in the Arctic region. No NATO Summit Declaration even mentions the word Arctic, and neither does the Alliance's 2010 *Strategic Concept*.

NATO has been internally divided on the role that the Alliance should play in the High North. Norway is the leading voice inside the Alliance for promoting NATO's role in the Arctic. It is the only country in the world that has its permanent military headquarters above the Arctic Circle, and it has invested extensively in Arctic defense capabilities.

Canada has likewise invested heavily in Arctic defense capabilities. However, unlike Norway, Canada has stymied past efforts by NATO to play a larger role in the region. Generally speaking, there is a concern in Canada that an Alliance role in the Arctic would afford non-Arctic NATO countries influence in an area where they otherwise would have none.

As a sovereign nation-state, Canada has a prerogative to determine which role, if any, NATO should play in Canada's Arctic region. However, as a collective-security alliance, NATO cannot ignore the Arctic altogether, and the Alliance should not remain divided on the issue.

Russia has a long history in the Arctic. In the early 18th century, Russia sent a number of large expeditions to explore and map the Siberian coastline at crippling cost to the treasury.

The explorers, scientists, and adventurers who partook in the Kamchatka expeditions, known as the Great Northern Expeditions, numbered in the thousands. Even by today's standards, these are still probably the largest scientific expeditions in history.

Almost 300 years later, Russia is still staking new claims in the Arctic. In 2007, Artur Chilingarov, then a member of the Russian Duma, led a submarine expedition to the North Pole and planted a Russian flag on the seabed. Later he declared: "The Arctic is Russian."⁸⁸

Today, Russia is motivated to play an active role in the Arctic region for three reasons:

1. **Low-risk promotion of Russian nationalism.** Because nationalism is on the rise in Russia, President Vladimir Putin's Arctic strategy is popular among the population. For Putin, the Arctic is an area that allows Russia to flex its muscles without incurring any significant geopolitical risk.
2. **The economic potential of the region.** Russia is also eager to promote its economic interests in the region. Half of the world's Arctic territory and half of the Arctic region's population is located in Russia. It is well known that the Arctic is home to large stockpiles of proven, yet unexploited, oil and gas reserves. The majority of these reserves is thought to be located in Russia. In particular, Russia hopes that the Northern Sea Route (NSR) will become one of the world's most important shipping lanes.
3. **Russia's security in the region.** Russia has invested heavily in militarizing its Arctic region. While the Arctic region remains peaceful, Russia's recent steps to militarize the region, coupled with its bellicose behavior toward its neighbors, makes the Arctic a security concern.

It is worth closely examining Russia's recent steps to militarize its presence in the Arctic region. In March 2017, a decree signed by Putin gave the Federal Security Service (FSB), which controls law enforcement along the NSR, additional powers to confiscate land "in areas with special objects for land use, and in the border areas."⁸⁹ Russia's Arctic territory is within this FSB-controlled border zone. The FSB and its subordinate coast guard have added patrol vessels and built up Arctic bases, including a new coast guard base in Murmansk that opened in December 2018.⁹⁰

The Russian national guard, which reports to Putin,⁹¹ is also taking on an increased role in the Arctic and is now charged with protecting infrastructure sites that are deemed to be of strategic importance, including a new liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal at Sabetta that opened in December 2017.⁹² The first shipment of LNG from the Sabetta terminal to China via the NSR took place in July 2018.⁹³ The Russian national guard was also reportedly tasked with security at a floating nuclear power plant, the *Akademik Lomonosov*, which sailed from Murmansk on August 23, was towed across the NSR, and arrived at the town of Pevek on September 14.⁹⁴ Russia hopes to export similar floating nuclear power plants in the future.⁹⁵

The Arctic, in particular the Kola Peninsula, factors heavily into Russia's basing, procurement, and military structuring. As a recent report summarized:

Russia's military leadership accords absolute priority to perimeter defence of the Kola Peninsula, to ensure the survivability of second-strike nuclear assets. The Kola Peninsula and its surrounding areas are considered of strategic importance for Russian national security. Perimeter defence around Kola and the extension of the "Bastion" defence concept are designed to give Russia defence in depth.⁹⁶

The continued importance of the Bastion concept for Russia underlines the primacy of the Arctic-based Northern Fleet, which accounts for two-thirds of the Russian navy. An Arctic command was established in 2015 to coordinate all Russian military activities in the Arctic region.⁹⁷ An Arctic brigade was formed in 2015, although plans for a second brigade have thus far failed to materialize.⁹⁸ A naval deepwater division, based in Gadzhiyev in the Murmansk region and directly subordinate to the Minister of Defense, was established in January 2018.⁹⁹ Russian forces in the Arctic have gained important recent experience, as "Russian troops have now been training in Arctic conditions for more than four years, and many troops from the Arctic Brigade have received live combat experience in Syria."¹⁰⁰ Since Russian air assault units are intended to serve as spearhead forces for the Arctic brigade,¹⁰¹ the "majority of air-assault units in Russia have to undergo Arctic training."¹⁰²

Russia is also investing in military bases in the Arctic. Its base on the large island Alexandra Land, commissioned in 2017, can house 150 soldiers without being re-supplied for up to 18 months.¹⁰³ In addition, Soviet-era facilities have been re-opened. The airfield on Kotelny Island, for example, was reactivated in 2013 for the first time in 20 years and "will be manned by 250 personnel and equipped with air defense missiles."¹⁰⁴ In September 2018, the Northern Fleet announced construction plans for a new military complex to house a 100-soldier garrison and anti-aircraft units at Tiksi, which is likely now complete.¹⁰⁵ Also, in 2018, Russia opened an Arctic airfield at Nagurskoye that is equipped with a 2,500-meter landing strip, which can accommodate a range of Russian fighter jets and surveillance aircraft.¹⁰⁶

In fact, air power in the Arctic is increasingly important to Russia; an Arctic air squadron managed by the Northern Fleet will soon be deployed to Monchegorsk on the Kola Peninsula, roughly 62 miles from the Finnish and Norwegian borders.¹⁰⁷ In 2018, according to the Russian Ministry of

MAP 3

Key Russian Military Installations in and Near the Arctic



- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Vladivostok—Home of Russia’s Pacific Fleet | 13. Graham Bell Island | 25. Severomorsk, Home of Russia’s Northern Fleet |
| 2. Matua, Kuril Islands | 14. Nagurskoye | 26. Vidyayevo |
| 3. Provideniya | 15. Arctic Shamrock/Trefoil | 27. Sputnik Base Pechenga |
| 4. Anadyr/Ugolny | 16. Alykel | 28. Zapadnaya Litsa |
| 5. Mys Shmidta (Cape Schmidt) | 17. Yamal-Sabetta Port | 29. Chernyakhovsk Air Base |
| 6. Wrangel Island Base | 18. Nadym | 30. Alakurtti Air Base |
| 7. Pevek | 19. Salekhard | 31. Olenya Air Base |
| 8. Temp-Kotelny Island | 20. Vorkuta-Sovetskiy Air Base | 32. Belomorsk Naval Base |
| 9. Severny Klever (Northern Clover)-Kotelny Island | 21. Amderma | 33. Gremikha Naval Base |
| 10. Tiksi | 22. Naryan-Mar | 34. Arkhangelsk—Home of North Arctic Command |
| 11. Khatanga | 23. Rogachevo-Novaya Zemlya | |
| 12. Sredny Ostrov (Middle Island) | 24. Gadzhiyevo—Main Submarine Base for Russia’s Northern Fleet | |

SOURCE: Heritage Foundation research.

SR235  heritage.org

Defense, “Russian Tu-142 Bear and Il-38 May maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare aircraft, as well as Su-24MR Fencer tactical reconnaissance jets, flew more than 100 sorties in total above the Arctic circle.”¹⁰⁸ In total, Russia has 14 operational airfields in the region along with 16 deepwater ports.¹⁰⁹ The investments in these new military facilities have cold-weather combat in mind. Major General Igor Kozhin, head of the Russian Naval Air Force, claimed that Russia had successfully tested a new airstrip cover that is effective in “temperatures down to minus 30 centigrades.”¹¹⁰

Russia undertook regular air patrols in the Arctic in 2019.¹¹¹ As an example, the Russian Ministry of Defense announced that in January 2019, two Tu-160 bombers flew for 15 hours in international airspace over the Arctic.¹¹² Over the course of one week in April 2019, Russian fighter and bomber jets flew near the coast of Norway twice. In one instance, two TU-60 bombers and a MiG-31 flew 13 hours over the Barents, Norwegian, and North Seas. British and Danish jets scrambled to meet the Russian aircraft.¹¹³

Russian Arctic flights are often aggressive. In March 2017, nine Russian bombers simulated an attack on the U.S.-funded, Norwegian-run radar installation at Vardø, Norway, above the Arctic Circle.¹¹⁴ In May 2017, 12 Russian aircraft simulated an attack against NATO naval forces taking part in the Eastern Atlantic Area (EASTLANT) 17 exercise near Tromsø, Norway, and later that month, Russian aircraft targeted aircraft from 12 nations which were taking part in the Arctic Challenge 2017 exercise near Bodø.¹¹⁵ In April 2018, Maritime Patrol Aircraft from Russia’s Pacific Fleet for the first time exercised locating and bombing enemy submarines in the Arctic, while fighter jets exercised repelling an air invasion in the Arctic region.¹¹⁶

The 45th Air Force and Air Defense Army of the Northern Fleet was formed in December 2015, and Russia reportedly has placed radars and S-300 missiles on the Arctic bases at Franz Joseph Land, the New Siberian Islands, Novaya Zemlya, and Severnaya Zemlya.¹¹⁷ In 2017, Russia activated a new radar complex on Wrangel Island.¹¹⁸ Russia plans to lay a nearly 8,000-mile fiber optic cable across its Arctic coast, linking military installations along the way from the Kola Peninsula through Vladivostok.¹¹⁹ In November 2018, Russia announced rocket firings in the Norwegian Sea that were between 20 nautical miles and 40 nautical miles from the Norwegian coast. As previously noted, the test firings, with little advance notice, were designed to send a message as they took place in an area through which NATO ships were sailing during the Trident Juncture exercise.¹²⁰ Russia has reportedly deployed Murmansk-BN long-range radio jammers to Severomorsk, the Kola Peninsula, and in Kamchatka, as well as Krasukha-2 and Krasukha-4 electronic warfare systems to bases at Novaya Zemlya, Severnaya Zemlya, the New Siberian Islands, and Chukotka.¹²¹

In December 2019, Russia's Joint Strategic Command overseeing every Arctic military unit was upgraded to an "independent military administrative unit, equal in status to a military district."¹²² Russia is developing equipment optimized for Arctic conditions, such as the Mi-38 helicopter and three new nuclear icebreakers, to add to the 40 icebreakers already in service, six of which are nuclear.¹²³ Former U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Paul Zukunft has expressed concern that "Russia is probably going to launch two icebreaking corvettes with cruise missiles on them over the course of the next several years."¹²⁴ In July 2019, Russia tested two Tor-M2DT anti-aircraft missile systems designed for operating in the Arctic at Novaya Zemlya.¹²⁵

In July 2017, Russia released a new naval doctrine citing the alleged "ambition of a range of states, and foremost the United States of America and its allies, to dominate the high seas, including in the Arctic, and to press for overwhelming superiority of their naval forces."¹²⁶ In May 2017, Russia announced that its build-up of the Northern Fleet's nuclear capacity is intended "to phase 'NATO out of [the] Arctic.'"¹²⁷ The Northern fleet, however, faces limitations; a recent report notes that

the majority of its assets are not Arctic-specific, operating beyond the region and in other strategic directions. This situation is worsened by the Northern Fleet's general lack of ice-class surface vessels and its heavy reliance on Rosatomflot civilian icebreakers to ensure passage along the NSR and transit in ice conditions east of the Barents Sea and Novaya Zemlya.¹²⁸

Russia's Northern Fleet has focused on building newly refitted submarines, including a newly converted *Belgorod* nuclear-powered submarine that was expected to launch in April 2019¹²⁹ and to enter active duty in 2020.¹³⁰ The *Belgorod* is expected to carry six Poseidon drones, also known as nuclear torpedoes, and will carry out "covert missions."¹³¹ The submarine will have a smaller mini-sub potentially capable of tampering with or destroying undersea telecommunications cables.¹³² According to Russian media reports, the *Belgorod* "will be engaged in studying the bottom of the Russian Arctic shelf, searching for minerals at great depths, and also laying underwater communications."¹³³ A similar submarine, the *Khabarovsk*, is under construction and could enter active duty as early as 2022.¹³⁴

As an Arctic power, Russia's military presence in the region is to be expected. However, it should be viewed with some caution due to Russia's pattern of aggression. In the Arctic, sovereignty equals security. Respecting national sovereignty in the Arctic would ensure that the chances of armed

conflict in the region remain low. Since NATO is an intergovernmental alliance of sovereign nation-states built on the consensus of all of its members, it has a role to play in Arctic security. Ignoring the importance of the Arctic region for collective security is short-sighted.

