

PEACE AND SECURITY

THREE VISIONS FOR NATO

Mapping National Debates on the Future
of the Atlantic Alliance

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Despite gloomy headlines, NATO serves its members' core security interests and is here to stay. Beyond this agreement, however, expert communities in member states strongly disagree on NATO's future direction.



Contested are NATO's future focus, priorities and strategies towards Russia, China and its Southern neighbourhood, as well as the ways in which its internal architecture should be reformed.



Three different visions of NATO's future are on the table: (i) a »NATO classic plus« would focus on collective defence and Russia, with a few extras, such as cyber. (ii) a »NATO with a global outlook« would set its sights on China and widen its partnerships. (iii) a »NATO Generation Z« would widen its scope even further and address such risks as climate change and democratic backsliding.

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FOREWORD

Eva Ellereit and Marius Müller-Hennig

The future of NATO is once more under discussion. Politically, the Alliance and relations between the allies have been characterized by multiple tensions and heated controversy in recent years. But the Alliance has been under massive pressure to change militarily, too. The evolving nature of the Afghanistan mission and the return to the core task of collective defence in the wake of Russia's annexation of Crimea and the war in Eastern Ukraine were perhaps the most prominent challenges, but by no means the only ones. To be sure, NATO responded to the new challenges, but it was a long time before there was a comprehensive strategic discussion in and between the member states on a strategic reorientation of the Alliance. The most recent Strategic Concept dates from 2010.

But the most recent experts' report to NATO's Secretary General on the political dimension of the Alliance made it clear that it was high time to renew the Strategic Concept. It looks likely that the requisite mandate will be issued at the NATO summit in Brussels on 14 June 2021. But whatever the precise process of working out a new Strategic Concept, it is essential and will shape the security policy discussion over the coming years.

In his analysis of NATO's current Strategic Concept for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in January 2011 Christos Katsioulis came to the conclusion that »the Strategic Concept glosses over the sometimes fragile consensus between the member states and avoids definite positions on disputed points.«¹ A new Strategic Concept worthy of the name needs to confer clarity on the key contentious issues in order to provide orientation, both internally and externally.

In the 2010 Concept it was above all »the role of nuclear weapons in the Alliance, crisis management in relation to other actors, relations with Russia ... and the question of defence funding in a period of financial and economic crisis«² that fell short of expectations. The present study shows that these issues remain on the agenda for the next Strategic Concept, albeit sometimes under completely different circumstances. This study also shows that, on top of

this, a number of other serious issues have emerged, above all NATO's relations with China, how to tackle hybrid threats and the balance in the Alliance between values and interests.

Given the heightened complexity the present study is intended to provide solid orientation for participation in the political debate on the future of the Alliance. It sheds light on national expert discussions on the future of NATO in a series of key member states and non-member states, systematizes them and, finally, takes a comparative perspective. In all this there is a deliberate focus on the debates in the expert community.

In this way, this study is supposed to contribute to a better mutual understanding of national discussion dynamics. It is directed both at those interested in foreign and security policy and at experts and decision-makers. It is intended to involve and provide orientation in a debate that is otherwise conducted mainly in a very exclusive »epistemic community« of NATO experts. This is because it is particularly important at the present time, when the Alliance's fundamental orientation and future are under debate that, beyond the circle of designated NATO experts, also decision-makers from political executives and legislatures, the media, but also the critical public should be called upon to play an active part in the discussion.

We would like to thank the team of authors at the Leibniz Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) for their comprehensive expertise and outstanding cooperation, especially the two project leaders Dr Caroline Fehl and Dr Matthias Dembinski. The study will continue to shape our own political advisory, dialogue and educational work as a reference point, and should help us, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, to contribute to this vital strategic process.

Berlin, June 2021

¹ Katsioulis, Christos (2011): »The new NATO strategy. A temporary compromise«, available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/07796.pdf>

² Ibid.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Matthias Dembinski and Caroline Fehl

NATO is at a crossroads – yet again. After years of internal turmoil and self-doubt, the Alliance is in the process of reforming and re-inventing itself. At the London summit commemorating NATO's 70th anniversary, the Heads of States and Governments asked NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to initiate a forward-looking reform process. At the summit in June 2021, NATO members will take stock of the state of this NATO 2030 process and authorize work on a new strategic concept. NATO's current strategic concept dates back to 2010 and was drafted in a completely different geopolitical environment. Adaptation is thus inevitable. But because this always bears the risk of maladaptation, it is imperative to accompany this reform process with critical analyses and discussions that engage not just a small expert community, but also policymakers in governments and parliaments, as well as the general public across NATO's member states.

With this edited volume, we aim to provide the basis for such an informed discussion. By summarizing and comparing expert discourses on key questions regarding NATO's future across a broad spectrum of key member (and selected non-member) states, we seek to promote both a deeper understanding of the issues at stake and a better mutual understanding of diverging geographical, historical and political perspectives on these issues. At the same time, by mapping and juxtaposing national visions of NATO, we delineate a space of political possibilities, giving rise to different »futures« that could result from the ongoing reform process.

The list of challenges that NATO is facing is exceedingly long and includes a prioritization of threats, a revision of its internal architecture, and a determination of its character. Is it an alliance based more on values or on interests; is it a flexible organization that manages the diversity of its member states; or is it a tightly knit alliance that obliges all its member states to sing from the same hymn sheet?

The prioritization of threats includes not only the »who« but also the »how«. Is Russia still the major threat? And is the Russian threat primarily military or asymmetrical and directed against the political stability of Western states? Is rising China an emerging threat or a multi-faceted security risk? To what extent do threats emanating from the »South« call for increased NATO's attention? Do they originate primarily from state failure and economic problems or from terrorism

and the encroachment of extra-regional powers? And what does the withdrawal from the very costly and rather unsuccessful 20 year long security assistance mission in Afghanistan imply for the future of military interventions?

NATO's response to these threats is also contested. Should NATO focus on Russia and its traditional core task of collective defence? Should it rather respond to China by expanding its geographical scope and its partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region? Or should it expand its functional scope and focus, for example, on critical infrastructure, or on stabilization and societal resilience more generally?

Adding to this list of external challenges are increasing internal divisions and uncertainties. Will the United States shift its attention and capabilities away from Europe as the conflict with China intensifies? If so, should European member states start to compensate the relocation both politically and militarily? And how should NATO react to authoritarian tendencies in some member states and to the growing heterogeneity of interests and outlooks?

This edited volume maps and compares expert discourses on these questions within NATO, as well as in selected member states, and in Russian and Ukraine.

Summarizing the key findings, given recent debates about a crisis of the liberal order and a decay of its institutions, a first key finding is that NATO is here to stay. A majority of experts in all member states and from different political orientations are convinced that NATO serves the interests of their countries.

A second finding concerns the widespread conviction that NATO is in need of reform. However, experts in different countries disagree on the scope and direction of reforms and our mapping of discourses point to three ideal-typical futures of NATO, each of which entails specific opportunities and risks.

The first vision is the least expansive and follows the formula »NATO classic plus«. In this future, NATO would go back to basics and focus on the core task of collective defence. As the »plus« in the formula indicates, NATO would not only address the risk of a Russian conventional or nuclear attack, but also threats of hybrid warfare, cyber-attacks and disin-

formation campaigns. The first vision has particularly strong support among Eastern European member states, but also has some vocal advocates in the United States, Germany, the Netherlands and France.

The second vision, »NATO with a Global Outlook« would expand the geographical and functional scope of the Alliance. In this vision, the primary global dynamic on NATO's current agenda is the ongoing power shift towards China. To address it, NATO will have to expand geographically by working with partners in the Indo-Pacific region and functionally by dealing among others with critical infrastructure, supply chains and internet security. This vision is being pushed most vigorously by US government officials and US think tanks, but it is also supported as a quid pro quo for an enduring American presence by experts in East European countries.

The third vision is that of a NATO Generation Z. In this vision, the Alliance would expand the definition of security and its own competences even wider to tackle an array of non-traditional threats. This includes the projection of stability across its Southern flank, on one hand, and societal resilience against climate change, pandemics and asymmetrical interference, such as disinformation campaigns, on the other. This vision finds support among experts in Southern European member states but has recently been gaining support also in the United States and Western European NATO member states.

INTRODUCTION

Matthias Dembinski and Caroline Fehl

NATO is at a crossroads – once again. Although recurrent predictions of its impending decay underrate NATO's inherent stability and strength, the challenges facing the alliance are real, and the need to adapt has been widely recognized among academic observers, national decision-makers and within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization itself. One major challenge lies in structural shifts affecting the leadership role of the United States, on which NATO has depended since its foundation. Domestically, the centre-ground of American society and of its political system is eroding, decreasing support for US global engagement and commitment to multilateralism, despite US President Joe Biden's reassurances that »America is back« (Goldgeier 2019; Kirshner 2021). Globally, the rise of an authoritarian and increasingly assertive China is pulling US attention away from Europe. European states, too, recognize China's growing presence in the region as a security risk. But the debate on the consequences of China's rise and NATO's possible responses has just begun. At the same time, Russia and NATO's stalling dual-track strategy based on deterrence and dialogue are pulling member states in different directions. While some argue for upping the ante by stepping up sanctions and putting more troops on the ground along the Eastern flank, others call for a fresh approach towards Russia. Splits are also emerging between member states looking to the East and to the South. The latter deplore the gap between their contributions to deterrence on the Eastern flank and the (lack-)ing) attention paid to their concerns by Eastern and Northern member states. This geographic divergence also entails conflicting views regarding NATO's purpose. Are threats primarily military in nature and should NATO therefore focus on defence and deterrence? Or are member states confronted with multifaceted security risks, requiring NATO to broaden its agenda? Last but not least, member states are torn between visions of NATO as a community of values or as an organisation based on interests. Should NATO prevent deviations by member states from the catalogue of democratic values? Should it insist on solidarity and consultation with the aim of forging common approaches, not only with regard to Article 5 but across the entire range of foreign and defence policies? Or should NATO acknowledge differences among its members and lower its sights with regard to political coherence and common values?

While officials and pundits have long been aware of these questions and challenges, a culmination of events over the

past few years has given an acute sense of crisis and urgency to debates on the future of NATO: Turkey's repeated diversions from the alliance consensus; former US President Donald Trump's disdain for NATO; the sudden American withdrawal from Northern Syria; and a perceived general lack of consultation and common purpose led French President Emmanuel Macron to diagnose NATO as »brain dead«. Moreover, the alliance's de facto failure in Afghanistan – evident to both pundits and the public well before President Joe Biden's announcement of the impending US troop withdrawal – will undermine confidence in NATO and should cause a thorough evaluation and rethinking of its crisis-management concept. At the 2019 London summit commemorating NATO's 70th anniversary, the Heads of State and Government reacted to all of these signs of crisis and asked NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to initiate a forward-looking reflection process. One element of this process is the report of a Reflection Group published in November 2020 that will pave the way for a new Strategic Concept. NATO will most likely adopt this new Strategic Concept before the end of Stoltenberg's current term of office in late September 2022.

Adjustment may be inevitable but entails the risk of maladaptation (Tardy 2020). Critical analysis of NATO's reflection process, the different directions in which the alliance could evolve, and the political consequences that would flow from these different scenarios is therefore of the utmost political importance. This report provides the basis for such critical reflection.

To identify key lines of debate in the reflection process and likely changes of direction, we map expert discourses among think tanks, research institutes and other relevant non-state actors on the future of NATO in selected member countries, as well as Ukraine and Russia. Member countries have been selected for analysis on the basis of representativeness and of importance in terms of size and influence. By focusing on expert discourses, we seek to go beyond capturing a spectrum of opinions within each of the countries analysed in our report, rather than »blackboxing« these internal discussions and focusing exclusively on government positions. In some countries, such as Italy, the level of agreement among think tanks on crucial issues concerning NATO's future is fairly high. In these cases, clear country-specific positions can be identified more easily. In other countries, such as the

United States, differences among think tanks are vast, reflecting the broad range of political views on the alliance. In these cases, predicting future stances toward NATO based on the preferences of an individual government would be highly misleading.

By identifying areas of agreement and disagreement, the report highlights different alternative futures for NATO and the possible risks to peace, security and NATO's internal cohesion that these different scenarios entail. The mapping involved a structured assessment of debates and positions concerning NATO's major external and internal challenges.

- Regarding the external challenges, we assess debates on NATO's relations with Russia, China and the Southern neighbourhood, as well as debates on arms control and armaments, hybrid threats and out-of-area interventions.
- Regarding internal challenges we assess positions on a possible broadening of NATO's agenda, a possible Europeanization of NATO and relations with the EU, and ways of strengthening consultation and normative unity.
- Based on this mapping of think tank discourses in NATO member states, as well as in two of NATO's Eastern neighbours, we identify areas of agreement and disagreement and thus highlight three alternative futures for NATO. To assess the risk of institutional maladaptation, we discuss the political opportunities and risks associated with the three futures.

In particular, we argue that an evaluation of the reforms should be based on whether they allow NATO as a regional organization to reconcile inherent tensions between three classical conceptions: collective defence, collective security and common security.¹ Scholars have argued that NATO has been attractive for members not only because it has deterred potentially hostile external powers (collective defence) but because it has provided collective security (Sayle 2019: 29). According to this view, the unique combination of American hegemony and leadership, on one hand, and the voice opportunities NATO has opened up for its smaller members, on the other hand, have created opportunities for cooperation and peace within the transatlantic area (Risse-Kappen 1995). However, because of ingroup/outgroup effects and other dynamics, regional organizations in general and value-based regional organizations (such as NATO) in particular are prone to emphasize collective defence and security at the expense of common security; that is, their ability to cooperate with external actors. An assessment of NATO's reform process should therefore also take NATO's propensity for cooperation with external powers into account.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 opens up with a discussion of the challenges NATO is facing and possible responses that are being considered within relevant bodies of NATO itself, particularly its International Secretariat.² Chapters 3-15 map debates within individual countries. The concluding chapter summarizes the findings, and presents and evaluates possible futures for NATO.

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¹ It should be noted that these classical conceptions differ from NATO's core tasks that have been described in the 2010 Strategic Concept as collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm).

² For this study, we conducted interviews with members of the International Secretariat and the Permanent Delegations of selected member states.

ON THE ROAD TO NATO 2030: HOW THE ORGANIZATION VIEWS THE FUTURE OF NATO

Matthias Dembinski and Caroline Fehl

Institutionally speaking, NATO is a strange animal. Viewed from one perspective, it is an intergovernmental organization that respects national sovereignty and the veto rights of its member states. With the disappearance of the unifying Soviet threat and after several rounds of enlargement since 1999, finding common ground has become ever more difficult. Viewed from another perspective, NATO is characterized by strong mechanisms that facilitate coherence and compromises well above the level of the lowest common denominator of state interests. Those mechanisms include norms and codes of conduct, such as »all for one and one for all«, that entrap member states rhetorically (Schimmelfennig 2001), a permanently running consultation machinery, and, last but not least, a vast civilian and military international bureaucracy with usually rather »entrepreneurial« Secretary Generals at its top (Ostermann 2020).

Policy change within NATO is driven and restricted first and foremost by (coalitions of) member states. Yet NATO's bureaucracies, and the International Secretariat in particular, as well as attached bodies, such as the Parliamentary Assembly, influence decision-making processes as well. NATO's Secretary Generals, though with varying degrees of success, have tried to leave their imprint on the organization. Staff at the International Secretariat facilitate and influence negotiations and decision-making by preparing policy papers, chairing committees at various levels, from the North Atlantic Council in the format of Heads of State and Government down to specialized committees, by identifying possible compromises and by implementing and framing new concepts in ways that link them to the established »acquis« of shared norms and goals.¹ The International Secretariat does not necessarily represent fixed interests and positions. Fairly often, individual members and units present different views,

and the Secretariat, instead of pursuing a clearly defined line, merely states policy alternatives.

The London summit in December 2019 provided a unique opportunity for the Secretary General. Heads of State and Government »invited the Secretary General to present to Foreign Ministers a Council-agreed proposal for a forward-looking reflection process under his auspices, drawing on relevant expertise, to further strengthen NATO's political dimension, including consultation«.² Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg seized the opportunity. He tasked the Reflection Group, consisting of ten eminent persons under the chairmanship of Thomas de Maizière and Wess Mitchell, with developing recommendations for strengthening Allied unity and political consultation. However, he also emphasized that the work of the Reflection Group was just one part of a larger reform process that he is determined to lead. He presented some of his own ideas on NATO 2030 even before the Reflection Group published its report in November 2020. In his view, this process is about enabling NATO to remain strong militarily, for example, by retaining its technological edge, becoming more united politically, for example, by strengthening consultation and providing timely information on national policies that have repercussions for other members, and by taking a broader approach globally.³ In his view, »going global« implies first and foremost a deepening of partnerships with states and organizations in Asia and the MENA region in particular. Beyond these catchwords, Stoltenberg's agenda aims at keeping NATO relevant, first and foremost in the eyes of the United States and other member states, but also of publics that are increasingly interested in policy issues beyond NATO's traditional realm of military defence. Thus, the eight thematic issues on his reform agenda also include the climate/security nexus, with a focus on reducing NATO forces' CO₂ emissions and improving societal resilience. NATO's efforts in this regard are aimed primarily at aligning national standards in a variety of areas, such as critical infrastructure. According to interviewees, other ideas, such as a common

¹ Energy security is a case in point. Since the mid-2000s, Eastern European member states have supported NATO's involvement with energy security, while states such as France and Germany have hesitated, fearing that NATO's involvement might lead to an unnecessary militarization of this policy field. In the run-up to the formulation of the 2010 Strategic Concept staff at the International Secretariat contributed to a compromise by linking energy security to established topics, such as cyber security. After the adoption of the Strategic Concept, NATO created an Energy Security Section within the newly established Emerging Security Challenges Division. As this unit implemented the new policy, the meaning of energy security shifted from its initial geo-strategic connotation to a narrow understanding closely related to Article 5 (Bocse 2020).

² NATO London Declaration, 4 December 2019; https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm.

³ Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on launching NATO 2030 – Strengthening the Alliance in an Increasingly Competitive World, 8 June 2020; https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_176197.htm?selectedLocale=en

funding scheme for NATO operations, are unlikely to gain traction with member states.

The Reflection Group, too, stretched its mandate. It undertook a comprehensive review of NATO's challenges that resulted in 138 recommendations (NATO 2030). Given that the report had to take the red lines of its ten members into account,⁴ it is a surprisingly forward-looking document. Yet, it presents the views of its members and does not necessarily reflect thinking within the International Secretariat or other NATO bodies. Since the publication of the report, the two chairmen and other members of the group have published their own interpretations of the report. The debate within the organization departs from the premise that the alliance's future should build on its past and the three core tasks of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security, as laid out in the 2010 Strategic Concept.

RUSSIA: CONFRONTATION OR DIALOGUE?

After Russia's annexation of Crimea and the 2014 Wales summit, NATO went »back to basics«, that is, back to a more collective defence and deterrence-oriented posture. Its dual-track approach rhetorically combined the renewed focus on deterrence of Russia as NATO's »chief threat« (NATO 2020: 16) with the offer of dialogue. There is a sense within the International Secretariat that by creating, for example, the Enhanced Forward Presence, totalling about 4,500 troops, the »Tailored Forward Presence« in Bulgaria and Romania, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VHTF) and the NATO Readiness Initiative 4-30 the alliance has made considerable progress in restoring deterrence.⁵ In contrast, the second element of the dual-track approach is lagging far behind. One of our interviewees acknowledged that divergences among states and the rather uncompromising stance of many Eastern European members toward Russia, plus Russia's intransigent position, limit the possibilities of a constructive dialogue on Russia's place in the European security order. In this view, an overly restrictive interpretation of NATO's dual-track approach overrates Russia's military might and pushes Russia further into a tight alliance with China. In contrast, the Reflection Group Report is an expression of this immobility. It tightly circumscribes the dialogue part of NATO's dual-track approach by arguing that »to be productive, such dialogue must be firm on principles and conducted from a position of unity and strength« (NATO 2020: 26). Instead, NATO should »tighten rather than merely renew sanctions (...). Evolving the strategy in this way would preserve cohesion within NATO, while providing a prospect for breaking the stalemate with Russia on NATO's terms« (ibid: 26). The report underscores NATO's open door policy and does not mention the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

REACTING TO CHINA'S RISE

Looking into the future, one of the most important challenges concerns NATO's reaction to China's rise and increased global presence. The Trump administration had pushed China onto NATO's agenda,⁶ and President Biden will continue to call for transatlantic unity and solidarity against China. At the 2021 Munich Security Conference, he invited the European NATO members to »prepare together for a long-term strategic competition with China«.⁷ At issue is how America's NATO partners assess the implications of China's rise and whether they coordinate responses primarily within NATO or the EU. Recent EU strategy papers describe China as a partner, an economic competitor and a systemic rival,⁸ and its High Representative Josep Borrell asked member states to develop an independent European approach and that the EU should do things on China »its own way«.⁹

NATO itself was rather slow to react to this geopolitical shift. China was not mentioned at all in the Communiqués of the Wales (2014), Warsaw (2016) and Brussels summits (2018). The unusually brief London Declaration (2019) contains a rather lengthy paragraph devoted to issues such as the »security of our communications, including 5G«, which concludes that China's growing influence presents »both opportunities and challenges«.¹⁰

Since then, China has been quickly rising up NATO's agenda. Sensing the American priorities and the changing mood within Europe, departments within the International Secretariat have begun to analyse China's rise and possible ramifications for NATO and transatlantic security. In numerous interviews and statements, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has explained that China's rise and growing presence in NATO's vicinity demands »a more global approach« from NATO.¹¹ In his view, going global does not imply a global presence – as a collective defence organization, NATO will

⁴ Interestingly, the report contains a critique of Donald Trump's unilateral policies but no critical words about Turkey's nationalist course.

⁵ The NATO Readiness Initiative was agreed at the Brussels summit in 2018 and aims at putting 30 air squadrons, 30 naval combat units and 30 mechanized battalions on higher levels of alert, ready to deploy within 30 days. Brussels Summit Declaration, Press Release (2018) 074.

⁶ In February 2017, Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis remarked to his NATO colleagues that »the transatlantic bond is essential to (...) addressing a more assertive China. (<https://nato.usmission.gov/february-15-2017-intervention-secretary-defense-mattis-session-one-north-atlantic-council/>).

⁷ The White House: Remarks by President Biden at the 2021 Virtual Munich Security Conference, 19 Feb. 2021.

⁸ European Commission, EU-China – A strategic outlook, 12 March 2019.

⁹ Josep Borrell 2020: The Sinatra Doctrine. How the EU Should Deal with the US-China Competition, IAI Papers 20 (<https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaip2024.pdf>).

¹⁰ Shortly before the summit, defence ministers agreed to update NATO's baseline requirement for civilian telecommunications, including 5G and to undertake a thorough risk assessment regarding »the consequences of foreign ownership, control or direct investment. This is important, because next generation telecommunications will affect every aspect of our society«, including military operations. Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers, 25 Oct. 2019 (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_169945.htm?selectedLocale=en).

¹¹ The Secretary General stresses that NATO and collective defence will remain geographically defined. However, he has also emphasized that, in a globalized world, the security of member states is affected »by events elsewhere. Economically. Politically. Or militarily« (cf. Berti and Diaz-Plaja 2018: 21).

remain geographically confined – but rather a global perspective and a multi-faceted response to a China that is coming closer to NATO, ranging geographically from the Arctic to the Mediterranean and functionally from the security of critical infrastructure to space to emerging disruptive technologies and arms control (Stoltenberg 2020). While Stoltenberg has been continuously repeating the »opportunity and challenges« formula,¹² the Reflection Report struck a slightly more critical tone. It puts China on the same level as Russia, referring to »two systemic rivals« (NATO 2020: 9). »NATO must devote much more time, political resources, and action to the security challenges posed by China« and should »consider establishing a consultative body to discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China« (NATO 2020: 12). In a subsequent article, the chairmen of the Reflection Group expanded this proposal and called for the establishment of a »consultative body modelled on the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls« to counter China's »military–civil fusion strategy which aims to systematically harness technology for military aims« (de Maizièrre and Mitchell 2021).

In contrast, the debate within the International Secretariat is more circumspect. Interviewees emphasize that China does not constitute an Article 5 threat and that NATO will show consideration for the close economic ties between member states and China. A coordination of existing US, UK and EU export control regimes appears more feasible than a renewal of the Cold War CoCom export control regime. Staffers expect that NATO will upgrade dialogue and partnerships with East Asian democracies. Moreover, NATO will monitor Chinese cyber activities, armament trends and investments in critical infrastructure in Europe and possible repercussions for NATO's capacity to move troops and resupplies during an emergency. Beyond these measures, however, a NATO policy on China has still to emerge.

NATO AND THE MENA REGION

Debates within the International Secretariat acknowledge that the difference between the attention and resources that NATO has devoted to deterrence on the Eastern flank and to stability projection on the Southern flank might undermine the perception of solidarity and cohesion. Beyond the general acceptance that a more balanced approach is necessary, the debate reflects continuing uncertainty and differences among member states concerning the appropriate course of action to strengthen the Southern flank. NATO reacted to the increased instability in the MENA region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the emergence of the Islamic State at the summits in Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016). Building on the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, it launched the defence Capacity-Building Initiative in 2014 and adopt-

ed a 360-degree approach to deter threats in 2015.¹³ At the Warsaw summit, NATO placed »Projecting Stability« rhetorically on par with »Deterrence and defence«. Stoltenberg had introduced the projecting stability concept in a speech in 2016, in which he had enumerated various challenges, such as refugee flows resulting from civil wars, state collapse and terrorism, and argued that »to protect our territory, we must be willing to project stability beyond our borders«. ¹⁴ In the aftermath of Warsaw, NATO developed the »framework for the South« to promote good governance, integrity and transparency in neighbouring countries, deployed a training mission to Iraq, and decided in February 2021 to increase its personnel from 500 to 4,000. Additionally, in 2018 the »Hub for the South« became operational at the Joint Force Command in Naples. The mandate of the Hub includes understanding regional challenges and improving dialogue and cooperation with partners such as NGOs and other regional organizations in the MENA region (Vershbow and Speranza 2019).

Nevertheless, several factors are still being debated within NATO bodies. With regard to strategy, should the projecting stability approach be complemented with more robust deterrence and defence elements to counter the increasing presence of external actors such as Russia in the region? Or should NATO focus on the political and economic root causes of instability? Regarding partners, is the »Hub for the South« approach and working with societal actors the best way forward? Or will NATO, being a state-centric organization itself, continue to work primarily with partner states' security apparatuses and try to mainstream good governance and rule-of-law norms into its capacity-building and training programmes? And lastly, should NATO pursue its fight against terrorism agenda in parallel with, and under the same conceptual roof as, its projecting stability agenda (Berti and Diaz-Plaja 2018)? Or should NATO prioritize projecting stability and separate both agendas conceptually?

ARMS CONTROL AND ARMAMENTS

Since the Harmel Report of 1967, NATO and the International Secretariat have taken a strong interest in arms control and non-proliferation. NATO's function in this policy area is twofold: it serves as a forum for allied consultations,¹⁵ and it communicates common positions. For example, NATO's declaration that member states share the US assessment of Russian violations of the INF treaty gave credibility to the American position. President Biden's decision to extend the New START treaty has been welcomed within NATO, Stol-

¹² See, for example, the Discussion with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Council on Foreign Relations, 11 March 2021; https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_182132.htm

¹³ Statement by NATO Defence Ministers, 25 June 2015, Press Release (2015) 094.

¹⁴ »Projecting Stability: charting NATO's future«, Speech by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 29 September 2018. Cf. Berti and Diaz-Plaja 2018: 20.

¹⁵ A prominent example for NATO's consultative function was the Special Consultative Group on Arms Control that existed between 1979 and 1987 and allowed European allies to influence bilateral negotiations on intermediate-range missiles.

tenberg has given assurances that NATO will not deploy new land-based, nuclear armed missiles in response to the breakdown of the INF treaty, and interviewees hope that the Open Skies Treaty might somehow be rescued.

In contrast, NATO's declaratory policy on the future of nuclear disarmament and its own nuclear posture send rather mixed signals. Influenced by President Obama's disarmament speech in Prague in April 2009, NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept expressed the resolve to »create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons« (NATO 2010). However, when international momentum gathered behind the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) resulting in its adoption in 2017, NATO member states issued a statement condemning the treaty and claiming that it creates divisions and undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). According to the statement, the TPNW would delegitimize NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements without engaging »any state actually possessing nuclear weapons« (NATO 2017).¹⁶

Members of the Secretariat share this critique of the TPNW (Rühle 2017), and the Secretary General has expressed his strong support for NATO's nuclear sharing policy and his expectation that Germany will continue to take an active part in this arrangement.¹⁷ The Reflection Group Report is even more explicit. It repeats the familiar formula that NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements should be revitalized, »that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will never contribute to practical disarmament « (NATO 2020: 37), and that China must be considered in future arms control. Instead, debates within the Secretariat emphasize military *modernization* and the Reflection Group Report stresses that maintaining a technological edge in crucial areas, such as artificial intelligence, autonomous capabilities and space »is the foundation upon which NATO's ability to deter and defend (...) rests« (NATO 2020: 29).

INTERVENTION OUT-OF-AREA

Against the background of the failed out-of-area interventions in Afghanistan and Libya, interviewed members of the International Secretariat share the sense that NATO is very unlikely to engage in such operations in the future. NATO will retain limited expeditionary capabilities, but is more likely to conduct training, capacity-building and observation missions. Nevertheless, NATO and the International Secretariat are developing a human security agenda aimed at protecting civilians, and women in particular, in armed conflict. Likewise, staffers emphasize that NATO will always seek broad international legitimization for military interventions.

¹⁶ Among the member states analyzed, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey have US nuclear weapons stationed on their territories under NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements.

¹⁷ Jens Stoltenberg: Germany's support for nuclear sharing is vital to protect peace and freedom, op-ed article originally published in German in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 May 2020; https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_175663.htm?selectedLocale=en

HYBRID THREATS

As already mentioned, most staffers at the International Secretariat regard the likelihood of a Russian military attack as rather low. In contrast, a broad range of incidents summarized in NATO terminology as hybrid threats or hybrid attacks coming from different sources are regarded as much more likely.

Reflecting this changing threat perception, NATO members put hybrid threats on the agenda of the Warsaw summit. They adopted, among other things, a »Cyber Defence Pledge«, agreed to strengthen societal resilience by achieving the so-called NATO Baseline Requirements for National Resilience¹⁸ and adopted a strategy for NATO's role in countering »hybrid warfare«.¹⁹ In this regard, they declared that the Council could decide to invoke Article 5 in such contingencies.²⁰

Since then, the concept of hybrid threats has been elevated and has become increasingly blurred in NATO documents. The Reflection Report, for example, refers to the term »hybrid« 53 times in 20 pages (Ehrhart 2021: 44). Here hybrid threats include actions by third parties that range from propaganda and disinformation to the manipulation of elections to cyber-attacks against civilian networks and critical infrastructure of various magnitudes to covert intervention and cyber-attacks of military networks as a precursor to open warfare. Despite the attention devoted to hybridity, the debate within the Secretariat on such scenarios and possible responses is still characterized by uncertainty. Interviewees acknowledge the vast differences between such acts. Regarding hybrid threats in the lower and medium range of the spectrum, officials describe NATO's role in slightly different terms. Most policy papers concede that NATO is not the natural first responder. Prime responsibility for ensuring resilience and fending off disinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks against networks and infrastructure rests with private actors, states and the EU.²¹ NATO has a prime responsibility for protecting its own networks and for refuting malign misrepresentations of NATO's own activities.²² Beyond that, NATO's focus is on building situational awareness and on monitoring and coordinating the

¹⁸ Commitment to enhance resilience, NATO Press Release (2016)118, 8 July 2016. Cf. also Wolf-Diether Roepke and Hasit Thankey: Resilience: the first line of defence, in: *NATO Review*, 27 February 2019.

¹⁹ The summit communiqué defined hybrid warfare as situations »where a broad, complex, and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means, and overt and covert military, paramilitary, civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design by state and non-state actors to achieve their objectives«.

²⁰ Warsaw Summit Communiqué, 9 July 2016, press release (2016)100, para. 72.

²¹ The EU has developed its own policies on »Cyber Security for the Digital Decade«; (<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/eus-cybersecurity-strategy-digital-decade>) and on resilience of critical infrastructure (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/pdf/15122020_proposal_directive_resilience_critical_entities_com-2020-829_en.pdf).