NATO's review process is the time to take seriously the need for the Alliance to recognize the Arctic as a vital piece of the collective-security puzzle. To become better focused on Arctic security, NATO should:

- **Acknowledge NATO's role in the Arctic officially for the first time.** The review process should include a section devoted to the Arctic. This need not be a strategy, but it should acknowledge that the Arctic matters to the security of the Alliance.
- **Work with allies to develop a NATO Arctic strategy.** The Alliance should agree that it is time to develop a comprehensive Arctic policy to address security challenges in the region. This should be done in cooperation with non-NATO members Finland and Sweden.
- **Encourage NATO's non-Arctic members, such as the U.K. and the Baltic states, to promote an Arctic agenda.** The U.K. takes an active interest in the Arctic. Geographically, the U.K. is the world's closest non-Arctic country to the Arctic Circle. The Baltic states work closely with the Nordic countries, which are Arctic powers.
- **Continue to participate in training exercises in the region.** Exercises above the Arctic Circle are vital to ensuring that the Alliance is prepared to meet potential threats to Arctic security.
- **Call for the next NATO summit to be held above the Arctic Circle.** This would bring immediate awareness of Arctic issues to the Alliance. Perhaps the Norwegian city of Tromsø would be most appropriate.

2. NATO and the Baltic Region. NATO's ability to respond effectively to a contingency in the Baltic region has been a concern since Russia's 2014 takeover of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. The Baltic region is one of the most complex regions that the Alliance is obligated to defend. The U.S. government should use this assessment to think strategically about putting in place durable, robust measures to deter Russian aggression in the region.

While small in size and population, the Baltic states represent something much bigger geopolitically: They are staunch defenders of economic freedom, liberal democracy, and human rights. They experienced Russian treachery during more than five decades of Soviet occupation in ways that few other countries did. This horrific experience means that the Baltic states do not take for granted the democracy, liberty, and security they enjoy today.

The Baltic region presents unique military and political difficulties that NATO needs to overcome. These challenges include:

- **The Baltic states’ geographical isolation.** Militarily speaking, the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are isolated from other NATO members. To the north of the Baltic states are non-NATO, but friendly, Finland and Sweden. To the south and east are Russia and Belarus. To the west, Lithuania shares a border with the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. Only Lithuania shares a land border with another non-Baltic NATO member—a 65-mile border with Poland, to the southwest between Kaliningrad and Belarus, known as the Suwalki Gap.
- **The Baltic states’ small size.** The Baltic states are small in population and size. Combined, the three have roughly the same geographic size and population as Missouri. The Baltic region is probably the only region inside NATO that is too small to depend on rapid reaction forces based elsewhere for its defense.
- **The Baltic states’ inability to reinforce.** Key to any potential liberation of the Baltic states would be the swift arrival of robust reinforcements and equipment to the region. However, contested airspace, especially in light of Russia’s A2/AD capabilities in the region, would make reinforcing the region difficult—if not initially impossible. Even NATO’s Joint Air Power Strategy cautions that “the future operating environment may be one in which air superiority can neither be assured at the onset of operations nor, once obtained, be an enduring condition.”¹³⁵
- **NATO’s critical dependence on non-NATO countries.** While not impossible, it would be extremely difficult for NATO to respond to an incident in the Baltic region without the acquiescence of non-NATO Finland and Sweden. (See Textbox 3.)

TEXT BOX 3

The Geography of the Baltic Sea

Sweden and Finland are important partners of NATO. However, neither is obligated to come to the assistance of any NATO member in the event of an armed attack. History has shown that most military operations in the Baltic region require access to what is today Swedish and Finnish air, sea, and land. For example, during the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War (1918–1920), the Swedish fortress of Viapori (today known as Suomenlinna in Finland) and the Åland Islands (an autonomous Swedish-speaking archipelago that belongs to Finland) played a crucial role. During both World Wars, the Skagerrak and Øresund Straits—both of which border Swedish waters and serve as a gateway to the Baltic Sea—were highly contested.

During the Cold War, NATO member Denmark's Bornholm Island was an area of contention between

the Soviet Union and NATO. In the 21st century these considerations have not disappeared.

The Danish Straits consist of three channels connecting the Baltic Sea to the North Sea via the Kattegat and Skagerrak Seas. These channels are particularly important to the Baltic Sea nations as import and export routes. This is especially true for Russia, which has increasingly shipped its crude oil exports to Europe through Baltic ports. Overall, approximately 125,000 ships per year transit these straits. If NATO needed to intervene militarily in the Baltic States, access to the Danish Straits would be vital.

It would be naive in the extreme to think that Russia did not factor the importance of these islands and the Danish Straits into its Baltic Sea contingency planning—and it would be just as irresponsible for NATO not to do the same.

NATO has taken good steps for the Baltic region in recent years, but more should be done. At the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO announced the creation of an Enhanced Forward Presence: four multinational battalions stationed in Poland and the Baltic states. So far, the EFP has been a success. The U.S. serves as the framework nation for the battle group in Poland, the United Kingdom is in Estonia, Canada is in Latvia, and Germany is in Lithuania. EFP troops are under NATO command and control; a multinational divisional headquarters located in Elblag, Poland, coordinates the four battalions.

One issue that remains controversial inside the Alliance is the question of permanently stationing NATO troops in the Baltic states. The only way to guarantee the security of the Baltic states against a conventional Russian military threat is by having robust troops and military capabilities on the ground. The Baltic states are too small to rely on a strategy of defensive depth that could buy NATO enough time to mobilize and deploy a sizable force to the region.

In order to better protect NATO's pre-positioned equipment, rotational troops, and key infrastructure and transport nodes required for rapid reinforcements in the Baltic region, NATO needs to develop a strategy

promoting air defense, not just air policing. Air defense would require a robust fast-jet and airborne surveillance presence in addition to air defense assets.

The Trump Administration has sent positive messages about the possibility of deploying Patriot missiles to the region. In July 2017, as part of the Tobruk Legacy exercise, the U.S. even temporarily deployed a Patriot missile battery to Siauliai air base in Lithuania, the first time the U.S. has deployed ground-based air defense to a Baltic country.¹³⁶

Despite positive discussions and aspirational talk, NATO has not agreed on a common position for a Baltic Air Defense.

Another matter to consider is the role of the Kaliningrad Oblast in regional security. Kaliningrad is a small Russian exclave along the Baltic Sea (slightly larger than Connecticut), bordering both Lithuania and Poland. Kaliningrad is part of Russia's Western Military District, and approximately 25,000 Russian soldiers and security personnel are stationed there. It is home to Russia's Baltic fleet, which consists of around 50 vessels, including submarines. Perhaps most important for Moscow is that Kaliningrad is the heart of Russia's A2/AD strategy.

Russia's permanent stationing of Iskander missiles in Kaliningrad in 2018 occurred a year to the day after NATO's EFP deployed to Lithuania.¹³⁷ Iskander missiles can carry nuclear or conventional warheads and have a range of 250 miles, placing Riga, Vilnius, and Warsaw within their reach. Russia reportedly has deployed tactical nuclear weapons, the S-400 air defense system, and P-800 anti-ship cruise missiles to Kaliningrad.¹³⁸ Russia also has facilities for storage of tactical nuclear weapons at Kaliningrad. Russia is modernizing runways at its Chernyakhovsk and Donskoye air bases in Kaliningrad, providing Russia with nearby bases from which to fly near NATO airspace. Many of the aerial incidents that cause NATO planes from Baltic Air Policing to scramble involve Russian planes flying from or to bases in Kaliningrad. Additionally, Russia plans to re-establish a tank brigade and a "fighter aviation regiment and naval assault aviation (bomber) regiment" in Kaliningrad and to re-equip the artillery brigade with new systems.¹³⁹

Any action that NATO takes to reinforce the Baltic region would be a responsible defensive measure designed to defend the Alliance, not to provoke a war with Russia. Defending the Baltic states and deterring Russian aggression will be far easier and cheaper than liberating them. As NATO carries out its reflection process it should use this opportunity to:

- **Prepare to reinforce the Baltic region quickly.** NATO should be holding exercises focused on quickly deploying a large number of

troops to the Baltic region on short notice. Also, NATO should ensure that the Baltic states have the infrastructure and ability to receive large numbers of forces and their equipment.

- **Establish a permanent military presence in the Baltic region.** The deployment of four rotational battalions to the region is a good start, but more needs to be done. The threat from Russia will remain for the foreseeable future. NATO needs to show an enduring commitment to the region by permanently stationing armed forces in the Baltics.
- **Acknowledge the importance of a Baltic Air Defense mission.** While the Baltic Air Police has been useful for policing the region's airspace, more needs to be done. A robust Baltic Air Defense mission is needed to ensure that the region can be defended on the ground, in the air, and at sea.
- **Think creatively about which framework would work the best for a Baltic Air Defense.** At first glance, NATO might seem the best framework for implementing a Baltic Air Defense program, but Finland and Sweden—essential countries for a Baltic Air Defense—are not in NATO. The European Union is out of the question due to internal divisions on defense matters. Therefore, a multilateral regional approach that includes both NATO and individual EU members is needed.
- **Factor Kaliningrad into NATO's Baltic region contingency planning.** NATO needs to develop a strategy dealing with the Russian A2/AD capabilities in Kaliningrad. In particular, this requires close cooperation and planning with Poland. No credible defense of the Baltics can be carried out without neutralizing the threat from Kaliningrad.
- **Work with the non-NATO Nordic countries to improve the air defense of the Baltics.** Due to their geographical location, non-NATO Finland and Sweden would form an important part of any Baltic Air Defense strategy. NATO must continue to work closely with Helsinki and Stockholm to ensure regional coordination and cooperation.

3. NATO and the Black Sea. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Black Sea has essentially become a Russian lake. This is a direct

MAP 4

The Black Sea Region



SOURCE: Heritage Foundation research.

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threat to U.S. and NATO security interests. Many of the recent initiatives regarding the Black Sea at the NATO level have not met expectations. The U.S. should use the reflection period to lead the Alliance in developing meaningful ways to work with the Black Sea littoral states to start the process of developing a strategy for regional security.

The Black Sea sits at an important crossroads between Europe, Asia, and the Caucasus. Many important oil and gas pipelines, as well as fiber optic cables, crisscross the sea. Throughout the history of the region, the Black Sea has proven to be geopolitically and economically important.

Three of six Black Sea countries (Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey) are in NATO. Another two countries (Georgia and Ukraine) work closely with NATO, have suffered the direct impact of Russian aggression, and aspire to join the Alliance someday.

It is also worth noting that Black Sea countries have demonstrated a greater political will to deploy troops in support of NATO operations than countries in other regions. Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Turkey, and Ukraine

collectively contribute one-third of all the European forces serving in NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan, for example.

For Russia, domination of the Black Sea region has always been considered a matter of national survival. Russian Black Sea ports, being Russia's only warm water ports, have always served the economic interests of Russia. For example, on the eve of World War I, 50 percent of all Russian exports, and 90 percent of Russian agriculture exports, passed through the Bosphorus out of the Black Sea. Today, an oil tanker passes through the Bosphorus out of the Black Sea every 15 minutes carrying Russian oil or Kazakh oil (the latter, of course, transits Russia so that Moscow can collect transit fees).

Russia's annexation of Crimea is an unprecedented act of foreign-state aggression in the 21st century. The annexation has de facto cut Ukraine's coastline in half, and has helped Moscow with its long-term goal of turning the Black Sea into a Russian-controlled lake. Russia has since claimed rights to underwater resources off the Crimean peninsula previously belonging to Ukraine.

Russia has taken steps to strengthen its grip on Crimea through a major effort at increasing capabilities, especially anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. Russia's A2/AD capability is not the only thing that makes operating in the Black Sea a challenge. Additional diplomatic and political factors further complicate the matter.

The 1936 Montreux Convention makes maintaining a robust NATO maritime presence difficult. The convention gave Turkey control over the Turkish Straits and placed limitations on the number, transit time, and tonnage of naval ships from non-Black Sea countries that may use the strait and operate in the Black Sea.

Non-Black Sea state warships in the Straits must weigh less than 15,000 tonnes. No more than nine non-Black Sea state warships, with a total aggregate tonnage of no more than 30,000 tonnes, may pass at any one time, and they are permitted to stay in the Black Sea for no longer than 21 days.¹⁴⁰ This places limitations on non-Black Sea NATO member operations in the Black Sea region.

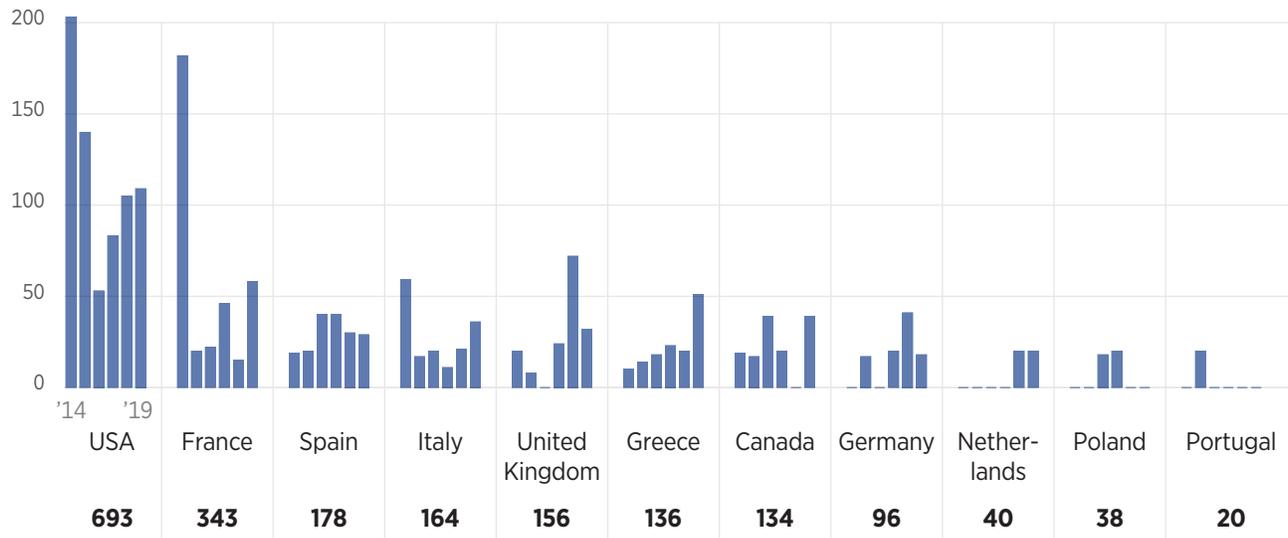
There are also challenges on the political front. Due to internal disagreements among Black Sea NATO members, NATO has been unable to meet its expectations in the region. For example, the creation of a permanent NATO maritime force in the Black Sea has been discussed but not realized.

Soon after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the U.S., along with several other NATO members, stepped up its presence in the Black Sea. But since then, this presence has been drastically reduced. While NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg pledged an increase in NATO ships to the Black Sea in February 2017, progress has not been made as quickly as expected.

CHART 1

U.S. Maintains Large but Declining Presence in the Black Sea

NUMBER OF DAYS WITH WARSHIPS IN THE BLACK SEA, 2014–2019



SOURCE: Bosphorus Naval News, <https://turkishnavy.net/> (accessed April 17, 2020).

SR235 heritage.org

At the July 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO also agreed to “develop tailored forward presence in the southeast part of the Alliance territory. Appropriate measures, tailored to the Black Sea region.”¹⁴¹ The land component of NATO’s tailored forward presence is a multinational framework brigade based in Craiova, Romania, under the control of Headquarters Multinational Division Southeast (HQ MND–SE) in Bucharest.¹⁴² HQ MND–SE achieved final operational capability in March 2018.¹⁴³ The 5,000-strong brigade “still consists mainly of Romanian troops, but they are supplemented by Bulgarian and Polish troops and headquarters staff from various other NATO states.”¹⁴⁴ The U.S. and Romania jointly organize a biannual exercise Saber Guardian, which is “designed to improve the integration of multinational combat forces.”¹⁴⁵ In the 2019 iteration, “[a]lmost 8,000 soldiers from six countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and United States of America)” took part in exercises across Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania.¹⁴⁶

The economic, security, and political importance of the Black Sea and the broader region is only becoming more important. With Russia increasing its military capability in the region, now is not the time for NATO to grow complacent. With U.S. leadership, the Black Sea can receive the appropriate focus and attention during NATO’s reflection period. To do so, NATO should:

- **Develop a strategy for the Black Sea region.** The U.S. should be a leader inside the Alliance to develop meaningful ways for working with the Black Sea littoral states to develop a strategy for regional security. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Black Sea has essentially become a Russian lake. This is a direct threat to U.S., NATO, Ukrainian, and Georgian security interests. Many of the recent initiatives at the NATO level have not met expectations.
- **Establish a Black Sea Maritime Patrol mission modeled on the Baltic Air Policing mission.** NATO's interest in Black Sea security is increasing, but the overall presence of non-Black Sea NATO warships is decreasing. NATO should establish a Black Sea Maritime Patrol mission modeled on the successful Baltic Air Policing mission, in order to maintain a robust NATO presence in the Black Sea in line with the 1936 Montreux Convention. This would require non-Black Sea NATO countries to commit in advance to a regular and rotational maritime presence in the Black Sea.
- **Open a NATO-certified Center of Excellence on Black Sea Security in Georgia.** There is no precedent for a NATO-certified Center of Excellence in a non-NATO country, but establishing one could improve NATO-Georgia relations and show how important the Black Sea region has become for Europe's overall security. The Center of Excellence would provide an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and training in how to address the challenges associated with Black Sea security.
- **Think creatively about increasing presence in the Black Sea.** In addition to establishing a Black Sea Maritime Patrol, NATO needs to explore more unconventional proposals to increase the length of time for which non-Black Sea countries operate in the sea. This should include the possible use of the Danube River or the Danube-Black Sea Canal.
- **Not neglect the land and air component of Black Sea security.** With much of the focus on the Black Sea region focused on the maritime realm, policymakers cannot ignore the important air and land component in the region. NATO should consider the feasibility of a Black Sea Air Policing Mission, for example.

TEXT BOX 4

Out-of-the-Box Thinking Required

The restrictions that limit the size, number, and length of stay for non-Black Sea warships in the Black Sea is one of the biggest factors to the reduced presence of NATO in the sea.

Obviously, the most immediate solution to this problem is for NATO members to increase their presence by committing to rotational Black Sea patrols. The only thing preventing NATO from doing so is political will. A longer-term solution would be for NATO and its non-Black Sea member states to invest in and help develop the maritime capabilities of the Alliance's Black Sea littoral states, such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey, and NATO partners Georgia and Ukraine.

However, there are two creative ways that the Alliance should consider to increase its presence in the Black Sea:

- **Germany's Danube option.** According to Article 30 of the 1948 Convention Regarding the Regime of Navigation on the Danube, only Danubian countries may operate naval vessels in the river (if outside their national borders then with permission of the relevant Danubian state).¹

Warships of 8,000 tonnes or less can travel 50 miles upriver to Romania's Port of Braila.² This would reset the clock on the 21-day limit allowing Germany to double the time that its warships are allowed in the Black Sea. (In 2019, Germany sent one ship, an Elbe Class displacing 3,500 tonnes, into the Black Sea for a total of 18 days.)

- **The Danube-Black Sea Canal option.** This man-made canal in Romania might offer an opportunity for non-Danubian states to reset the clock on the 21-day limit. It is relatively small at 90 meters wide, and can only hold a ship of 5,000 tonnes or less. Still, in 2019, a total of 13 naval vessels from Canada, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, the U.S., and the U.K. entered the Black Sea in ships that could, in theory, operate in the canal.

One, or all, of these options might be possible after details are worked out by policymakers, and maybe not. But NATO must start to think creatively about complex challenges like increasing its presence in the Black Sea.

1. Danube Commission, "Convention Regarding the Regime of Navigation on the Danube," August 18, 1948, <http://www.danubecommission.org/uploads/doc/convention-en.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2020).

2. Author Luke Coffey interviewed Romanian officials in Washington, DC, in February 2020.

- **Deepen relations with Georgia and Ukraine.** These are two Black Sea countries that know what it is like to suffer from Russian aggression. They also aspire to join the Alliance someday. Without close cooperation and relations with both, NATO cannot have an effective Black Sea strategy.¹⁴⁷

4. NATO and the Balkans. Much has changed in the Balkans since NATO published its most recent strategic concept in 2010. The number of NATO members in the region has grown from two (Albania and Croatia) to four (with the addition of Montenegro and North Macedonia). Bosnia and

Herzegovina remains an official candidate country, and direct flights between Kosovo and Serbia have been restored.¹⁴⁸ NATO members Italy and Greece help to maintain air policing over the airspace of Albania and Montenegro.¹⁴⁹

However, there is much that remains uncertain. The western Balkans remain the only region in Europe with unfinished business. Sectarian divisions are a constant undercurrent, and the region as a whole continues to struggle with high unemployment, pervasive corruption, and the flight of human capital, especially among the young and educated. Even today ethnic, religious, and cultural differences, along with historical grievances, retain the potential to set off renewed hostilities and violence. Furthermore, the challenges posed by the destabilizing influence of Russia, rising Chinese interests and investment in the region, and pockets of Islamist extremism threaten to ensnare the Balkans in a permanent purgatorial geopolitical quicksand.

NATO's review should not overlook the importance of the Balkans for the future of the Alliance. NATO's open-door policy has helped to promote democracy, stability, and security in the Balkans. Ensuring that the open-door policy remains accessible for deserving European countries will preserve a key driver of progress and stability in a region. In addition, NATO's strategic review should underscore the potential of the region, its geographic importance, and the contributions that Balkan allies are making across the Alliance.