²² NATO has a website called »Setting the Record Straight« to correct this kind of disinformation.

responses of private actors and state agencies particularly with a view to ensuring the safety of critical infrastructure needed for the purpose of collective defence, such as the movement of NATO troops. In this view, NATO's approach to resilience is closely linked to Article 5. Other papers allude to a model in which NATO sits at the centre of a web of private and public actors in partner- and member states and coordinates their resilience activities.

Regarding the upper end of the threat spectrum, staffers agree that NATO has a primary role to play. However, they also point out that attribution in such scenarios is notoriously difficult, that there are no clearly defined red lines within this grey zone, and that here is a great risk of misperceptions and inadvertent escalation. In these circumstances, the invocation of Article 5 may thus not be a credible deterrent. So far, NATO has not developed a strategy on how to respond to hybrid attacks in the upper end of the spectrum (Rühle 2021).

BROADENING NATO'S AGENDA

NATO's approach to projecting stability and to countering hybrid threats is related to the debate on whether NATO should focus on collective defence or should broaden its agenda even further and seek responsibility for a set of issues ranging from climate change and gender to NATO's role in pandemics or domestic terrorism. The thinking within the International Secretariat and among the members of the Reflection Group goes in different directions. The Secretary General has repeatedly stressed that security is not only based on strong militaries. »We need strong and resilient societies and economies, too.«²³ Some members of the Reflection Group, such as Marta Dassù, assume that by broadening the agenda and »more actively supporting human security and the resilience of democratic societies« (Dassù 2020), NATO will retain its relevance in the eyes of the public. Moreover, by expanding its agenda, NATO would be better able to accommodate the more diverse views of its Southern members on risks and security challenges. With regard to terrorism, for example, the Reflection Report argues that NATO should integrate the fight against terrorism into its three core tasks, »not least to maintain NATO's perceived relevance among concerned home audiences« (NATO 2020: 32).

Others are concerned that by expanding the agenda, NATO might create expectations that it cannot fulfil. The CO₂ footprint of armed forces is an important issue but will not help NATO to retain public support. Moreover, by broadening the agenda, NATO runs the risk of losing its focus and becoming involved in issues where it has no comparative advantage. Critics of an expanded agenda refer not only to an inflation of hybrid threats but also to terrorism as an example of this risk of distraction. They point out that NATO cannot add value with regard to preventing terrorist acts within member states. Regarding the fight against terrorism be-

yond NATO's borders, they argue that NATO as a consensus-oriented organization is simply not well placed to deal with such rapidly changing threats that are perceived by member states rather differently.

RELATIONS WITH THE EU

After the EU adopted its Global Strategy in 2016, both Western organizations renewed their efforts to reform their relationship. However, despite the Joint Declaration on EU–NATO Cooperation of 2018²⁴ and agreement to work together on 74 concrete projects, relations are still not defined. The co-chair of the Reflection Group Thomas de Maizière laments the lack of focus and commitment to co-operation and criticizes the shallowness of concepts such as European strategic autonomy.²⁵ As a matter of fact, functional overlap between the two organizations is actually increasing as NATO is broadening its agenda beyond territorial defence and as the EU is striving for strategic autonomy also in the field of security, defence and armament. Thus co-operation can no longer be achieved by a division of labour. Instead, functional cooperation requires agreement on hierarchy, authority and autonomy of decision-making. Are NATO and the NAC, where the United States wields a tremendous amount of influence and the United Kingdom has a strong voice, the predominant institutions where members consult and achieve agreement? Or are the European Union and the European Council the place where EU members forge agreement on foreign, security and defence policy?

The Reflection Group Report takes a rather traditional stance. It insists that »NATO remains (...) the essential forum for security consultations and decisions among Allies« (NATO 2020: 55). It asks for the »fullest involvement of the NATO Allies that are not members of the EU in its initiatives« (NATO 2020: 56)²⁶ and reminds that unnecessary duplication should be avoided. Members of the International Secretariat are more supportive of a balanced relationship between NATO and the EU. However, proposals for a European pillar within NATO or an overhaul of NATO's structure that would give European NATO members more voice collectively are not on the Secretary General's reform agenda.

BURDEN SHARING

In 2006 NATO members agreed to a spending target of 2 per cent of GDP on defence and at least 20 per cent of de-

²³ Opening Remarks by Secretary General on NATO 2030, 4 February 2021; https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_181208.htm

²⁴ Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation, Press Release (2018)095, 10 July 2018.

²⁵ Cf. De Maizière's statement at the 16 Petersberger Gespräche zur Sicherheit: Die Weiterentwicklung der NATO, 16 March 2021; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z28V25HqYoM&t=1s>

²⁶ This formulation links the Joint Declaration of 2018 but changes its wording. The paragraph in the Joint Declaration reads: »We encourage the fullest possible involvement of the NATO allies that are not members of the EU in its initiatives« and asks that EU member states that are not part of the alliance should equally be involved in its initiatives. Joint Declaration of EU-NATO Cooperation, para. 3.

fence expenditures on procurement, research and development. At the Wales summit in 2014, they transformed this informal understanding into a more formal pledge.²⁷ Although the European NATO members have increased defence spending substantially since 2014 – in 2021, nine member states are likely to meet the 2 per cent goal – burden sharing became the most divisive issue during the Trump administration.

Looking forward, the Secretary General and the Reflection Group support fairer burden-sharing. While the Reflection Group advocates the 2 per cent goal, members of the International Secretariat are more supportive of politically less divisive and more differentiated formulas, such as the cash, capabilities and contributions metric, to assess the fair sharing of the common burden. As already mentioned, the Secretary General has put forward ideas on a common financing of contributions, for example, to the Enhanced Forward Presence, as well as a NATO defence innovation fund. These ideas, although they might contribute to a fairer sharing of the burden, are unlikely to find support among member states.

POLITICAL COHESION

As already mentioned, member states' concerns about NATO's lack of cohesion and sense of purpose, culminating in Macron's »braindead« outburst, triggered the NATO 2030 reform process and the Reflection Report. There is a general consensus within NATO bodies that norms such as »one for all and all for one« pertain to collective defence. At issue is whether NATO should oblige members to also act together on non-Article 5 issues and how this could be achieved. The report of the Reflection Group strikes a carefully worded compromise between NATO's political cohesion and national sovereignty. On one hand, it proposes closer consultations as a means to secure the unity of the alliance. With regard to procedures, the report encourages the delegation of more competences to the Secretary General and raising the threshold for single country blockages. On the other hand, it argues that NATO should respect the different security cultures and outlooks of its member states, allowing more flexibility and the establishment of coalitions inside Alliance structures. Interviews with members of the International Secretariat reveal strong support for retaining NATO's intergovernmental character and that diverting from the consensus principle will not gain traction.

NATO: A COMMUNITY OF VALUES OR INTERESTS?

Related to the issue of political cohesion is the debate on NATO's character as a community of democratic values. The Secretary General has repeatedly emphasized that NATO

will bolster its support for democracy abroad and should also strengthen democratic principles enshrined in the preamble of the NATO treaty within the alliance. A commitment to democratic principles is deemed necessary not least in order to make the alliance more immune against attempts by external powers to divide members and undermine collective defence. The NATO 2030 report recommends several mechanisms to strengthen NATO's character as a community of values. It proposes a code of good conduct to uphold democracy and the rule of law, as well as the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience. NATO's Parliamentary Assembly, too, focuses on the danger of democratic backsliding and has proposed a centre for democratic resilience within NATO.²⁸

Other members of the International Secretariat caution that NATO, in contrast to the EU, possesses no instruments to influence political developments within member states. Trying to enforce democratic standards within member states might be more detrimental to NATO's unity and cohesion than tolerating deviations from the democratic path.

²⁷ The relevant sentence reads: „Allies (...) aim to move towards the 2 % guideline within a decade (...) Wales summit declaration para. 4.

²⁸ See Gerry Connally, NATO Parliamentary Assembly Political Committee Report: NATO@70: Why the Alliance remains Indispensable.

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COUNTRY CASES NATO MEMBER STATES

THE UNITED STATES DEBATES THE FUTURE OF NATO

Caroline Fehl

Historically, the United States and NATO have been of critical importance to one another. To the United States, NATO has constituted one of the central pillars of the US-led post-war international order. Designed not only to defend and balance against the Soviet Union, but also to win European support for US liberal hegemony and for intra-European reconciliation and integration through a strategy of »institutional binding« (Ikenberry 2019: 12), it remained valuable to US interests and strategy even after the demise of the Warsaw Pact. To NATO, conversely, the United States was and is the most important ally. US national defence spending dwarfs that of other allies in absolute and relative terms, accounting for two-thirds of the alliance's overall defence spending and 3.4 per cent of US GDP (in 2019). The alliance also depends on the United States for 22 per cent of its budget and for key assets in areas ranging from intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance to ballistic missile defence (NATO 2021). Most critically, US nuclear weapons provide the backbone of NATO's nuclear deterrence posture. Furthermore, the United States traditionally staffs NATO's most important command post, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), who is double-hatted as the commander of the US European Command (EUCOM).

As a result of this material and organizational pre-eminence, positions and policy choices taken by US governments matter more to the alliance than those of any other individual member state. In this respect, the presidency of Donald Trump has left a divided legacy both for the organization and for his successor Joe Biden. While Trump's rhetorical attacks on NATO and contested troop withdrawal decisions have fuelled doubts about the strength of the US commitment to allies, his administration also exhibited continuities with past US policies in reinforcing US capabilities on NATO's Eastern flank through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) (EUCOM 2020). Already on the campaign trail, President Biden affirmed his strong commitment to NATO as part of his foreign policy platform (Biden 2020a), as well as his intention to recommit the United States to bilateral and multi-lateral arms control and cooperation among democracies. Speaking at the 2021 virtual Munich Security Conference, he accordingly reaffirmed that »the transatlantic alliance is back«, promising to »keep faith with Article 5« (Biden 2021a). And yet, he will still have to manage transatlantic differences on issues ranging from burden-sharing to relations with Russia and China. And while Biden is determined

to revitalize US global engagement in general, and the transatlantic partnership in particular, he cannot ignore long-term structural shifts in US politics that have eroded the political centre and have lessened voters' appetite for global engagement (particularly military engagement) on both the left and the right. These realities are recognized, for instance, in a seminal report co-authored by Biden's National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan that sets out a »foreign policy for the middle class« (Ahmed et al. 2020). At the same time, the very fact that US foreign policy can fluctuate strongly with presidential terms complicates Biden's reengagement with allies, who are well aware that a future Republican president could quickly re-inflate the conflicts they faced during Trump's term. A critical question for both the United States and its NATO allies is thus whether Biden will be able, through a more systematic and thought-through effort, to set a course that will guide US foreign policy for years to come with regard to key challenges, ranging from climate change to the rise of China.

These complications and open questions notwithstanding, Biden's (partial) policy reversal on NATO is certain, for the coming four years, to bring US policy back in line with a strong bipartisan mainstream view of the alliance that prevails not only within the US government bureaucracy, military and Congress (Gould 2019), but also across the vast landscape of think tanks constituting the wider US expert community. This mainstream view is shared by major centrist institutes such as the Atlantic Council, the Brookings Institution, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, as well as by the progressive think tanks that carry most influence with the present administration, the Center for American Progress and the Center for a New American Security. It is characterized by a set of agreements: on China as the number one long-term security challenge; on Russia as a major threat to US national security and NATO as the primary tool for countering it; on the values of liberal democracy as the basis of the Atlantic alliance; and on the increasing relevance and diversity of non-military and non-traditional threats that need to be addressed, both within and outside NATO. While the mainstream is thus solidly Atlanticist, most pundits also agree on the need for greater European self-reliance as the United States continues the »pivot to Asia« initiated under Barack Obama, and for stronger European contributions to NATO burden-sharing.

And yet, former President Trump is not alone in positioning himself outside the mainstream. Both at US universities and think tanks, influential scholars and experts – particularly, but not only those placing themselves in the «realist» school of thought – are questioning conventional Atlanticist wisdom, such as the rationale for a continued US military presence in Europe, understanding NATO as a community of values, and hawkish policies vis-à-vis Russia.

THREAT PERCEPTIONS

While it is beyond the scope of this report to paint a full picture of the plethora of threats and challenges discussed by US security policy experts, a number of core agreements can be identified. These largely concur with the «4+1» formula coined by former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Joseph Dunford to identify the main threats to US national security (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2016): China, Russia, Iran, North Korea and the (more diffuse, hence «+») threat of violent extremism and terrorism (O’Hanlon 2020; see also Wood 2020: 215–236). The consensual nature and stability of this threat perception is also evidenced by the fact that the Biden Administration’s *Interim National Security Strategy* lists the exact same threats in identical order (Biden 2021b).

Among these widely agreed threats, the highest priority is China, which is now – in the words used by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at his Senate confirmation hearing – widely perceived as «the most significant challenge of any nation state to the United States» (Blinken 2021a: 15). Blinken’s promise to «approach China from a position of strength» (ibid: 16) is echoed in numerous think tank publications on the «China challenge» (Anonymous 2021; Ford/Goldgeier 2021; Kroenig/Cimmino 2020; see also Beckley/Brands 2021; Campbell/Doshi 2020). The growing regional and global assertiveness of Russia is a second point of broad agreement (Coffey/Mrachek 2020a; Weiss/Rumer 2020). As with China, however, influential voices also caution against an overly confrontational policy toward America’s former Cold War rival (see below). Third, Iran, North Korea and the problem of WMD proliferation linked to both countries are widely seen as significant threats to the United States and global stability, even though there is little agreement on how to respond to them (Catalano et al. 2020; Cordesman 2020; Mrachek et al. 2020; Jackson 2019). Violent extremism and terrorism (particularly jihadist) is still on the list of key threats for US experts and policymakers (Phillips 2020), but has recently declined in relative importance.

Cutting across the 4+1 issues, experts across the political spectrum agree on the ever-increasing importance of non-traditional (non-kinetic) threats, particularly cyber and hybrid threats (Bellasio/Silfversten 2020; Nelson/Perkovich 2020; Wheeler 2018). These threats are seen as emanating from non-state actors, but also from governments, including China and Russia (Polyakova/Boyer 2018). Furthermore, the trend toward «democratic backsliding» both within and outside the West is perceived as an increasingly serious security issue by large parts of the US foreign policy establishment

(Kendall-Taylor 2019; Katz/Taussig 2018) and has been flagged as a key challenge by President Biden, but is viewed differently by a sizeable conservative minority (see below). The Interim NSS highlights this problem even before addressing the list of more conventional threats, warning that «democracies across the globe, including our own, are increasingly under siege» (Biden 2021b: 7). Lastly, the NSS also captures a broader trend in the US foreign policy establishment in describing pandemics, climate change and other environmental and societal risks as part of the «global security landscape» and as forming part of the «biggest threats» (ibid.).

RUSSIA

«Geography still matters. Russia—NATO’s largest, most militarily capable neighbor—remains NATO’s principal external challenge» (Burns/Lute 2019). This statement by former US NATO ambassadors Douglas Lute and Nicholas Burns, put forth in a report for the Harvard Belfer Center on the occasion of NATO’s 70th anniversary, captures the predominant view of the US foreign policy community, which understands Russia as NATO’s principal «raison d’être» (Goldgeier/Martin 2020). At the same time, the statement that «geography matters» can also be interpreted as a characterization of the US perspective on NATO: unlike Europeans looking to NATO for the military defence of their homelands, US policymakers and experts discuss the Atlantic alliance from a geographical distance as an organization dealing with US interests in one specific world region. As far as the US mainstream view is concerned, NATO’s business is the «territorial defense and the maintenance of stability in Europe» (Moreland 2019), and Russia is the single most important threat to that business. Accordingly, discussions about NATO are closely intertwined (albeit by no means identical) with broader debates about the bilateral US–Russia relationship.

Both with regard to the nature of the Russian threat and with regard to advisable responses within and outside NATO, three broad perspectives can be distinguished in the landscape of US think tanks.¹

The first, and by far most influential perspective can be characterized as both Atlanticist and deterrence-focused. In this perspective – widely shared by policymakers on both sides of the aisle – Russia is a «revisionist» or «revanchist» power bent on «undermin[ing] the security order that emerged in Europe after the Cold War» (Colby/Solomon 2016; Herbst 2020; see also Vershbow/Breedlove 2019; Daalder 2017; Schmitt 2018). This revisionist impulse should be met with resolve rather than attempts to «accommodate» Russia (Fried/Vershbow 2020). As a study published jointly by several major US think tanks put it: «Some argue that such demonstrations of strength would be provocative. We

¹ While these perspectives do not represent ideological camps with fixed borders, and individual experts at times combine positions attributed here to different perspectives, they nevertheless represent visible argumentative clusters in the US debate.

believe Western weakness would be more provocative» (Binnendijk et al. 2016).

For NATO, this means, in the first place, strengthening deterrence particularly on its Eastern flank. While this demand is fairly consensual at a general level, pundits are by no means agreed on what a stronger deterrence posture would look like in practice. Largely in line with NATO's current strategy of »deterrence by rapid reinforcement«, an Atlantic Council report (Vershbow/Breedlove 2019) proposes qualitative and quantitative reinforcements of US and NATO conventional forces that should be made on a rotational basis (with some additional permanent elements, such as headquarters) or just outside former Warsaw Pact territory. This cautious reinforcement is intended to avoid divisions over the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, which commits NATO to carrying out its mission without »permanent stationing of substantial combat forces« (ibid.; similarly Binnendijk et al. 2016). In contrast to this approach, analysts such as Elbridge Colby at the Center for a New American Security (Colby and Solomon 2015) or David Shlapak and Michael Johnson at the RAND Corporation (Shlapak/Johnson 2016) advocate a strategy of »deterrence by denial«, proposing to permanently station significantly stronger conventional forces in Poland and the Baltics.² The aim of this force posture is to make a quick Russian land grab in the Baltics (a »fait accompli« – see below) hard enough to deter such an aggression in the first place.³

Beyond the Baltics, analysts highlight the need for the alliance to »set NATO's sights on the High North« (Danoy/Maddox 2020). Warning against the threat of a »Russian A2/AA [A2/AD] bubble along the Alliance's Northern flank«, they argue that »[t]he question [...] is not whether NATO should be actively engaged in Arctic issues, but rather what is to be the form of that engagement« (ibid.: 76–77). Proposals under discussion range from diplomatic engagement with Russia – for instance, by working on a military code of conduct for the Arctic through the NATO-Russia Council – to the establishment of a NATO Arctic Command, Arctic Rapid Reaction Force, and investment in icebreaker capabilities.

In addition to reinforcing deterrence, Atlanticist deterrence advocates generally favour continuing NATO's open door policy vis-à-vis countries aspiring to membership, and »standing strong in the face of Russian intimidation« aimed at preventing a further expansion of the alliance, rather than granting Russia a »veto« over alliance policy (Farkas 2015; see also Coffey/Mrachek 2020b; Montgomery 2019). While acknowledging that NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia may need to remain on the back burner for some time to come,

they advocate a more proactive NATO policy to »boost both partners' deterrence capacity and reduce Moscow's ability to undermine their sovereignty« (Vershbow 2020: 69). Such a policy could include the provision of military capabilities, a permanent NATO presence at Ukrainian and Georgian training centres, and common exercises on Ukrainian and Georgian territories.

As already mentioned, US discussions about NATO policy toward Russia are closely intertwined with debates about bilateral US–Russian relations. In these broader debates, Atlanticist deterrence advocates support providing bilateral »lethal assistance« to Ukraine – a policy already advocated by Joe Biden when he was Obama's vice president – as well as maintaining and expanding economic sanctions, in response to both Russian aggression in Crimea and human rights violations committed in the country and against dissidents abroad (Vershbow 2020). Importantly for Germany, this includes sanctions against the Nord Stream II project, long considered a »bad deal for Europe« by Joe Biden (Gardner/Hunnicut 2021). Under pressure from Senate Republicans threatening to derail senior Biden appointments, Secretary of State Blinken renewed these sanctions threats against the »Russian geopolitical project intended to divide Europe and weaken European energy security« (Blinken 2021b). These threats notwithstanding, the administration has waived congressional sanctions on German companies for the time being. A durable compromise, however, may yet require the German government to agree to strict safeguards that would prevent Russia from politically exploiting the pipeline, including a »snapback« mechanism (Stelzenmüller 2021).

In contrast to the hard-line positions that dominate the US discourse on Russia, a second cluster of analyses offered by US think tanks describe the Russian threat in more nuanced terms and place somewhat greater hopes in cooperation, while also insisting on strong deterrence and an Atlanticist stance. At Brookings, for instance, Michael O'Hanlon and Steven Pifer agree on the need to (moderately) reinforce NATO's deterrence posture in the Baltics (O'Hanlon/Skaluba 2019; Pifer 2019a), but also caution against steps that would squander cooperative opportunities with Russia. More boldly, O'Hanlon (2017) argues that NATO expansion has gone too far and proposes negotiating a new security architecture for Eastern Europe, with a belt of »permanently neutral« states separating NATO and Russia. Rejecting claims that the United States or the West are »on the brink of a Cold War« with Russia (or China) (O'Hanlon/Zeigler 2019), he calls for the United States and NATO to prepare measured, non-escalatory responses to scenarios involving small-scale and/or hybrid Russian aggression, lest they be drawn into an involuntary great-power conflict (O'Hanlon 2019). Closer to the mainstream, Pifer rejects the idea of a neutral buffer zone as inappropriate and impracticable, and supports both NATO's open door policy and lethal aid to Ukraine, but also advocates a temporary compromise formula that Ukrainian NATO membership should happen »not now, but not never« (Pifer 2019b). He also differs from Russia hawks in demanding that sanctions be »closely coordinated with allies, and clearly messaged«, promising sanc-

2 Based on a series of wargames, the RAND report famously concluded that seven brigades were needed to effectively deter Russian aggression in the Baltics, although not all of these would need to be forward deployed (Shlapak/Johnson 2016).

3 Colby and Solomon (2015: 43) argue that a stronger permanent presence would still remain under the threshold of the Founding Act, although they also question whether the political conditions stipulated in the Founding Act are still in force, given Russia's recent aggressions.

tions relief in return for clearly specified cooperative behaviour (Pifer 2020a).

At the Woodrow Wilson Center, Russia analyst Michael Kofman echoes O'Hanlon in rejecting the idea of a »Cold War« with Russia, pointing to Western »over-extension« as having contributed to tense relations (Marcus 2018). With regard to deterrence, he questions both NATO's current deterrence posture and a »deterrence by denial« strategy aimed at preventing a Russian »fait accompli«. Stating that »[y]ou can have the prospect of NATO expansion eastward [or] deterrence by denial, but not both«, he argues that even a substantial permanent NATO presence in the Baltics would be unable to effectively deny a Russian attack, while also crossing the red line of the Founding Act and risking provoking the Russia aggression it seeks to deter. The logical consequence is »deterrence by punishment«, a strategy relying on the threat of both horizontal and vertical (including nuclear) escalation in response to a Russian attack (Kofman 2016a, b).

Looking further North, Russia experts at the CSIS see the Arctic as »a positive outlier in a receding list of areas where U.S.-Russia engagement is cooperative«, while also criticizing both Moscow's enhanced military presence and NATO's responsive measures as having contributed to an unhealthy »securitization« of the region (Newlin et al. 2020). Although there is now broad agreement that the Alliance should discuss Arctic issues and »conduct the occasional large exercise like Trident Juncture«, experts such as David Auerswald at the US National War College caution that, for the time being, »NATO itself should play a very limited, direct role in the Arctic« and that »[t]o do more risks weakening alliance unity and needlessly antagonizing Russia« (Auerswald 2020).

Some of the analyses and proposals endorsed by cooperation-focused Atlanticists (see also Haass/Kupchan 2021; Newlin et al. 2020) are echoed in a recent open letter calling for a »rethinking« of US Russia policy under the Biden administration. In this document published by *Politico*, six prominent authors and a long list of co-signatories argue that »America's current mix of sanctions and diplomacy isn't working« (Gottemoeller et al. 2020). While recognizing that Russia »complicates, or even thwarts« US foreign policy, they contend that a »mix of competition and cooperation« is possible, and urge a return to normal diplomatic relations, a »balanced commitment to deterrence and détente« pursued through strategic dialogue, renewed cooperation on arms control, and an easing of sanctions in return for Russian cooperation. With regard to Europe, the letter calls for the United States to »remain firm« in support of allies, while also considering »measured and phased steps forward« to improve the relationship with Russia.

Interestingly, the list of signatories to the letter – which prompted an immediate response from a more deterrence-focused group (Kramer 2020) – also includes scholars at both universities and think tanks that diverge from the Atlanticist bent of the first two perspectives in taking a NATO-sceptical stance. This small but vocal group of schol-

ars, which includes self-identified »realists« and libertarians, as well as isolationists from the left of the political spectrum, tend to see NATO's expansionism, rather than Russia's, at the heart of present tensions. Accordingly, they argue that granting Russia its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe would moderate, if not resolve, the West's and the United States' conflict with Moscow (for example, Ashford 2016b; Beebe 2019; Carpenter 2019a; Mearsheimer 2014; Shiffrinson 2021; Walt 2018). As Cato Institute fellow Doug Bandow (2019) puts it, »if Moscow had expanded the Warsaw Pact to Latin America, engineered a coup in Mexico City, and offered to bring that nation into an anti-American alliance, Washington would have been equally displeased« (Bandow 2019). While some of this criticism is shared by cooperation-oriented Atlanticists (see above), scholars in this last group are much more radical in declaring NATO ultimately superfluous, an »outdated alliance« (Bandow 2019), an »anachronism« (Walt 2018) and a »dangerous dinosaur« (Carpenter 2019b). Pointing both to what they perceive as an exaggeration of the Russian threat and to Europe's economic capabilities, NATO sceptics conclude that »Europe can defend itself« (Posen 2020; see also Posen 2019) and that the United States should turn over responsibility for deterring Russia to Europeans, at least in the medium to long run.

CHINA

While NATO occupies a central place in discussions about US–Russia relations, it is more peripheral to the extensive debate about the United States' »China challenge«. This debate is marked by a broad agreement on China as a key foreign and security policy threat and an increasing convergence of pundits across the political spectrum on competitive policies vis-à-vis the rising power.

At the conservative end of the spectrum, getting tough on China is supported by clear majorities among voters (Silver et al. 2020), pundits (Anonymous 2021; Beckley/Brands 2021; Brands/Cooper 2019, 2021; Carafano et al. 2020; Mattis et al. 2021; Schmitt 2019; Zakheim 2021), and policymakers. Despite some initial flirtation with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump and the vocal China hawks in his administration turned up the pressure both on China itself and on US allies viewed as being too soft on China.

Joe Biden, during his campaign to replace Trump, took on board much of the latter's China rhetoric, and his administration's early public clashes at bilateral US–China talks and determination to enlist Quad members India, Japan and Australia in a »show of unity against Beijing« (Sevastopulo/Kazmin 2021) confirm his intention to continue down a competitive path. However, Democrats and liberal pundits are not unified around hard-line positions. As Brookings scholar Thomas Wright highlights, the question of how to deal with China is central to a broader split within the Democratic Party between »restorationists«, who argue for a return to an Obama-style balance between cooperation and competition, and »reformists«, who »see China as the

[Biden] administration's defining challenge and favour a more competitive approach than Obama's» (Wright 2020).

The latter, more influential group includes key Biden administration appointees who previously worked for the Obama administration and/or liberal think tanks: National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan (Campbell/Sullivan 2019); Kurt Campbell (Campbell/Ratner 2018), formerly at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) and now Asia-Pacific coordinator on the National Security Council; Rush Doshi, formerly at Brookings and now senior China coordinator at the NSC; and Ely Ratner (Ratner et al. 2019), formerly at CNAS and now chief principal adviser on China matters to Secretary of Defence Austin.

A second group of liberal-leaning pundits, while not disagreeing with the magnitude of the challenge, places much stronger emphasis on the need for continued and even enhanced US–Chinese cooperation. At Brookings, Jeffrey Bader (2020) cautions that China is »a strategic competitor, not an enemy«, echoing an »open letter« published previously by a group of scholars from the Wilson Center, Carnegie Endowment and Harvard and Yale universities in the *Washington Post* (Fravel et al. 2019) and co-signed by Bader and many other US think tank experts. Bader's Brookings colleague Michael O'Hanlon – in line with his position on Russia – warns against getting involved in a major power conflict with China over Taiwan and other regional conflicts (O'Hanlon 2019). Thom Woodroffe at the Asia Society Policy Institute points particularly to the problem of climate change as an area in which cooperation with China is not only feasible and necessary but also supported by the American public (Noisecat/Woodroffe 2021). These and further proposals for US–Chinese cooperation were collected and elaborated in a 2020 Brookings report (Hass et al. 2020).

The most radical dissent with the dominant China hawks is articulated by libertarians such as Ted Carpenter at the Cato Institute, who argues that the United States and its Western partners need to accept China's sphere of influence and »dial-back their insistence that all nations, even great powers, adhere to the principles of a U.S.-led liberal, rules-based, international order« (Carpenter 2019a).

Diverging general perspectives on China also entail different assessments of NATO's role in dealing with the rising power. On one hand, it is clear that all US alliances, NATO included, will be affected in one way or another by the fact that China tops the list of US foreign policy priorities; on the other, this does not imply that NATO is necessarily seen as a centrepiece of US China policy.

Libertarians such as Carpenter (2019a) point to diverging US and European interests on China to question NATO's overall rationale. At the other end of the spectrum, many centrist and liberal Atlanticists advocate »enlisting NATO to address the China challenge« (Nietsche et al. 2020). A group from CNAS, for instance, contend that Chinese policy, while not directly threatening NATO, has the potential to disrupt alliance cohesion. They advocate deepening and institutionaliz-

ing cooperation with allies in the Indo-Pacific, including through an »Indo-Pacific Council«, and recommend both joint and NATO exercises in the region (Nietsche et al. 2020). Similarly, an Atlantic Council report envisages NATO as the »node of a network to counter CN hostile activities«. By developing its bilateral relations with Asian partners into a more institutionalized »Atlantic-Pacific Partnership«, the authors argue, NATO should »take the lead in becoming the necessary strategic counterweight to China's rise«. In their view, a coordinated response of NATO as an alliance of democracies would enjoy greater global legitimacy as a US-led response to China (Hildebrand et al. 2020; see also Brzezinski 2020; Kroenig/Cimmino 2020). At the same time, engaging China through NATO is seen as opening windows for cooperation, for instance through the establishment of a »NATO-China Council« modelled after the NATO-Russia Council (Brzezinski 2020). According to all of these scholars, China's challenge and NATO's response are only in part about traditional military capabilities; cyber threats and Chinese global »influence operations« necessitate close allied cooperation on issues such as 5G network security and an expansion of NATO's seven »baselines for resilience« (Hildebrand et al. 2020; similarly Nietsche et al. 2020).

Situated in between NATO sceptics and NATO enthusiasts is a group of pundits who argue that NATO should »cautiously pivot towards China«, building up partnerships with East Asian democracies but serving as a forum for discussion and coordination rather than taking immediate action on non-military issues, such as 5G network security (Goldgeier/Martin 2020; see also Coffey/Kochis 2020: 17–18; Ford/Goldgeier 2021). Arguing that »Russia must remain the main focus of NATO«, they suggest tying NATO allies into a broader »Atlantic strategy« toward China that goes beyond NATO's geographical borders, and argue that »the U.S. should help to forge agreement inside the Alliance on what role, if any, NATO should play in dealing with Beijing, helping to create a united front that cannot be easily exploited« (Carafano et al. 2020). At Brookings, Lindsey Ford and James Goldgeier (2021) see the need for »frank discussions« about what could and what could not be expected of European NATO allies in hypothetical military crisis scenarios involving Beijing. At the same time, they point to »tradeoffs« associated with a more prominent European role in the Indo-Pacific, arguing that regular European deployments in the region could »detract« from NATO's core tasks.

PROJECTING STABILITY IN THE SOUTH

As discussed above, China and Asia are increasingly perceived as key challenges for NATO that will compel the alliance to adopt a more global outlook. This represents a remarkable discursive shift from discussions on »global NATO« in the 2000s (for example, Daalder/Goldgeier 2006), which revolved largely around terrorism and instability in the global South, particularly in the Middle East region. In this earlier, post-Cold War and post-9/11 perspective, terrorism, state failure and humanitarian crises were seen as not only presenting direct and severe threats to the allies, but also as re-

quiring military out-of-area interventions. These interventions, US policymakers and pundits agreed, would be less costly and more legitimate if undertaken by a multilateral alliance than unilaterally by the United States alone.