NATO forces intervened to stop bloodshed during the Balkan sectarian wars of the 1990s. Since 1999, NATO has kept a peacekeeping force in Kosovo, KFOR, as authorized by United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1244,¹⁵⁰ adopted on June 10, 1999, which authorized the establishment of an international security presence "with substantial North Atlantic Treaty Organization participation"¹⁵¹ in Kosovo. Two days later, the first elements of NATO's KFOR entered Kosovo.¹⁵² Today, the KFOR peacekeeping force maintains 3,532 troops from 27 contributing nations inside Kosovo, and is responsible for overall security in the nation.¹⁵³

UNSC Resolution 1244 also provided for the demilitarization of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a process that was overseen by KFOR. Many former members of the KLA were integrated into the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), a civilian emergency service agency established in September 1999 to provide disaster response services, perform search and rescue missions, provide humanitarian assistance, assist in demining, and help to rebuild destroyed and damaged infrastructure.¹⁵⁴ Other members of the former KLA were integrated into a new police force or left the security sector altogether.¹⁵⁵

Upon gaining independence, Kosovo adopted a constitution that created the Kosovo Security Force (KSF), under civilian control, and structured to reflect the ethnic diversity of the country.¹⁵⁶ In January 2009, the KSF was established¹⁵⁷ as a lightly armed, 2,500-strong force “tasked with crisis response, civil protection and ordinance disposal,”¹⁵⁸ reaching initial operating capacity by September that year.¹⁵⁹ KFOR played a key role in standing down the KPC, and helping stand up the KSF.¹⁶⁰ In December 2018, Kosovo’s parliament voted to create an 8,000-strong army (5,000 active duty and 3,000 reserves), by transitioning the KSF into an army.¹⁶¹ Now that Kosovo has taken the step of creating an army, NATO should look for opportunities to take part in bilateral and multilateral exercises, while encouraging Kosovo’s nascent army to adhere to NATO standards. Being interoperable with allied forces will assist Kosovo in the future should it seek NATO membership.

The path toward NATO membership has also been a crucial driver of modernization and reform in candidate countries, including in the Balkans. A recent example is North Macedonia, which became NATO’s 30th member on March 27, 2020¹⁶²—a milestone for the Alliance and the end of a decades-long dispute with Greece over its northern neighbor’s official name, and the successful culmination of a decades-long process of seeing North Macedonia’s NATO aspirations realized. North Macedonia’s accession is very welcome for NATO; its addition strengthens the Alliance, bolsters regional stability in the western Balkans, and sends a strong message to pernicious actors—such as Russia—that they do not have a veto right over the decisions of the sovereign member states of NATO.

Long viewed as Europe’s tinderbox, the Balkans today are increasingly geostrategically important due to their proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. In the past few years Russia has greatly increased its activities and capabilities in the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁶³ In addition, ongoing security concerns emanating from large-scale migration from North Africa and the Middle East across the Mediterranean led to the creation of NATO’s ongoing Operation Sea Guardian, which provides “maritime situational awareness, counter-terrorism at sea and support to capacity-building.”¹⁶⁴ This reality has not been lost on NATO, which is investing in upgrading regional facilities, including \$56 million to upgrade an Albanian airbase at Kucova. While no planes will be based at Kucova, the upgrades will bring the base up to NATO standards and allow NATO aircraft to refuel or reload at the facilities.¹⁶⁵ In January 2020, NATO deputy spokesman Piers Cazalet stated that “Upgrading Kucova air base will give the alliance an important strategic facility in the western Balkans, within short reach of the Mediterranean, Middle East and Black Sea region.”¹⁶⁶

NATO has played a constructive role in the Balkans helping to secure the region, putting an end to sectarian violence of the 1990s, establishing a committed presence on the ground to safeguard this hard-won peace, and in leveraging membership to bring Balkan nations into the club, thus inculcating much of the region into the western system, while being a critical driver of the region's reform and modernization. With North Macedonia's accession to NATO, there may be a temptation to take a victory lap—which would be a mistake.

The strategic review should not overlook the importance of the Balkans for the future of the Alliance, and keep engagement with the region as a key priority moving forward. Therefore, the strategic review should:

- **Keep the door open for other western Balkan nations.** NATO enlargement has helped bind like-minded democracies on both sides of the Atlantic in mutual self-defense. Furthermore, requirements for joining the Alliance have proven to be critical catalysts for reform, particularly reforming the military and strengthening the rule of law in candidate countries. The strategic review should reiterate that the Alliance's open-door policy remains available for deserving European countries. NATO's open-door policy takes on even greater importance for the region as future EU accession (Croatia and Greece are the only western Balkan countries currently in the EU) is today increasingly viewed as a closed pathway.
- **Recognize the important contributions of Balkan member states.** Balkan NATO members are contributors to the Alliance, taking part in NATO missions including Resolute Support (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia), Enhanced Forward Presence Battalions (Albania, Croatia, and Montenegro), and Operation Sea Guardian (Albania and Croatia). The strategic review should recognize these contributions from Balkan member states, and encourage continued active engagement in Alliance operations.
- **Support the Kosovar army with exercises and trainings with NATO interoperability in mind.** NATO should look for opportunities to include this new army in multilateral exercises and work to ensure that Kosovo's army adheres to NATO standards and is interoperable with allied forces. This will assist Kosovo in the future should it seek NATO membership, which would in turn contribute to regional security.

- **Stay committed to the KFOR mission.** The creation of an army in Kosovo does not mean that KFOR is no longer necessary. Rather, today it is more important than ever that KFOR continue its robust participation with allies across NATO. NATO forces in Kosovo will continue to remain the hearthstone of Kosovo's security.
- **Take a realistic and pragmatic approach to Serbia.** Serbia remains Russia's main foothold in the western Balkans. Russia's economic and military ties to Serbia are strong, and Russia's propaganda campaigns are extremely active. NATO's strategic review should be realistic and approach Serbia as it is, a country playing its relations with China, Russia, and the West off of one another. Serbia is unlikely to join Western structures anytime soon, and holding out hope for a massive change in the nation's trajectory is naive. That does not mean that NATO should stop seeking meaningful engagement with Serbia. For instance, of the 17 military exercises that Serbia held with other nations in 2019, 13 were with NATO members.¹⁶⁷

5. NATO and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). While not entirely part of NATO's area of responsibility as defined by Article 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the Alliance cannot ignore the MENA region. History and recent events show that what happens in the region can quickly spill over into Europe.

To the south of Europe, from the eastern Atlantic Ocean through North Africa and to the Middle East, is an arc of instability. This region is experiencing increasing instability from demographic pressures, increased commodity prices, interstate and intrastate conflict, tribal politics, competition over water and other natural resources, religious tension, revolutionary tendencies, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and proxy wars involving regional and global actors. This region also has some of the world's most vital shipping lanes, energy resources, and trade choke points. The fallout and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in this region remains to be seen; overall, it is a recipe for instability.

Almost a decade on after the start of the so-called Arab Spring, the region remains full of geopolitical challenges. From the rise of transnational terrorism to the nuclear threat and state-sponsored terrorism from Iran, many in NATO have rightly decided to place a renewed focus on working with regional partners on NATO's southern periphery. NATO already has structures in place to improve cooperation with partners in this part of the world, but it has done little to enhance these relationships in recent years.

NATO carries out its cooperative security task with its southern partners through two mechanisms: the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

1. The Mediterranean Dialogue. Launched in 1994, the Mediterranean Dialogue forms the basis of NATO's relations with its Mediterranean partners—Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. Although the talks of the dialogue generally take place on a bilateral basis between NATO and one Mediterranean partner (“NATO+1”), on occasion this forum meets as “NATO+7,” placing Israel at the same table as some of its regional neighbors, where it would not otherwise be.

2. Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Launched in 2004, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative currently forms the basis of NATO relations with the Gulf states. Although all six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council were invited to join, only Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have become participants so far. Saudi Arabia and Oman have expressed minor interest in joining.

Whether it is regional terrorism emanating from al-Qaeda, or the threat of nuclear proliferation in Iran, NATO member states share many of the same security concerns as the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, many of the countries in this region have demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with NATO and have even contributed troops to NATO-led missions. NATO's KFOR at one time had 100 Moroccans and 1,200 soldiers from the UAE serving in the ongoing peace-support operation in Kosovo.

The NATO mission in Afghanistan has included troops from Jordan, the UAE (including Emirati special forces), and Bahrain. Jordan, Qatar, and the UAE provided aircraft and resources for the NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011.

Many countries in the region, especially in the Gulf, have been staunch U.S. allies and have worked closely with NATO member states on regional security initiatives—albeit outside NATO's framework. For example, Bahrain is home to both the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and the U.K.'s Maritime Component Command, and has also managed the regional maritime task force responsible for conducting security operations in the central and southern Gulf.

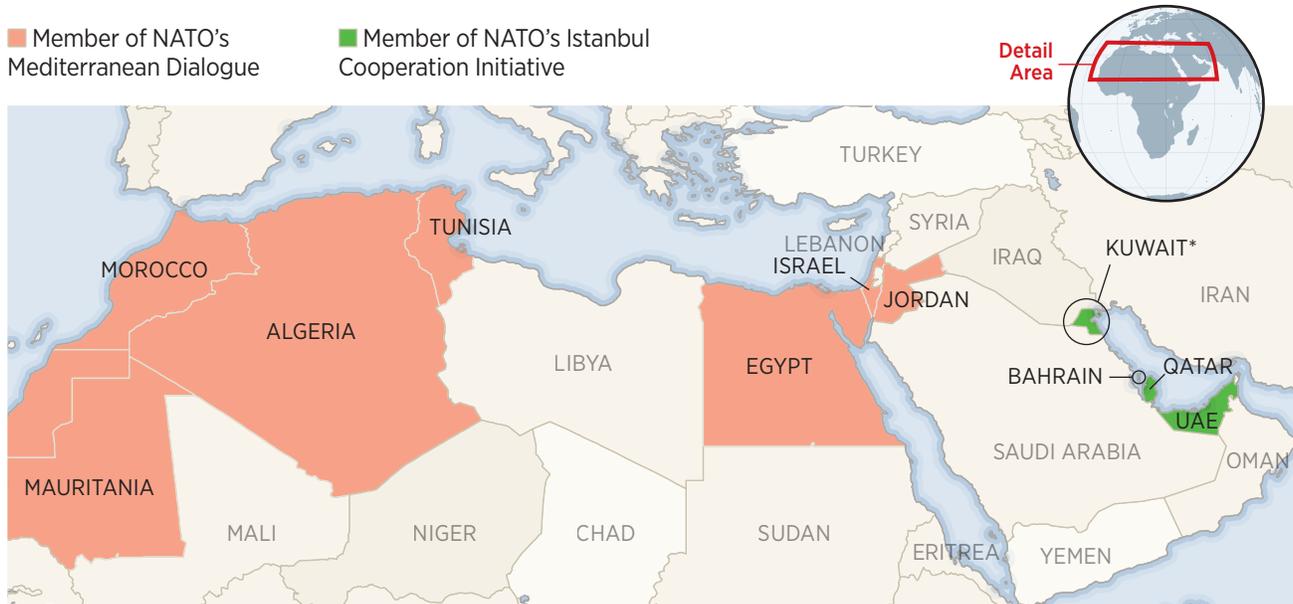
The Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative remain two complementary, yet distinct, partnership frameworks. Inside each are varying degrees of cooperation between NATO and the participating countries.

MAP 5

Overview of the Middle East and North Africa

Member of NATO's
Mediterranean Dialogue

Member of NATO's Istanbul
Cooperation Initiative



* The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative-Regional Center is located in Kuwait City.

SOURCE: Heritage Foundation research.

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Any nation participating in these groupings can also increase political and security cooperation with NATO through an Individual and Partnership Cooperation Program (IPCP).¹⁶⁸ For many countries in North Africa and the Middle East, cooperation with NATO can be politically difficult. Allowing a bilateral “NATO+1” relationship based on the IPCP format allows these countries to choose the degree of cooperation they wish to have with NATO. This built-in flexibility is important when forging relations, because some countries feel more comfortable about cooperating with NATO than others. A little cooperation is better than no cooperation.

In the Mediterranean Dialogue, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia have IPCPs with NATO. However, there is still a reluctance by some in the region to work more closely with NATO. For example, at the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO announced that it was opening an intelligence fusion center in Tunisia. Four years later, this proposal remains on ice due to domestic political disagreement in Tunis regarding cooperation with NATO.¹⁶⁹ In 2017, NATO opened a Strategic Direction South Hub (NSD-S) as part of Joint Forces Command–Naples. The main focus of NSD-S is to serve as a hub for closer NATO cooperation with its partners in North Africa.

Enthusiasm for NATO cooperation in the Middle East is also mixed. Important member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, do not participate in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Although NATO and Iraq have an IPCP, Iraq remains outside the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. However, Kuwait is home to the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Regional Centre (ICI-RC). The goal of the ICI-RC is to improve the shared understanding of security challenges between NATO and its partners in the region through high-level meetings, working groups, and educational courses.

Partnership leads to interoperability, which helps to promote understanding and security. This is why cooperation between NATO and the countries of the MENA region is so important. As Iran becomes more of a destabilizing player in the region and transnational terrorism continues to plague the region, NATO should build solid and enduring relations with the friendly countries in the MENA region.

The Alliance should use the reflection process to build on its relations in the MENA region by:

- **Appointing a Special Representative for the MENA region.** In the MENA region, personal relationships are paramount. NATO should appoint a highly respected statesman with knowledge of the region to be an enduring point of contact.
- **Pushing to enlarge the membership of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.** In particular, NATO should include countries where U.S. and European blood and treasure have been invested, such as Iraq and Libya, as members. The more cooperation, the better.
- **Establishing a Mediterranean Dialogue Regional Center.** This regional center should be modeled on the ICI-RC currently in Kuwait. This will help NATO and the countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue to improve interoperability and deepen relations. Perhaps Morocco would be a suitable location.
- **Emphasizing the MENA region at the next summit.** Neither the Mediterranean Dialogue nor the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative has formally met during a NATO summit at the head-of-government level. The next NATO summit should include these high-level meetings for both groupings.

- **Focusing solely on the ICPC format if countries feel uncomfortable joining the Mediterranean Dialogue or the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.** Many important allies will find it politically difficult domestically to join a grouping inside NATO. This should not prevent the Alliance from cooperating with these allies.
- **Not ignoring Malta.** Malta is a small European island country in the Mediterranean Sea just 215 miles off the coast of North Africa. It is a declared neutral country—meaning it will not join security alliances or take direct part in military operations. However, during the 2011 NATO-led military operation in Libya, Malta was important for NATO for three reasons even though it would not allow operations to launch from Maltese territory: (1) Malta opened its airspace to NATO aircraft; (2) Malta allowed its territory to be a staging point for NATO countries to evacuate their citizens from Libya; and (3) Malta allowed NATO aircraft conducting strike operations to land in times of distress. Should NATO need to get involved in North Africa again, Malta will be an important player. NATO should pursue closer political relations with Malta at a speed and style decided by Valletta.

Section Five: NATO's Return to Basics (Articles 3 and 10)

With most of the focus on the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty being on the collective security guarantee of Article 5, policymakers should not ignore other important articles: Article 3 and Article 10. These articles deal with very important, if not contentious, issues that the Alliance must get right if it is to continue to be an effective security alliance in the future.

Article 3 focuses on the need for NATO countries to invest in their own defense capabilities. Of course, Article 3 predates the requirement for 2 percent of GDP on defense spending that NATO established as its benchmark in 2006. Article 10 focuses on NATO enlargement. Over the past seven decades the Alliance has been very successful in bringing in new member states. This has helped to spread civility and security across the north Atlantic region, but as fewer countries become eligible to join the Alliance the issue of enlargement becomes more contentious.

Article 3: Defense Investment. As an intergovernmental security alliance, NATO is only as strong as its member states. Weak defense spending on the continent has led to a significant loss of capabilities and embarrassing gaps in readiness for NATO allies. As a result, American Presidents of both political parties have long called for increases in defense spending by NATO allies.

Although most are familiar with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty—an attack on one is an attack on all—Article 3 is the most important when it comes to the overall health of the Alliance. Article 3 states that member states, at a minimum, will “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” Only a handful of NATO members can say that they are living up to their Article 3 commitment.

Since the end of the Cold War, many European nations (until very recently) have consistently cut defense spending. The result, inevitably, has been a significant loss of capability.

An example, the U.K.’s Royal Navy, which, excluding the U.S., remains by far the most capable navy in NATO, has lost 40 percent of its fleet since the end of the Cold War.¹⁷⁰ For allies that spend less than 2 percent of GDP on defense, capability gaps are far worse. Readiness concerns across the Alliance are myriad, none more so than in Germany, a nation whose economic vitality—and growing ambition—has consistently failed to match its defense spending. Germany’s fleet of 93 Tornado jets, critical to NATO’s nuclear deterrent, have a readiness rate of under 40 percent.¹⁷¹ A recent report found that in 2018, an average of only 39 of 128 Eurofighters and only 26 of 93 Tornados in Germany’s Luftwaffe were available for training or combat.¹⁷²

In 2006, in an effort to encourage defense investment, NATO set a target for member states to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense. At the 2014 Wales Summit, member states recommitted to spending 2 percent of GDP on defense and also committed to spending 20 percent of their defense budgets on “major equipment” purchases by 2024.

According to NATO figures in 2019, nine countries—Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom, and the United States—spent the required 2 percent of GDP on defense.¹⁷³ This is up from only three nations meeting the benchmark in 2014—Greece, the U.K., and U.S. Likewise, in 2019, 16 NATO members (Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States) spent the required 20 percent of their defense budgets on new equipment and research and development.¹⁷⁴ This is a significant improvement over 2014, when only seven NATO members met the 20 percent equipment and research and development benchmark.

NATO allies have made real and sustained increases in defense spending in recent years. By the end of 2020, non-U.S. NATO members will have invested an additional \$130 billion since 2016.¹⁷⁵ In addition, “2019 marked the fifth consecutive year of growth in defense spending for European Allies and Canada with an increase in real terms of 4.6% from 2018 to 2019.”¹⁷⁶

While progress has been made, with some European NATO members having increased their defense spending, they have much more to do. Allies need to ensure that recent increases are not ephemeral, and they should commit to investing the necessary political and economic capital to fulfill their Article 3 treaty commitments.

Reaching the 2 percent of GDP spending benchmark and meeting the Article 3 obligation requires the political, economic, and societal will to invest in defense. While some NATO members have increased defense spending, many nations in the Alliance have not done so. In order to encourage NATO members to further increase defense spending in a realistic and timely way, the strategic review needs to:

- **Reaffirm the importance of Article 3.** Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty is the most important when it comes to the overall health of the Alliance. Article 3 states that member states, at a minimum, will “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.” Only a handful of NATO members can say that they are living up to their Article 3 commitment.
- **Encourage allies to recommit to defense spending.** As an inter-governmental security alliance, NATO is only as strong as its weakest link. In 2019, only nine countries of 29 NATO members¹⁷⁷ attained the benchmark to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense, and only a little over half (16) members were spending 20 percent of their defense budgets on equipment. The strategic review should reaffirm the benchmarks agreed upon in 2006 and 2014, and encourage allies to put plans in place to attain them by 2024 as each nation committed to in Wales.
- **Encourage NATO members to make increased defense spending the law of the land.** Some allies have passed legislation requiring that a certain amount of GDP be spent on international aid, but have failed to do the same with regard to defense spending. The U.S. should encourage NATO members to enshrine defense spending commitments and timelines in legislation. This would help to increase transparency and political accountability.
- **Get finance ministers involved.** There should be a special session for finance ministers (or their equivalent) at the next NATO ministerial. In many parliamentary democracies, it is the finance minister who controls public spending. Educating the finance ministers on the

importance of military investment might help to secure more defense spending over the long term.

- **Encourage allies to make a public case for defense spending.**

Recent polling found that an average of 71 percent of the publics across NATO believes that their country should defend another NATO ally if attacked.¹⁷⁸ To honor this commitment, however, a nation must have capabilities and manpower to come to their aid. Leaders in Canada and Europe should not take public support for NATO membership for granted. Instead, the strategic review should encourage governments to strongly and consistently make the case for NATO, and the importance of robust defense spending, to their publics.

- **Resist calls to include infrastructure investment in NATO spending targets.**

Recent calls by some in NATO for a change in national budget spending rules to count things like infrastructure and cybersecurity as part of countries' defense spending figures would weaken the Alliance. While cybersecurity and infrastructure are important to NATO, including them in spending targets would in turn accelerate the movement of national defense budgets from procuring capabilities to domestic infrastructure projects that are politically expedient to national politicians.

Article 10: Enlargement. NATO has underpinned Europe and North America's security for nearly 70 years, so it is no surprise that many countries in the transatlantic region that are not already members want to join the Alliance. NATO's open-door policy has been a crucial driver of modernization and reform in candidate countries, has promoted stability and peace in Europe, and has made it easier for the Alliance to coalesce around collective defense.

NATO's open-door policy for qualified countries has contributed greatly to transatlantic security since the first round of enlargement in 1952, helping to ensure the Alliance's central place as the prime guarantor of security in Europe. The North Atlantic Treaty's Article 10 states that any European state that is "in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area"¹⁷⁹ can be invited to join the Alliance. Macedonia joined the Alliance in March 2020, bringing the total number of members to 30. This leaves two countries that are currently official candidates for joining NATO: Georgia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ukraine and Kosovo also hope to join the Alliance someday.

TEXT BOX 5

Enlargement or Expansion?

When policymakers and commentators discuss the issue of bringing new members into the Alliance, it is important that they use the right words. One often hears the terms “NATO enlargement” and “NATO expansion” used interchangeably.

As an intergovernmental and democratic security alliance, NATO does not “expand.” Imperial empires expand. NATO “enlarges.” Article 10 of the

1949 North Atlantic Treaty specifically uses the word enlargement. Using the “expansion” to describe the process of bringing new members into the Alliance only feeds into the propaganda machines of an adversary like Russia that wrongly describes NATO as an ever-expanding empire and as encircling Russia.

While Russia has described any further NATO enlargement as a “provocation,”¹⁸⁰ no third party should have a veto over the decision of the sovereign member states of NATO. It is for the democratic countries that make up the Alliance to decide on whether to admit new members, and which ones. All decisions made by the Alliance require unanimity, including those regarding enlargement.

Georgia. Georgia was promised eventual membership at the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008. Since then, not all members of the Alliance have been supportive. This is especially true of France and Germany, which blocked Georgia from receiving a MAP.

After the Russian invasion in 2008 and the subsequent occupation of 20 percent of Georgia’s territory, Georgia has transformed its military and has been steadfast with its support for U.S.-led and NATO-led overseas security operations. Georgia has contributed thousands of troops to Iraq and hundreds of peacekeepers to the Balkans and Africa. Perhaps Georgia’s greatest contribution is in Afghanistan.