In today's US discussions about NATO, these issues have lost salience. In part, this is due to a re-evaluation of the terrorist threat confronting the United States, and of the strategy of addressing both terrorism and other sources of instability through military interventions. With the »war on terror« approaching its twentieth anniversary, some experts note that »jihadi-linked terrorism« appears to be »on the decline« (Byman 2018) and that terrorist threat assessments have been »inflated« (Thrall/Goepner 2017), while others feel the need to caution that the terrorist threat is »not finished« (Travers 2020). With regard to interventions, both conservative and liberal scholars argue that past foreign missions designed to eradicate terrorism, to protect civilians and to bring lasting stability to the key Middle East region have largely failed (for example, Kupchan 2021; Stelzenmüller 2020; Thrall/Goepner 2017). As Charles Kupchan at the Council on Foreign Relations puts it, »unnecessary wars of choice« across the Middle East region have »produced little good«; remaining US interests in the region, including counterterrorism, can be achieved through diplomatic means or »surgical military operations« (Kupchan 2021). Brad Stapleton at Cato agrees, evaluating NATO's own out-of-area missions in Afghanistan and Libya as a »major mistake« that have failed to stabilize both countries, while also provoking Russia by casting doubt on NATO's defensive orientation (Stapleton 2016).

Against the background of this growing chorus of intervention sceptics and Biden's own campaign promise to end America's »forever wars«, the Biden administration's announcement of a full troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by September 2021 came as no surprise and was supported by pundits of different political shades (Bandow 2021; Kupchan and Lute 2021; Wertheim 2021). Others, including both liberal commentators and conservatives, such as former National Security Adviser John Bolton, advocated against or criticized the decision (Afzal and O'Hanlon 2021; Bolton 2021; Cunningham et al. 2021).

With regard to NATO's future out-of-area tasks, pundits draw different inferences from the alliance's poor intervention track record. Many conservative experts advise that NATO should go »back to basics« to defend alliance territory against the resurgent Russian threat (Coffey/Kochis 2019; similarly Ashford 2016a). According to Stapleton, the alliance »cannot afford to allow external operations to divert attention and resources from its core mission« (Stapleton 2016). Heritage's Luke Coffey and Daniel Kochis (2019) argue that »NATO does not have to be everywhere doing everything. It does not have to become a global counterterrorism force or the West's main tool for delivering humanitarian aid.«

To others, the task of stabilizing »Europe's fragile Southern frontier« remains central to NATO (Burns/Jones 2016; Vereshbow/Speranza 2019). According to Kupchan, the United States is »reducing its military footprint in the broader Mid-

dle East, underscoring the need for NATO to focus more on a Southern strategy« (interview with the author, 7 May 2021). While large-scale interventions are an unlikely future scenario, peacekeeping, stabilization and training missions out-of-area should remain high on the organization's agenda. In the Mediterranean region, including Libya and perhaps eventually Syria, European NATO members should be prepared to take the lead in potential missions, »picking up some of the slack« as the United States re-focuses on domestic issues and directs more resources to the Asia-Pacific (ibid.). At the Center for European Policy Analysis, Lauren Speranza even recommends enhancing NATO's military crisis management capabilities with regard to counterterrorism or humanitarian contingencies (Speranza 2020: 8–9).

These recommendations notwithstanding, the task of projecting stability in general and military out-of-area missions in particular are relatively marginal themes in recent US think tank publications on NATO. Scholars emphasize defence and counter-terrorism cooperation with Middle Eastern partner governments, for example, through the Mediterranean Dialogue or Istanbul Cooperation Council programmes (Schroeder 2019: 28–29), or focus on Russia, China and other challenges to allied security. Implicitly, this lack of attention underscores what Kupchan and others articulate explicitly, namely that the United States will increasingly expect its European NATO allies to take responsibility for NATO's Southern flank.

ARMS CONTROL

Like discussions on other key aspects of US national security, US debates about arms control are only marginally about NATO. At a general level, despite long-standing cross- and within-party divisions on the subject, most policymakers and experts at major US think tanks agree in seeing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation not as ends in themselves, but as one policy tool that can – depending on political outlook – help or hurt US security interests.

While the Biden administration is no exception to this pragmatic and strategic approach to arms control, its coming to office has dramatically improved the prospects for maintaining those bilateral and multilateral frameworks that have survived the Trump administration's onslaught. Shortly after his inauguration, Biden already agreed to the extension of New START, the only remaining bilateral nuclear arms control agreement with Russia. The Open Skies Treaty – renounced by Trump against the advice not only of the US arms control community but also the US military – is probably beyond rescue, given Moscow's recent announcement of withdrawal. In contrast, the administration is engaging in genuine negotiations to re-establish both US and Iranian compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Programme of Action, and to renew coordination with European partners on this issue, albeit not through the framework of NATO.

While many Republicans and (neo)conservative commentators oppose such plans (Geller 2021; Rubin 2021), liberal and

realist pundits and US arms control experts support them (Conley et al. 2021; Krepon 2021; Krepon/Roth 2021; Pifer/Acton 2021; Rose 2020a) – and propose even more far-reaching medium- to long-term steps. According to arms control advocates such as Steven Pifer at Brookings, the Biden administration should engage in strategic stability talks with Moscow, propose a partial replacement of the INF treaty that deals at least with nuclear-armed intermediate-range missiles, or even build on New START to seek a more comprehensive future agreement with Moscow limiting *all* US and Russian nuclear systems. To achieve such a comprehensive deal with Russia, even US missile defence should be put on the table. Furthermore, Biden should conduct a nuclear posture review – in consultation with allies – that should declare deterrence of a nuclear attack to be the «sole purpose» of US nuclear weapons (Pifer 2020b; similarly Conley et al. 2021).

This last proposal is of most direct relevance to NATO – and marks the upper limits of what can be expected of the Biden administration in terms of reforming nuclear deterrence. Influential US experts oppose a «sole purpose» or «no first use» doctrine (for example, Miller 2020), or propose a more modest change to the current US deterrence posture nuclear posture by limiting the use of nuclear weapons to «existential threats» against the United States (Perkovich/Vaddi 2021). With regard to NATO, some insist that the alliance needs a «credible threat of nuclear escalation» vis-à-vis Russia (Kofman 2016b). Others, more moderately, criticize the fact that «NATO's stated nuclear strategy is too stale, vague and timid to ensure deterrence» (Binnendijk/Gompert 2020) and should be spelt out to more clearly threaten symmetrical nuclear retaliation in case of a Russian first strike, in parallel with a deployment of new US sea-based nuclear cruise-missiles in the European theatre. In their view, European opposition to nuclear deterrence in general – and nuclear sharing specifically – leaves NATO without a credible deterrence (ibid). And while the US government and larger US defence community maintain a strong interest in nuclear non-proliferation and in reducing the risk of nuclear terrorism, US extended deterrence is seen as strengthening, rather than undermining this goal. As a recent report by the Chicago Council on Global Relations argues, doubts about US nuclear guarantees could ultimately prompt US allies to acquire their own nuclear weapons, fuelling a new nuclear arms race (Daalder et al. 2021).

As these discussions make plain, criticism of nuclear deterrence *as such* and advocacy of nuclear disarmament are limited to civil society activists and more radical arms control think tanks, but viewed by most policymakers and pundits as unrealistic at best and destabilizing at worst. The most far-reaching present nuclear disarmament initiative, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in January 2021, will therefore continue to meet with opposition not only within the administration but also among mainstream think tankers (Williams 2020).

One arms control initiative that enjoys broad support in the US community is a potential successor to the INF treaty. As such an agreement would be particularly vital to European

security, European NATO allies stand a good chance of making their voices heard with the Biden administration. For instance, they could weigh in against over-ambitious proposals to ensure Chinese participation in such a future agreement (advocated, for example, by Binnendijk/Gompert 2020), which have received expressions of sympathy from China-critical «reformists» in the Biden administration, but are, according to Pifer, «doomed to fail» (Pifer 2020b).

Apart from the nuclear field, another issue of importance to many US think tanks is the arms trade. Many criticise the United States for exporting arms into crisis zones or to regimes with problematic human rights records. With regard to internationally contested US drones strikes, practically no moderate American think tank suggests an international ban or abandonment of the use of combat drones. However, some institutes, such as the Stimson Center, call for more transparency and oversight, as regards both transfer and use (Dick/Stohl 2020). The discourse on what has been termed «lethal autonomous weapon systems» is usually separated from the drone discourse and shows more nuances and a broader range of arguments vis-à-vis the European continental debate. Security-related arguments (for example, Laird 2020) are more prominent than in Europe and the overall need of the armed forces to invest in high-tech weapon systems is more widely accepted. Closely related, albeit again an individual issue is the debate about the (military) use of artificial intelligence (AI). Scholars such as Elsa Kania (2020) at Brookings are closely following Chinese ambitions in this area.

CYBER AND HYBRID THREATS, EMERGING AND DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES, SPACE

In recent years, tasks that go beyond the alliance's traditional core functions of military and territorial defence have steadily gained importance in US discussions on NATO. In line with the emphasis placed by NATO's own reflection group on cyber and hybrid threats, emerging and disruptive technologies, and space, US NATO experts are increasingly devoting attention and analysis to these (partially overlapping) new threats and challenges (Beaulieu/Salvo 2018; Edwards et al. 2020; Kramer et al. 2020; Reynolds/Lightfoot 2020; Rose 2020b). Despite their diversity and internal complexity, all of these issues share the feature that they are both linked to and cut across NATO's more traditional missions. Cyber and hybrid threats, in particular, are discussed most prominently in the context of NATO–Russia or NATO–China relations (Burns/Lute 2019: 26–27; Polyakova/Boyer 2018; Speranza 2020), but also with regard to non-state actors (Hamilton 2019). They have the clear potential to affect NATO's military position vis-à-vis these state adversaries, yet efforts to counter such threats or improve resilience against them need to go far beyond the military realm. Some scholars, such as Jim Goldgeier and Garret Martin at the American University, therefore question whether NATO as a military alliance is «best suited to take the lead» on issues such as cybersecurity in 5G networks or tackling disinformation (Goldgeier/Martin 2020). While they see the alliance in a

»supporting role«, others, such as Daniel Hamilton at Johns Hopkins University, argue that the task of building resilience has become part of NATO's *raison d'être*: »The challenge of hybrid conflict underscores why NATO, in its 70th year, must remain the keystone to Western security. NATO offers a ready mechanism for allies to promote shared resilience to disruptive attacks. It is a means by which resilience can be projected forward to neighbors who are weak and susceptible to disruption« (Hamilton 2019).

In terms of concrete measures, pundits propose a wide array of steps that NATO and its members could take to address new threats. These range from earmarking 2 per cent of national GDP for cybersecurity and digital defence modernization (Edwards et al. 2020) and the formation of »expert hunt teams« to detect intruders in defence systems to engaging in offensive cyber actions against Russia and China as part of a strategy of »persistent engagement« (Kramer et al. 2020). When it comes to space, pundits agree with NATO's decision to declare space an operational domain, and recommend improving intelligence sharing on anti-satellite threats, »mainstreaming« outer space in NATO institutions and processes, exercises and wargames, and improving cooperation with both the US Space Command and Space Force and the EU (Rose 2020b).

NATO AS A COMMUNITY OF VALUES

Strengthening democracy at home and abroad was one of the central messages conveyed by Joe Biden throughout his presidential campaign (Biden 2020b). With this renewed embrace of democratic values, he stands in stark contrast to his predecessor's anti-democratic leanings and professed sympathy for foreign authoritarian leaders. As Biden has made clear, this general outlook has important implications for NATO. In a direct rebuke of Trump's view of the alliance, Biden sees NATO not only as serving US interests but also as »the bulwark of the liberal-democratic ideal« and the US commitment to it as »sacred, not transactional« (ibid.). This reaffirmation of NATO as a community of values brings US government policy back in line with a broad consensus among US foreign and security policy think tanks.

And yet the new emphasis placed by Biden and his team on the defence of democracy also entails new challenges and discussions for NATO. As different perspectives among US pundits make clear, defending democracy can be interpreted as an external or an internal task for the alliance. Deterrence-oriented Atlanticists tend to stress external challenges to democracy emanating from NATO's authoritarian competitors, most notably China and Russia. According to this perspective – shared by many conservatives but also by »reformers« within the Democratic Party (Wright 2020) – NATO's traditional and current core mission is the »forward defense of democracy« on the European continent (Moreland 2019). In addition, pundits envision the »alliance of free nations« as the future »center of a global network of alliances« with other »leading democracies«, including Japan, Australia and India (Wilson/O'Brien 2020: 102–105).

While the external dimension of defending democracy is dominant in the US discourse, other scholars highlight the internal risk NATO faces from »democratic backsliding«. In Charles Kupchan's words, »the biggest threat today to the security of NATO countries is not Russia, not China, it's us – populism, polarization, inequality, political dysfunction. We need to get our own houses in order if we are to deal effectively with external threats« (Interview with the author, 7 May 2021). As Goldgeier and Martin point out, »[a]uthoritarianism within NATO is not just a threat because the alliance is based on democratic values, but because it makes less democratic countries more vulnerable to the threats posed by information manipulation and election interference from Russia and other outside meddlers« (Goldgeier/Martin 2020; see also Katz/Taussig 2018). In response to this challenge, Goldgeier and Martin suggest that »member states can speak loudly on behalf of democratic values and use their bilateral relationships to pressure authoritarian rulers«. For Jonathan Katz and Torrey Taussig (2018), such steps do not go far enough. In their view, institutional innovations are needed to address internal challenges to democracy, such as a governance committee under the chairmanship of NATO's assistant secretary general for political affairs and security policy, or a new special ombudsperson tasked with raising concerns over violations of the Washington Treaty.

Once more in disagreement with the Atlanticist mainstream, conservative NATO-sceptics criticize the latter's »transformational agenda« (Beebe 2019). To them, the notion that NATO can and should contribute to the spread of liberal democracy, particularly by expanding towards and into the Russian »sphere of influence«, is misguided. As Cato Institute expert Emma Ashford (2016b) asks rhetorically: »Does NATO promote the common defense of existing members, or seek to expand the Euro-Atlantic democratic community? It cannot accomplish both.«

INTERNAL ADAPTATION AND EUROPEANIZATION

Apart from challenges to NATO's underlying values, the two most pressing internal issues being broadly discussed by US NATO experts are the Europeanization of the alliance and the related, perennial question of transatlantic burden-sharing. At a general level, the notion that European NATO members are still failing to contribute their fair share to the allies' common defence is shared across the entire political spectrum. However, policy recommendations about what to make of this perceived imbalance vary widely, from the extreme recommendation to leave the defence of Europe entirely to Europeans (Bandow 2019; Carpenter 2019b) to nuanced discussions among Atlanticists about exactly how Europeans could contribute more. Past US governments have looked with suspicion at European Union efforts to achieve greater autonomy on matters of defence, and this suspicion is still palpable among conservative experts in particular. At the Heritage Institute, for instance, Ted Bromund and Daniel Kochis (2021) point to the »vital need to ensure that the EU

does not develop a defense identity or ambitions that would detract in any way from NATO». However, the view that prevails today among both liberal and conservative observers is that both the United States and NATO stand to gain much more than they would lose from closer EU defence integration, which would simultaneously contribute to forming a solid European pillar within the Atlantic alliance. The United States, this dominant view holds, »should broadly welcome the prospect of stronger EU security and defense roles« (Brattberg/Valášek 2019; similarly Bergmann 2021; Hamilton 2021). As Kupchan puts it: »I don't like the term »strategic autonomy« – but the EU's efforts to become more capable militarily and forge a more common foreign and defense policy need to continue« (interview with the author, 7 May 2021). According to Ford and Goldgeier (2021), »if the U.S. is going to succeed in rebalancing its defense posture toward Asia, it needs a stronger Europe able to take the lead in its broader neighborhood«. Still, even EU-friendly Atlantacists such as Erik Brattberg and Tomás Valášek at Carnegie warn against excluding US companies from EU defence projects, and argue that the EU should »prioritize capabilities over integrationist objectives« (Brattberg/Valášek 2019).

When it comes to burden sharing within the Atlantic alliance, a growing number of US experts agree that, although Europeans need to contribute more, NATO's 2 per cent goal constitutes a poor metric for measuring European efforts. According to Goldgeier and Martin (2020), for instance, there is a »very strong case to retire the 2 percent metric in normal times, but the extraordinary circumstances created by COVID-19 make this even more urgent«. Like them, Derek Chollet, Steven Keil and Christopher Skoluba argue in an Atlantic Council study that the focus should shift to measuring output and capabilities rather than mere defence spending, giving credit to more valuable capabilities (Chollet et al. 2020). When measuring spending itself, these experts argue that measures need to be more standardized, that trend lines should be emphasized over set percentage goals, but also that allied governments should »reconsider what counts for burden sharing« (ibid.). Suggestions in this respect range from investments in emerging tech or pandemic preparations to the improvement of transport infrastructure critical to ensuring mobility in a crisis scenario (ibid.) and investments in resilience against hybrid threats (Hamilton 2019). »It will be a difficult discussion«, argue Chollet, Keil and Skoluba (2020), »but NATO should reconsider the nature of twenty-first century security«.

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THE CANADIAN DISCOURSE ON NATO'S FUTURE

Dirk Peters

OVERVIEW

Canada is a founding member of NATO, which has always played a central role in Canadian defence policy. Even though the government's 2017 strategic document *Strong, Secure, Engaged* emphasizes that »Canada is also a Pacific nation«,¹ the main focus of Canada's defence policy since the Second World War has been European security. After the experience of two world wars, successive Canadian governments have been interested in preventing a single dominant power from rising in Europe again and escalating conflicts in Europe from drawing Canada into another large-scale war. Besides that, NATO membership has had the added benefit of helping Canada to manage relations with the United States. The alliance has enabled Canada to keep its big neighbour close without being locked into a thoroughly unbalanced bilateral security relationship with it. In addition to providing security, NATO membership has also enhanced Canada's international influence.

A major concern with the security of Europe is also visible in today's discourse on the future of NATO among Canada's leading think tanks. According to most analyses, the key threat that NATO faces today emanates from Russia, which challenges NATO both militarily and through its attempts to destabilize the alliance and its members by non-military means. Some voices point to China as a rising challenger, and the Asia-Pacific as an area of increasing strategic interest, but usually Russia is regarded as posing the more immediate threat to NATO. Relations with China are viewed as providing more space for constructive political engagement.

The key internal challenges facing NATO, according to this Canadian discourse, are maintaining cohesion and keeping the United States committed to the alliance. The latter translates into the problem of burden-sharing and most Canadian think tanks focus particularly on how Canada can contribute to burden-sharing in order to keep the United States on board. By and large, they agree that a mix of at best moderately increased defence spending (which

finds little political support) and continued commitment on the ground in NATO missions would be the best way forward for the Canadian government.

This approach to the burden-sharing debate reflects another major characteristic of the discourse reviewed here. It is very much a discourse about Canada's role in NATO rather than a discourse about NATO and its future per se. Questions of European autonomy, for example, as important as they may appear for NATO's future, do not trouble Canadian think tanks as much as they do European ones.

THE DISCOURSE ON NATO'S FUTURE

THE KEY THREAT TO NATO: RUSSIA

Russia is clearly seen as the major threat facing NATO today and for the foreseeable future. Geopolitically, Russia threatens NATO on its Eastern flank as well as in the Arctic, the North Atlantic and in the South, through its engagement in conflicts in the MENA region (Segal 2018). The fact that Russia appears intent on »discarding established arms control and political agreements pertaining to the European theatre« adds to this military threat (Moen/Turdeanu 2018: 4). Moreover, Russian efforts at destabilizing the Alliance and its members through disinformation, cyber attacks and the like are also viewed with concern.

The threat on the Eastern flank in particular is undisputed. NATO's most visible response to this threat, its enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltic countries and Poland, receives particular attention in the Canadian discourse because Canada serves as the Framework Nation to the eFP in Latvia. Observers view this commitment and its renewal in 2019 favourably (for example, Banka 2019; Leuprecht et al. 2018a, b; Hilton 2018). They consider it both an important contribution to defending NATO against threats from Russia and a prudent investment that helps Canada to demonstrate its commitment to the alliance despite its relatively low level of defence spending (see also the section on burden-sharing below). Hence it signifies »Canada's steadfast approach to alliance politics: pay just enough« of an insurance premium to show that »we're back« (Leuprecht et al. 2018b: 9).

¹ *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*, <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf> (5 May 2021), p. 90.

Besides the Eastern flank, the Arctic also receives some attention as a region in which Russia challenges Canada's and NATO's security. The threat assessment here is somewhat more controversial, however. To start with, scholars point out that, from a security organizational perspective but also from a threat perspective there are two Arctics. There is the European Arctic, which the United States considers part of its European Command. And there is the North American Arctic, which, from the Canadian perspective, is a NORAD and, from the US perspective, a NORTHCOM responsibility. Canadian scholars argue that military threats are more virulent in the European Arctic. In this area of strategic significance for the sea lines of communication, the Greenland–Iceland–United Kingdom gap was notorious for Soviet submarine activities during the Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, NATO not only dismantled the Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT) with responsibility for coordinating NATO defences in this crucial area, but NATO states also significantly reduced anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities and training operations. The Royal Canadian Navy, for example, has largely lost its formerly exemplary ASW expertise. As Russia is rebuilding its submarine capabilities and presence in the region, NATO, too, should upgrade its command structure, capabilities and training operations.

With regard to the North American Arctic, scholars see fewer military threats. Collins (2018: 10), for example, argues that the Arctic is an issue that is »less about hard security and more about resource development, tourism, and commercial shipping«. Canada has invested mainly in civilian infrastructure to enhance the Canadian presence there without militarizing the region. During a parliamentary hearing, Andrea Charron, Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba, stated that Russian activities in this part of the Arctic have been fairly constructive, which she attributed to the functioning of the Arctic Council. Accordingly, involving NATO in the security of the North American Arctic is not necessary, might be counterproductive and should be discouraged.² Michael Byers added on the same occasion that »there is very little prospect (...) that the United States is going to let NATO into its NORTHCOM domain«.³

Others warn that, in general, Russia's Arctic policy poses a real danger and needs to be addressed accordingly. They point to the build-up of forces, coupled with Russian attempts to lay legal claim to vast areas of the region and China's apparent willingness to engage in the Arctic alongside Russia. Hence, Braun and Blank (2020: 15–17), for example, advise the Canadian government to respond to what can be viewed as Russia's militarization of the Arctic by building up military capabilities, especially by acquiring adequate aircraft and ice breakers. Overall, however, the

issue is considered an issue mainly for Canadian defence policy rather than for NATO as a whole. This is in line with the government's position, which seeks to avoid, for example, NATO exercises related to the region (Charron 2017; on the implications of exercises in the Arctic, see also Hughes 2019).

Apart from these regional challenges in the East and the North, how should Canada and NATO respond to Russia? The advice is somewhat varied. On one hand, there are commentators who emphasize the desirability of a political answer rather than a military one. NATO should not »combat hybrid warfare with more hybrid warfare« (Carment/Belo 2018: 11). This approach requires investments in societal resilience to make influence campaigns and hybrid attacks less threatening. Inclusive and non-confrontational approaches can then be pursued especially with regard to problems that fall under the remit of organizations to which Russia also belongs, in particular the OSCE, and in cooperation with the EU (Carment/Belo 2018: 12–13). This also ties in with recommendations that Canada not take an unnecessarily confrontational approach towards Russia and explore possibilities for cooperation, especially in the Asia-Pacific, even if this may be at odds with US policies (Paikin 2021). Erika Simpson (2021: 11–12) advises NATO to learn from Canada and pursue multilateral approaches in its dealings with Russia.

But there are also advocates of much more robust responses to Russian policy and of demonstrating strength vis-à-vis Moscow. Moens and Turdeanu (2018: 16), for example, argue that NATO members should invest in their capabilities and demonstrate »proportionate strength to ensure that Russia sees the boundaries of its own plans and actions«. Others support this approach and recommend that NATO »deter possible Russian aggression by fielding robust military forces« and extend deterrence to the cyber realm (Bercuson 2019b: 10). Cyber defence can take the form of NATO's Co-operative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (Kimball 2019: 9–10). But it can also require launching similar »non-kinetic NATO attacks« on Russia to deter it from future attacks (Segal 2018: 3) and thus actually countering hybrid warfare with more hybrid warfare. None of this, however, is seen as excluding the possibility of seeking cooperation if Russia can prove its willingness to cooperate (Bercuson 2019b: 11).

CHINA AS A RISING CHALLENGER?

Whereas there is widespread agreement that Russia poses an active threat to NATO, China's role is somewhat more controversial. Some regard China primarily as an economic power that is increasingly enhancing its ability to project influence. This appears to be reflected also in the Canadian government's approach, which has begun to address China as a security issue a little more actively, for example through cautious Freedom of Navigation operations in the region, although it also seeks cooperative relations with Beijing (Collins 2018: 14–15).

² Statement by Dr Andrea Charron at the Hearing of the Standing Committee on National Defence, House of Commons, 22 November 2017.

³ Ibidem, p. 2.

Recently, however, Sino-Canadian relations have taken a turn for the worse since Canada arrested Huawei's CFO on a US warrant and China retaliated by arresting two Canadian citizens on charges of spying. There are also a number of observers who argue that the potential for cooperation with China is inherently limited given the divergence of values between China and the West (Smith-Windsor 2020: 26). Collins et al. (2020: 11) even claim that »China has replaced Russia as the West's principal rival« as it combines dynamically growing economic power with a willingness to significantly increase its military capabilities and an assertive foreign policy. What adds to the challenge is the fact that China has begun to cooperate more closely with Russia and that it is as active in the area of hybrid and grey-zone conflict as Russia (Carment/Belo 2018). From this point of view, it is time for Canada to give up its almost exclusive focus on transatlantic relations and to look more towards the Pacific (Collins et al. 2020: 21).

Advice for NATO and Canada on how to deal with China obviously hinges on this threat assessment. The general problem NATO members face is that of striking a »balance between countering China and remaining open to cooperation with Beijing where that is possible on reasonable terms« (Cottey 2021: 15). But there are different opinions on where that balance lies. Some observers highlight the opportunities for cooperation and argue that a careful cooperative approach, which could even include Russia, might help stabilize security relations in the Asia-Pacific and enable Canada to benefit from economic opportunities there (Paikin 2021). A useful addition to such a strategy would be attempts to build resilience, just like against Russian hybrid threats, and to respond politically to conflict with China (Carment/Belo 2018). Others advise NATO members to safeguard their economies from Chinese influence and to be clear about the value difference by openly criticizing the human rights record of the Chinese government (Collins 2018: 15–16). Concerning these recommendations, the role of NATO as an organization may well be constrained to that of a forum in which member states find a common approach towards China (Cottey 2020: 15).

However, for some, NATO may also play a more active role. Expanding NATO's network of partners to the Asia-Pacific is a popular recommendation. Ideas range from boosting cooperation with partners in the region (Collins 2018: 14–15; Jenne 2020), for example by expanding the number of »Enhanced Opportunities Partners« (Lai 2020), to institutionalizing such cooperation, for example through a »NATO Asia-Pacific Forum« (Moens/Smith-Windsor 2016: 244–246; similarly, Lorenz 2020). Certainly the most far-reaching suggestion in this context is the idea of bringing countries from the Asia-Pacific into NATO as new members, for example, Australia or Japan as associate members (Bercuson 2019b: 10) or broadening membership »to include partner countries, starting with Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand« (Robertson 2019: 8).

Finally, there are also some calls to be ready for a military presence in the region. Canada is being called upon to

enhance its presence in the Asia-Pacific, for example, through naval and air patrols (Collins et al. 2020: 24). And there is even speculation about the possibility of extending the NATO area of operations to engage in military crisis management there (Smith-Windsor 2020: 27–30).

POLITICAL COHESION: NATO AS A COMMUNITY OF VALUES OR SHARED INTERESTS?

Apart from these external challenges, the Canadian discourse also deals with the core internal challenge for NATO: cohesion. What is it that holds NATO together, or should hold NATO together, from the perspective of participants in the Canadian discourse? Tensions among NATO allies are obvious. The Canadian discourse centres especially on the Trump administration's confrontational approach to burden-sharing as the main challenge (see below). Emmanuel Macron's comments about NATO's »brain death« receive less coverage here than elsewhere as an indication of, and contribution to, NATO's political problems (Leuprecht 2019).

For the question of how political cohesion can be enhanced, shared values are a popular reference point in this discourse. This may be considered a reflection of the general orientation of Canadian foreign policy, which is often perceived as multilateral and value-driven. At NATO's founding, the Canadian government sought to make the alliance not only into a military alliance but a forum of liberal, democratic states. Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which emphasizes the shared values of the allies, has been dubbed the »Canada Clause« (McKay 2021: 38).

According to many contributions to the Canadian discourse it is these shared values that keep the diverse set of nations in NATO together and ensure the security of Europe and, by extension, Canada (Leuprecht et al. 2018b). Shared values are also what can create unity vis-à-vis China (in contrast to economic interests, which are more diverse) and provide a crucial link to partners in China's neighbourhood (Smith-Windsor 2020: 17–19).

This directly leads to concerns about tendencies in some member states to turn away from those values. Turkey and some Central and Eastern European allies display a growing tendency towards authoritarian rule. In many member states, nationalist and populist tendencies are becoming increasingly influential. This poses a double danger as it creates disunity between allies and within individual states. For one thing, this disunity can make NATO less effective in its international dealings (Bercuson 2018). Second, it makes NATO and its allies more vulnerable to influence campaigns as the disunity can be exploited by outside powers, especially Russia and China, or by non-governmental actors (Charron 2021). In turn, building resilience to counter Russian and Chinese influence campaigns will require a reliable commitment to a set of shared values (Carment/Belo 2018: 12).

Not everyone agrees with this analysis. Some observers emphasize the enduring strength of NATO despite European populism and the appearance of disunity created especially by the Trump administration (Bercuson 2019b). Others, who see a problem, disagree about the solution. Moens and Turdeanu (2018: 17), for example, recommend that allies de-emphasise disagreements (especially about the significance of minority rights) and instead focus on their common heritage. This would allow them to »dry up the vulnerable debate inside the West on who we are« and to »rein in Moscow's ability to play foul on our mobiles and in our minds«. Bercuson (2018), by contrast, sees NATO as caught in a dilemma. Ignoring authoritarian tendencies in its member states would undermine the credibility of NATO's commitment to democratic values. Addressing these tendencies head on and suspending or even throwing out the members in question, however, would threaten NATO's effectiveness.

Occasionally, commentators argue that allies might be brought together not just by shared values but also by a common external threat. In this sense, Russian attempts at undermining NATO might actually serve to make the alliance stronger (Bercuson 2019a). Likewise, allies' increasing concern about the rise of China might contribute to alliance cohesion (Hautecouverture 2021).

BURDEN-SHARING

Burden-sharing in NATO is a highly significant topic for Canadian think tanks and it is so for reasons similar to those that underlie the debates in other countries. Burden-sharing was identified by the Trump administration as the single most important issue for NATO. Consequently, US allies need to address it somehow in order to keep the United States engaged in the alliance.

For European NATO members, the problem of burden-sharing is intimately linked to the question of European autonomy within and outside NATO. Unsurprisingly, the issue of Europeanisation is not nearly as prominent in the Canadian discourse. Notwithstanding individual views that Macron's quest for European strategic autonomy and his criticism of the state of NATO pose the »greatest threat« to NATO (Leuprecht 2019), the issue is usually considered of minor importance (Hautecouverture 2021).

Contributors to the debate agree that Canada needs to demonstrate its commitment and its willingness to carry a fair share of the burden in the alliance. Canada's contributions are regarded not only as insurance against US disengagement from Europe (which would shift even more of the burden for defence against Russia on Canada and European allies). It is also regarded as a way of securing Canadian influence in the alliance (Kimball 2019; Robertson 2017).