Even though Georgia has not received a MAP, it has a relationship with NATO that far exceeds the traditional MAP. The relationship includes the Annual National Program, the NATO–Georgia Commission, and the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package agreed to at the 2014 Wales Summit. Included in this package is the NATO–Georgia Joint Training and Evaluation Center (JTEC), inaugurated in August 2015. NATO reaffirmed its commitment to Georgia at the 2016 Warsaw Summit.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. In April 2008, Bosnia and Herzegovina stated its desire to join NATO, and the country was offered its MAP in 2010. Bosnia and Herzegovina has made some progress in defense reform and has even deployed troops to Afghanistan, but the country is still far off from joining the Alliance.

In order to become a NATO member, Bosnia and Herzegovina must first register all immovable defense properties as state property for use by the country's defense ministry. Little progress on this has been made. On a visit to Sarajevo in February 2017, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stated that "NATO stands ready to activate your Membership Action Plan, once all immovable defence properties have been registered to the state. We welcome the reforms that you are making in the defence and security sector."¹⁸¹

An additional challenge is the internal politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which makes NATO membership controversial. This is especially true in the ethnically Serb region, Republika Srpska, one of two sub-state entities inside Bosnia and Herzegovina that emerged from that country's civil war in the 1990s. Republika Srpska aligns more with Serbia and Russia's position when it comes to Euro-Atlantic integration.

Ukraine. Even though NATO stated in 2008 that someday Ukraine would be invited to join the Alliance, until recently, the Ukrainians themselves have made little effort to help make this invitation a reality.

Once an aspiring NATO ally under the leadership of President Viktor Yushchenko, Ukraine's previous pro-Russia government under President Viktor Yanukovich blocked membership progress. In 2010, the Ukrainian parliament passed a bill that barred Ukraine from committing to "a non-bloc policy which means non-participation in military-political alliances."¹⁸²

In light of Russia's aggression, the Ukrainian people have demonstrated, whether on the streets of the Maidan or through the ballot box, that they see their future allied with the West, not under Russian domination. While NATO should continue to foster closer relations with Ukraine, it is important to be clear that Ukraine has a long way to go before NATO membership becomes a serious possibility.

Kosovo. Many leaders in Kosovo have expressed a desire to join NATO over the past decade.¹⁸³ In 2018, former Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj stated that Kosovo would apply for NATO membership following the creation of its army.¹⁸⁴ However, significant stumbling blocks remain for Kosovo to become a NATO member, not least of which is the fact that four current NATO members do not recognize Kosovo's independence (Greece, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain).¹⁸⁵ This reality foiled Kosovo's attempts to join the Partnership for Peace program and would certainly need to be overcome in order to become a NATO member. A further stumbling block remains the continued contentious relations between Kosovo and Serbia.¹⁸⁶ While Kosovo is not yet ready to join the Alliance, the strategic review should keep open the possibility that it could one day join in the future. In the meantime, NATO should support Kosovo's long-term transatlantic

aspirations by being patient, supporting rule-of-law reforms in Kosovo, encouraging Kosovo's army to adopt NATO standards, and by encouraging normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.¹⁸⁷

NATO has done more than any other organization, including the European Union, to promote democracy, stability, and security in the Euro-Atlantic region. NATO accomplished this by enticing countries to become a part of the club. While it may be tempting to view North Macedonia's recent accession to NATO as a closing ceremony for enlargement, that would be a substantial mistake. It is in America's interest that NATO's door remain open to deserving European countries.

NATO's reflection period offers an opportunity for the Alliance to send a clear message that its "open-door" policy remains firmly in place. NATO should do this by:

- **Keeping the door open.** NATO should ensure that its open-door policy is explicitly clear for those countries that meet the criteria set out in Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty.
- **Making clear that Russia does not have a veto right.** Russia should never be seen as having a veto over a country's potential membership in NATO, including Ukraine. Just because a country was once occupied by the Soviet Union or under the domination of the Russian Empire does not mean that it is blocked from joining the Alliance in perpetuity.
- **Ensuring that NATO meets with aspirant countries at the head-of-state level during the next summit.** In the past, this meeting has been relegated to foreign ministers. The NATO heads of state should make time to meet with the leaders of the two aspirant countries during the next NATO summit. This would send the right message of support.
- **Establishing realistic expectations for Ukraine.** NATO should continue to foster Ukraine's membership ambitions, and keep the door open for eventual membership, while recognizing that NATO membership is not currently a realistic option.
- **Ensuring that Georgia continues to progress toward membership.** The Alliance must be clear that Georgia's successful completion of subsequent Annual National Programs, the close relationship

through the NATO–Georgia Commission, and the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package are the true markers of progress that are bringing Georgia closer to membership.

- **Decoupling Georgia’s path to NATO membership from Ukraine.** Ukraine and Georgia share many common challenges, especially as they pertain to Russia. However, Georgia’s path toward NATO membership is far ahead of Ukraine’s. This should be acknowledged by the Alliance. This is not meant to be a criticism of Ukraine, merely a reflection of the reality as things stand.
- **Supporting Bosnia and Herzegovina.** With North Macedonia joining the Alliance in March 2020, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains the most realistic Balkan prospect to next join the Alliance. While there are many domestic political obstacles, such as the lack of support for membership by Republika Srpska, NATO must keep the country on track for eventual membership.
- **Encouraging Finland and Sweden to join NATO.** Ultimately, the Swedish and Finnish populations will decide whether to join NATO, but privately NATO should pursue a policy that encourages membership for these two Nordic countries. Until they join NATO, they will not benefit from the Alliance’s security guarantee.
- **Supporting Kosovo’s long-term transatlantic aspirations.** While Kosovo is not yet ready to join NATO and has significant challenges to overcome, the Alliance should welcome Kosovo’s transatlantic aspirations, take a patient approach, and support modernization and key reforms.
- **Taking a long-term and pragmatic approach with other European countries.** In the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the idea of countries like Poland or Estonia joining NATO seemed unrealistic, if not crazy. Almost 30 years later, many of the countries of the former Warsaw Pact or those under Soviet occupation during the Cold War are now some of NATO’s most steadfast members. However unrealistic it might seem for a country like Belarus or Azerbaijan to someday join NATO, the world will be much different 50 years from now. The door must always be kept open, and policymakers must keep an open mind.

Section Six: Evolving Threats

Ballistic Missiles. According to NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, "The greatest responsibility of the Alliance is to protect and defend our territory and our populations against attack, as set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty." Along with NATO's conventional forces and nuclear capabilities, ballistic missile defense (BMD) plays an important part in NATO's deterrence and defense posture.

While NATO continues to improve its BMD capability and has achieved some significant milestones, the United States and its allies need to ensure that their missile defense programs keep pace with the threat.

At the 2010 Lisbon Summit, NATO agreed to develop a BMD capability that would cover all territory and all populations of NATO's members as a core task of collective defense. In 2012, NATO published its Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, which was designed to examine all aspects of NATO's defense posture, including BMD. The review declared that: "The proliferation of ballistic missiles is a growing concern for the Alliance and constitutes an increasing threat to Alliance security. NATO's ballistic missile defence capacity will be an important addition to the Alliance's capabilities for deterrence and defence."

In July 2016, NATO declared an Initial Operational Capability of NATO BMD, which offers a stronger capability to defend Alliance populations, territory, and forces across southern Europe against a potential ballistic missile attack. The 2018 Brussels Summit declaration stated that the

next major milestone is the completion of the core element of the NATO BMD Command and Control, the only component eligible for common funding. We continue to look for opportunities to quickly and effectively improve delivery of NATO's BMD Command and Control, overall completion of which is necessary to reach system maturity and Full Operational Capability.¹⁸⁸

As long as ballistic missiles exist in the inventories of adversaries, and proving that the technology for BMD remains achievable, it would be the height of irresponsibility for NATO not to pursue this capability.

BMD is also an important part of Alliance burden sharing. An Aegis Ashore site in Deveselu, Romania, became operational in May 2016, and in April 2019, the U.S. announced the temporary deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to Romania while the Aegis Ashore system is updated.¹⁸⁹ Other components include an AN/TPY-2 forward-based early-warning BMD radar with a range of up to 1,800 miles at

Kürecik, Turkey; the U.S. is also reportedly building a second undisclosed site (site K) near Malatya, which is home to an AN/TPY-2 radar with a range of up to 1,800 miles, expanding capability at the site. BMD-capable U.S. Aegis ships are forward deployed at Rota, Spain.¹⁹⁰

In March 2020, the U.S. Navy announced support for basing an additional two destroyers to Rota, which would bring the total to six.¹⁹¹ The additional deployments would, according to General Tod Wolters, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, “allow us [NATO] the opportunity to continue to improve our ability to get indications and warnings in the potential battlespace and also dramatically improve our ability to better command and control.”¹⁹² A second Aegis Ashore site in Redzikowo, Poland, which broke ground in May 2016, was expected to be operational in 2017 but has been beset by construction delays and may not become operational until 2022.¹⁹³

Ramstein Air Base in Germany hosts a command and control center¹⁹⁴ and the U.K. operates a BMD radar at Royal Air Force Fylingdales in England. In November 2015, the British government stated that it plans to build a new ground-based BMD radar as a contribution.¹⁹⁵ It expects the new radar to be in service by the mid-2020s and reportedly will also “investigate further the potential of the Type 45 Destroyers to operate in a BMD role.”¹⁹⁶ In October 2017, ships from the U.S. and allies Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom took part in a three-and-a-half-week BMD exercise called Formidable Shield off the Scottish Coast.¹⁹⁷ Formidable Shield exercises were held again in 2019.¹⁹⁸

During the reflection process NATO must:

- **Reaffirm the importance of ballistic missile defense.** As long as ballistic missiles exist in the inventories of adversaries, and proving that the technology for BMD remains achievable, it would be the height of irresponsibility for NATO not to pursue this capability.
- **Underscore that ballistic missile defense is important for burden sharing.** While some allies have invested, and continue to invest, in capabilities that are valuable for BMD, not all allies do so. The strategic review should encourage allies to invest in BMD-component air defenses, BMD-capable ships, and radar technology and capability.

Nuclear Weapons. The threats associated with nuclear proliferation, and the return of great power competition, make the world even more dangerous today than it was during the Cold War, stressing the importance that

NATO maintain its “nuclear culture.” The 2018 Brussels Summit declaration states that the “fundamental purpose of NATO’s nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression. Given the deteriorating security environment in Europe, a credible and united nuclear Alliance is essential.”¹⁹⁹

Regarding the nuclear nature of the Alliance the same declaration states: “The strategic forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, are the supreme guarantee of the security of Allies. The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and contribute significantly to the overall security of the Alliance.”²⁰⁰

In addition, the U.S. maintains tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Unofficial estimates put the current figure between 150 and 200, which are based in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey.²⁰¹ All of these are B-61 free-fall gravity bombs designed for use with U.S. and allied dual-capable aircraft.

Encouraged by the Obama Administration’s policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, some in NATO have suggested that American tactical nuclear weapons in Europe are a Cold War anachronism and should be removed from the continent. For years, the issue of nuclear weapons has been a divisive one inside the Alliance. However, in 2012, NATO published its Deterrence and Defence Posture Review, which was designed to look at all aspects of NATO’s defense posture, including nuclear weapons. The review declared that “[n]uclear weapons are a core component of NATO’s overall capabilities for deterrence and defence,” and that the “Alliance’s nuclear force posture currently meets the criteria for an effective deterrence and defence posture.”²⁰² As Russia continues to increase its stockpile of tactical nuclear weapons intended for battlefield use in Europe, NATO’s nuclear mission becomes even more critical.