However, contributing to burden-sharing is not regarded primarily as a matter of defence spending. In fact, commentators

basically agree that the 2 Per Cent Goal is not an adequate measure of commitment to the alliance. For one thing, rising defence budgets come with opportunity costs, that is, lower expenditure for other ways of ensuring international peace and security, such as environmental programmes and international organizations (Simpson 2021: 4–7). Secondly, allies' contributions to the alliance's capabilities and, in particular, to NATO operations should also be considered as elements of burden-sharing (for example, Bercuson 2019b; Cormier/McRae 2019; Collins 2018; Law 2018; Sokolsky/Leuprecht 2018). Canada is perceived to make particularly valuable (and outsized) contributions to NATO missions, starting with the war in Afghanistan. The country participated from the very start in the coalition-led war in 2001 and played an important role in transforming the post-war stabilization mission ISAF into a NATO-led mission. Canada's engagement in Afghanistan has been »revolutionary« (Moens 2008: 571) for Canadian security policy as it represented a turn away from an emphasis on human security and peacekeeping to a more robust use of force that cost the lives of more than 150 Canadian soldiers alone. The engagement was maintained until 2014 with a view to bolstering the country's position in NATO, even though public opinion increasingly turned against the mission after the death toll began to rise in 2006 (Massie 2016). Today, Canada again plays a prominent role as the framework nation for the eFP in Latvia. Besides Canada, only the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany serve as framework nations to reinforce NATO's Eastern flank. Alongside Canada's leading role in the NATO mission in Iraq, this can be viewed as offsetting a comparatively low level of defence spending (currently at around 1.4 per cent) and is viewed favourably in the discourse, as described above (for example, Leuprecht et al. 2018b).

ARMS CONTROL

Playing its role as a »good citizen« (Becker-Jacob et al. 2013), Canada has traditionally been a staunch and very active supporter of arms control, non-proliferation and the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Canada's diplomacy, as Canada's former Disarmament Ambassador Paul Meyer put it, »seems to have nuclear disarmament in its DNA« (Meyer 2021). Nuclear arms control and disarmament resonates with the Canadian public,⁴ and experts are generally in favour of this orientation. There is a broad consensus behind Canada's support of bilateral arms control endeavours like the New START treaty and multilateral arms control and non-proliferation initiatives such as the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty and a comprehensive test-ban treaty. Differences emerge with regard to unilateral initiatives in general and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in particular.

The contentious issue at stake in debates on the TPNW arises from tensions between two possible consequences of

⁴ A strong majority of Canadians, for example, support the TPNW. See: <https://pugwashgroup.ca/canadians-want-nuclear-disarmament-and-our-government-should-act/>

Canada's self-conception as a »good citizen«: Canada's loyalty to NATO and its inclination to support nuclear disarmament. Government representatives and more conservative scholars defend the official policy of eventually siding with its NATO partners. Initially, Canada was rather positive toward the initiative to prohibit nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds and participated in all three conferences on the TPNW and in the UN Open Ended Working Group. After the conclusion of the negotiations, however, Canada sided with its NATO partners. The logic of this turn-around has best been captured in a statement by Leslie Andrew, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at a 2017 Parliamentary Hearing: »as members of NATO, we have relied on and stood on the shoulders of others who have nuclear weapon deterrent capabilities«. On the same occasion, Mark Sedra, President of the Canadian International Council, suggested a continuation of the traditional arms control approach in order »to prevent states like North Korea, Iran, and others from acquiring nuclear weapons, but at the same time working with major states like Russia and the United States to reduce their stockpiles«. Robert Huebert, senior researcher at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, warned that with worsening relations between Russia and NATO, »the effort is better spent trying to develop new ways to ensure that the Russians understand our commitment to the ongoing issue of deterrence«.⁵

Some commentators accept that NATO allies won't sign the TPNW but still urge NATO to do more in terms of nuclear disarmament. Erika Simpson (2021: 16–20), for example, points out that the TPNW serves to highlight the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and will increase the pressure at the next NPT Review Conferences to move beyond the deadlock of the last Review Conference. It may also increase the pressure to adapt NATO's Strategic Concept accordingly. Progressive think tanks, such as the Rideau Institute⁶, and NGOs such as the Canadian Pugwash Group (Meyer 2021) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom⁷ even lend enthusiastic support to the TPNW. Canada should build on its tradition of pursuing unilateral disarmament even in opposition to the US. During the Premiership of Pierre Trudeau, Canada terminated its nuclear weapons-related role within NATO and ended the deployment of US nuclear weapons that had been stationed on Canadian soil in the context of the bilateral North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD).⁸ Thus, Canada is the first nuclear-armed country that has chosen to divest itself of nuclear arms. Today Canada should continue this policy. Peggy Mason, Direc-

tor of the Rideau Institute and former Disarmament Ambassador proposes a kind of two-step compromise. In a first step, Canada should absent itself from NATO's nuclear policy and sign the TPNW. In a second step, Canada should begin a dialogue within NATO »with the aim of convincing other non-nuclear weapon states within NATO to similarly renounce NATO's (...) nuclear posture«.⁹ In addition to adopting a No-First-Use policy, which is overdue and actually demanded by the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, NATO should also renounce the deployment of US nuclear weapons in Europe.

OTHER CHALLENGES FOR NATO

Some issues that play a prominent role in other countries receive relatively little attention in Canada. This holds not only for the issue of Europeanisation (see above) but even more for the problems that NATO faces on its Southern flank (but see Holmboe 2017). Yet Canadian think tanks do address some issues that do not have a prominent place in the political debate. These are often individual contributions that highlight particular issues, such as the prevalence of national caveats in NATO operations and its implications for operational effectiveness (Bercuson 2018); or the standardization of ammunition (Zhou 2018). Gender issues, however, receive somewhat more attention across different think tanks. The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000 gave the issue of gender international visibility in security policy. In 2007 NATO began to take gender issues more seriously. Hlatky and Hughes (2018) provide an overview of gender mainstreaming efforts in NATO and identify a set of problems. Their recommendations focus especially on moving away from framing awareness of gender issues as a contribution to operational effectiveness. They advocate a general inclusion of gender in policy and operational design. Hlatky has also led a project that developed a Gender Training course package for NATO.¹⁰ Wählen (2020) argues that Canada, in particular, would be well-suited to pushing the WPS agenda within NATO.

⁵ House of Commons: Canada and NATO: an alliance forged in strength and reliability, Report of the Standing Committee on National Defence, June 2018, p. 86; <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/NDDN/Reports/RP9972815/nddnrp10/nddnrp10-e.pdf>.

⁶ See: <https://rideauinstitute.ca/2021/01/25/welcoming-the-tpnw-and-supporting-a-progressive-american-foreign-policy/>

⁷ See: https://www.ceasefire.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Acehson_Canadian-Senate-19.01.21.pdf.

⁸ Between 1963 and 1984, Canada participated in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements and deployed F-104 Starfighters as delivery vehicles for US nuclear weapons in Europe.

⁹ Statement Peggy Mason, Hearing, Standing Committee on National Defence, House of Commons, NDDN No. 71, 1st Session 42nd Parliament, 22 November 2017, p. 5.

¹⁰ See *Tailor-Made Gender Awareness Applications for the NATO Community*, https://www.queensu.ca/cidp/nato_gender_apps (16 February 2021).

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THE FRENCH DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF NATO

Janna Chalmovsky

FRANCE IN NATO – A SHORT HISTORICAL OUTLINE

France's foreign policy is guided by the *leitmotif* of autonomy (Ostermann 2019; Pannier/Schmitt 2020). This is also reflected in France's attitude towards NATO. Although France was one of the organization's founding members, it is the only country to have left its integrated command structure, before returning (with the exception of the Nuclear Planning Group) in 2009. Still, the French government considers NATO to be just one pillar of European security and the French view of it differs in important respects from the views of other European states.

Today, the country's full membership of the Alliance is no longer publicly questioned and the 2017 French Strategic Review stated that NATO is »a key component of European security« (French Strategic Review 2017: 59). In contrast to other European states, France has traditionally emphasized NATO's character as a collective defence organization and has downplayed its role as a forum for political consultation and coordination. President Macron, while slightly adjusting the balance between collective defence and common security, remains in this tradition.

France participates regularly in NATO missions, is part of the NATO deployment in the Baltic States and Poland, and holds the post of Supreme Allied Commander for Transformation (SACT). Also, French defence spending as a proportion of GDP will probably reach more than two per cent in 2021, although this is »purely an arithmetic consequence of the [Covid-19] crisis« (Parly 2020). Nevertheless, France pursues its visions of European sovereignty and defence autonomy in parallel with its commitment to NATO. Reasons for France's ambivalent stance towards NATO also lie in the country's relationship with the United States – France has from the beginning perceived NATO primarily as an instrument of American influence in Europe (Pannier/Schmitt 2020: 147). On one hand, the United States is seen as occupying a central position when it comes to guaranteeing European security; on the other hand, France regularly questions the reliability of the US commitment to the defence of Europe. The United States is not a European power and traditionally French discourse on NATO has warned of its hegemonic posture. The United States' pivot to Asia is further increasing this uncertainty about the country's security guarantee for Europe.

Still, even though France favours the European Union in its public diplomacy and defence initiatives, these efforts do not come at the expense of the country's engagement in NATO. According to Christelle Calmels, France's main objectives regarding NATO since its return into the military structure are to reform the alliance not only with a view to improving the management of budgetary and human resources, but also to strengthen France's participation in decision-making at all levels, and promoting a 360° approach (Calmels 2020a). By strongly committing France to NATO, the government also hopes to dispel the impression that French support for European defence will undermine NATO.

THREAT PERCEPTIONS: NATO'S »BRAIN DEATH« AND A COMPLEX AND DIVERSE THREAT ENVIRONMENT

French think tanks and research institutes that shape the French expert discourse on NATO – most notably the Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS), the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS), and the Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri) – are mainly part of a national consensus regarding NATO's role in France's security policy. The future of NATO is not at the centre of the French expert discourse. Discussions on this matter take place somewhat on the side-lines and are conducted only by »a select few« (expert interview), compared with the generally strong interest in French national security policy and in European defence. The alliance is accepted as one pillar of France's and Europe's security, but nothing more. In discussions about the future of the geostrategic balance for example, NATO is mentioned, but does not hold a prominent place when considering possible actions and alternatives.

Looking at **threat perceptions**, French experts agree overall that France and Europe are facing a multifaceted and deteriorating threat environment and that threats have become more diverse and complex. This includes, among other things, Islamist terrorism, Russia, regional instability and state fragility in Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) and Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), the return of great power competition globally and the geostrategic rise of China (Brustlein/Simón 2019: 33; Calmels 2020b; Institut Mon-

»NATO is doing fine, but the atlantic alliance is in trouble«

Tertrais 2019

taigne 2021). But in France these issues are not necessarily perceived as being a challenge for NATO or something that should be dealt with by the Atlantic Alliance. For a majority of French experts, at the moment the biggest challenge for NATO lies in the lack of unity between its member states. President Macron's »brain death« commentary in his interview with *The Economist* in 2019 (Macron 2019) was directed at Turkey and the lack of consultation between NATO member states, but should also be seen in a bigger context (President Obama's choice not to sanction Syria after the use of chemical weapons in 2013, the US decision to withdraw troops from Syria in 2019, thus leaving a vacuum and room for Turkish manoeuvre) (Boniface 2019a). Thus, for French pundits, the biggest threat to NATO does not necessarily come from outside, but rather from dissent inside the Alliance, the lack of consultation between the Allies, and the deterioration of transatlantic political links (Moïsi 2019; Mauro 2019a). As Bruno Tertrais, FRS's Deputy Director and Senior Fellow at the Institut Montaigne, has prominently put it, »NATO is doing fine, but the Atlantic Alliance is in trouble« (Tertrais 2019). According to him, the lack of unity poses the biggest threat to the credibility of NATO's deterrence. This is a rather common position in the French debate (cf. Mauro 2019b).

RUSSIA AND THE FUTURE OF NATO

On **Russia**, there certainly seems to be some understanding of the eastern European member states' threat perception. Nevertheless, differences exist when it comes to assessing how big the Russian threat really is for Europe. Some see Russia as a problem, just not in the conventional sense. Rather, as Frédéric Mauro (2019b: 3), Associate Research Fellow at IRIS, highlights, this security problem stems from the danger it poses to European unity: »for the time being, the threat lies more in the fact that Russia divides Europeans than that it might invade them«. The conflict with Russia is not fought on the battlefield, but in the cyber, political and electoral space. Regarding the latter, France already had its own experiences with a disinformation campaign just days before the second round of the 2017 presidential elections. This effort failed, also because the French authorities were aware of a possible threat posed by disinformation. France has never officially attributed responsibility, but it is most likely that »the perpetrators were (...) at least linked to Russia« (Jeangène Vilmer 2019: 23). Nevertheless, French pundits are mostly on the same page in assessing that the conventional threat by a country »whose GDP is equivalent to Spain« (Mauro 2019a; cf. Boniface 2019b) should not be overestimated. IRIS Director Pascal Boniface (2019a), for example, states that »Moscou pose un défi stratégique, mais pas une menace militaire« [Moscow presents a strategic challenge but not a military threat]. According to him, the Crimea case holds historic and strategic specificities that do not offer a precedent for future annexations.

Still, the militarisation of Russian diplomacy, as well as the systematic use of aggressive practices is perceived as more than just an unconventional problem by some French experts (Maulny 2017). As Dominique Moïsi (2019), Special Advisor at Institut Montaigne, points out, »Tous ceux qui proclament qu'il n'existe pas de menace russe, souffrent soit de problème oculaire aigu, soit poursuivent un agenda qui n'a rien à voir avec l'analyse objective de la réalité« [All those who claim that there is no Russian threat are either blind or are pursuing an agenda that has nothing to do with the objective analysis of reality]. Tertrais (2019: 4, cf. Heisbourg 2020: 88) agrees with this view and concludes that as long as Russia remains a significant potential threat to Europe, its deterrence is likely to remain a dominant feature of NATO. Additionally, some pundits point to the possibility that Russia could be »tempted to take advantage of the US's focus on its confrontation with China« (Haroche 2020: 10; cf. Brustlein/Simón 2019) and expand its presence in the (wider) European neighbourhood, especially in regions where it is already militarily deployed (such as Syria and the CAR).

All in all, the French position regarding a possible threat by Russia is summed up in Tertrais' (2018: 34) assessment that »[t]he Russian problem is real and serious – but it is political more than it is military«. French advances to »build bridges with Russia« (Maulny 2020: 7) do not mean that France does not believe in a tough stance towards Russia, but should be understood as an attempt to overcome the game of great power rivalry. These efforts were never about »whitewashing Russia« (expert interview), but about getting out of the strategic deadlock in Europe and keeping dialogue channels for cooperative solutions open (Panier/Schmitt 2020: 141).

CHINA AND THE FUTURE OF NATO

China is perceived as a challenge, from a strategic point of view, because of its more aggressive demeanour in the Indo-Pacific Region. As an Indo-Pacific power France holds important strategic interest in the region and sees the growing importance of maritime security issues in its regional strategy (Regaud 2020). Therefore, some have already called for a French »pivot' towards Asia« (Duclos 2020a), be it only in the geo-economic sphere. The challenges China poses on a geopolitical scale, especially with its values, its increasing military power but also its ambitions to shape the political, economic and technological order on an international scale, are constantly debated in France – just not with regard to the role of NATO. Rather, the focus lies on finding a common European position that should strengthen Europe's resilience towards Chinese interference. French commentators highlight the need for Europeans to create their own narrative with regard to the Sino-American conflict (Simon 2020). It is in the French interest to keep the issue outside of NATO in order to pre-

vent it from getting militarized and to keep the United States at arm's length on an issue that – from a French point of view – first of all affects the European Union and should therefore be resolved within a European context. As Pascal Boniface (2020) puts it, when it comes to China, the Report of the 2020 Reflection Group is »clairement une instrumentalisation des États-Unis pour emporter avec eux les pays européens membres de l'OTAN dans leur lutte globale contre la Chine« [clearly the United States taking advantage to get the European NATO members on board in its global struggle against China].

Still, some experts consider the strategic challenges China poses for NATO. Here, French opinion and discourse is intrinsically linked to the assessment of the United States' engagement in NATO: the question is whether China is considered as a direct threat to the Alliance and its member states or if it is mainly an indirect threat because of the rising geostrategic competition between the United States and China. FRS' Special Advisor François Heisbourg (2020: 89) for example sees the emergence and establishment of China as »America's peer competitor« as the starting point for a shift from the debate on *burden-sharing* to a debate on *burden-shifting*. The Director of Ifri's Security Studies Center, Corentin Brustlein (2019: 41), also points to the fact that European armed forces will need to increase their strategic flexibility at the higher end of the conflict spectrum in the future. As the United States will most likely pivot even more towards Asia, European countries will need to compensate for the withdrawal of US high-end military capabilities (cf. Haroche 2020).

NATO-EU RELATIONS: EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY FOR A MORE CAPABLE NATO

France was advocating a stronger European role in defence even before the end of the Cold War (Maulny 2020). In France, strategic autonomy is »still considered a priority goal of defense policy« (Brustlein 2018: 2). Therefore, the concept of strategic autonomy is deeply engrained in French strategic culture and the country's strategic debate. The Covid-19 pandemic has confirmed President Macron's opinion that »economic, security and normative challenges are increasingly interrelated and should be addressed by a renewed investment in Europe's strategic autonomy« (Pannier 2021: 25). Additionally, structural trends pulling the United States away from Europe, like the pivot to Asia, and President Trump's disruptive policies in particular demand a greater European self-reliance in the field of defence (Tertais 2019; Boniface 2019b). Some scholars even support Jolyon Howorth's (2019) proposition to merge NATO and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), or at least to call for more Europeanisation of NATO (Mauro 2019b: 19). The main preoccupation of French commentators on this matter is the need for European countries to take matters into their own hands, in order to be able to manage crises in the European neighbourhood (Mauro 2020; Bellais/Nicolas 2019; Duclos 2020). According to FRS Research Fel-

low Benjamin Hautecouverture (2021), the »question of strategic autonomy runs through European thinking against the backdrop of a generally shared perception that Europe is entering an era of heightened strategic and geopolitical competition«.

In the view of French scholars, European self-reliance and emancipation from US hegemony needs to manifest itself also in the field of armament cooperation. As French Minister of Defence Florence Parly has pointed out, NATO's solidarity clause »is called Article 5, not Article F-35« (Parly 2019). Thus, French calls for more common investment in European defence projects (Brustlein 2018) are not only linked to the perception of a more challenging threat environment, but also necessary to balancing the perceived economic and political hegemony of the United States inside NATO (Mauro 2019b; Mauro/Fernandez-Cras 2020; Bellais/Nicolas 2019). French experts agree that closer integration at the European level is imperative in order to overcome the inefficiencies resulting from the national fragmentation of armament industries and armed forces. Guided by a strong tradition of strategic thinking, studies and proposals exist on the necessary development of capabilities in order to achieve strategic autonomy. For example, Corentin Brustlein proposes a strategic capability concept »that emphasizes flexibility (...) but gives priority to those capabilities suited to the higher end of the conflict spectrum« (Brustlein/Simón 2019: 34–35). Frédéric Mauro (2019b: 20) brings the idea of a »defence Eurogroup« into the debate, which could work outside the framework of EU institutions »as an embryonic, integrated and autonomous 'European army'«. This configuration could work under qualified majority voting or at least decision-making by consensus or consensus minus one, a procedure he identifies as one of NATO's main successes.

Nevertheless, according to Corentin Brustlein (2018: 2), fears that France aims at a »Gaullist turn« that would »sever the transatlantic link while bolstering French influence« are unfounded: France's perception of strategic autonomy has become much more nuanced. An ambitious vision of European strategic autonomy therefore does not stand in contrast to NATO. Quite the contrary: a stronger Europe would also strengthen the Atlantic Alliance (de Fougères 2020; Institut Montaigne 2021: 138). Also, NATO will continue to provide collective defence and enhance military interoperability. Additionally, France has become more pragmatic with regard to European strategic autonomy. This pragmatism reflects the French acknowledgement that many European leaders, even in Germany, still look to the United States for leadership in defence (Boniface 2019b) and do not engage seriously enough with French initiatives (Berghofer 2020).¹ Thus, an agnostic perception of European strategic autonomy is to be

¹ Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer's statement that »Illusions of European strategic autonomy must come to an end« has been particularly disappointing for French scholars. Cf. Kramp-Karrenbauer: »Europe still needs America«, in: Politico, 2 November 2020 (<https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-still-needs-america/>) and »Macrons rebuttal – Ein Gespräch mit dem französischen Staatspräsidenten«, in: Der Grand Continent, 16. November 2020, <https://legrandcontinent.eu/de/2020/11/16/macron/> (accessed 22. November 2020).

found in French thinking, according to which it is unnecessary to put much energy into the discussion and just work with what's available – meaning that NATO remains »indispensable autant qu'incontournable« [indispensable as well as unavoidable] (Moisi 2019).

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND DISARMAMENT

The French debate on (nuclear) deterrence and arms control reflects France's status as one of the five declared Nuclear Weapon States (NWS). However, the French debate differs from debates in the United States and the United Kingdom. One difference concerns the production of knowledge on nuclear weapons and deterrence. In the United States, central concepts such as strategic stability, extended deterrence or escalation control have been developed by think tanks such as RAND. In France, strategic thinking and the development of doctrines such as »deterrence from the weak to the strong« and the »equalizing power of the atom« have been heavily influenced by state officials, such as colonels Pierre-Marie Gallois and Charles Ailleret and by President de Gaulle himself (Tertrais 2020: 14). In some ways, this state centrism characterizes French debates even today (de Montbrial/Gomart 2019). Politically, no significant voice doubts that as long as nuclear weapons exist, the *force de frappe* should be retained. Issues of arms control, too, are rarely discussed in Parliament. Nuclear deterrence and the French nuclear forces are not a major issue and are not a topic of public controversy or among French NGO's (Tertrais 2020: 23). The French press reports on arms control only in relation to major international issues such as North Korea or the Iranian nuclear deal.

With few exceptions, the French expert discourse is also characterized by this general sense of acceptance. Specialized think tanks such as Ifri and CERI debate these issues at great length. However, they usually do not position themselves in political debates on nuclear deterrence and disarmament, but rather analyse the historical, sociological and strategic perspectives of French policies in this field. The exception is CERI experts who question more openly the foundations of nuclear deterrence and the rationale of France's nuclear posture (Pelopidas 2017). The majority of scholars, however, do not criticize the official policy of maintaining nuclear deterrence and basic strategic concepts such as vital interests, sufficiency and unacceptable damage. Nor do they question the contribution of France's independent nuclear forces to European security within the context of NATO.² Regarding the issue of a stronger European role for France's independent nuclear forces, most scholars discuss affirmatively France's overtures to its European partners in general and President Macron's 2020 affirmation of the

force de frappe's European dimension in particular. In his speech at the École de Guerre, Macron underlined that »France's vital interests (whose violation might trigger a nuclear response) now have a European dimension« (Macron 2020). The exception is again CERI scholars who question whether a nuclear deterrence arrangement is still necessary and useful given that US nuclear deterrence capabilities in Europe have »since the 1960s been both ineffective and unnecessary« (Egeland/Pelopidas 2021: 242). In their view, the recurring debates about European nuclear capabilities – recently launched again by President Macron's Speech at the École de Guerre – thus resemble a »zombie that can never be finally put to rest« (Egeland/Pelopidas 2021: 238). They emphasize the »weaknesses in the case for Euro-nukes« and question whether Macron's offer will be taken up by sceptical publics and decision-makers in Germany and other European countries (Egeland/Pelopidas 2021).

The majority discourse on NATO and arms control is shaped by the prevalent nuclear doctrines. Thus, scholars support the notion that NATO should remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist. French scholars propose legally binding arms control instruments, transparency and confidence-building measures, doctrinal exchanges and information-sharing as instruments that can help to increase the stability of nuclear deterrence (HauteCouverture/Maitre/Tertrais 2021).³ They see no room, however, for French nuclear arms reductions as long as the quantities of nuclear weapons deployed by the United States and Russia surpass by magnitudes the number of French weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, too, does not resonate with the French expert community. As one of the five official nuclear weapon states, France has consistently rejected the Treaty, as well as the notion that the Treaty sets international customary law.⁴ In the same vein, most scholars do not accept the argument of a close link between the NPT obligation of nuclear weapon states to disarm and the prohibition of non-nuclear weapon states acquiring these weapons (Maitre 2019: 27). The French concept of vital interests to be protected by nuclear deterrence also runs counter to the idea of no-first-use. Instead, most scholars refer to the unilateral reductions France made after the end of the Cold War and propose concrete arms control measures such as the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty and the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty as a way forward (Brustlein 2021).

² NATO recognized the value of France's independent nuclear force for the first time in the 1974 Ottawa declaration which states that the British and French »nuclear forces capable of playing a deterrent role of their own contribute to the overall strengthening of the deterrence of the Alliance«.

³ The French sense of the urgency of arms control has also been expressed by President Macron himself: against the backdrop of mounting tensions, he demanded in 2020 that »Europeans must also propose together an international arms control agenda. The end of the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the uncertainties about the future of the New START Treaty and the crisis of the conventional arms control regime in Europe has led to the possibility of a return of pure, unhindered military and nuclear competition by 2021, which has not been seen since the end of the 1960s« (Macron 2020).

⁴ See: <https://www.icanw.org/france>. However, French public opinion seems to be more receptive (https://www.mvtpaix.org/word-press/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/CP-05.07.2018-Sondage-TIAN_EN.pdf) and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly »recommended that the government »mitigate its criticism« of the treaty »to show that we understand and take into account the concerns of states and their desire for more balanced global governance« (see: <https://www.icanw.org/france>).

NATO: A SECURITY ORGANIZATION

France has always seen NATO primarily as a **military organization** and not as a community of values (Tertrais 2020). French commentators definitely do not share the 2020 Reflection Group's view that NATO has always been based on shared values. As Pascal Boniface (2020) highlights, Portugal's Salazar regime was a founding member of NATO and military coups in Turkey and Greece have never put these countries' membership in NATO into doubt. Thus, from a French point of view, NATO has always been a »military machine« and is therefore not »the ideal forum or vehicle for foreign policy convergence« (de France 2019). On this matter, Michel Duclos, Special Advisor at Institut Montaigne, proposes to expand the transatlantic agenda for addressing current challenges by making the EU the key geopolitical partner of the United States (Duclos 2020). French wishes for NATO reform are therefore linked to enhancing decision-making and better consultation on security issues, but no more. As part of the »Southern Quartet«, an informal grouping including France, Spain, Italy and Portugal, France calls for a more balanced approach on the part of NATO to dealing with Russia and threats in the South, as well as better coordination with the European Union in the Mediterranean region (Calmels 2020b). Still, the French call for a **360° approach** should be considered »a discursive way to alleviate the Alliance's focus on Russia while not involving an increased NATO presence in the South« (Calmels 2020b: 422).

When it comes to **future operations**, French pundits deem it unlikely that there will be more than training missions in the Southern Region (Pannier/Schmitt 2020: 141; Calmels 2020b). First of all, future operations in the region would need a robust legal basis (unlikely with the current blockades in the UN Security Council) and strong support from the United States (unlikely due to »post-Afghanistan operational fatigue«). Additionally, given its bureaucratic nature, internal divisions and slow decision-making procedures, NATO is not in a position to tackle the »diffuse and multifaceted nature of southern threats« (Calmels 2020b: 429) and it is questionable whether NATO should even be involved in tasks such as migration management or countering terrorist actions. Even though both the United States and European countries share the terrorist threat as a security problem, French pundits deem it fairly unlikely that NATO will get involved »even though several relevant programmes have been launched to adapt defence instruments to new threats and hybrid forms of armed violence« (HauteCouverture 2021). In the view of French scholars, coalitions-of-the-willing are more flexible and better placed to react to such contingencies. Regarding responses to instability in the South, NATO should either work closely with the better resources of the EU or leave the responsibility entirely to the EU. This would allow NATO to focus on its main purpose, namely territorial defence.

Regarding decision-making procedures, French experts take the view that changes in this area seem unlikely, if not impossible. Thus, increased consultation and dialogue on threat perceptions among the partners could once again lead to a

cohesive common policy, something that is currently lacking, but that has always been achieved in the past. For this, Joe Biden's presidency could be a good opportunity to revive the debates on collective security in Europe and the future of the transatlantic alliance. Biden's foreign policy priority to »restore and reimagine« alliances has opened up some leeway for a new strategic dialogue between the transatlantic partners, of which the Europeans should now take advantage (HauteCouverture 2021).

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GERMANY'S VIEW OF THE FUTURE OF NATO: NECESSARY BUT IN NEED OF REPAIR

Matthias Dembinski

Historically, Germany has been a reliable partner within the alliance and able to reconcile its obligations towards NATO with its post-war security culture, based on multilateralism and military restraint. In fact, most German pundits share the assessment that NATO will remain a building block of German and European security. Yet, there is also a widespread sense that NATO is in crisis concerning its cohesion and purpose. This sense is fuelled by uncertainties about the future course of the United States but also Turkey's nationalist foreign policy, the deviations from the rule of law in some member states, and increasing internal heterogeneity and immobility. Despite the talk of crisis, however, many scholars are convinced that NATO, because of its character as a collective defence organization and a community of values, will be able to adapt (Deitelhoff/Daase 2020).

Beyond this general consensus, the German debate on NATO's future is characterized by at least three fault-lines. The first runs between proponents of détente and those who acknowledge the enduring relevance of deterrence. The second runs between supporters of a transatlantic orientation and those who favour a European one. The third, recently emerged fault-line runs between proponents of a value-based policy and advocates of pragmatism.

CHINA/GLOBAL NATO

The rise of China figures in discourses on the future of NATO, for two reasons. First, perceptions of China are changing rapidly. Second, scholars acknowledge that China's evolving power and assertiveness will accelerate the US pivot to Asia and impact NATO's internal architecture.

Only a few years ago, China was perceived as an economic opportunity that Germany could not afford to miss. This image has changed profoundly (Tatlow 2020).¹ Expectations that increased trade and communication would foster China's transformation have been disappointed. Today, experts emphasize China's role as a technological, regulatory and normative competitor that adversely affects the resilience of Western societies and deliberately challenges liberal val-

ues in Europe and globally. Others focus on security. While scholars do not perceive China as a military threat, they acknowledge the nexus between technology and security, as well as China's growing military footprint in Europe and adjacent regions, including its naval exercises in the Mediterranean and, together with Russia, in the Baltic Sea.

Despite this changing perception of China, the debate on how Germany should react to these challenges and on NATO's role in this regard is just beginning. On China, the abovementioned fault-lines overlap and two broad camps are emerging.

The first camp consists of proponents of a value-based policy who advocate a tougher line on human rights and of those who emphasize the security and military aspects of the relationship and advocate, among other things, stricter monitoring and control of Chinese (economic) activities in Europe. The second camp consists of pragmatists and proponents of détente. Pragmatists underline the importance and benefits of a working relationship with China and caution that Germany and Europe will have to deal with China as it is. They continue to support a policy of engagement. However, they, too, call for a more level playing-field – for example, on investment – and precautions to make sure that growing interdependence does not allow China to change German and European norms and values (Godehardt 2020; Riecke 2021). Proponents of détente are concerned about the repercussions of a securitization of relations and expect that interdependence will have civilizing effects on the conflict.

One emblematic issue in this debate is the participation of Chinese companies in the construction of Germany's 5G network. The inter-agency compromise of autumn last year will not exclude companies formally, but will restrict the use of Huawei components (Bartsch/Laudien 2021: 25). According to members of the first camp, this compromise falls short of what is needed. Germany should ban Huawei outright from building the 5G network (Schwarzer/Burns 2020). Members of the second camp take a more balanced view of security risks and economic benefits and point to the direct and indirect costs that the exclusion of Huawei would entail.

This fault-line overlaps with the transatlantic/European divide. Members of the first camp react favourably to the

¹ A widely read paper by the Association of German Industries captures this changed mood: BDI 2019.

»The Archimedean point of future transatlantic relations will be China policy.«

German Transatlanticists Group 2021: More Ambition, Please! Toward a New Agreement between Germany and the United States.