The Alliance should use the reflection period to reaffirm its commitment to maintaining NATO’s nuclear culture by:

- **Ensuring that NATO remains a nuclear Alliance.** As Russia becomes increasingly hostile in the region and the threat of nuclear proliferation continues, it is just as important today as ever before that NATO maintain its “nuclear culture.” As long as the West could face a nuclear threat from any part of the world, NATO needs to remain a nuclear alliance.
- **Maintaining the presence of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.** These weapons have served, and will continue to serve, as

a visible demonstration of U.S. commitment to NATO. These weapons are likely to become more important in the future, especially as new nuclear-armed states emerge and threats to the Alliance continue and evolve.

- **Ensuring that dual-capable aircraft (DCA) remain in service.** All of the B-61s forward located in Europe are designed for use with U.S. and allied dual-capable aircraft. This is an important and often-overlooked part of Alliance burden sharing. As certain countries start to retire some of their DCA fleet, NATO must press its member states that have a responsibility to operate DCA aircraft to replace them with planes that are also DCA.

Hybrid Warfare. Since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, there has been much discussion in Western policy circles on how to deal with Moscow's hybrid warfare tactics. There is also a debate on how to define hybrid warfare.

Perhaps the best definition is offered by the new European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki:

coordinated and synchronized action, that deliberately targets democratic states' and institutions systemic vulnerabilities, through a wide range of means (political, economic, military, civil, and information) [and] activities [that] exploit the thresholds of detection and attribution as well as the border between war and peace.²⁰³

In other words, hybrid warfare combines non-traditional attacks, such as cyberattacks and misinformation campaigns, to weaken society and delegitimize government authority. Often a hybrid attack falls below the threshold of being a traditional armed attack. This makes responding to a hybrid attack difficult. Often, hybrid warfare can be used in advance of, or as a key component of, a conventional military attack.

Hybrid warfare must be prevented or deterred—it is not something that can be easily overcome once it has begun. Once the social, political, and economic conditions exist to allow hybrid tactics to be effective, it is probably too late to stop them. This is why NATO should accept that it plays a secondary role to national governments in dealing with hybrid threats. As with counterterrorism, NATO as an intergovernmental institution lacks many of the required tools and policy competencies to counter hybrid threats.

There are three main ways to counter hybrid threats and to mitigate its impact:

1. **Establish good governance on the local and national level.** If people feel like they are governed fairly and governed well, they become less susceptible to disinformation and propaganda campaigns by Russia or other adversaries. Where there is endemic corruption, a lack of strong local government, and the disconnection of central government to legitimate political grievances on the local level, the stage is set for Russian meddling.
2. **Encourage economic freedom.** People need economic stability and the belief that their children have a bright economic future. Pursuing pro-growth policies that help increase economic prosperity is an important part of countering hybrid tactics. People who feel as if they have economic opportunities are less susceptible to foreign meddling.
3. **Help to create a bond of trust and respect between the average person and law enforcement and the intelligence services.** If people believe they are policed fairly and that intelligence services are not overstepping their bounds, a society will become more resilient against hybrid tactics, Russian or otherwise.

In addition, law enforcement is often the first line of defense in a hybrid war scenario. A very capable and professional law enforcement and intelligence service can mitigate the effectiveness of provocateurs acting on behalf of Moscow.

While NATO is limited in what it can do practically to deter hybrid threats, the Alliance can serve as an important coordination platform. Also, there are some aspects of hybrid warfare that have a direct impact on the military readiness and the political solidarity of the Alliance. These are cybersecurity, energy security, and countering disinformation. There is room for NATO to play a bigger role in addressing these issues.

Cybersecurity. NATO has stated that “a severe cyber-attack could lead to invoke Article 5.”²⁰⁴ Ultimately the decision to invoke Article 5 will be a political decision. At the 2016 Warsaw Summit, NATO recognized cyberspace as a domain of operations, and on August 31, 2018, it established a Cyberspace Operations Center (CYOC) in Mons, Belgium, that will include 70 cyber experts when it becomes fully operational in 2023.²⁰⁵ The CYOC, according to NATO, “will provide situational awareness and coordination of NATO operational activity within cyberspace.”²⁰⁶ In 2017, NATO announced it would spend \$1.85 billion to expand its satellite

TEXT BOX 6

What Triggers Article 5?

With the increase in newer threats, such as cyber warfare and transnational terrorism, many wonder what would constitute an Article 5 response from NATO today. After the Islamist terrorist attacks in Paris 2015, some called for NATO to invoke Article 5 against ISIS.¹ Some even called for NATO to invoke Article 5 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.² One of the more popular questions in the NATO policy community is: “Can a cyberattack meet the Article 5 threshold?”

To date, Article 5 has only been invoked once, in October 2001, in response to 9/11. Contrary to popular belief, NATO’s subsequent military mission in Afghanistan was, and is, not an Article 5 mission. The invocation of Article 5 in October 2001 resulted in two different missions: Operation Active Endeavor and Operation Eagle Assist, which ended in 2016 and 2002, respectively.³ To date, these have been the only two Article 5 missions in the history of NATO.

There is no specific “trigger” for Article 5. There is no specific list of events in the North Atlantic

Treaty that serves as a guide on when, or when not, Article 5 can be invoked. The only guidance in the North Atlantic Treaty given to policymakers for what constitutes an Article 5 response is found in Article 6. (See Textbox 1.) To meet the Article 5 threshold, there must be an “armed attack” on a member state’s territory or an “armed attack” against “the forces, vessels, or aircraft” of a member state “in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.” This means, for example, that a North Korean missile strike against Hawaii, despite it being part of the United States, could not get an Article 5 response (Hawaii not being in the North Atlantic area).

A member state cannot unilaterally invoke Article 5. All 30 members must make the decision unanimously.

Ultimately, the decision to invoke Article 5 is a political one made on a case by case basis. So in theory, as long as the “armed attack” meets the geographical criteria set out in Article 6, any kind of attack could warrant an Article 5 response.

1. James Stavridis, “NATO’s Turn to Attack,” *Foreign Policy*, November 14, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/11/14/natos-turn-to-attack-paris-terrorist-isis/> (accessed April 13, 2020).
2. Frederick Kempe, “Why Trump Should Trigger NATO’s Article 5 Against Covid-19,” Atlantic Council, March 14, 2020, <https://atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/why-trump-should-trigger-natos-article-5-vs-covid-19/> (accessed April 13, 2020).
3. Seven NATO AWACS radar aircraft helped to patrol the skies over the United States, with a total of 830 crew members from 13 NATO countries flying more than 360 sorties.

communications capabilities.²⁰⁷ Its decision was driven in part by the acquisition of five Global Hawk surveillance drones, which generate significant data; after initial delays, the first drone was delivered in 2019 to Sigonella Naval Air Station.²⁰⁸

The Alliance’s Joint Air Power (JAP) Strategy released in June 2018 highlighted the importance of cyber and space capabilities:

Increasing reliance on cyber and space-based capabilities by Alliance forces presents vulnerabilities for adversaries to negate critical NATO capabilities through degradation, denial or destruction, whilst providing opportunities for

the Alliance to integrate such capabilities with JAP for kinetic and non-kinetic effect. Both the resilience and exploitation of such capabilities is [sic] therefore a critical requirement that future development should address.²⁰⁹

NATO has also invested in strengthening its relationship with the tech industry through the NATO Industry Cyber Partnership. This initiative, established in 2014, facilitates cooperation for the mutual benefit of both NATO and allies' industry and academia. In 2019, industry continued to support NATO's cyber defense by providing real-time actionable cyber threat information, thereby enabling stakeholders to take rapid action to respond to threats.²¹⁰

China is an adversarial power that should not be allowed to use its government-controlled companies to gain a significant foothold in the burgeoning fifth-generation (5G) wireless networks of NATO member states. Such a presence would be a clear national security threat that could decisively compromise telecommunications and data infrastructure—including the communications integrity of the military and intelligence community. The London Declaration stated that “NATO and Allies, within their respective authority, are committed to ensuring the security of our communications, including 5G, recognizing the need to rely on secure and resilient systems.”²¹¹ Recently, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison remarked, “We’re very concerned with the 5G and control of communications networks, and we’re dealing with that at NATO.”²¹²

Energy Security. NATO also benefits whenever Europe reduces its dependence on Russian oil and gas. This is particularly important at a time when Nord Stream 2, the proposed Russian gas pipeline to Germany that will increase Europe's dependence on Moscow for energy, seems to be an ever-closer reality. Europe depends on Russian natural gas for 40 percent of its needs. In total, almost 200 billion cubic meters of natural gas are now imported from Russia annually due to declining European production and rising demand.²¹³ Russia has a track record of using energy as a tool of aggression, and each barrel of oil and cubic meter of gas that Europe can buy elsewhere will make NATO more secure.

In addition to the existing network of oil and gas pipelines connecting Azerbaijan on the Caspian Sea to Southern Europe bypassing Russia, construction finished on the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline in June 2018, further linking Azerbaijan to Turkey. This pipeline will then connect with the Trans Adriatic Pipeline, which will run from the Turkish–Greek border to Italy via Albania and the Adriatic Sea when it is completed in 2020.²¹⁴

These new gas pipelines, in addition to the existing South Caucasus Pipeline, are known as the Southern Gas Corridor. Once fully operational, the Southern Gas Corridor will be a network of pipelines running 2,100 miles across seven countries, supplying 60 billion cubic meters of natural gas to Europe.²¹⁵ There is also talk about finally building a Trans Caspian Pipeline to bring natural gas from Central Asia to Europe bypassing Russia.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project would connect Germany directly with Russia. This project is neither economically necessary, nor is it geopolitically prudent. Rather, it is a political project led by German financial interests and Russian geo-political machinations to greatly increase European dependence on Russian gas, magnify Russia's ability to use its European energy dominance as a political trump card, and specifically undermine U.S. allies in Eastern and Central Europe.

Disinformation. NATO faces a challenge from disinformation, primarily emanating from Russia, however the danger of Chinese propaganda should also not be overlooked. Russian disinformation targeting NATO pushes a number of narratives, including the false narrative of NATO aggression and encirclement of Russia, propaganda surrounding NATO's EFP, particularly how the deployments will lead to war or made-up abuses by multinational soldiers in host nations. Russian propaganda efforts are meant for both the Russian domestic audience, as well as to sow division within NATO and undermine support for the Alliance in Europe.

Russian disinformation has in particular honed in on NATO's EFP battalions in the Baltic states and Poland, seeking to undermine support within the host nation populace. Recent examples of Russian EFP propaganda include false stories of German soldiers in Lithuania desecrating a Jewish cemetery with Nazi symbols,²¹⁶ and false stories that the U.S. was planning to move nuclear weapons from Turkey to Lithuania.²¹⁷ NATO soldiers and their families participating in the EFP battalions or Baltic Air Policing have also been targeted by harassing and threatening Russian phone calls and text messages.²¹⁸ More recently, Russia has sought to use the COVID-19 pandemic to undermine support for NATO's EFP, for instance, by propagating false stories in January 2020 that U.S. soldiers who were positive for the disease were stationed in Lithuania.²¹⁹

While Chinese disinformation is not at the same level of threat to NATO as Russian propaganda is at the moment, the long-term challenge it poses should not be discounted. In July 2019, Germany investigated three reporters from the Chinese state-controlled Xinhua News Agency, which filmed equipment and interviewed soldiers about their routines at a German base used as a training area for Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF)

units. (Germany was the spearhead for VJTF in 2019.)²²⁰ China has also issued propaganda related to COVID-19,²²¹ including the narrative that the Chinese government responded robustly to the outbreak.²²²

As the Alliance and its members grapple with the threat of hybrid warfare, the U.S. and NATO should use the reflection process to:

- **Acknowledge the Alliance’s limitations when confronting hybrid threats, and push member states to do more to prevent hybrid warfare on their territories.** NATO should not pretend to lead on an issue for which it lacks the competency. Ultimately, good governance, economic freedom, and trusted law enforcement and security services are the best bet for stopping a hybrid war before it even starts. So, while policymakers should look toward NATO to provide a robust conventional and nuclear deterrence for members of the Alliance, only the national capitals can establish the political and economic conditions that can prevent Russia and other adversaries from using hybrid tactics effectively.
- **Offer more political support to non-Russian energy projects.** Every drop of oil and gas that Europe does not import from Russia makes the Alliance more secure. During the reflection period, and at every other opportunity (such as summit and ministerial declarations) the Alliance should offer political support for the construction of the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor. As Europe seeks alternatives to Russian gas, the Southern Gas Corridor and completion of a Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline will play important roles.
- **Raise awareness of the dangers of Nord Stream 2.** The U.S. should use the NATO reflection period to specifically address Nord Stream 2, expressing U.S. opposition and linking the pipeline to NATO collective defense, which it would greatly undermine. A U.S. focus on preventing Nord Stream 2 may give other member states concerned about the project political cover to express their own concerns and opposition.
- **Understand the range of threats presented by cyberattacks.** NATO faces a cyber threat not only from Russia but also from state actors, including China and Iran, as well as non-state actors. While the Alliance must continue to harden its networks, NATO should recognize that, ultimately, the bulk of cyber defense will fall to individual nations and as such should encourage robust attention to cyber capabilities amongst the 30 allies.