American invitation to closely coordinate policy on China within NATO. In their view, the transatlantic allies, together with East Asian democracies, should form a united front in talks with China on trade, investments and the security-related aspects of technologies and export controls in particular (Schwarzer/Burns 2020). According to DGAP scholars Brauss and Mölling (2021), »allies should develop a common approach on how to tackle China's geo-economic initiatives«. Liana Fix of the Körber Foundation and Steven Keil of the German Marshall Fund state that »greater cooperation on China is needed if Germany is to be a partner to the United States in leadership in a new geopolitical era« (Fix/Keil 2021). Proponents of a value-based policy, too, are all the more inclined to accept NATO as a venue for coordinating policy on China, the more NATO presents itself as an alliance of democracies that stand up for democratic values globally. A recent policy paper by Ellen Ueberschär, co-chair of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, and Patrick Keller, Deputy Director of the Federal Academy for Security Policy, co-signed by 17 pundits, exemplifies this overlap. The paper notes a convergence of American and European views on China and calls for a close coordination of policy between the United States and the EU on issues ranging from human rights to export controls. (German Transatlanticists Group 2021).

Members of the second camp are sceptical about turning NATO into the main forum for consultation and coordination on China. They emphasize differences in interests and approach between the United States and European states and are more inclined to strengthen the EU as a common voice in relations with China. In their view, European states should formulate an EU policy first and coordinate with the United States in areas such as digital infrastructure and technology in an EU-US format (Rizzo 2020; Rudolf 2020a). The Indo-Pacific strategies launched by Germany and the Netherlands at approximately the same time are also seen as stepping stones towards a genuine European response to the rise of China (Godement/Wacker 2020).² The debate on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) between China and the EU exemplifies this difference. Members of the first camp criticize the adoption of the CAI and argue that the EU should have consulted with the incoming Biden administration on developing a common approach. Members of the second camp support the Agreement on the grounds that it establishes a genuine European approach towards China (Abb 2021).

Regarding the repercussions of China's rise for NATO's internal architecture, the differences are less pronounced. Members of the first camp call for more German and Euro-

pean burden-sharing.³ Members of the second camp conclude that Germany and Europe must, at the same time, safeguard their economic interests and compensate militarily for the looming relocation of American forces and crucial assets (Masala/Tsetsos 2021).

RUSSIA

NATO's relationship with Russia is one of the thorniest issues in the current German security debate. Scholars agree that the annexation of Crimea and Russia's intervention in Eastern Ukraine violate key norms and should not be accepted. They disagree in their analyses of the causes of the conflict and appropriate responses, however.

Proponents of détente⁴ tend to blame both sides for the deterioration of relations that began prior to 2014,⁵ and argue that Russia is acting, on one hand, out of a combination of resentment, bitterness over what it perceives as a denial of respect and the fear of being cut out of Europe, and on the other hand, based on a misguided perception of its relative strength that bolsters its geopolitical aspirations and its provocative behaviour. In this view, the high levels of military tension are driven at least partly by action-reaction processes. Proponents of détente and pragmatists agree that despite Russia's structural weakness, attempts to enforce a change of policy or even of the regime are futile. Instead, NATO will have to deal with Russia as it is. More promising than a strategy of regime-changing coercion is a strategy aimed at co-existence and hopes of the »civilizing« effects of societal and economic exchange (Dembinski/Spanger 2017). In this view, NATO's military measures to bolster deterrence are sufficient. The alliance should preserve the NATO-Russia Founding Act and advance the dialogue part of its dual-track strategy (Finckh-Krämer 2021). To facilitate dialogue, NATO should either suspend future enlargements (Ganser/Lapins/Puhl 2018) or develop alternative institutional arrangements to guarantee Ukraine's and Georgia's security (Dembinski/Spanger 2017).

Advocates of deterrence perceive Russia as inherently aggressive. Russia never identified with the post-Cold war order of the Paris Charter. Instead, it is bound to reclaim, by coercive means if necessary, a sphere of influence. In their view, the combination of Putin's authoritarianism and the

² The German Indo-Pacific Guidelines express the expectation that this initiative will lead to a European policy approach towards the Indo-Pacific region. See: Die Bundesregierung 2020:11.

³ More Ambition, Please! Toward a New Agreement between Germany and the United States. Available at: <https://anewagreement.org/en/> (accessed 19 May 2021).

⁴ This rather heterogeneous group includes observers such as Alexander Rahr, who shows some appreciation of Putin's policies, but also scholars such as Wolfgang Zellner who, despite noting fundamental differences between Russia and the West, make the case for détente.

⁵ See, for example, the Report by the Panel of Eminent Persons 2015. Wolfgang Ischinger was the German member of this panel.

need to divert attention away from internal contradictions motivates Russian conflictual behaviour (Meister 2015; 2020). Emboldened by the alliance with China and the perception of Western weaknesses, Russia sees no need for compromise and instead uses a combination of asymmetric instruments and military threats to weaken the West. Nord Stream II, which Russia advances for geopolitical reasons, is a case in point (Umbach 2018). Proponents of a value-based policy take a similar view. Ralf Fücks, formerly of the Böll Foundation and now chairman of the Zentrum Liberale Moderne, argues that the policy of »Wandel durch Annäherung« (change through rapprochement) has failed. The Putin regime is inherently corrupt, repressive and bound to undermine the West and its values.⁶

Proponents of deterrence see the greatest danger in NATO's weakness in the face of Russia acquiring coercive options across the board, from grey-zone instruments to nuclear weapons (Brauß/Krause 2019). With regard to the latter, Brauß and Krause (2019) and Brauß and Mölling (2019) suggest that Russia aims at regional escalation dominance that potentially would allow it to occupy the Baltics and deter Western counter-measures with a nuclear escalate to de-escalate strategy. To check these aspirations, NATO should »go back to basics« and focus on collective defence. Germany should concentrate on its role as a logistics hub and on heavy armaments and rapid reinforcements. Instead of rotating troops in and out of Poland and the Baltic states, NATO should deploy additional combat units permanently (Schwarzer/Burns 2020). A violation of the NATO-Russia Founding Act would be acceptable as the circumstances under which this agreement was sealed in 1995 changed with the annexation of Crimea. Conventional defence needs to be augmented with credible nuclear deterrence. Members of this school see the envisaged deployment of US nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles as a step in the right direction. However, NATO should also plan for the deployment of conventional and possibly nuclear-armed land-based intermediate-range missiles on European soil (Brauß/Mölling 2019). In addition to military strength, adherents of the deterrence and values camps advocate economic sanctions, including halting the Nord Stream II pipeline project (Meister 2020; Friedrich 2020). Concerning future enlargement, both camps argue that NATO should keep its doors open and intensify military cooperation programmes with Ukraine and Georgia to prepare them for eventual accession.

ARMS CONTROL

German scholars are generally supportive of arms control and non-proliferation. However, most scholars endorse *negotiated* arms control (Kühn 2020). While adherents of the deterrence school are more sceptical of controlling

Russia's armaments, the German peace research institutes, scholars at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) and researchers at centres such as Metis at the University of the Armed Forces in Munich take a strong interest in arms control. Wolfgang Zellner and his co-authors of the OSCE Network of Think Tanks have presented detailed proposals to reduce the risks of conventional deterrence in Europe (OSCE Network 2018). A group of international scholars, including German participants from the SWP, the IFSH and PRIF, produced a report on risk reduction and arms control in Europe that, among other things, calls for a continuation of the Open Skies Treaty and a specification of the deployment limitations in the NATO-Russia Founding Act as a stepping stone for confidence-building and conventional arms control (Expert Group 2020). SWP's Wolfgang Richter emphasizes the danger of inadvertent military conflicts and presents a catalogue of conventional arms control and confidence-building measures (Richter 2020; see also Pieper 2020). The IFSH and PRIF have developed detailed proposals for dialogue on emerging technologies.

Controversies have emerged with regard to proposals that go beyond negotiated arms control. The treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons is supported by scholars from the German peace research institutes (see, for example, Meier 2021; Baldus 2021) and the Böll Foundation,⁷ but viewed rather critically by others. SWP scholar Jonas Schneider, for example, argues that the prohibition treaty is deficient and does not serve Germany's security interests as long as nuclear weapons are an important element of Russia's military posture (Schneider 2021). The expert community is also divided on the issue of Germany's withdrawal from NATO's nuclear sharing commitment. PRIF scholar Sascha Hach (2020) makes the case for the unilateral withdrawal of the remaining US nuclear weapons in Germany. Others take a more cautious view. Peter Rudolf doubts that these bombs have any military rationale (Rudolf 2020b: 17). IFSH scholars Pia Fuhrhop, Ulrich Kühn and Oliver Meier (2020) argue that instead of taking unilateral decisions now, Germany should propose a multilateral five-year moratorium on the introduction of destabilizing weapons into Europe and use the time for new arms control negotiations. Proponents of the deterrence school oppose a unilateral withdrawal from NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement. A Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS) paper argues that such a step could result in the re-deployment of nuclear weapons to Poland (Brose 2020). A DGAP study reveals widespread support for NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement among European governments and concludes that »nuclear sharing is caring« and essential for the cohesion of NATO (Becker/Mölling 2020; for a similar view see Volz 2020). Some proponents of the value-oriented camp share this view. For example, the abovementioned »More Ambition, Please!« paper argues that Germany should continue to take part in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements.

⁶ Available at: <https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/beziehung-russland-deutschland-100.html>. See also his op-ed in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 February 2021: https://libmod.de/fuecks_faz_russland_mischung/ (accessed 19. May 2021).

⁷ The Böll Foundation published a sweeping endorsement of the prohibition treaty by two ICAN members: Balzer/Messmer (2020).

HYBRID THREATS

Scholars differ in their assessments of Russian disinformation campaigns and hybrid threats and disagree on NATO's role in countering them. Pragmatists and proponents of détente tend to perceive cyber-attacks attributed to Russia, disinformation campaigns and Russian meddling in democratic processes as disturbances rather than existential threats. In their view, NATO does not add much value by countering these kinds of Russian interference, and should focus instead on deterring hybrid military threats and highly disruptive and damaging cyber-attacks. Adherents of the deterrence camp are more inclined to see such interference as part of an escalation spectrum. In their view, resilience against malicious activities and the protection of key civilian infrastructure »constitutes NATO's first line of deterrence and defence«. NATO should play a leading role and »set national resilience targets to ensure a common standard« (Brauss/Mölling 2021).

NATO AND OUT-OF-AREA INTERVENTIONS

The perceived failures of NATO's ISAF mission and the missions in Libya and Iraq impact on the German debate about NATO's future role. The expectations of the late 2000s that NATO would transform itself into an expeditionary alliance and that the German armed forces would follow this trend are gone. The German armed forces retain some of their expeditionary capabilities and contribute to capacity-building and UN peace operations. However, there is an awareness that NATO is unlikely to engage in major out-of-area combat operations. Regarding the more likely capacity-building, training and peace support operations, scholars generally argue that a UN mandate or similar legitimization should be a prerequisite.

NATO-EU RELATIONS

After the four chaotic years of the Trump administration, and with the Biden administration endorsing European defence initiatives, the erstwhile divisions between Europeanists and proponents of a transatlantic orientation have softened. Scholars across the above mentioned fault-lines share the conviction that the EU member states will have to share more of the burden and that the EU will play a role in coordinating national efforts. In fact, most scholars agree that strengthening the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) need not come at the expense of NATO (Major 2019: 39; Puglierin 2020). Conversely, traditional proponents of a European orientation accede that NATO will remain responsible for collective defence (Lippert/von Oндarza/Perthes 2019: 19).

But differences remain. Representatives of the transatlantic camp reject concepts such as European sovereignty and autonomy in security. For the foreseeable future, the

EU lacks the means, political will and strategic culture to guarantee security in Europe. Moreover, an inflated rhetoric of European autonomy might – perhaps inadvertently – serve as an excuse for an American withdrawal. Transatlanticists insist that the project of European defence autonomy should take a back seat whenever it conflicts with declared US interests. They particularly object to the idea of a closed European defence market, the creation of integrated European units that do not also benefit NATO, and any attempt to coordinate European positions and speak with one voice in the North Atlantic Council. In contrast, proponents of the European camp argue that in the future, Europe cannot rely on American protection as it has done in the past. Building European defence necessitates a certain level of discrimination, such as an exclusive PESCO (Lübke-meier 2020). Scholars also disagree with regard to the possibility of future European nuclear deterrence based on a restructured Force de Frappe. While Europeanists such as Eckhard Lübke-meier (2020) find it worth considering this perspective, others, such as IFSH's Barbara Kunz (2020), express strong reservations.

BURDEN-SHARING

Scholars acknowledge that burden-sharing will remain contentious. They disagree on the adequacy of NATO's 2 per cent Defence Investment Pledge (DIP) and on possible alternatives. The deterrence school tends to defend the 2 per cent goal (Kamp 2019; Schwarzer/Burns 2020). Others are less categorical. Henning Riecke (2019) argues that Germany should realize Chancellor Merkel's announcement to increase spending to 1.5 per cent of GDP by 2025 and specify how and when Germany will reach the 2 per cent goal in the future. However, he also proposes that NATO should go beyond the artificial metric of 2 per cent. This critique is widely shared. The 2 per cent metric has obfuscated the massive increase in defence spending since 2014. German defence expenditures, for example, rose from €34 billion in 2014 to €51.4 billion in 2020. According to many scholars, the 2 per cent goal does not adequately reflect either military efficiency or real contributions to NATO. For example, while most of Germany's defence spending strengthens NATO, other alliance members spend a substantial part of their defence expenditures on projects that do not benefit NATO directly. Claudia Major (2019: 31), senior researcher at the SWP, notes that NATO itself is aware of the shortcomings of the 2 per cent metric and uses three parameters in its internal assessments: Cash, capabilities and contributions to NATO operations. Echoing this critique, some argue that NATO should use a more differentiated set of input criteria that also take into account expenditures on crisis prevention or the modernization of logistical infrastructure (Richter 2020b). Others propose the use of output criteria (Ganser/Lapins/Puhl 2018) such as the financing and provision of the capability packages that states promised to provide in the context of NATO's Defence Planning Process (NDPP) (Meyer zum Felde 2018).

COHESION AND CONSULTATION

Scholars acknowledge NATO's lack of cohesion, intra-alliance conflicts, the occasional blocking of decisions and sometimes the lack of willingness to inform and consult on decisions that affect the security of other members. They question NATO's ability to change member states' behaviour, however. Because deviations from the consensus principle and/or more delegation of competences to the Secretary General or other NATO organs are not deemed realistic, some scholars are favourably discussing proposals for an institutionalization of coalitions within NATO.⁸

VALUES AND SCOPE OF NATO

German scholars and proponents of the value-oriented camp in particular emphasize the value-based character of NATO (Major 2019: 15). In this view, common democratic values are an antidote against destabilization from within. However, they rarely discuss in detail what this implies for dealing with partners such as Turkey. Regarding the Reflection Group's proposal to broaden NATO's portfolio and include various aspects of security, ranging from climate to natural disasters, the debate has just begun. Claudia Major (2019: 40) sees merit in this idea and BAKS Vice President Patrick Keller (2020) argues that NATO should formally introduce a fourth core task under the heading of resilience. Others like the head of German Society for Security Policy (GSP) Johannes Varwick seem to be more skeptical and ask whether the Alliance might lose its focus.⁹

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⁸ See 16. Petersberger Gespräche zur Sicherheit: Die Weiterentwicklung der NATO, 16 March 2021; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z28V25HqYoM&t=1s> (accessed 21 May 2021)

⁹ Ibidem.

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ITALY DEBATES THE FUTURE OF NATO

Matthias Dembinski

Italy is a staunch NATO ally and a close security partner of the United States (Ratti 2021). Italy is a participant in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement, hosts the Allied Joint Force Command in Naples and several US bases and is currently the second largest contributor to NATO operations after the United States. The Italian debate combines a strong transatlantic orientation with support for the construction of the EU as a more capable provider of security and defence. This consensus is shared by the centre-right and centre-left in the Second Republic.¹ It emerged after the end of the Cold War when the centre-left parties, whose security approach had hitherto been based on support for European frameworks in the form of the OSCE or a strengthened EU, began to embrace transatlantic perspectives and NATO.²

THREAT PERCEPTION: AMERICAN RETRENCHMENT AND MOUNTING CHALLENGES

The Italian think tanks and research centres that dominate the discourse on the future of NATO – most notably the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI), the Centro Studi Internazionali (CeSI) and the Aspen Institute Italia – lean more or less towards transversal positions (although IAI is rather centre-left) and are part of this consensus. The debate among think tank scholars starts from a generally shared assessment that Italian security is threatened by the combination of two worrying strategic trends: US retrenchment from the crucial MENA region (Marrone/Muti 2020: 14) and an accumulation of threats stemming from this region. Even if Joe Biden's election offers an opportunity to renew the transatlantic partnership, the structural forces pulling American attention and resources away from Europe will remain.

The most important factor in this respect is the rise of an increasingly assertive China and the corresponding American pivot to East Asia.

According to many scholars, the combination of the two trends creates a security environment marked by »aggressive multipolarity«. The security void created by the partial American withdrawal from the MENA region has been filled by the incursions of regional actors such as Iran, Turkey, Egypt and the Gulf States, as well as Russia and to some extent China, who have been able to exploit the prevalent fragility of states resulting from local conflicts and underdevelopment. Although these actors refrain from challenging the still existing American military hegemony directly through open warfare, they have engaged in a variety of proxy wars, hybrid threats and cyber-attacks, resulting in what Stefano Silvestri recently termed »guerra in tempo di pace« [war during peace-time] (Silvestri 2020: 3). Even if Italy's territorial security is not threatened directly, Italian scholars worry about the spillover effects from instability in adjacent regions, and from Libya in particular. Looking further into the future, some Italian think tankers, most of them affiliated with the IAI, hope that this situation is transitional and will be replaced by a bipolar confrontation between the United States and China: »In short, we are facing a multipolar scenario while seeing on the horizon the contours of a mostly bilateral setting« (Credi/Marrone/Menotti 2020: 3).

Against this backdrop, most Italian think tankers are convinced that the Alliance »remains a crucial multilateral tool for the management of Euro-Atlantic security« (Carati 2019: 51f), but that on the road to 2030 NATO must adapt.

RESPONDING TO THE RISE OF CHINA AND THE EMERGING AMERICAN-CHINESE CONFLICT

One area in which adaptation seems both inevitable and difficult is China. Many Italian scholars acknowledge that NATO will have to play a more active role not only to counter a perceived Chinese assertiveness in the European region, but also because the United States will remain committed to Europe »while pushing Europeans to both take greater responsibility for their Continent's security and to stand together with the US against China« (Marrone/Muti

¹ The Five Star Movement (M5S) and the PD reframed their positions towards NATO recently, and the Conte II and the current Draghi governments are even more NATO-friendly than the Conte I government.

² Italian scholars debate whether foreign policy in the Second Republic is characterized by continuity (Crocì 2008) or swings like a pendulum with the changes in government between centre-right and centre-left coalitions. Adherents of the »pendulum school« argue that the foreign policy of the centre-right coalitions usually follows a »conservative/nationalist paradigm« and are more pro-Atlantic, while the foreign policy of the centre-left follows an »international/progressivist« paradigm and is more pro-European (Brighi 2007).

»Independently of who is in government, Washington has always been the main point of reference for Italian foreign policy.«

Foradori 2014: 37

2020: 3). Implementing such a quid pro quo, however, might be difficult for Italy. Following a surge of Chinese investment in Italy since 2014, China and its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have increasingly come to be perceived by the public and by some scholars primarily as an opportunity. At the behest of the Five Star Movement (M5S), Italy signed a memorandum to join the Belt and Road Initiative on 23 March 2019. This positive view of China was shared by some think tankers. For example, Paolo Magri, ISPI's executive vice president, wrote in 2017 that in contrast to Trump's unilateralism and transactional approach, »China has taken a clear position to defend globalization and boost new multilateralism (...). The BRI is an open proposal from China to Europe (...) to forge a platform for diversified cooperation (...) and ultimately to reduce the risk of the »Thucydides Trap«« (Magri 2017: 8).³

In recent years, however, the mood has changed.⁴ While ISPI researcher Flavia Lucenti still argues that »the U.S.-led West misconceives China's behaviour and intentions« (Lucenti 2020), others propose a more robust response. Recent IAI policy papers criticize the unilateral policies towards China of Italy's populist government, headed until August 2019 by M5S and Lega, as undermining Euro-Atlantic solidarity (Casarini 2019a) and call for an approach that combines elements of engagement and containment that protects European values and interests (Casarini 2019b). However, the debate is just beginning on whether Italy should use NATO as a vehicle for coordinating policy on China or should develop a European response and coordinate policy with Washington on a bilateral EU-US level. A recent IAI/Aspen Institute Italia paper describes China as the West's main global competitor in technological terms and in the future possibly as NATO's main military concern. The Alliance should take a balanced approach towards China that includes strengthening the security of supply chains and NATO's technological edge with a policy of engaging China in areas of common interest (Credi/Marrone/Menotti 2020: 5). IAI's Nathalie Tocci takes a slightly different stance.⁵ According to her, the United States regards China as a geopolitical rival and prefers a strategy of containment and (partial) decoupling, whereas Europeans perceive authoritarian China as a threat to their values and

open regulatory standards and prefer a strategy of guarded engagement that protects the resilience and attractiveness of the liberal model. Thus, EU member states should seek transatlantic coordination on China in a bilateral EU-US format rather than within NATO.

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

A second area in which Italian scholars have called for adjustment concerns NATO's policy towards Russia. Although Russia is perceived as a threat to NATO's Eastern flank and is also extending its aggressive policies in the MENA region, scholars have advised NATO to recalibrate its policy and pursue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue »with a premium of dialogue over deterrence« (Marrone/Muti 2020: 14). Allies should engage Russia in a dialogue on crisis prevention, arms control and issues of common interest (Credi/Marrone/Menotti 2020: 4). Such a dialogue would also be important as it might lessen Russia's interest in forging closer ties with China. A recent MONDODM paper strikes a slightly more critical tone by advocating a double track of targeted pressure and resilience-building (de Stefano and Freyrie 2020:4). This position reflects Italy's traditionally close relations with Russia (Ratti 2021) and the traditional conviction of centre-left actors in Italian politics that European security eventually will have to include Russia in common institutional structures.

In line with this dual track approach towards Russia, most Italian scholars support **NATO's open door policy** with regard to South-East Europe (to project stability and counter the influence of extra-regional powers), but view the possibility of offering NATO membership to Ukraine and Georgia very critically (Marrone/Muti 2020: 7).

THE FUTURE OF ARMS CONTROL

So far, the Italian case for dialogue with Russia in the realm of arms control has not been translated into concrete proposals (Trezza 2019). On the coming into effect of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the Foreign Ministry signalled Italy's support for a nuclear-weapons free world, but maintains that this goal »can only be achieved realistically by a difficult procedure that takes not only humanitarian considerations into account, but also national security and international stability needs«.⁶ In fact, Italy remains firmly committed to NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements and is procuring F-35 jets as the next generation of dual-capable aircraft (DCA). This ambivalence is also

³ This is a reference to Graham Allison's widely circulated 2017 book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap*.

⁴ The partners of the populist government – the Five Star Movement and Matteo Salvini's Lega – have always been at odds with each other over Italy's participation in the BRI. American criticism of Italy's signing of the memorandum led to a split in the coalition, culminating in Salvini's characterization of the Chinese engagement as »colonialism«. Available at: <https://www.recnews.it/2019/03/11/salvini-no-alla-colonizzazione-cinese/> (last accessed 11 May 2021). The Defence Minister of the current government has characterized China's rise as a »challenge« (Marrone/Muti 2020: 13).

⁵ Interview with World Policy Review, 12.01.21. Available at: <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/29346/how-china-eu-relations-will-affect-eu-us-relations> (last accessed 11 May 2021).

⁶ Available at: https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivion-otizie/comunicati/entrata-in-vigore-del-trattato-per-la-proibizione-delle-armi-nucleari-tpnw.html (last accessed 11 May 2021).

reflected in debates among think tanks. Scholars are generally in favour of non-proliferation and negotiated arms control and they deplored the breakdown of the INF (Alcaro 2019a) and the Open Skies treaties (Castelli 2020). However, the TPNW and NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are not debated much and pundits do not propose unilateral steps. Italy's participation in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements has been criticized by NGOs such as *ICAN Italia* and grassroots movements such as *Rete Italiana Pace et Disarmo*.⁷ However, their ideas have not gained traction in political debates and debates among think tanks.

ASYMMETRIC THREATS AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

Italian scholars emphasize the importance of asymmetric and hybrid threats. Given Lega's sympathies with authoritarianism in Russia, the alleged covert Russian financial support of Lega and the influence of Russian media outlets such as Sputnik, think tankers worry about disinformation campaigns and foreign meddling in Italy's political system. Strengthening the resilience of political and societal structures is a major issue in the think tank debate. In addition to cyber and hybrid threats many scholars emphasize the military threats that might result from new technologies. In their view NATO should be aware of emerging disruptive technologies and invest in maintaining its technological edge. In line with their scenario assessment (see below), Italian scholars have identified shortcomings of Italian and other European armed forces in the area of strategic enablers such as Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, strategic air lift, logistical support, missile defence and force protection broadly (Marrone 2020a).

CRISIS PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Italian scholars support NATO's 360-degree approach and Italy's participation in strengthening NATO's military presence on the Eastern flank and in the Baltic region.⁸ Some studies argue that the stereotype according to which Southern members focus only on non-conventional threats emanating from the South, while Eastern members focus on military threats emanating from Russia is misleading (Celac/Dibenedetto/Purcăruș 2019). Yet, most think tankers maintain that the Southern neighbourhood remains crucial. Echoing Italy's 2015 White Paper, IAI scholar Alessandro Marrone has advanced the concept of an »Enlarged Mediterranean«, a regional security complex encompassing not only the countries located at the Southern rim of the Mediterranean, but also the Maghreb and Sahel regions, as well as the Middle East (Marrone 2020a). Projecting stability into this region should remain one of NATO's pivotal tasks. In accordance with their threat assessment, accord-

ing to which the aggressive incursion of regional actors has been furthered by situations of state failure and local conflicts, Italian scholars argue that NATO should go beyond a strict state-centric approach. As a state-based organization, NATO has partnered with MENA states and their security forces, focusing on programmes such as capacity-building. However, those »security services are often culpable in the deterioration of the country's political situation« (Marrone/Muti 2019: 71). NATO should supplement its military might with civilian instruments, build relations with non-state partners in crucial regions and contribute to stability by »supporting more than intervening directly« (Marrone/Muti 2020: 18). In this context, Italian scholars endorse the establishment of NATO's Strategic Direction South Hub in Naples as a crucial initiative that underlines NATO's commitment to projecting stability. This hub is an analytical body composed of civilian and seconded military experts. Using the hub, NATO should focus on »constant dialogue, capacity building and support to the local communities« (Dibenedetto 2019a: 11). However, some scholars question NATO's utility as a military organization. To compensate for this structural weakness, NATO should cooperate closely with the EU and try to benefit from the EU's experience in stabilization and crisis prevention (Marrone/Muti 2020: 18).

Despite the importance of civilian crisis prevention, Italian scholars anticipate that the advent of »aggressive multipolarity« will most likely necessitate future military stabilization missions as well. Despite changing governments the Italian policy of sending troops abroad either on a bilateral basis (for example, in Libya) or in a multilateral context has been fairly stable, and public opinion has got used to them (Muti/Marrone 2019). Most scholars take the principled stance that interventions require legitimization from the UN or the host country.

NATO AS A COMMUNITY OF VALUES

Not surprisingly, the Italian debate on the future of NATO addresses not only external challenges, but also internal disagreements and deficiencies. Most scholars perceive NATO as a community of values and argue that NATO's continued existence and ability to adapt to changing circumstances results from its value-oriented character as an organization of democratic states. Yet, scholars also maintain that pragmatism and respect for member states' interests should remain hallmarks of NATO. This approach is reflected in, for example, Natalie Tocci's (2020) recommendation that NATO, despite Erdoğan's autocratic turn, should seek opportunities to work with Turkey.

EUROPEANIZATION AND INTERNAL ADAPTATION

According to Italian think tankers, a reformed NATO will remain a fundamental reference point for Italian security (Marrone/Muti 2020: 14). One element of reform consists of the growing Italian interest in developing European security and

⁷ See: <https://retepacedisarmo.org/> (last accessed 11 May 2021).

⁸ Italy contributes troops not only to Mission Resolute Support in Afghanistan but also the NATO missions eFP Latvia and Baltic Air Policing.

defence structures. In future crises, Italy and other European countries should look for American support in terms of force enablers such as space and air assets but not for boots on the ground (Marrone 2020b). Italian scholars even envision scenarios in which Europeans would be asked to defend NATO's eastern flank with limited support from America, while the United States would focus on a simultaneous crisis in the Pacific (Credi/Marrone/Menotti 2020: 6).⁹ To shoulder this burden, the European NATO allies would have to cooperate more closely. Italian scholars note that »European countries have so far struggled to engage collectively when it comes to the security and stability of their neighbourhood« (Tocci 2020). Nevertheless, given the uncertainties of the American leadership, Europe's recently stated ambition to pursue strategic autonomy is becoming a matter of necessity (Alcaro 2019b). Scholars see Europe's potential primarily in the field of armament cooperation. This should not come at the expense of NATO, however. European defence initiatives such as PESCO or the EDF should remain synergic with NATO and be developed in consultations with Washington. EU defence cooperation should not lead to a duplication of capabilities or the exclusion of NATO partners such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Italian defence companies are present on the American market and the government in Rome should insist that the European armaments market remains open. Likewise, European institution-building should not occur at the expense of NATO's unity and cohesion.

Although Italy fails NATO's 2 per cent target, **burden-sharing** is not debated much in public and is not even an issue among think tanks. The low salience of this issue may be because American scorn has not been directed against Italy and because Italy sees itself as an exemplary performer with regard to output criteria.

Italian scholars tend to support the reflection group's proposal to **broaden NATO's agenda**. Scholars support, for example, NATO's initiatives regarding the gender balance and argue that women and gender perspectives will enrich NATO with new perspectives both at the conceptual and mission level (Marrone/Muti 2020: 5). More generally, scholars entertain the idea of a fourth core task that includes issues of societal resilience.

⁹ For a similar assessment see: Aspen Institute Italia webinar: The future of NATO, 8 October 2020, <https://www.aspeninstitute.it/en/programs/future-nato> (last accessed 11 May 2021).

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THE NETHERLANDS AND THE FUTURE OF NATO

Matthias Dembinski

As a founding member of the alliance, the Netherlands has been a staunch ally of the United States and a reliable NATO partner. The Netherlands hosts US tactical nuclear weapons and has been contributing troops to operations such as ISAF, NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Lithuania, NATO's Mission in Iraq and the war against ISIL. At the same time, the Netherlands has supported the project of European security and defence. Portraying itself as a bridge-builder, it has traditionally tried to reconcile opposing views within NATO between proponents of American leadership and proponents of European self-reliance in security. In recent years, however, this balancing has been giving way to a more pro-European view among think tankers and decision-makers (Thompson 2021). Removed from NATO's frontlines, the Dutch security community tends to take a less alarmistic view of external threats and a more analytical look at NATO's internal frictions. This transatlantic consensus with a Dutch flavour is reflected in discourses among Dutch think tanks and research institutions such as Clingendael and the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS). Most think tankers share the somehow contradictory diagnosis that NATO will remain a cornerstone of Dutch and European security and that NATO is in crisis (Klijn 2020a; Zandee 2018/2019: 5). It is therefore not surprising that Dutch institutions are debating the state and possible futures of NATO fairly intensely.

According to Clingendael scholar Dick Zandee (2019a; Zandee 2019b), three major internal issues are eroding the cohesion of the alliance: US–European divergences that were exacerbated by Donald Trump, the East–South divide and Turkey. Although President Biden has renewed the American commitment to multilateralism and NATO, Dutch scholars expect that structural shifts – such as the erosion of the multilaterally-oriented centre in the United States (Thompson 2021: 28) and the continued American pivot to Asia in response to an increasingly assertive China – will persist (van Hooft 2020a). A report by the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs summarized the consequences most succinctly:

The era of US hegemony, in which the United States served as the guardian of the post-war global order, is over. (AIV 2020: 4)¹

The East versus South divide will continue to draw members apart. Eastern European allies regard Russia as the main threat and have asked NATO to invest in heavy forces. »Southern NATO members are mainly worried about the spill-over effects from instability and conflict in the Middle East and Africa« (Zandee 2019a: 176) and would like NATO to invest in naval, coastguard and border protection capabilities. Turkey is regarded as a major challenge. According to the Dutch analysis, »Turkey is not only drifting away from the value-based transatlantic order but is also pursuing an assertive, risky and strictly independent foreign policy that creates conflicts with its NATO-partner along several fronts« (Zandee 2019a: 177; Kruijver 2019).

RELATIONS WITH CHINA

One issue area in which Dutch scholars see a need for reflection is NATO's positioning towards China and the unfolding American–Chinese conflict. As already mentioned, Dutch scholars assume that the United States' traditional role as NATO's benign hegemon will shift as it braces for competition with China. The HCSS/Clingendael strategic forecast review concludes that »the US pivot to Asia means that Europe is no longer the top priority for US grand strategy, and European policymakers have begun to take steps to reduce their security dependence on Washington. Both of these trends will accelerate between now and 2030« (Thompson et al. 2021: 134f). Clingendael's Hugo Klijn expects that »in this process, it [the United States] will increasingly try to shed distracting obligations and partnerships that serve no direct purpose to this end« (Klijn 2020a). Sooner or later, the European NATO allies will be confronted with a choice to either demonstrate NATO's usefulness in this context or otherwise risk the American leadership in preserving European security. The initiators of a newly established HCSS research programme on Transatlantic Relations in an Age of Sino-American Competition expect »deterrence gaps and shortfalls that will emerge in NATO Europe during periods when the United States is preoccupied with China«.²

¹ The independent Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), consisting of members with an academic background, advises the Dutch government and parliament on foreign policy.

² Available at: <https://hcss.nl/news/initiative-on-the-future-of-transatlantic-relations-program-2021-2030-transatlantic-relations-in-an-age-of-sino-american-competition/>

The majority of think tankers agree that for the Netherlands, such a choice would be difficult. A Clingendael report on Dutch public opinion shows that if a »new Cold War« with China were to develop, »the largest group [of respondents] would prefer to stay neutral« (Korteweg et al. 2020: 6). Interest groups and government agencies, too, are split between those expressing concerns about China's increasing assertiveness and military capabilities, and those emphasizing economic interests. The Dutch China strategy, adopted in May 2019, tries to balance concerns and interests, describing the Dutch government's position as »constructively critical of China. The government seeks to work with China on the basis of shared interests. At the same time, it wants to make the Netherlands more resilient to the risks to which China is exposing us« (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2019: 92). The Indo-Pacific strategy that the government unveiled in November 2020 – the Netherlands is the third European country to adopt such a strategy – also oscillates between highlighting security threats and calling for diplomatic initiatives. Regarding the critical issue of Huawei's participation in the Dutch 5G network, the government has taken the middle ground. Despite warnings from the United States and from the Dutch intelligence agency AIVD, a regulation passed in summer 2019 forces telecom companies to vet their equipment suppliers more thoroughly, but made no mention of banning Huawei. Since then, however, the major operators have started to replace Huawei equipment in their core networks.

So far, Dutch scholars see a Chinese challenge not primarily in military terms but rather pertaining to functional issues, such as the resilience of critical infrastructure, digital security, economic standards and the security of supply chains.³ On the crucial question of whether or not a grand transatlantic bargain on China is advisable, the debate among Dutch think tankers has just begun and clear camps have not yet emerged (Dekker/Okano-Heijmans 2020). There is general agreement that the Netherlands should remain closely aligned with the United States and its European allies on these issues. Beyond this consensus, members of the Atlantic camp tend to argue that the Netherlands should coordinate closely with the United States on China within NATO. Members of the European camp emphasize the differences in the American and European approaches towards China and favour coordination within the EU as a first step and consultation with the United States at the level of EU-US dialogue as a second step. The 2020 Indo-Pacific strategy is in line with this latter approach as it is presented as a stepping stone in the development of a European approach towards the Indo-Pacific.

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

Opinion polls conducted before Alexei Navalny's latest arrest show that »of all European countries, people in the Nether-

lands [and Sweden] have the most negative views of Russia« (Deen et al. 2020: 2). The downing of the MH-17 aircraft over the Donbas area and the clumsy Russian denial strategy have most likely contributed to these negative attitudes. Yet, this negative image does not translate into alarmistic military threat perceptions. The scholarly debate on Russia reflects these nuances. One outspoken Dutch voice in this debate is Clingendael's Hugo Klijn. The starting point of his argument is the assessment that the West will »have to deal with Russia as it is« (Klijn/Deen 2020: 1). He argues that the breakdown of the European security order began before the Russian intervention in the war in Georgia in 2008 and was also caused by Western policies. At the core of Russia's animosity is its »deeply felt frustration with the way the European security order evolved after the Cold War« (Klijn 2020b: 3). In his view, only bold diplomacy could create a way out of the downward spiral of reciprocal threats, sanctions and escalating tensions. The success of such a change of course »hinges on the readiness to discuss in earnest Europe's Eastern neighbourhood (...) as the most sensitive bone of contention« (Klijn 2020b: 5). The West should »somehow convey the message to Russia that for the foreseeable future they [Georgia and Ukraine] will not join [NATO] (if at all)« (Klijn 2020b: 5). Klijn does not expect »hamstrung Germany« to lead this strategic overhaul. Instead, he counts on French President Macron and argues that his overtures towards Russia deserve support, not scorn (Klijn/Deen 2020). In the end, however, it will be up to the new US administration to »muster the adulthood required for engaging Russia in a serious dialogue and for partnering with Europe in this endeavour« (Klijn 2020b: 4). As already mentioned, Klijn is only one voice in this debate, and others view Russia more critically. For example HCSS scholar Paul van Hooft (2020a) maintains that Russia's departure from the post-Cold War security order was overdetermined and probably also related to Putin's authoritarian turn and increasing state capacities fuelled by rising energy prices. In his view, NATO's past decisions to enlarge NATO, reap peace dividends and redirect scarce funds towards the creation of expeditionary armies resulted in a dangerous deterrence gap when the underlying assumption of perpetual Russian weakness and friendliness was proven wrong (van Hooft 2020b). Following from this analysis, many Dutch think tankers argue that territorial defence should be NATO's operational priority.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

Dutch think tanks and the HCSS in particular excel in strategic and technical assessments of asymmetric, hybrid and emerging kinetic and non-kinetic threats (Sweijts et al. 2021; HCSS 2020). Concerning a Russian threat of hybrid warfare, Dutch scholars differ in their assessments. While some describe it in stark terms, others argue that the West is barking up the wrong tree (Klijn 2019). Scholars agree in the assessment of the severity of (Russian) disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks and other forms of intervention in the »grey zone«. Against the background of meddling in the Dutch referendum on the association agreement with

³ While some voices in this debate argue that global interdependence renders analytical concepts such as geopolitics in relations with China less useful (Langendonk 2021), others are concerned about open and covert Chinese interference in public debates.

Ukraine⁴ and attempts to hack the computers of the OPCW during the Organization's investigation of chemical weapons attacks in Syria⁵ – both incidences have been attributed to Russia – the Dutch academic community expects that in the future »gray zone operations will be a central part of Moscow's strategy« (Thompson et al. 2021: 134).

ARMS CONTROL

Dutch scholars generally support a restart of arms control. Clingendael's Sico van der Meer (2019) has explored ways of rescuing the INF Treaty. Dick Zandee cautions that arms control will have to take the changed geopolitical and technological circumstances into account. This implies that first steps should focus on an extension of New START, a revival of the Open Skies regime and new regional initiatives aimed at confidence-building measures and risk-reduction. Additional arms control endeavours should go beyond the bilateral framework, take the rising arsenals of states such as China into account, and move beyond traditional quantitative approaches (Zandee 2019b). Sico van der Meer (2018) proposes eleven options to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use but stops short of recommending a separation of launchers and warheads. Peter van Ham (2018) explores ways of resuming conventional arms control with a focus on qualitative constraints of technological developments.

Beyond this general support for negotiated arms control, the public and decision-makers are conflicted with regard to additional steps, such as supporting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) or a renunciation of the Dutch participation in NATO's nuclear sharing agreements. Advocacy groups support the TPNW,⁶ and the Netherlands was the only NATO country to participate in the negotiations on the prohibition treaty, only to come out against it in the final vote. While advocacy groups refer to polls showing strong support for nuclear disarmament, a study by the European Council on Foreign Relations finds that »the Dutch government and the public are in favour of nuclear disarmament, but not at the expense of NATO's security. They do not support the unilateral disarmament of tactical nuclear weapons, and believe that disarmament should also form part of negotiations involving Russia«.⁷

Dutch think tankers share this stance. They support negotiated arms control and are more reluctant with regard to unilateral steps. The Dutch debate on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the role of American nuclear weapons deployed in Europe is a case in point. An

outstanding report by the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) defends Dutch participation in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements. As long as nuclear weapons exist, deterrence against nuclear attack should be their sole purpose. Arms control efforts should be intensified to mitigate the dangers of misperceptions and inadvertent use (AIV 2019). The Dutch government concurred with these findings. The government continues to support the goal of complete nuclear disarmament and hopes that »the international security situation and agreements within NATO« will allow the Netherlands and other European countries to abandon NATO's sharing arrangements. However, the government thinks that »a unilateral withdrawal of US sub-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe would be undesirable for both military and political reasons«.⁸ Instead, the government will try to achieve the withdrawal of all Russian and American sub-strategic nuclear weapons from Europe (from the Atlantic to the Urals).

MILITARY MISSIONS

As already mentioned, the Netherlands have contributed to most of NATO's out-of-area missions. Starting in 2006, Dutch forces extended their presence in Afghanistan and deployed to the rather unstable southern province of Uruzgan. After winding down the unsuccessful ISAF mission and the failures in Libya, Dutch think tankers do not expect that large-scale military interventions will be high on NATO's agenda any time soon. Instead, multinational high-end interventions out of area will, if at all, most likely be conducted by »coalitions of the willing« (Zandee 2018/2019: 5).

NATO AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

The Netherlands has traditionally supported European defence initiatives. Dutch scholars have emphasized the effective generation of European military capabilities but have been reluctant to embrace far-reaching political concepts such as strategic autonomy. Being aware that such buzzwords will be met with criticism in Eastern European NATO states and cognizant that even France looks to NATO and the United States for territorial defence, Dutch scholars continue to emphasize the complementarity of European Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO. For example, Clingendael's Dick Zandee argues that »closer defence cooperation among EU nations can certainly help to strengthen the alliance, provided it is carried out not in competition, but in cooperation with NATO« (Zandee 2019a: 179).

However, given Europe's vulnerabilities, the United Kingdom's departure from the EU and shifting American priorities, the Dutch views on European defence cooperation are

4 Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/16/world/europe/russia-ukraine-fake-news-dutch-vote.html>

5 Available at: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-11/news/russia-charged-opcw-hacking-attempt>

6 Available at: <https://www.icanw.org/netherlands>; <https://www.pax-forpeace.nl/stay-informed/news/majority-of-the-dutch-say-that-the-netherlands-must-join-the-ban-treaty>

7 Available at: https://ecfr.eu/special/eyes_tight_shut_european_attitudes_towards_nuclear_deterrence/#

8 Letter of 18 April 2019 from Minister of Foreign Affairs Stef Blok and Minister of Defence Ank Bijleveld-Schouten, available at <https://www.advisorycouncilinternationalaffairs.nl/documents/government-responses/2019/04/18/government-response-to-nuclear-weapons-in-a-new-geopolitical-reality>.

changing. A recent AIV report advises the Netherlands to align itself »as closely as possible with the Franco-German initiatives for European security« (AIV 2020: 6). The report not only proposes hitherto contentious proposals such as the transformation of the existing Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) into a headquarters for strategic and contingency planning and the preparation of military missions. It also embraces French-German ideas of new institutional structures, such as a European Security Council in order to enhance Europe's capacity for decisive action. A Clingendael report argues along the same lines that »more European responsibility can no longer be interpreted solely as realizing better burden-sharing in NATO; it is also about Europe becoming a geopolitical actor in the context of the changing international order with China, Russia, and the United States as the main competing world powers« (Zandee et al. 2020). The report, although supporting the idea of a European Security Council, emphasizes the generation of European defence capabilities that will benefit both NATO and the EU. In this regard, Dick Zandee proposes that European mechanisms such as the Capability Development Plan and Permanent Structured Cooperation should be further developed in coordination with respective Alliance mechanisms such as the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) (Zandee 2019c). Even the traditionally more transatlantic-oriented HCSS embraces European defence and concepts such as strategic autonomy.

NATO's 2 per cent target is a rather sensitive issue as currently the Netherlands falls short. Despite substantial increases in defence spending in absolute terms in recent years, spending as a percentage of GDP will remain at around 1.3 per cent. The most likely explanation is not a lack of funds but a lack of political will to invest more in defence. Dutch think tankers argue that a new transatlantic security bargain should focus less on input measures and more on output. The generation of defence capabilities should be the future standard of burden-sharing, and »the European allies should set themselves the goal of delivering half of NATO's conventional forces« (Zandee 2019d). Turning half of NATO's level-of-ambition into a European one would entail that EU forces be able to conduct one major joint operation (for example, territorial defence of Europe) if the United States is engaged in a major parallel conflict in the Pacific area (Zandee et al. 2020: 27).

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POLAND: STRENGTHENING THE EASTERN FLANK

Hans-Joachim Spanger

Poland, a NATO member since 1999, is by far the most important country on the Alliance's eastern flank and one of its most important member countries in general. With currently 118,500 soldiers (including the Territorial Defence Forces), it has the eighth largest armed forces, encompassing all branches. Moreover, together with Norway in the far north and Estonia and Latvia on its eastern flank, it is the only country that shares a land border with Russia along the Kaliningrad Oblast, which is about 230 km long, and a common border with Russia's closest ally Belarus, which is over 400 km long. Of particular strategic importance is the so-called »Suwalki Gap«, the border strip between Poland and Lithuania, which separates Kaliningrad from Belarus with a width of about 100 km and indispensable for access to the Baltic member states. This also enjoys particular attention as the successor to the »Fulda Gap« of the Cold War period.

Poland is also one of nearly ten member countries that have met NATO's 2 per cent target for military spending as a share of GDP since 2018 (in previous years, the figure fluctuated between 1.73 per cent in 2013 and 2.22 per cent immediately after the Crimean invasion in 2015). The Alliance set this goal in Prague in 2002 after the second round of enlargement and reaffirmed it at the 2014 summit in Wales after the Russian annexation of Crimea, with a time horizon of ten years. At the same time, it was determined in 2014 that 20 per cent of military expenditure should be invested in new equipment. Poland registered a marked increase here in 2015 and since then the figure has been well above 20 per cent (24 per cent in 2019). The Polish government's goal is to increase the share of military expenditure in GDP to 2.5 per cent by 2024. However, in terms of military expenditure per capita, Poland only ranked in the bottom third in 2019, at an annual USD 295 (in constant 2015 prices) (NATO 2019).

THREAT PERCEPTION: RUSSIA ABOVE ALL!

Poland's geostrategic location, combined with long historical experience, indicate where the country sees its primary security threat. In the words of the National Security Strategy adopted in 2020: »The most serious threat is the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation, pursued also by means of military force« (National Security Strategy 2020: 6). There is no serious doubt about this in Poland, neither within the strategic community nor

across political camps and over time. As deeply divided as Polish society and the country's political class are domestically, they are united in this assessment of the overriding Russian threat. And this consensus has changed little over time. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 is therefore not a watershed in the Polish understanding, but, as the representative of a centrist think tank, the Kazimierz Pułaski Foundation, put it, »a gripping lesson on the perils of ignoring history« (Yeager 2014). Among these lessons, according to scholars from the official Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), is that the »return to 'business as usual' in 2009 when Russia did not meet its obligations for a troop withdrawal from Georgia could have been interpreted as a sign of weakness, which might have emboldened Putin to move into Ukraine in 2014« (Lorenz and Godzimirski 2017: 8).

The focus on Russia corresponds to the fact that a large part of the threats registered alongside the military build-up and the increased number and size of Russian exercises on the eastern flank – from cyber warfare to disinformation to the »progressive decomposition of the international order« – are also attributed primarily to Russia. These have been subsumed under the rubric of hybrid warfare with the aim of »destabilising the structures of Western states and societies and creating divisions among the Allies« (National Security Strategy 2020: 6). To a certain extent, this even applies to the southern flank, because Russia's intervention in Syria »put pressure on the Western countries in an additional theatre. For NATO, it meant that Russia was directly undermining Alliance security, not only in the east but also in the south«. Hence »it was Russia that made NATO approach both flanks as one« (Terlikowski 2019: 8). In accordance with this logic, the southern flank is therefore also defended in the east (apart from the challenges of terrorism and migration, which are clearly subordinate threats in Polish discourse).

This threat from the east will not change in the foreseeable future, at least not for the better, »as long as Putin remains in office«, according to Stanisław Koziej, former head of the National Security Bureau of Polish president Komorowski (Koziej 2019b). Therefore, concentrated and concerted efforts are required.¹

¹ This is a widely shared view in Poland, time and again put forward among allies wherever a perceived need arises, see, e.g., Dębski et al, 2020.

NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE UNITED STATES ABOVE ALL!

Concerted efforts manifest themselves in Poland's alliance policy, which establishes the »external pillars of its security ... through its membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union, the strategic partnership with the United States of America, as well as regional cooperation for security« (National Security Strategy 2020: 10). In this context, the prime focus is on the United States and with that on NATO, because it is the United States alone whose military presence in Europe makes the difference, and it is the US whose »lead role« has since 2014 made NATO adjustments to the Russian threat possible in the first place (Kacprzyk 2018).

In this respect too, there is agreement in principle in Poland. However, this does not apply unreservedly, as the ambivalent relationship to Trump and his administration illustrates, as do relations with France and Germany and thus also the security policy role of the European Union. The latter has become the main subject of dissent, which reached its peak during the Trump era. Incidentally, Trump not only divided NATO but also the Polish strategic community.

As far as Trump is concerned, he was, on one hand, received with some scepticism in the Polish strategic community, which is hardly surprising given his advances towards Russia, for example at his very critically regarded meeting with Putin in Helsinki in 2018 (Lorenz 2018). Moreover, his demonstrative lack of interest in NATO and the pressure on allies to increase defence expenditures were similarly criticized. It is therefore the State and Defence Departments, as well as Congress, that Polish think tanks were counting on, while Trump was said to have limited the administration's room for action (Kacprzyk 2018).

On the other hand, it was precisely this dubious role of the US president that the PiS government sought to exploit to establish a special relationship based on its »ideological and political closeness to the Republican community in the USA«, to which a representative of a think tank close to the PiS, the Sobieski Institute, referred (Pawłuszko 2020b). The »Fort Trump« offered by Polish President Duda during his visit to Washington in 2019, with a view to encouraging a permanent US troop deployment, is the most vivid example. It resulted in a bilateral Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement in 2020, which, in addition to the 5,500 US troops already stationed in Poland, provides for the creation of infrastructure for the stationing of a further 15,000 US troops as part of allied reinforcements (although there has apparently been a lengthy dispute over cost sharing). This special relationship with Trump is not without risk after Biden's election victory, as commentators close to the PiS worryingly note: »the high intensity of political meetings and the image of 'Trump's ally' deliberately developed by the Polish government may become a burden in relations with the Biden administration. The

normalisation of US relations with Germany, the EU and NATO may require Poland to partially change its political agenda in order to maintain its cooperation priorities« (Pawłuszko 2020a).

It is therefore conceivable that the »two schools of Polish security policy« of recent years, the »pro-American« government and the »pro-European« opposition (Pawłuszko 2020b), will have to realign. These two schools came about in accordance with the principle of communicating tubes. The greater the distance between Washington and Berlin under Trump, the closer the relationship between Washington and Warsaw – with the consequence that relations between Warsaw and Berlin were damaged in parallel – to the dismay of many in Poland's strategic community.

While the PiS government – under the aforementioned auspices – has so far relied exclusively on Washington and the purely interest-based approach of the Trump administration, the conservative and liberal opposition, in line with the majority of think tanks, favours more of a balance, involving above all Germany and the EU, not least because it is the EU with which the opposition associates its fight against the alleged dismantling of democracy and the rule of law by the current PiS government (although with respect to NATO the perceived community of values does not play a visible role in the Polish security debate). France, and specifically President Macron, on the other hand, is invariably perceived with great caution, whereby the memory of the »drole de guerre« in 1939, when France declared war on Germany without operational consequences allowing Germany to focus entirely on Poland, may play just as much a role as Macron's repeated overtures to Moscow, which are said to undermine the unity of NATO (Lipka 2019). The irritation is similar with regard to the demands launched by Macron in particular for »strategic autonomy« of the EU or even a European army: they have been unanimously rejected, along with any weakening of NATO that may appear on the horizon.

However, NATO's »unity« and »cohesion« are central goals of Poland's alliance policy, which – and there is widespread agreement on this – is not questioned by those who, like Poland, call for a policy of strength, but rather by those who give Russia the impression of weakness. »Unity«, however, demands compromises, especially with Germany, the big neighbour in the West that is an object of criticism, but indispensable. The ambivalence towards Germany became visible, for example, when Trump surprisingly announced a troop withdrawal from Germany in 2020, although subsequently this was rejected by the US Congress. The fact that Poland was to benefit from this (through the relocation of 1,000 soldiers and the Forward Command of the US 5th Corps) was much welcomed by the Polish government, but there was also criticism, even from think tanks close to the PiS, such as the Klub Jagiellonski. They argued that through Germany is »the only route the US army can take to reach Poland quickly and in

large numbers during a crisis» and so »antagonising Germany by Donald Trump's unilateral and unexpected decisions could set a dangerous precedent«.²

REGIONAL COOPERATION AND NATO ENLARGEMENT: ON THE BACKBURNER

The various regional cooperation formats that Poland initiated and keeps alive are in fact more of programmatic than practical relevance: the Bucharest Nine, the Visegrad Group and the Three Seas Initiative, as well as the Weimar Triangle with Germany and France. On one hand, the Bucharest Nine serves as the common »voice of the eastern flank« in the Alliance, which is not easy in view of the repeatedly lamented divergent threat perceptions (Terlikowski et al. 2018). On the other hand, however, they are intended to underline Poland's claim to leadership, true to the famous formula depicting Poland as »too big to be small«, while also being »too small to be big« (Janulewicz 2020). While the Three Seas Initiative as a project to expand transport infrastructure and energy diversification away from Russia – paradoxically with strong support from both the United States and with a view to China's Belt and Road Initiative – is a pet project of the PiS government and particularly of the Polish president, the Weimar Triangle has largely become dormant under the PiS government.

The situation is similar with regard to enlargement of NATO (and the EU). Although Poland remains committed to the »open door policy« of both organizations, enlargement policy is not nearly as active under the current government as, for instance, around 2008, when Poland pushed for the EU's Eastern Partnership. It is also noticeable that enlargement is currently receiving relatively little attention among think tanks, which is all the more surprising as removing Poland from the frontline would certainly defuse the country's precarious security situation.³

DETERRENCE AND DIALOGUE: LOPSIDED

Under the current circumstances, Poland sees its security as guaranteed primarily by »enhanced deterrence and defence« within the framework of NATO, »combined with readiness to engage in a conditions-based dialogue«, as stated in the National Security Strategy (2020: 23). There is no significant divergence on this issue either. On the contrary, it is repeatedly emphasized that the inclusion of dialogue in the dual strategy is, despite considerable risks, only for the sake of NATO cohesion because Germany, France and the southern members insisted on it as a means

to reduce tensions (Lorenz and Godzimirski 2017: 5). PISM scholars refer here to Poland's exclusive experience of the Warsaw Pact, where it »could closely watch the Kremlin's tactics of exploiting divisions among the Western powers to strengthen its political and military potential. Today, Warsaw is weary of Moscow using the same tactics and using the dialogue with NATO to insert a wedge between the Allies« (Lorenz and Godzimirski 2017: 6).

In order to keep some allies' quest for dialogue under control, there is a certain preference for pursuing such dialogue through the NATO–Russia Council. Although it allegedly serves the Kremlin as a »useful tool for exploiting the differences between the Allies«, as a multilateral instrument including Poland it is considered suitable for preventing undue bilateral contacts with Russia. The »Structured Dialogue« initiated by Foreign Minister Steinmeier in 2016 and the founding of the »like-minded countries« group, with 22 members, serve as cautionary examples here (Dyner et al. 2018).

THE NATO-RUSSIA FOUNDING ACT: OBSOLETE

Assessment of the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, namely of the self-imposed deployment restrictions, is different from that of the NATO-Russia Council. While all commentators welcome NATO's adjustments, including the Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltic States and Poland, as well as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and the NATO Response Forces,⁴ this is not deemed sufficient to counter the prevalent scenario of a limited war and a Russian fait accompli at Poland's expense. In the discourse, not only does Russia's regional military superiority play a role, but above all its anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capacity in its Western Military District, including the Kaliningrad Oblast (Terlikowski 2019: 7), as well as its alleged nuclear de-escalation strategy which is said to envisage terminating a conventional conflict by introducing tactical nuclear weapons at a fairly early stage (Koziej 2019b).

Numerous commentators therefore argue for a permanent stationing of allied troops in Poland (see, for example, Koziej 2019a) and similarly for a »less dogmatic approach« to the Founding Act, »which would offer additional flexibility in strengthening NATO's cohesion and influencing Russian calculations« (Dyner et al. 2018). Despite the nuclear risks emanating from Russia, this does not necessarily entail the deployment of nuclear weapons in Poland, in contrast to the forced expansion of missile defence as a »potentially essential element of consolidating the US presence on NATO's eastern flank« (Menkiszak and Żochowski 2016). What is

² Sobiraj (2020). Occasionally one can even read rather outlandish proposals (Konda and Smura 2018: 50) that Germany ought to be the preferred bilateral – not multilateral – ally that should be nurtured, for instance, as giving Poland some leverage over the US, as Andrzej Dybczyński, a scholar from the University of Wrocław, put it.

³ The remainder, Russia's Kaliningrad oblast, would be even more exposed and vulnerable in such a situation.

⁴ Equally welcome has been the establishment of a NATO Cyber Planning Group because Poland is considered a prime target of Russia's »disinformation attacks for its strong stance at the NATO Eastern Flank« (Raś 2019: 2). Others therefore call for »offensive« strategies and capabilities (Świątkowska 2016; Szpyra 2016).

more, the debate on German nuclear sharing in NATO initiated by the SPD⁵ in 2020 has so far not been used as an opportunity to bring Poland into play here. Rather, according to a prominent scholar from PISM, the status quo should be maintained as an affirmation of the link between the security of various regions within the Alliance.⁶ And although in the wake of the demise of the INF treaty there have been calls for a »comprehensive post-INF strategy« this not only entails a strengthening of deterrence but also getting ready for new arms control proposals, not least in order to avoid a new arms race and maintain NATO unity (Kacprzyk et al. 2020; Kacprzyk and Piotrowski 2020).⁷

Some commentators, such as Marek Menkiszak, who is in charge of Russia at the Institute for Eastern Studies and who is notorious for his hardline stance, also favour turning away from the Founding Act because this would thwart central and unaltered goals of Russian security policy: »strategic control of the post-Soviet area, the existence of a security buffer zone in Central Europe [...] Initially, the security buffer zone in Central Europe was intended to separate the areas of NATO and Russia (and other CIS countries). However, when this proved impossible, it was to be established inside NATO on its eastern flank« (Menkiszak 2019a: 6). No wonder Menkiszak is equally sceptical about arms control, not only because he considers Russia guilty of eroding the arms control system but also because any fear of an arms race and a new Cold War only serve Russia's aim of obtaining concessions in new negotiations, its lack of the means to sustain a costly arms race notwithstanding (Menkiszak 2019b; 2020).

OUT OF AREA: QUID PRO QUO

The dominant fixation on the Russian threat means that collective defence clearly takes precedence over global crisis management in Polish discourse. However, Poland, as the »most active participant« of all new NATO members, has also been involved in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan in the past. And even though under the »Komorowski doctrine«, named after the former president, this engagement

was reduced after 2014, the PiS government decided in July 2016 to provide the ISIS coalition not only with special forces but also with four F-16 fighter jets (Bil 2018). However, it was clear from the beginning that the goal was predominantly instrumental: »to gain as many political and military benefits as possible from close cooperation in Afghanistan and Iraq« (Pawłuszko 2020a).

CHINA: MIXED FEELINGS

Addressing the most recent challenge – the People's Republic of China – has proved more complicated. The National Security Strategy notes that »the growing strategic rivalry between the United States of America, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation ... affects the entire international system« (7), but does not go beyond this observation. The rise of China and Russian bandwagoning are not connected at any point. The discourse on the potential security implications of China's rise has itself been restrained so far. After all, Poland is a member of the Chinese 17+1 cooperation format in Europe and hence continues to focus on imminent economic opportunities rather than on a distant threat, because, as an institute close to the PiS puts it, »the further away from the borders of China, the smaller are the Chinese ambitions and possibilities for systemic world governance today« (Jakóbowski 2019). This view is also shared by the China expert at PISM (see Szczudlik 2015, 2020). The Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki is not quite so relaxed and certainly acknowledges the uncomfortable decision-making situation in which Poland could find itself in view of the »strategic rivalry« between the USA and China. In such a situation there is no question that Poland will follow the »trusted and mutual partnership with our transatlantic allies«, even if Morawiecki believes he can position Poland as a »bridge [...] translating European fears and expectations and observations into American language and vice versa« (Werner 2020).

⁵ The SPD is perceived with some scepticism in Poland because of its alleged pro-Russian leanings. Indicative is the following example from the Institute of Western Studies: »social democratic concepts of eastern policy, being a mixture of naivety and cynicism, all too often developed into a tendency to accept the Russian point of view« (Żerko 2017). This point of view on Germany has gained even more traction under the current government.

⁶ Kulesa (2020). Similarly OSW scholar Gotkowska, who also pointed to the risk that such a German move could trigger similar reactions in other countries and hence »end the risk and responsibility sharing between the US and its European allies in nuclear deterrence, a deepening US-European and intra-European rifts over security policy, and a decreased level of nuclear deterrence in Europe« (Gotkowska 2020).

⁷ The nuclear issue is by no means viewed uncritically in Poland, as illustrated, for example, by the signature of a number of prominent Polish politicians from the political left and liberal center – Aleksander Kwaśniewski, Andrzej Olechowski, Dariusz Rosati, Hanna Suchocka – to the »Open Letter in Support of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons« of September 2020.

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THE ROMANIAN DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF NATO

Matthias Dembinski

Romanian discourse on foreign affairs and security is characterized by a general consensus that (i) the country's place is with the United States and within the transatlantic and European security institutions, and (ii) Russia's »aggressive behaviour« and »actions to militarize the Black Sea region« constitute the main threats to Romanian security.¹ The general agreement that the future of Romania lies in integration in European and transatlantic structures emerged during the transformation period in the 1990s and expressed itself for the first time in the so-called Snagov consensus of 1995.² When Romania was left out of the first round of NATO enlargement, the United States offered to establish a Strategic Partnership in 1997. This partnership was substantially enhanced in 2011 with the adoption of the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the Twenty-First Century. Since then, both countries consult each other and work together in a close-knit network of working groups (Stanciu et al. 2019). The partnership has gathered even more steam in recent years (see below), culminating in the adoption of a »Roadmap for Defense Cooperation« in October 2020.³ Since the establishment of the Strategic Partnership in 1997, the United States has been the most important reference point of Romania's foreign and security policy. Romania has looked to the United States for protection and has done its part to cement the relationship by supporting the US diplomatically and militarily. Bucharest sided with the Bush administration in the conflict over the Iraq war in 2003 and contributed troops to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁴

With very few exceptions, Romanian think tanks and research centres still share the »spirit of Snagov« (Naumescu 2017: 196). Romanian scholars support their country's Western orientation and call for a robust NATO and US presence in the Black Sea region. Slight differences arise over the repercussions of the close partnership with the United States with regard to relations with China and Russia. These differences remain subdued, however – also among political parties – mirroring opinions within the strategic community, generally speaking.⁵

THREAT PERCEPTION

Romanian scholars perceive Russia as the main security threat. Romania's foreign policy community became suspicious of Russia's intentions after Moscow's intervention in the civil war in Moldova and started to perceive Russia as an outright threat after the interventions in Georgia 2008 and Ukraine 2014. The annexation of Crimea in particular is widely regarded as a game changer. George Visan, fellow at the Romanian Energy Centre, summarizes this widely shared threat perception: »The greatest conventional threat for Romania in the short and medium term comes from a resurgent and aggressive Russia« (Visan 2016: 6).