- **Avoid specific guidelines for what kind of actions would trigger Article 5.** While NATO should continue to state that a severe cyberattack could trigger Article 5, it should avoid delineating exactly where the line for invocation would be. Such a delineation only invites cyber aggression up to just under a hypothetical Article 5 trigger.
- **Articulate the threat posed by Chinese 5G technology clearly.** NATO should reflect on the military threat posed by Chinese information technology to the Alliance, recommend a ban on Chinese 5G technology in NATO facilities, and impart on allies the necessity of secure domestic networks for ensuring the collective defense.
- **Condemn and refute Russian disinformation forcefully and swiftly.** NATO should forcefully and swiftly dispute and rebut Russian propaganda and disinformation with factual evidence, such as the Alliance did with the Russian propaganda on COVID-19.²²³ The work undertaken by the NATO Stratcom Centre of Excellence in Tallinn will help the Alliance understand the themes and methods being employed by pernicious actors.
- **Undertake a review of Chinese disinformation.** The review should consider the growing threat posed by Chinese disinformation and information warfare, such as the consistent falsehoods propagated by China around the origins of COVID-19.
- **Ensure robust member state participation in the Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian Centers of Excellence.** These centers focus on cybersecurity, energy security, and disinformation campaigns, respectively. The three Centers of Excellence could benefit greatly from increased Alliance participation, as well as from NATO partners Georgia and Ukraine.

Global Pandemics. NATO's most recent Strategic Concept—an official policy document intended to guide the Alliance to prepare for future threats—contains not a single mention of the word “pandemic.”²²⁴ Many of the countries inside NATO do address this issue in their national security and defense strategy documents.

For example, the United Kingdom has a global health security section in its most recent security and defense strategy. The threat from pandemics even gets a mention in the foreword written for the document by the prime

minister.²²⁵ The Trump Administration's National Security Strategy published in 2017 has a section titled "Combat Bio Threats and Pandemics."²²⁶ The most recent French white paper on defense and national security also recognizes the threats posed by global health issues and pandemics.²²⁷

As a military alliance, NATO's responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic is to continue to ensure the readiness of Alliance forces to carry out combat operations at a moment's notice. On April 2, 2020, Secretary General Stoltenberg stated: "Our forces remain ready, and our crucial work goes on—including in our multinational battlegroups in the east of the alliance, NATO Air Policing and our maritime deployments."²²⁸

There are two important areas to which NATO and its member states must pay close attention when it comes to dealing with a global pandemic.

First is the issue of health and welfare of service personnel and their families. This is the most important consideration for NATO during a global pandemic. An Armed Force that is medically unfit is useless. Also, soldiers who are deployed thousands of miles from home, should not have to worry about the safety and health of their family members. They need to be 100 percent focused on the mission at hand. During an international pandemic, this is perhaps the single most important thing for the Armed Forces.

As seen with the COVID-19 pandemic, viruses do not discriminate between ranks. Inside NATO two high-profile senior generals tested positive for the virus. The chief of staff of the Italian army, Salvatore Farina, and the head of the Polish Armed Forces, Jarosław Mika, have both tested positive for COVID-19. There was even at least one confirmed case of COVID-19 at NATO headquarters in Brussels. A large military base in northern Norway near the border with Russia was put on lockdown after a Norwegian soldier tested positive for the coronavirus and another 1,300 soldiers were quarantined.

A second major focus area is maintaining levels of military readiness. Militaries rely on training. If they cannot train, they will be less prepared to fight when necessary. As seen with COVID-19, the spread of the virus throughout Europe has hurt readiness on both a strategic and a tactical level. On the strategic level, major NATO exercises were cancelled or curtailed. A major exercise in Norway focused on Arctic security, "Exercise Cold Response 20," was cancelled. This exercise was to involve 15,000 NATO troops. Another major exercise called "Defender Europe 20" was curtailed because of the coronavirus outbreak. This exercise was originally billed as the largest U.S.-led exercise in Europe since the mid-1990s. On a positive note, at least the planning for these exercises has already happened, which in itself, is an important part of any training exercise. On the tactical level,

if soldiers cannot do basic training, such as going to the rifle range, because they are restricted to military bases or to the barracks, their readiness levels go down. This also leads to low morale.

Most of the responsibility for maintaining the health and safety of armed forces lies with the individual member states, not with NATO. That is not to say that NATO does not have a role to play in pandemic response, and member states heavily affected by COVID-19 quickly turned to the Alliance for assistance.

NATO established the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) in June 1998 as a “clearing-house mechanism for the coordination of requests and offers of international assistance amongst NATO Allies and partners.”²²⁹ The EADRCC originally covered the geographical area of 50 countries, including NATO allies and the signatories of the Partnership for Peace. Over time, its mandate widened to cover requests for assistance in the event of a major chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear incident or attack, and gradually extended to cover the territories of NATO partners from the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, as well as of other partners across the globe. Currently, the EADRCC’s mandate covers the geographical area of 70 countries.²³⁰ The EADRCC has responded to Hurricanes Harvey and Katrina in the U.S., forest fires in Israel and Latvia, Ebola in West Africa, H1N1 swine flu in Bulgaria and Ukraine, and flooding in the Balkans.²³¹

During the pandemic, the EADRCC is helping to coordinate assistance based on requests and availability of supplies, such as Czech and Turkish relief aid to Italy and Spain, including personal protection equipment and disinfectants.²³² In April, NATO foreign ministers directed Supreme Allied Commander Tod Wolters to help coordinate matching requests for aid with offers of assistance, as well as to use excess airlift capacity to ease transport of essential supplies across borders.²³³ Secretary General Stoltenberg stated: “He [Wolters] will also implement simplified procedures for rapid air mobility, in coordination with Eurocontrol, using the NATO call sign for military relief flights.”²³⁴

NATO’s Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC), “a multinational programme that provides assured access to strategic military airlift capability for its 12 member nations,”²³⁵ has also been leveraged for pandemic response. Examples include cargo flights from Europe to South Korea to collect essential medical supplies for the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.²³⁶ In April, SAC capabilities helped transport ICU beds to the Dutch-controlled part of the Caribbean island Sint Maarten.²³⁷ Other examples of Alliance responses to COVID-19 include an Italian team from

NATO's Support and Procurement Agency working with a private company that created printed 3-D connectors to convert snorkeling masks to ventilator masks.²³⁸ In April, KFOR helped to transport gowns, masks, and sanitizers to North and South Mitrovica in Kosovo.²³⁹

In addition to NATO facilitation, allies have banded together to assist one another during the pandemic. Examples include Albania and Poland sending doctors to Italy, the German air force helping to transport patients from France and Italy to German hospitals for treatment, Germany donating ventilators to the U.K., the United States donating medical supplies to Italy, and NATO's Support and Procurement Agency providing field hospital tents and equipment to Luxembourg to increase capacity.²⁴⁰

The pandemic also exposed areas of concern surrounding Chinese and Russian efforts to benefit from the outbreak. Both China and Russia sent aid to Italy, the European epicenter of the pandemic, however in nearly every case this aid came with strings attached. Furthermore, the scale of aid from NATO allies to Italy was of many magnitudes greater. While Chinese planes did bring some equipment and doctors to Italy, "it was part of a commercial deal formalized a few days before in a phone call between the foreign ministers of China and Italy, Luigi di Maio and Wang Yi. Italy was buying medical equipment from China, but the government took advantage of a parallel donation made by China's Red Cross to make it look like an instance of its 'politics of generosity.'"²⁴¹ China's diplomatic outposts in Europe trumpeted the deliveries,²⁴² while at the same time Chinese propaganda pushed the false narrative that COVID-19 began in Italy.²⁴³ Russia also sought to profit from the pandemic by sending a shipment of purported aid and personnel to Italy in March. However, 80 percent of the equipment sent was of no value; one official described the worthlessness of the shipment saying, "the Russian delivery contained, for example, equipment for bacteriological disinfection and a field laboratory for chemical-biological sterilization—not the ventilators and personal protective equipment."²⁴⁴ In addition, an Italian newspaper uncovered that Russia's "medical experts," based less than two hours from the U.S. base at Vicenza, were in fact "dispatched by the Russian defense ministry, not the health ministry.... What's more, many are senior biological, chemical, and nuclear officers in the medical branch of the Russian armed forces."²⁴⁵

In order to deal with the issues of global pandemics, NATO should:

- **Reaffirm the importance of individual member states keeping their service members healthy and fit.** Ensuring the health and welfare of service members and their families is the first essential role

of any armed force. This is a responsibility solely in the hands of the member states. However, if the member states fail at this task, there are serious consequences for the Alliance.

- **Help the member states to manage the crisis when appropriate.** This is where the EADRCC and NATO's SAC can play a role.
- **Maintain readiness through training.** As a military alliance, NATO's responsibility during any pandemic is to ensure the readiness of Alliance forces to carry out combat operations at a moment's notice. If training exercises must be canceled or curtailed, they must be rescheduled as soon as possible. Also, virtual training events must take place.
- **Consider lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.** NATO has taken a leading role in helping to facilitate the transfer of needed equipment, personnel, and supplies between member states. This critically important work should continue during the pandemic. NATO should conduct a review of its response to COVID-19. This would help to assess the success and timeliness of NATO's response, and issue recommendations to the Secretary General for better future pandemic preparation.

Conclusion

NATO's period of reflection could prove the fulcrum for the Alliance's future trajectory, with geopolitical implications that ripple beyond Europe and the United States. Since its inception, NATO has done more than any other multilateral organization to promote democracy, peace, and security in Europe and the broader transatlantic community with benefits that have rippled out to the broader global community. Ensuring that NATO can face the challenges of the 21st century while safeguarding and vitalizing collective defense—the heart of the Alliance—is the charge of the upcoming reflection period.

In this important moment, American leadership cannot be replaced. The United States must ensure that the reflection outcome firmly moors a future NATO to both sides of the Atlantic, refocuses the allies on the *raison d'être* of collective defense (including the associated necessities of robust defense spending and vigorous capabilities in increasingly vital spheres like cyber warfare and information warfare), while at the same time ensuring NATO's

readiness to address a range of growing challenges. Getting this balance right requires an understanding of where the Alliance has been, where it is now, and where it is headed. The outcome of the reflection process will provide vital guideposts for striking the proper balance and ensuring the vitality of NATO for the next 70 years and beyond.

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