Russia is no longer perceived merely as a spoiler but as a revisionist power, albeit at a regional level. According to Romanian experts, the fortification and militarization of Crimea since 2014 is changing the military balance in the Black Sea region (Dinu 2020). The military threat has superseded security risks that were given more prominence in discussions among Romanian scholars prior to 2008, such as a possible backsliding of democratic reforms, a lack of trust in democratic institutions, corruption and possible threats resulting from regional instability or a possible resurgence of minority conflicts. Domestic challenges are still being dis-

¹ Jean Patrick Clancy, *European Security Journal*, citing the Romanian National Defence Strategy 2020–2024 (<https://www.esjnews.com/romania-s-new-national-defence-strategy-a-call-for-greater-black-sea-nato-presence>).

² At a meeting at the Snagov resort outside Bucharest in that year, representatives of the state, the government and all political parties agreed to strive for a Euro-Atlantic orientation. An English version of the Snagov declaration of 21 June 1995 is reprinted in Dimitris Papadimitriou and David Phinnemore: *Romania and The European Union: From Marginalisation to Membership?* London, Routledge, 2008, p. 74.

³ <https://ro.usembassy.gov/roadmap-for-defense-cooperation/>. Under the agreement, the United States will »continue to support the modernization and interoperability of Romania's armed forces and continue to assist Romania to defend itself and the Black Sea region, including continued rotation of U.S. forces into the region«.

⁴ Romania signed the letter of the Vilnius-10. It also supported the war on terror by allowing the CIA to set up secret camps for the interrogation of prisoners, using well-documented harsh methods. The programme is another example of the »Snagov consensus«. It began during the reign of President Ion Iliescu of the Social Democratic

Party and was continued under his successor Traian Băsescu who had been elected on the ticket of the National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal, PNL) and the Democratic Party (Partidul Democrat, PD).

⁵ For instance, representatives of the Romanian Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat (PSD) usually advocate friendlier relations with Russia and China and have always emphasized the importance of a functioning dialogue with these countries, whereas the other parties take a more critical stance towards Russia.

»Romania is the most pro-American country in Europe, if not in the world«

Iulian Chifu: Romania – Outlook on Security Policy Development and National Expectations Until 2025, Working paper (Chifu 2020: 4)

cussed, and the National Defence Strategy addresses them as security risks. However, they pale in comparison with the conventional threat emanating from Russia.

Romanian scholars concur in their positive assessments of NATO's contribution in quelling past and present risks. During the 1990s and the early 2000s, the prospect of membership stabilized the Romanian transformation process (Olteanu 2020), guided military reforms and provided a framework for regional cooperation. Scholars also agree that NATO and the partnership with the United States have been instrumental in checking the new threat stemming from Russia. Romania's threat assessment and self-proclaimed role as NATO's bulwark on the South-Eastern flank has a strong bearing on Romania's relations with other countries, such as China.

NATO AND CHINA

Romania's bilateral relations with China have developed within the EU framework and the 16+1 structure of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and China. Romania hopes to diversify export markets and to gain access to financing for infrastructure projects and has welcomed China's Belt and Road Initiative. However, Romania kept a relatively low profile (except during Victor Ponta's tenure).⁶ Since then, however, the high-flying expectations have been disappointed as many investment projects have not materialized or have been delayed (Popescu and Brinza 2018: 30).

In the pull test created by the increasing tensions between China's advances and the American call for solidarity, China stands to lose. In line with Romania's »America first« policy, the government has positioned itself against Huawei. In fact, Romania was the first central and eastern European country to sign a memorandum of understanding with the United States on this issue on the occasion of a state visit to Washington in August 2019 (Leonte 2021).⁷ Following the adoption of the memorandum, prime minister Ludovic Orban, leader of the centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL), introduced legislation banning companies from taking part in the construction of the 5G network that do not respect transatlantic values.⁸ Even more important has been the

construction of units 3 and 4 of the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant. Negotiations with China on the financing and construction of the units came to naught when the United States agreed to provide financing to modernize Romania's nuclear infrastructure with Western technology. Both sides also agreed to work together on other infrastructure projects, such as a highway and rail-link that, if realized, will connect ports on the Black Sea and on the Baltic Sea (Popovici 2020). In addition, the United States is contributing USD 1 billion to the Three Seas Initiative, an institution of Eastern European states initiated by Poland and Romania that will create a network for the distribution of LNG. In January 2021, the government adopted a memorandum that, if enacted, would ban Chinese companies from bidding for public infrastructure projects.⁹ Most Romanian think tanks welcome this development. They agree that NATO should develop a response to China's increasing presence in Europe, for example, by monitoring Chinese investments in critical infrastructure. Moreover, they support the development of an EU and/or NATO Indo-Pacific strategy. The lone critics of the de facto exclusion of Huawei were Florin Pasatoiu, Director of the Centre for Foreign Policy and Security Studies, and Cristian Nitoiu, who argued that a confrontational approach towards China will come at the expense of economic opportunities (Pasatoiu and Nitoiu 2020).

COUNTERING THE RUSSIAN THREAT

Debates among Romanian think tanks focus on one issue: maximizing deterrence against Russia. This involves first and foremost attempts to anchor the United States firmly within the Southeast European region. The big price, as Manea and Gosu (2016: 6) put it, has been »U.S. boots on the ground, as the working assumption was that countries that have U.S. soldiers on their territory do not get invaded«. A major opportunity arose when the Obama administration reconfigured Bush's plans for a European-based ballistic missile defence architecture and decided in 2011 to build a BMD facility in Deveselu, Romania. Romanian scholars such as Valentin Naumescu, associate professor at Babes-Bolyai University and founder of the think tank Citadel, have been rather candid in their assessment that Romanian support for the missile defence programme is not related to an Iranian missile threat – the official NATO justification – but has everything to do with Russia.¹⁰ In addition to the base in Deveselu, approximately 1,500 US troops are stationed at the Mihail Kogalniceanu air force base and at

⁶ Romania signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding the BRI in 2015, but did so only at the level of secretary of state. Another example is Romania's delayed accession to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Romania joined the AIIB not with the first wave of EU states in March 2015 but started the procedure to join only in 2016.

⁷ Romania, US sign memorandum on 5G technologies »in line with rule of law principles«, Romania Insider, 22 August 2019; <https://www.romania-insider.com/romania-us-5g-memorandum>

⁸ Romania Rejects Partnering With China's Huawei On 5G, Prime Minister Says, November 01, 2020, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Romanian Service; <https://www.rferl.org/a/romania-rejects-partnering-with-china-s-huawei-on-5g-prime-minister-says/30924414.html>

⁹ Available at: https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/romania-issues-memorandum-blocking-chinese-firms-from-public-infrastructure-projects/?mc_cid=7c9613bbe6&mc_eid=2db9ef5256

¹⁰ Valentin Naumescu, Scutul antirachetă, Rusia și ordinea europeană. O tensiune insolubilă?; <https://www.contributors.ro/scutul-antiracheta-rusia-si-ordinea-europeana-o-tensiune-insolubila/>

Campia Turzii on a rotational basis. Since 2017, a US armoured battalion has been stationed on a rotational basis in Romania.

Pundits also support the enhancement of NATO's presence in the region. Scholars such as Iulian Fota and Mihail Ionescu, former Director of the Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History, welcomed NATO's Warsaw summit decision to increase NATO's forward presence (for example, by creating a Multinational Headquarters in Romania), but criticized the distinction drawn between the »Enhanced Forward Presence« on the northern flank and NATO's »Tailored Presence« on the south-eastern flank (Puri forthcoming: 6f.) Moreover, instead of rotating deployments from NATO states, Romanian scholars support the government's insistence that NATO troops should be permanently deployed along the Eastern flank (Manea and Gosu 2016: 6).¹¹ Ahead of the Warsaw summit, Romania had pushed the project of a permanent NATO naval presence in the Black Sea. This project was supported by the United States but fell on deaf ears in Bulgaria and did not materialize (Visan 2016). The corollary of abandoning the **NATO-Russia Founding Act** should be accepted as this act has lost its relevance anyway. Instead, Romanian experts argue that the artificial division inside NATO between areas of higher and lower security should come to an end and that NATO's integrated military structure should be extended to cover the new members. At the Bucharest summit in 2008, Romania supported the admission of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO. However, think tankers acknowledge that the two countries did not and still do not fulfil NATO's accession criteria. Given their entanglement in frozen conflicts, there is no easy way for these countries to join NATO in the foreseeable future. NATO should nevertheless expand its military assistance to Ukraine. Romania is a staunch advocate of Moldova's and Ukraine's accession to the EU.

To advance its views within NATO, Romania is forging closer ties with like-minded member-states. In December 2015, a first Eastern flank summit in Bucharest under joint Romanian and Polish chairmanship brought together nine NATO states in the so-called Bucharest 9 (B9) format (Gerasymchuk 2019). Another step in this regard is the Three Seas Initiative. Romanian think tanks have accompanied diplomatic outreach activities by forging networks with institutes particularly in Moldova and Ukraine, but also in Poland, Italy and other NATO states.¹²

Except for some lonely voices such as Florin Pasatoiu, Romanian think tankers do not see much room for **dialogue**

with Russia at the present time.¹³ **Arms control**, too, is not on the agenda of most think tanks.

Instead, think tanks are debating the nature of threats and focusing on ways to strengthen defence and modernize the armed forces (Visan 2019). According to Iulian Chifu, President of the Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Centre, Romania faces primarily conventional military threats. Unconventional threats, such as cyber attacks, have recently gained more prominence (Chifu 2020: 18f), and the United States has agreed to extend cooperation in the field. Since 2014, Romania has contributed to the NATO Ukraine Cyber Defense Trust Fund and has taken the lead in supporting Ukraine on cybersecurity. Given the numerous weaknesses of the Romanian media, the issue of (Russian) disinformation campaigns has gained prominence, and institutions such as the Bucharest-based Global Focus Centre and the Laboratory for the Analysis of Information War and Strategic Communications track and analyse such disinformation.

Another field in which Romania, in cooperation with the United States, is trying to counter Russian influence in the region is energy cooperation. Both sides are committed to »creating a single European energy market, diversifying energy routes and supplies, bolstering competitiveness and transparency, and advancing interconnectivity in the energy infrastructure«.¹⁴

Romanian scholars emphasize the character of NATO as a **values-based alliance** which has helped Romania in the reform process. In the same vein, pundits support the proposal for a code of conduct. However, this affirmation of NATO's democratic values is mixed with a dose of pragmatism, as expressed for example in Romania's efforts to forge a closer relationship with Turkey. Scholars perceive membership of the European Union as an additional anchor of Romanian security but are wary of French and German attempts to upgrade the **EU's defence policy**. Concepts such as European autonomy or a European army not only overextend European capabilities but would also split Europe. Moreover, Romanian scholars such as Iulian Chifu suspect that France is advancing these projects with a view to preserving its military-industrial base and solving »its post-colonial issues in Africa« (Chifu 2020: 11). In fact, Romania is pursuing a strict NATO-first policy. The programme to modernize the armed forces rests almost completely on

¹¹ Romania is upgrading the Mihail Kogalniceanu base to NATO standards capable of hosting up to 10,000 troops.

¹² See, for example, the cooperative project FLANKS involving the New Strategy Centre and the Norwegian NUPI. See also the cooperation between the Romanian NGO Experts for Security and Global Affairs Association (ESGA) and the Ukrainian Prism (Degeratu and Leca 2019).

¹³ This unity among think tanks contrasts with the differences among Romania's political parties. For example, while former President Iliescu signed a political treaty with Russia in 2003 aimed at improving relations, his successor Traian Basescu resorted to more aggressive rhetoric (Manea and Gosu 2016: 10f). Victor Ponta's attempt to improve relations with Russia during his brief tenure as prime minister of a Social Democratic Party government (May 2012 till November 2015) did not gain traction and was not well received by the Romanian strategic community.

¹⁴ U.S. Embassy in Romania: Joint Statement on the Implementation of the Joint Declaration on the Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century between Romania and the United States, 19 June 2018 (<https://ro.usembassy.gov/joint-declaration-on-the-strategic-partnership-for-the-21st-century-between-romania-and-the-united-states/>).

cooperation with US defence companies. Romania is pursuing the multilateralization of its military forces but only under the NATO umbrella. Romania sees itself as a reliable ally that **bears its share of the burden**. When Klaus Iohannis took office as President in 2015, he forged a consensus among the political parties on the implementation of NATO's 2 per cent goal (Visan 2016: 10). In 2019, Romania surpassed this threshold.

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SPAIN AND THE FUTURE OF NATO

Matthias Dembinski

Historically, Spain's relations with NATO have been characterized by a certain ambivalence. The careful steps towards membership after Franco's death in 1975 were not motivated by security concerns but rather by an attempt to anchor Spain within a democratic security institution, to facilitate the transformation and modernization of the armed forces and generally to overcome the country's isolation and backwardness. The path towards NATO proved to be contentious, however, with opposition coming largely from left-wing parties. After the Socialist Party (PSOE) came to power in 1982, Prime Minister Felipe González made a pragmatic U-turn that eventually resulted in a conditional accession. Spain joined NATO on 30 May 1982, but stayed out of the integrated military structure and did not allow nuclear weapons on its soil. Again, accession was not motivated by external security concerns, but rather by worries about the stability of the democratization process that gained new urgency after the attempted coup d'état of 1981 and concerns that not joining would impact negatively on the EU accession process (Bueno/Testoni 2021).

Since then, the attitude of ambivalence has not changed much. On one hand, Spain has been a reliable NATO member. Spain joined NATO's integrated structure in 1996, the former PSOE foreign minister Javier Solana excelled as NATO's Secretary General from 1995 to 1999, and Spain has contributed troops to NATO missions. In fact, Spain understands itself as a staunch promoter of multilateralism, and membership of NATO and the EU is part of this multilateral self-image.¹ The political parties (with the exception of the populist VOX party) share this consensus. While the Populist Party (PP) has been more transatlantic, PSOE is a strong advocate of European integration and autonomy. On the other hand, membership of NATO, as one of our interviewees remarked, is largely a goal in itself. The public's

interest in NATO remains low.² Currently, the NATO issue that is attracting some public interest concerns the pending decisions to extend the leasing contracts for the US Rota Navy base and the Morón Air Force base.³ Governments have never provided a convincing rationale for Spain's membership (Bueno/Testoni 2021: 172). With regard to collective defence, Russia is far away and the two flash-points of Spanish security – the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla – are outside of NATO's Article 5 perimeter.⁴ Government attempts to refocus NATO's attention on security risks emanating from the South have been only partially successful (see below). At the initiative of Italy and Spain, NATO launched its Mediterranean Dialogue already in 1994. Reacting to NATO's return to collective defence in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis, Spain and its partners in the »Southern quartet« (Portugal, France and Italy) have lobbied NATO to retain focus on the task of projecting stability into the Southern neighbourhood. Yet the initiatives agreed at the Wales summit in the context of NATO's 360 degree approach, such as the »framework for the South« (Becker 2018; Calmels 2020) pale in comparison with the reinforcement of NATO's eastern flank.

The leading think tanks and research institutes, such as the Elcano Royal Institute and the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), support this multilateral orientation and Spain's integration into transatlantic and European frameworks. Both focus more on regional security and European integration than on NATO. While the FAES Fundación, a think tank affiliated with the PP, has a stronger transatlantic leaning, the Fundación Alternativas, a progressive think tank with close relations to parties on the left, shows more interest in European security and defence. The Instituto

¹ The recently adopted National Defense Directive and the Guidelines for International Relations reflect this affirmation of multilateralism. The latter document announces that Spain will encourage »a more federal European Union« with greater strategic autonomy and will improve relations with the United States. It portrays Spain as a progressive global actor that will promote multilateralism, »a feminist foreign policy« and »humanitarian diplomacy«. See: <https://english.elpais.com/politics/2021-01-26/spain-drafts-new-foreign-policy-that-incorporates-gender-perspective.html> (last accessed 12 May 2021).

² NATO's approval ratings in Spain are relatively low (only in Greece and Turkey are its approval ratings lower). Cf. Pew Global Attitudes Survey.

³ This decision is politically sensitive because Podemos, one of the coalition partners of the current left-wing government, was founded in 2014 on a platform that promised exit from NATO. Since joining the government, however, Podemos has been back-paddling and has signaled its support for the extension of the lease.

⁴ Article 5 of the NATO Treaty reads as follows: »The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all (...)« Article 6 extends this area of protection by including, for example, Turkey and specific islands under the jurisdiction of the parties. However, when Spain joined, NATO did not extend Article 6 to include Spain's enclaves in Africa.

Español de Estudios Estratégicos (ieee.es) at the Spanish defence ministry contributes detailed analyses to the debate on the future of NATO. The Madrid branch of the European Council on Foreign Relations connects debates in Spain with those in the rest of Europe and focusses its security-related research on European Security and Defence Policy.

THREAT PERCEPTION

Pundits agree that NATO is facing new challenges, including a more assertive Russia, the emergence of China as a global actor and security risks from the South. Yet, scholars assume that »the most important challenges NATO is facing today are internal and political rather than strategic« (Rodríguez 2020: 1). Cognizant of the importance of US leadership, FAES scholars in particular already saw the first signs of a partial US disengagement during the Obama presidency and thereafter the lack of authority under the Trump administration was one cause of NATO's current woes (FAES 2019). Others identify disagreements between those NATO members who look to the East and those who are affected by events in their Southern neighbourhood as a risk to the cohesion of the alliance (Bacaria/Donnelly 2017; FAES 2019: 18). However, they are confident that NATO will be able to adapt and will continue to represent transatlantic unity.⁵

CHINA

Spanish scholars, on one hand, acknowledge the huge economic opportunities that China offers and on the other, recognize the rise of authoritarian China both as a regulatory and a normative competitor and as a potentially hostile military power. The debate on the consequences of the looming US-Chinese conflict for NATO, however, is just beginning. Most Spanish pundits emphasize what they see as differences between the American approach of decoupling from China and a European approach of critical engagement. NATO, too, should define its relationship with China »in a way that would be mutually beneficial to both actors« (Calderon 2020: 9).

RUSSIA

Spanish scholars share the assessment of a resurgent Russian threat and support NATO's dual track approach of deterrence and dialogue (FAES 2019: 129). In their view, common interests in areas such as climate change, the fight against jihadist terrorism or stability in the Mediterranean suggest a more substantial dialogue (Calderón 2020: 8). In the view of some scholars, Russia's behaviour is a product of its weakness and not its strength and its alienation from the West has been caused in part by Western policies. Thus scholars ask whether it is »time to change strategy and re-

place one model of confrontation with another of coexistence« (de Santayana 2020). As a faithful ally, as one interviewee has put it, Spain will follow NATO's policy on Russia. On a bilateral level, however, and given its economic interests in Russia, Spain seeks a rapprochement. Institutionalized meetings of business representatives, which had been put on hold since 2014, are about to be resumed.

In accordance with this focus on dialogue, Spanish think tanks are critical of further NATO enlargement. An ieee.es paper argues that further enlargements might strain the cohesion and decision-making capacity of the Alliance and will lead to further conflicts with Russia. An FAES paper advises NATO »to remain faithful to its open door policy«, but argues that, for the time being, consolidation should take precedence over further inclusion of new members (FAES 2019: 13). Moreover, many of the current candidates are not in a position to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Thus, »the enlargement policy should be re-evaluated« (Rodríguez 2020: 28).

DISINFORMATION AND ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

The issue of asymmetrical threats and Russian disinformation campaigns figures prominently in Spanish debates. For example, Russia Today and Sputnik are also present on the Spanish market and deliver their messages to Spanish-speaking countries in Latin America (de Pedro/Iriarte 2017). More importantly, the massive disinformation campaign during the Catalan independence referendum that authorities and the public attributed to Russia has made huge waves in Spain, is still being reviewed in courts and has deeply damaged Russia's reputation (Milosevich-Juaristi 2017). However, Spanish scholars do not see NATO as a prime responder in such contingencies.

ARMS CONTROL

The Spanish expert community takes some interest in arms control. Researchers at the ieee.es deplore the deterioration of the arms control and non-proliferation architecture in recent years, support the decision to prolong the New START treaty and remain sceptical about proposals to trilateralize nuclear arms control. In the opinion of Spanish pundits, attempts to include China at this point will delay possible progress in the Euro-Atlantic theatre. In their view, the nuclear prohibition treaty may be well intentioned, but it is an inadequate instrument for achieving disarmament (Almela 2018). Although some scholars express sympathy for the treaty, the general sense is that Spain, as a faithful ally, should not join.⁶ Moreover, if NATO's non-nuclear members were to join, they would lose information and »references that are important to their security« (Torres 2021:18).

⁵ FAES 2020: »OTAN 2030«: adaptarse para sobrevivir, 9.12.2020. Available at: <https://fundacionfaes.org/en/news/47341/otan-2030-adaptarse-para-sobrevivir> (last accessed 12 May 2021).

⁶ Interview with Spanish expert, 4.3.2021.

SOUTHERN DIMENSION

Not surprisingly, Spanish think tanks focus on the growing instability in the Maghreb and, even more so, in the Sahel, as well as on illegal migration, terrorism and hybrid threats (Samaan 2017). In their view, instability in North Africa and the Sahel region is largely a consequence of insufficient economic and social development, bad governance, local conflicts and rising Islamic fundamentalism (FAES 2019: 14). Against this backdrop, think tanks support the Spanish government's view that NATO, while bolstering its position on the Eastern front, should not neglect southern challenges. Together with Italy, France and Portugal, Spain launched an initiative within NATO that resulted, for example, in the »package for the South« and the »Regional Hub for the South« at Allied Joint Force Command in Naples in 2018 (Missiroli 2019). While Spanish think tanks welcome NATO's resulting efforts to cooperate more closely with the EU in the region, and to better understand and respond to conflict dynamics through dialogue, capacity-building and crisis management (Martin 2020), scholars deem these initiatives too limited (Arteaga 2019b). NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue is perceived by Spanish scholars as insufficient (FAES 2019: 18) or even an outright failure (Marquina 2019). A recent CIDOB study on Spain's Southern neighbourhood for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung headlines NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue but does not discuss it at all (Soler i Lecha/Morillas 2020). More generally, Spanish scholars agree that some NATO activities, such as capacity-building and training of local forces, might reduce the fragility of states in the Southern region but that NATO as a military organization is presently not well equipped to deal with the root causes of instability. This mismatch to a certain extent explains Spain's support for a broadening of NATO's agenda (see below).

NATO AND CSDP

As already mentioned, the Spanish expert community advocates both strong transatlantic links and European defence initiatives that would result in a more capable and autonomous EU. Scholars leaning more towards the PSOE have traditionally been more in favour of European defence than those who lean towards the PP. The former group supports European projects such as PESCO or the creation of a European headquarters. The latter group perceives European defence initiatives as a means to strengthen NATO and to make the alliance more attractive for the United States (FAES Fundación 2020). They are sceptical of Macron's initiatives (Arteaga 2019a), fear that efforts towards European autonomy could weaken NATO (Yeste 2018) and argue that European cohesion should be achieved by concerted cooperation involving not only France and Germany but also Italy, Spain and others (Rodríguez 2020: 29). NATO and the EU should stick to a division of labour under which NATO is responsible for collective defence and crisis intervention, whereas the EU focuses on crisis prevention and the more efficient organization of European armament production and procurement processes (Cobo/Tosato 2018; Rodríguez

2020). These scholars see the added value of recent European initiatives in the field of defence in a more efficient organization of the arms development and procurement processes. However, they insist that instruments such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and NATO should be complementary (FAES 2019: 29). But the uncertainty about the future orientation of the United States has resulted in a certain shift across the board towards more support for European defence integration.

BURDEN-SHARING

Spanish scholars acknowledge that their country will not achieve the 2 per cent goal (with defence spending below 1 per cent of GDP, Spain ranks near the bottom among NATO countries). In fact, given the costs of the Covid-19 pandemic, defence spending in real terms will not increase in the next few years. To avoid further transatlantic controversies, pundits propose replacing the 2 per cent metric by output-oriented criteria (Rodríguez 2020: 129) and, for example, the inclusion of money spent on the Spanish Civil Guard, which participates in NATO operations, as defence expenditure (Ortega 2019).

CONSULTATION, COMMUNITY OF VALUES AND BROADENING NATO'S AGENDA

As pointed out above, Spanish pundits have traditionally emphasized NATO's character as an alliance of democracies. Yet, there is little debate on how NATO should react to deviations from liberal values in some member states. Spanish scholars have looked on with concern as Turkey has drifted apart and flirted with Russia. In line with the traditionally close Spanish-Turkish relations, most emphasize the importance of keeping Turkey within NATO (Soler i Lecha/Morillas 2020: 12) and call for »a new positive impulse« in relation to Turkey (Gürsoy/Toygür 2018).

Although this debate is just beginning, it seems that Spanish scholars will support the Reflection Group's proposal to broaden NATO's agenda. Scholars take a strong interest in NATO's potential contributions to societal resilience and discuss what NATO could do, for example, to contain the next pandemic or fight domestic terrorism.

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TURKEY DISCUSSES ITS COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO

Sezer İdil Göğüş

Traditionally, Turkey has been NATO's bulwark on its South-Eastern flank. Turkey has always been an outlier, however. Unlike in Western Europe, relations with NATO have not been based on a strong institutional foundation – the integrated military structure in Southeast-Europe collapsed already in the 1960s under pressure from the emerging Greek–Turkish conflict – but rather on strong ties between the American and the Kemalist-oriented Turkish militaries. But even this bilateral relationship has not been without strains, which intensified when the US Congress imposed an arms embargo in response to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Moreover, the recurrent military coups have hardly been in keeping with NATO's image of a community of democratic states.

Recently, three structural shifts have complicated Turkey's relations with NATO even further: (i) the upheavals that destabilized large parts of Turkey's immediate neighbourhood; (ii) the stalling of Turkey's long march towards the West; and (iii) the rapid progress of Turkey's military and technological capabilities, which has bolstered Turkey's self-perception as a self-reliant and leading power in the region. In hindsight, the failed coup and the subsequent purges, particularly in the military, appear to have been a watershed.

Today, relations with NATO and its member states are strained in several regards. Most importantly, Turkey perceives a huge gap between what it believes it deserves and what it gets from its NATO allies. Partly reacting to a supposed denial of respect and attention for its interests, partly as a result of its more independent and assertive foreign policy, Turkey today sees NATO as just one reference point of its security among others, such as a functioning relationship with its »frenemy« Russia. Turkey will not leave NATO but will try to change it, with a view to making the alliance more amenable to Turkish interests and more flexible and compatible with its nationalist foreign policy. For the time being, however, Turkey finds itself increasingly isolated.

Turkish think tanks interpret these developments and Turkey's future within NATO from a variety of perspectives. More liberal and multilaterally oriented institutes, such as EDAM, see the country's isolation as partly self-inflicted and worrisome, and propose strategies for rebuilding bridges. More conservative and nationally oriented institutes

such as SETA,¹ tend to blame Turkey's NATO partners for the recent quarrels and support Turkey's more nationalist and assertive course within NATO. In their view, NATO needs to change in order to better accommodate Turkish interests.

TURKISH THREAT PERCEPTIONS AND RESPONSES

As already mentioned, Turkey's security concerns and threat perceptions are a product of its exposed geographical location and its perception of links between external threats and internal conflicts. In the eyes of the Turkish government, external threats accumulated in the aftermaths of the US intervention in Iraq and of the Arab Spring. The resulting instability, state failures and civil wars threaten Turkey's security indirectly through spillover effects, such as refugee flows, and directly as the resulting security vacuum at Turkey's border has been filled by hostile terrorist organizations – such as the PKK, the YPG and ISIS – and potentially hostile powers, such as Russia and Iran. Unlike its NATO allies, Turkey designates the Syrian-based Kurdish self-defence forces the YPG as a terrorist organization with close ties to the PKK. Even more worrying in the view of Turkish foreign policy elites are the links between external threats and internal conflict dynamics.²

Traditionally, the Turkish sense of danger and encirclement has been further fuelled by its liminal status within Western security institutions (Rumelili 2003). The de facto failure of the EU accession process and differences between Turkey and its NATO allies have aggravated the Turkish sense of neglect and rejection by its Western partners, accelerating the autocratic turn³ and the search for a »non-Western« identity,

¹ EDAM and SETA are representative of the landscape of Turkish think tanks and this analysis will mainly focus on their publications.

² Many observers note, however, that militarized conflict between state authorities and the PKK within Turkey escalated again after the AKP lost its parliamentary majority in the 2015 elections, in which the Kurdish HDP came out stronger. After the election, the government changed course from trying to woo the Kurdish population away from the HDP to confronting and suppressing the Kurdish party, as well as escalating the conflict with the PKK.

³ This autocratic turn was both one of the many causes and a consequence of the stalling accession process.

as well as an independent, self-reliant security policy. Reacting to the conflict dynamics at its borders, Turkey began to intervene in Syria and Iraq with a view to controlling its neighbourhood.

However, Turkey's military interventions in its near abroad and further away in Libya, as well as in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and the establishment of bases, for example, in Qatar, is not driven by defensive motives alone. Its military power, based on the size of its armed forces and its military-technological prowess, allows Turkey to flex its muscles as a rising power in the region and to pursue more actively its geopolitical and ideological aims by using military force, if necessary. In the course of this re-orientation Turkey has become embroiled in conflicts not only with its neighbouring countries but also with countries further away, not to mention with its NATO partners. Long-standing disputes with Greece over sovereign rights and the delimitation of exclusive economic zones in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean have escalated again, and multifaceted disputes with France have resulted in militarized interstate disputes. Instead of having »zero problems with our neighbours«, as postulated by former foreign minister Davutoğlu's doctrine (Tol 2013), Turkey today seems to have »zero friends« (Askerov 2017). The 2016 coup-attempt played an important role in reorienting Turkey's threat perception. It impacted on »Turkey's entire range of domestic and foreign policy dealings and equations« (Egeli 2019: 13–14). Turkey's political authority began to treat the in-country development and production of long-range air and missile defense systems as a priority. Soon after, they announced their decision to favor a Chinese offer that came complete with licensed production and the promise of technology transfer. Yet, with this decision came NATO's objections and challenges around integration and information security. In 2015 came the rollback of the pro-China decision, opting instead for the indigenous development of air and missile defense systems (in close conjunction with a foreign technological and industrial partner). The attempted coup heightened Turkey's mistrust of its Western partners and its determination to assert itself and actively pursue its national interests by military means, if necessary.

Turkish think tanks from different backgrounds and perspectives share the threat assessment. EDAM researchers, for instance, point out that while most alliance members consider Russia and China to be NATO's main foes (for example, Tuygan 2019c), for Turkey the situation in Iran, Iraq and Syria, as well as terrorist organizations PKK, YPG and ISIS pose important threats (for example, Kasapoğlu 2019a; Kasapoğlu/Ülgen 2018a)⁴. Pundits diverge in their views on the causes and consequences of the developments that led from »zero problems« to »zero friends«. A researcher from EDAM points out that Turkey's isolation is »self-inflicted« (Tuygan 2019d):⁵

»the government is far from admitting that our diplomatic isolation is the result of a disastrous combination of democratic decline and misguided foreign policy« (Tuygan 2020c). As a consequence of this policy, »we are at odds with all major powers and all regional countries« (Tuygan 2019a). In the same vein, one interviewee described the isolation as »the biggest threat for Turkey«.⁶ »Due to the failures of Turkish foreign and security policy ... we don't have any friends left ... and on top of that we have managed to attract the animosity of almost all regional neighbours, all global powers at the same time, which is a very precarious position«.⁷ To get out of this trap, members of this camp suggest that Turkey should »prioritize diplomacy« and »rebuild relations with Turkey's traditional allies« (Tuygan 2019a).

The causes and consequences of Turkey's isolation are perceived differently by some pro-AKP and/or nationalist think tanks. In their view, Turkey is one of the countries that contribute most to NATO, but also a country that has been particularly affected by terrorist violence (Ataman 2021), refugee flows and threats posed by Iran and Russia. While Turkey helps other alliance members, it has felt »left alone« when its security was threatened (Duran 2017; Yalçın 2017, 2019b; Köse 2020). The lesson to be learned from this experience of lacking understanding and solidarity is that Turkey needs to take care of its own security and cannot depend on others. The withdrawal of German and US Patriot missile defence systems in 2015, which had been deployed within NATO's mission »Active Fence« in 2013, came to symbolize the alliance's alleged lack of reliability.⁸ It also formed the background, as SETA's Hasan Yalçın outlines, to the fateful decision to purchase the S-400 air-defence system from Russia: »In the most critical period, they [NATO allies] signalled that they would leave Turkey on its own. They withdrew Patriots. Therefore, Turkey wants to provide its own security. If we cannot do it now by ourselves, we aim to buy the technology from other than NATO sources and develop its technology« (Yalçın 2017). In addition to this exceptional threat perception, the Turkish debate on the future of NATO is influenced by its bilateral relationships to the United States and Russia.

TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES AND NATO: EXPECTATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

As already mentioned, the United States has been Turkey's most important ally within NATO. But this relationship has never been without frictions.⁹ Researchers agree that these

⁴ One SETA researcher also counts Gülen movement (FETÖ) as a global threat for Turkey (Köse 2019c).

⁵ This article is published on his personal webpage, not EDAM. In one of his texts, however, he also shared the link to his personal webpage (Tuygan 2020b). Therefore, some articles from his webpage are also used for the analysis.

⁶ Interview with an expert, 25.01.2021.

⁷ Interview with an expert, 25.01.2021.

⁸ Germany and the United States withdrew the Patriots after Turkey changed the course of the fight against ISIS and started to attack PKK positions in Iraq. The complaint of a lack of NATO solidarity is somewhat misleading, as the German and US batteries were replaced by Italian and Spanish Patriot units.

⁹ The relationship between Turkey and the United States was also contested during the Iraq War in 2003 (Müftüler-Bac 2005).

frictions have become more serious in recent years because of the conflicting strategies they are pursuing in Syria, reactions to the attempted military coup and the lack of American responsiveness to Turkish views more generally. Today, the climate is poisoned by mistrust and mutual recriminations. They differ with regard to the harshness of their criticisms and the way forward. Going beyond current differences, Turkish scholars expect that structural trends will impact on the US role in the crucial MENA region.

Regarding the current US–Turkish differences, researchers from liberal think tanks, such as IPC, criticize the »Western wobbling in backing the Syrian opposition« (Aras/Yorulmazlar 2016: 2265). In their view, this indecisiveness formed »the necessary vacuum for Russia to figure out a way for getting Assad off the hook« (ibid.). The United States and NATO partners such as France made an even greater mistake by arming the YPG as an ally in the war against ISIS. EDAM's Kasapoğlu remarks that »...the Obama era's yet another failure was its military policy of arming groups (the YPG) with organic ties to an organization designated as terrorist by the US – namely, the PKK – to fight another terrorist network, Daesh [ISIS]« (Kasapoğlu 2019a; see also Ülgen 2019). IPC's Keyman (2017: 459) agrees that US–Turkish relations have worsened because of misplaced US support for the YPG. At the same time, liberal researchers underline the importance of the bilateral relationship. Against the backdrop of the Turkish interventions in Syria (especially Operation Olive Branch) researchers warn against a confrontation with the United States and suggest that in order to avoid an open conflict, the United States and Turkey should »re-establish a reliable path to US–Turkey convergence« (Kasapoğlu and Ülgen 2018b: 14).

SETA's critique of the United States is even more uncompromising. In their view, the US fight against ISIS has been guided by a wrong strategy. This »ineffective« and even »dangerous« (Yeşiltaş 2016) strategy has »created a space for undesired actors such as the PKK and Russia in Syria« and »is creating new causes for new conflicts in the Middle East for years to come« (Yeşiltaş 2016). The US »denial of the PKK–YPG connection« (Köse 2019a) and its support for the YPG is short-sighted and completely detrimental to Turkey's interests and to stability in the region. By supporting the »PKK/YPG militants«, the United States has created a »monster« (Duran 2016). SETA scholars charge the United States with not taking Turkey's concerns into account (Ataman 2018; Köse 2019a; Yeşiltaş 2018) and the fact that the US administration did not »recognize its most valuable ally« (Kanat 2019). SETA scholars assume that the incoming Biden administration might show even less appreciation for Turkey's concerns (Ataman 2021; Duran 2021b; Yalçın 2021). In addition to criticizing US policy in Syria, SETA researchers allege that the delayed American condemnation of the attempted coup and the refusal to extradite Fethullah Gülen, its purported instigator, points to a »covert US leverage« with regards to the attempted coup d'état in 2016 (Özçelik 2017: 2; Yeşiltaş 2016). Some researchers go even further. They suspect that the United States, by harshly criticizing Turkey and the purchase of the S-400 air

defence system, aim to undermine Turkey's NATO membership (İnat 2019a). According to this view, the US (and French) policy is characterized by an »anti-Turkey attitude« (Kanat 2020). These states are set to punish Turkey (İnat 2020). Therefore Turkey should focus its diplomatic attention on those segments in Europe and the United States who value cooperation with Ankara and explain to them »the real aims of Turkey« (İnat 2020). In contrast, scholars perceive NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg's role more positively. In their view, he »aims to establish dialogue between the members and is against the »otherization« of Turkey« (Duran 2021a).

Looking into the future, researchers expect that structural trends are pulling the United States away from the region. EDAM's Ülgen observes that recent trends give reason to doubt the US »commitment to the security of its European allies, which undermines both the cohesion and the deterrence capability of the alliance« (Ülgen 2019). Evin and Gisclon (2019: 7), scholars at IPC, warn that the United States is retreating from Eurasia, while the EU »is preoccupied with its own issues« and China is one of the »leading players« in the region, especially with its Belt and Road Initiative. Scholars from the liberal Global Relations Forum speculate that the United States, no longer dependent on oil from the Middle East, will reduce its presence in the region »whereas China, now the world's largest energy consumer, can be expected to increase its regional involvement« (Çetin et.al. 2019: 15). This partial American retreat opens »a wider space for manoeuvre for Turkey«. However, it also enables actors like Russia to fill the »power vacuum left by the US« (Arisan-Eralp et al. 2020: 3).

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA (AND CHINA)

While Turkish think tankers at SETA in particular accuse primarily the United States for its failed strategies in Syria and for its disrespect of Turkey's views and interests, NATO as such is also criticized for its lack of solidarity and support. This feeling of being left alone also impacts on Turkey's relations with Russia (and China). On one hand, Russia (and prospectively also China) is still regarded as a competitor in the MENA and Black Sea regions and a risk factor. Liberal scholars in particular are wary of Russia's assertiveness and growing presence, and point out that Russia and Turkey pursue different interests in Syria, Libya and the MENA region as such (Çelikpala 2019: 3). On the other hand, Turkey regards the presence that Russia has established in Syria and the larger region in the wake of failed Western policies as permanent. Thus, Turkey, being increasingly left on its own, will have to compromise with Russia in bilateral settings. Moreover, Russia is perceived as an economic partner, particularly with regard to energy cooperation (Çelikpala 2019). The resulting pattern of cooperation and competition is also noted by SETA researchers. While Yeşiltaş (2016) warns that Russia's and Iran's offensive intervention in Syria caused a serious security threat for Turkey, Duran speculates about a Turkish–Russian rapprochement: »As the new balance of power emerges, Turkish–Russian ties could be

reshaped within the context of Middle Eastern, NATO and European politics» (Duran 2017). Thus, the United States and NATO constitute just one vector of Turkey's policy in its neighbourhood, while Russia (and in the future also China) are other important vectors.

A CASE STUDY OF TURKEY'S MULTI-VECTOR POLICY: THE PURCHASE OF THE S-400 SYSTEM

The mistrust of America and the assessment of Russia as a competitor and partner formed the background against which the Turkish government decided to purchase the Russian S-400 air defence system. The attempted coup in 2016 changed the Turkish government's security perceptions and paved the way for the S-400 deal, which was a »top-down process: decision made first, and justifications generated afterward« (Egeli 2019: 13–14, 17). In the face of missile programmes in Iran and other neighbouring states, Turkey had for quite a while felt the need for an advanced long-range air and missile defence system and had negotiated with the United States, a French-Italian consortium and China (Egeli 2019). The rash decision to purchase the Russian system deepened the differences with NATO and plunged Turkey into a conflict with the United States. Suspecting that the S-400 radar will allow Russia to spy on the newest American F-35 fighter jet, the US government excluded Turkey from the programme and imposed sanctions.

Think tanks in Turkey agree that the perceived missile threat is real and that Turkey needs a defence system (see, for example, Kasapoğlu 2019b; Yalçın, Alptekin, and Bayraklı 2019; Yeşiltaş 2017). They disagree in their assessments of the motives and merits of the S-400 decision and the way forward. Scholars assume that the decision to buy the S-400 was motivated by a combination of mistrust in Western governments, and according to one interviewee, a felt need to compensate for the previous Turkish downing of a Russian airplane.¹⁰ Tuygan from EDAM describes the situation similarly: »one cannot but conclude that S-400 contract was the price Turkey had to pay to put behind the downing of the Su-24, the murder of the Ambassador¹¹ and thus restore its cooperation with Moscow« (Tuygan 2019b). Concerning the military value of the system, they point to the contradiction that NATO will not allow integration of the S-400 into NATO's radar infrastructure and that as a stand-alone system, the S-400 has only limited military effectiveness (Kasapoğlu 2019b; Kasapoğlu and Ülgen 2018a).¹² Moreover, scholars doubt that the deal included

the technology transfer package that Turkey sought during its previous negotiations (ibid.). Regarding the way forward, liberal scholars acknowledge the difficulty of undoing the deal. One expert stated that the only way out of the conflict is either that the system will not be activated, or that NATO (or the United States) will be given the opportunity to observe the system in order to prevent a data leakage.¹³

In contrast, researchers at SETA defend the purchase and deployment of the S-400 on grounds of national sovereignty (Alabarda 2019; Yalçın 2017). The system will »give Turkey superiority in deterrence« (Yeşiltaş 2017). Another SETA fellow claims that NATO, too, would benefit from a stronger Turkish air defence capability: Any policy that successfully addresses Turkey's national security concerns would only strengthen NATO (Duran 2021b). Still others support the arms deal on the ground that Turkey »does not have to make a choice between two blocs« (Altun 2017).

TURKEY AND THE FUTURE OF NATO

The Turkish debate on the future of NATO and Turkey's place therein is determined by this mix of Turkey's particular threat perceptions and the logic of its bilateral relations with the United States and Russia.

In light of the numerous bilateral conflicts with other NATO states, the most important finding is the consensus among think tanks concerning NATO's enduring importance for Turkey. In fact, only a few voices propose Turkey's exit from NATO.¹⁴ While SETA scholars refer to an instrumental logic and the advantages of being a member of still the »strongest, most institutional, and most deterrent alliance institution« (Yalçın 2018: 18), scholars from liberal think tanks refer to the importance of shared norms as well. One interviewee pointed out that Turkey's importance for NATO cannot be ignored.¹⁵ Another expert stated that it is »impossible that Turkey would leave NATO«¹⁶; and emphasized Turkey's connection with the West: »It is difficult to separate Turkey from the West«, and it cannot be expected that Turkey would turn its back to NATO.¹⁷ In the same vein, a paper co-authored by former NATO representatives of Turkey and a current EDAM associate underlines the importance of NATO and transatlantic relations for Turkey. According to them, Turkey possesses a range of instruments and opportunities to pursue its foreign policy. However, »NATO comes first amongst these opportunities and

¹⁰ Interview with an expert, 25.01.2021

¹¹ On 19 December 2016, the Russian ambassador to Turkey, Andrei Karlov, was shot at a public event by a Turkish off-duty police officer.

¹² »[I]ntegrating the S-400s into the Turkish national command and control, early warning and sensors networks by totally excluding the NATO infrastructure would be extremely demanding. For one, NATO contribution to Turkey's overall radar capabilities remains crucial. Secondly, Turkish systems' interfaces to external (NATO-compatible) systems (i.e. via Link16) make the situation more complicated. Thirdly, even if everything goes as planned in the S-400's

integration into national capabilities, as mentioned earlier, an effective ballistic missile defense requisites detecting and tracking the missile starting from the launch with real-time, precise information cueing between many components of an architecture« (Kasapoğlu and Ülgen 2018a: 7).

¹³ Interview with expert, 25.01.2021.

¹⁴ See, for example, Dr Nejat Tarakçı from TASAM: https://tasam.org/tr-TR/Icerik/51399/turkiye_nato_kartini_masaya_yatirmalidir.

¹⁵ Interview with an expert, 25.01.2021.

¹⁶ Interview with an expert, 29.01.2021.

¹⁷ Interview with an expert, 29.01.2021.

instruments» (Üzümcü/İldem/Ceylan 2021: 5). NATO is not only seen as a military organization, »it is rather a political-military organization« (ibid.). In that sense, becoming a member also necessitates accepting common values, such as democracy, individual freedoms and the rule of law, and, as the authors state, Turkey's NATO membership reflects the country's conscious choice towards Western values, which was in line with the Republic's establishing principles (ibid.). Overall, liberal scholars and think tanks point out the benefits of the alliance for Turkey and state the importance of re-establishing better relations with traditional allies.

Despite the general commitment to NATO, the Turkish discourse on the future of NATO shows interesting differences compared with other countries. **Russian threats** to the territorial integrity of NATO's (Eastern) members, hybrid threats or China play a secondary role in the Turkish discourse. Russia's regional »conventional ground forces superiority in the Western Military District over NATO ground forces deployed in the eastern flank« is mentioned in EDAM studies (Kasapoğlu 2019c: 13). However, most scholars propose a more conciliatory NATO approach towards Russia. EDAM's Ceylan proposes pursuing dialogue with Russia: »Open channels of communication with Russia should be sustained with a view to maintaining and reinforcing the deterrence and defence posture of the Alliance« (Ceylan 2020a). Tarık Oğuzlu from Antalya Bilim University adds that »... Turkey holds the view that Russia's concerns should be given more priority while elaborating NATO's policies on enlargement, military deployments in Eastern Europe and the missile defence system«. ¹⁸ Turkish think tanks also discuss NATO's role in securing the cyber space in light of Russian (and Chinese) threats (Köse 2019b; Kanat 2021). For example, Kasapoğlu and Kirdemir (2019) support a collective initiative against such threats and suggest establishing an AI task force by the Alliance.

China is perceived by the Turkish government as a partner rather than a competitor, and President Erdogan is on record of having said that instead of striving for EU membership, Turkey might join the Russia and China-dominated Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). ¹⁹ As already mentioned, Turkey mulled the acquisition of a Chinese missile defence system and is unlikely to follow a NATO line on restricting technological and economic interaction with China. This uncritical attitude, however, is not shared by liberal think tanks. EDAM's Tuygan (2019c), for example, refers to China as »a new factor collectively to reckon with« by the Alliance.

As we have seen, NATO is valued for its military strength and its ability to »harness technology and innovation to stay ahead« (Coşkun 2021: 3). Arms control issues are also discussed. The future of the US nuclear weapons deployed in

Turkey and Turkey's participation in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement figures in Turkish expert discourses. The United States still stores approximately 50 B-61 nuclear weapons at the NATO section of Incirlik air force base. ²⁰ After the attempted coup and against the backdrop of deteriorating bilateral relations, the United States had considered withdrawing the bombs. US State and Energy Department officials actually reviewed plans for their evacuation in 2019. ²¹ Apparently, the US hesitated on the grounds that a unilateral removal would further undermine relations and spur what outside observers describe as Turkey's nuclear ambitions. Turkish think tankers differ in their assessment of NATO's arrangement. Former EDAM scholar Mustafa Kibaroglu, Turkey's foremost researcher on nuclear arms control, has argued for quite a while that these weapons present a hazard far greater than their potential benefits and should be removed (Kibaroglu 2005; Kibaroglu/Sauer 2017). Others tend to perceive removal at this point in time as an expression of American mistrust. Scholars from SETA in particular reproach the American discourse on the security of these weapons as an expression of a general American mistrust and disrespect of Turkey. ²²

Turkish scholars across all camps support **burden-sharing** and NATO's 2 per cent goal. This is not surprising given the fact that Turkey's defence expenditures easily surpass this threshold. On **NATO-EU relations**, the debate is less clear-cut, as might be expected, given Turkey's traditional reservations against formalizing relations between the alliance and the EU. While most pundits are rather critical of a European role in security and defence, EDAM scholar Kürsat Kaya hopes that the EU will facilitate the participation of non-EU NATO partners in armament projects co-financed by the European Defence Fund (Kürsat Kaya 2019). IPC scholars Aydın-Düzgüt et al. (2020: 13) suggest that »the EU and NATO should invoke the Berlin Plus agreement to assist Turkey directly in responding to the Idlib crisis«.

Most researchers, even from liberal think tanks, emphasize NATO's character as an interest-based organization. EDAM's Kasapoğlu (2019a) and Ülgen (2019) point out Turkey's argument: NATO should support the security interests of all member states. Some voices, such as IPC's Keyman (2017) and Gürçan/Gisclon (2016) link respect for democratic values at home with Turkey's credibility abroad. Scholars across different camps agree that **collective defence remains**

¹⁸ See: <https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2019/04/27/natos-image-in-the-eyes-of-turkey>.

¹⁹ See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-europe-erdogan-idUSKBN13F0CY>.

²⁰ The current nuclear deployment pattern and Turkey's participation in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement differs from the situation in other NATO countries and is another expression of Turkey's liminality. The B-61s in Incirlik are not earmarked for use by Turkish jets. Another batch of 40 nuclear weapons which had been stored at two other airbases and had been earmarked for deployment by Turkish F-16s were withdrawn long ago. And as Turkey has never approved the permanent deployment of US fighter jets in Incirlik, the installation at Incirlik has the character of a storage site and not a fighter-bomber base (Kristensen 2019).

²¹ See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/14/world/middleeast/trump-turkey-syria.html>.

²² See: <https://www.setav.org/en/turkey-safer-today-than-it-was-yesterday/>.

NATO's important task²³. They emphasize that Turkey is committed to Article 5 which is of particular importance for Turkey given its unstable neighbourhood.²⁴

Going beyond collective defence, Turkish scholars from all camps state necessity for acknowledging Turkey's interests and concerns regarding security issues. Especially, in the view of SETA scholars, the **fight against terrorism** should be one of NATO's priorities. Turkish NATO diplomats have been rather successful in inserting language on terrorism into NATO documents²⁵. However, given the vast differences in interests and threat perceptions among member states, scholars acknowledge that support from allies will remain limited and that in many cases Turkey, instead of seeking compromises with its allies, should go it alone. SETA scholars in particular emphasize the importance of national interests (Duran 2017; Köse 2020).

This perception of fundamentally different interests also motivates proposals for the restructuring of NATO's institutional form and cohesion. With varying degrees, scholars propose a future for NATO in which the alliance becomes more flexible and less restrictive. According to SETA's Inat (2019b) Turkey's role has changed from being a consumer of security during the Cold War to being a provider of security for its friends and allies in other countries. In the past, according to SETA's Yalçın, Turkey, by being a member of NATO, traded protection for autonomy (Yalçın 2019a). Today, Turkey aims to restore this autonomy by reducing its dependency on NATO and by making NATO more flexible (Yalçın 2019a). NATO needs to reform in ways that allow Turkey more freedom of manoeuvre and even the possibility to cooperate within the frameworks of several multilateral alliances (Yalçın 2018: 18).

Scholars from liberal think tanks are less uncompromising. Some even see a need for NATO's »internal cohesion and unity« and its »ability to take time sensitive, consensus-based decisions« (Coşkun 2021: 3). EDAM's Kasapoğlu notes that »if the member states were to project their national agendas onto broader NATO affairs, then an alliance of nation-states could easily find itself helplessly struggling with an avalanche of paralyzing troubles« (Kasapoğlu 2019a). However, he too recommends that if NATO wants to remain effective in the future, it should »grasp the uniqueness of each member's geopolitical imperatives, while bearing in mind that no ally's national security concerns are less crucial than those of the others« (Kasapoğlu 2019a).

Overall, although Turkey's liminal position within NATO has been reinforced by developments in Syria, President Erdoğan's authoritarian turn and Turkey's nationalistic foreign policy, the importance of NATO for Turkey and, vice versa, Turkey's importance for NATO are still generally accepted in Turkey and among the other NATO states. The challenge will therefore be to find a place for Turkey within NATO without undermining NATO's cohesion and normative profile.

²³ For example, EDAM's Ceylan defines collective defence as »the backbone of the Alliance« (Ceylan 2020a). He also points out Turkey's contribution to collective defence (Ceylan 2020b). Moreover, Kasapoğlu and Kırdemir (2019) suggest a collective initiative regarding cyber security. SETA's Duran (2019) criticizes Macron, because »he raised questions about the collective defense clause«.

²⁴ Çelikpala (2019: 18), for example, notes that when Turkish relations with Russia were strained in 2015, Ankara called for a NATO meeting to discuss Russian air strikes in Syria. In his view this suggests »that, when vital interests are concerned, Turkey prioritized its traditional alliance relations«.

²⁵ Interview with a member of NATO's International Secretariat.

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THE UK DISCOURSE ON NATO'S FUTURE

Dirk Peters

THE UNITED KINGDOM IN NATO

NATO is the key international institution in British security policy. And Britain, in turn, is a key European member of NATO. It is a nuclear power, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, it has the ambition to have globally deployable armed forces and it usually spends more than 2 per cent of its GDP on defence. The country was instrumental in creating NATO after the Second World War and has remained a staunch supporter of the transatlantic alliance during and since the Cold War. At times, maintaining close ties to the United States – under the aegis of the so-called »special relationship« – appears to be a goal in itself for British security policy. In keeping with this basic policy orientation, British governments have usually been critical of attempts to give the EU greater weight in defence policy. While Tony Blair's Labour government helped to create what was to become the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict, successive governments have been highly reluctant to support its further development. Brexit has complicated the situation for Britain somewhat. It has made the transatlantic link even more significant for Britain, but at the same time has potentially reduced the value of this link for the United States as the United Kingdom will no longer be able to influence EU decision-making in the defence realm directly.

In this context, the United Kingdom is currently seeking to redefine its foreign, security and defence policy. In March 2021, it published its *Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (HM Government 2021), which identifies two crucial challenges for UK defence policy:

- (i) the need to enhance capabilities, especially to guard against Russia, »the most acute threat« in the Euro-Atlantic area (p. 71); and
- (ii) the need for an »Indo-Pacific tilt« (pp. 66–67) and to respond to »China's increasing power and assertiveness« (p. 24 et passim).

This reflects concerns that also dominate the discourse on the future of NATO among Britain's leading security think tanks. There is widespread agreement within this discourse that NATO faces two significant, yet different challenges in

relation to Russia and China. Whereas Russia is viewed as a direct threat to the security of NATO members, China is regarded as a challenger that might, over time, evolve into a more directly threatening actor. There is also a third challenge to NATO that is highlighted throughout the discourse: maintaining (or restoring) internal cohesion. The list of internal disagreements that need to be tackled is long but transatlantic burden-sharing and French-led efforts to achieve European autonomy are most often identified as key problems.

Think tanks widely agree on the best way to tackle most of these problems: enhancing European capabilities. This will help to counter the Russian threat, to safeguard against China at least in the long term, to ease disagreements over burden-sharing and it could even satisfy those striving for more European autonomy. There are differences in emphasis and, especially with respect to China, other measures are discussed. But European capabilities remain a recurrent theme in the British discourse. And this is yet another point of agreement between the British think tank discourse about the future of NATO and the UK government's recent *Integrated Review*. In its ambitious plan to strengthen British capabilities, the UK government not only seeks to maintain its own position in the Alliance but also to lead by example and prod other European allies to invest in their capabilities as well.

TWO MAIN CHALLENGERS: RUSSIA AND CHINA

RUSSIA

British think tanks regard Russia as a real military threat to the alliance, especially given its willingness to change borders in Europe, as illustrated by the 2014 annexation of Crimea. The core challenge lies in Russia's hybrid approach to NATO. Notwithstanding a number of publications on cyber security and societal resilience (such as Kendall-Taylor/Edmonds 2019; Afina et al. 2020), however, the main focus of British discourse is on the military side of this threat. There is extensive discussion of Russia's military capabilities and how they affect NATO members' security. The IISS, in particular, discusses scenarios involving Russian attacks on Lithuania and Poland or multiple flashpoints on the eastern

flank, arriving at recommendations on how to prepare for or guard against such contingencies (Barrie et al. 2019, 2020). Vulnerabilities are mainly seen on NATO's eastern flank but some also point to the Arctic or the »Wider North« (Arctic plus Baltic) (Boulègue 2018, 2019b; Kennedy-Pipe/Depledge 2019). RUSI's Peter Roberts (2019) even posits that Russia has expanded its influence so much »that it is the turn of NATO's European continental members to feel encircled«.

The advice concerning Russia is twofold. On one hand, there is a strong emphasis on enhancing capabilities and deterring Russia from military action. Europeans, in particular, are advised to take Russia's posture into account when deciding about capability development (Barrie et al. 2019, 2020). Recommendations for NATO as a whole include the reinforcement of its forward presence, strengthening NATO's »capacity to degrade Russian anti-access weapons« (Efjestad/Tamnes 2019: 17) and clarifying how the alliance would respond to the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons (Kendall-Taylor/Edmonds 2019: 6465). On the other hand, there are individual voices advocating that NATO should »continue its dual strategy of combining deterrence and meaningful dialogue« and engage in dialogue and confidence-building, especially with regard to arms control (Olsen 2020; see also Efjestad/Tamnes 2019: 21). Chatham House fellow Mathieu Boulègue (2019a, b), in particular, advocates a »dialogue of differences«, an institutionalized dialogue that would not aim at actually resolving differences but at clarifying them and explicating the »red lines« of both sides. This would help to avoid miscalculation and unintentionally drifting into an armed conflict. He also suggests that such a form of dialogue among NATO allies could help them to find a common stance and decrease Russian opportunities for undermining NATO cohesion.

CHINA

There is a broad consensus in the British discourse that China represents a second important challenge for NATO allies. But it is a challenge that is significantly different from the one that Russia poses, especially because it does not (yet) concern NATO's core business of collective defence. Analyses point to China's global ambition and the ambitious modernization of its armed forces, as well as the fact that it has established cooperation with Russia, seeks to undermine NATO cohesion (for instance through disinformation campaigns) and is already expanding the reach of its forces closer to NATO territory (Barrie et al. 2020: 1012; Legarda/Nouwens 2019; Nouwens/Legarda 2020). Moreover, the expansion of economic cooperation between European allies and China is viewed as a potential source of dependency that could be turned against Europeans (Efjestad/Tamnes 2019: 19).

NATO's inability to formulate a joint approach towards China is seen as a crucial weakness of the alliance (Roberts 2019). The US openly treats China as a rival, whereas the European Union only recently moved to an assessment of China as »partner«, »competitor« and »rival«. Such differ-

ences in threat assessment potentially provide China with leverage for sowing disunity in the alliance (Nouwens/Legarda 2020: 7).

No one sees a direct military confrontation between China and NATO as a likely scenario. The advice for handling the China challenge, therefore, focuses on bolstering cohesion within NATO, finding regional partners to contain China and cooperating to reduce the danger of economic dependency. Internal cohesion can be improved by better exchanges of information and more intensive internal debate about the different approaches towards China to identify common concerns (Bond 2019; Efjestad/Tamnes 2019: 19; Legarda/Nouwens 2019). Intensified partnerships with countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including linking NATO to existing regional security arrangements there, are viewed as a promising way to respond to China's ambitions without seeking to expand NATO's area of operations (Pothier 2019; Nouwens/Legarda 2020: 15). Countering the danger of economic dependency is not viewed as a prime task for NATO, but some commentators argue that NATO cooperation with the EU could help to alleviate the problem. It would be easier for the EU, for example, to monitor the influx of foreign direct investment into critical sectors and to deal with the technological and economic challenges China poses (Efjestad/Tamnes 2019: 20; Nouwens/Legarda 2020).

THE KEY INTERNAL CHALLENGE: COHESION

For most contributions to the British discourse, the key internal challenge that NATO faces is a lack of unity and cohesion. Trump's rhetoric, as well as Macron's »brain dead« comments, are popular points of reference for this diagnosis. The latter in particular have been heavily criticized by commentators from British think tanks (for a lone exception, see Chevallereau 2019). Even though Macron criticized the lack of cohesion himself, his remarks were widely regarded as further aggravating the key problem for NATO's cohesion: transatlantic differences over NATO's future and over burden-sharing or the contribution of Europeans to the overall defence effort. Other issues, especially the role of Turkey and regional differences in assessing external security challenges, receive less attention.

BURDEN-SHARING AND EUROPEANISATION

The rhetoric and policies of the Trump administration put the differences between the United States and its European allies under the spotlight. But there is a common understanding that disputes over burden-sharing in the alliance will not go away now that the United States has returned to a more centrist foreign and security policy (for example, Besch/Scazzieri 2020). For the US, the key security challenges lie in the Asia-Pacific, while Europeans are clearly more focused on Russia. The differences are so stark that the IISS even contributed to a policy game that centred on a scenario in which the United States leaves NATO (Fix et al. 2019) and

developed scenarios concerning how Europeans could defend themselves against attack if the United States did not join their effort (Barrie et al. 2019).

The result of these scenarios and of almost all contributions to the debate is straightforward: it is in the best interest of Europeans to keep the United States engaged in Europe (Pothier 2019). This can be achieved, for example, by adjusting to US strategic priorities: »A new transatlantic bargain might have to be built on the notion that Europeans operate globally to help the US with its various contingencies in exchange for a reconfirmed US commitment to European security through NATO« (Barrie et al. 2020: 18; see also Legarda/Nouwens 2019).

More importantly, Europeans should enhance their military capabilities in order to keep the United States engaged. There is no shortage of recommendations concerning which capabilities are most important (for example, Barrie et al. 2019, 2020; Efstathiou 2019). Increasing defence spending is the obvious implication of this recommendation. How can this be achieved? There is a strong emphasis on pragmatism. NATO's 2 per cent target, for example, is often viewed critically, if interpreted too rigidly, but at the same time regarded as an important symbolic guidepost to induce Europeans to invest in capabilities (for example, Béraud-Sudreau/Giegerich 2018; Béraud-Sudreau/Childs 2018; Efstad/Tamnes 2019: 22; Besch 2018a). EU efforts to achieve strategic autonomy are viewed with similar pragmatism. It is not the institutional choice that matters but the creation of capabilities (Barrie et al. 2020; Besch 2019).

Where institutional questions are discussed there is a clear preference for focusing on NATO (Roberts 2020) and creating »a kind of European core within NATO« (Kundnani 2019) rather than organizing the European contribution within the EU. This, of course, would also make it easier for the United Kingdom to play a leading role.

This does not imply, however, that the EU is viewed as useless or as NATO's competitor. Some contributions point out that, as a »regulatory power«, the EU has tools to address certain challenges more effectively than NATO. This holds, for example, in the realms of cyber security, force mobility or defence-industrial cooperation (Besch 2019; Olsen 2020; Efstad/Tamnes 2019) and in improving resilience against hybrid tactics (Besch/Bond 2019; Kendall-Taylor/Edmonds 2019). However, the implication that it is in the best interest of Britain, too, to maintain close links to the EU is rarely spelled out (but see Shea 2020).

A COMMUNITY OF VALUES?

NATO cohesion is threatened not only by transatlantic divergences. There are other fault-lines along which interests and values in the alliance diverge. These receive less attention in the British discourse. NATO members define their immediate security interests in different ways, with states on the eastern flank looking primarily towards Russia and states in

the South concerned mainly about instability around the Mediterranean.¹ There is also a noticeable divergence of values among NATO members because of the rise of populist leaders and autocratic tendencies in some states. In Turkey, both issues come together as the government attacks basic democratic institutions and defines Turkey's security interests in ways that may be harmful to those of other members (Chevallereau 2020; see also Besch/Bond 2019: 2; Scazzieri 2021).

Where these issues are discussed, the advice usually boils down to an appeal to common interests and common values. Leaders should return to consensus-building and to leading by example (Schake 2019) and to an awareness that »transatlantic security guarantees and collective defence in particular have to be rooted in a sense of solidarity, as well as shared values and interests between members of the community« (Efstathiou 2018). Focusing on shared democratic values could improve cohesion and give China and Russia fewer opportunities to exploit divergences among members (Olsen 2019, 2020).

There is little concrete advice, however, on how to actually achieve this. After all, as Chatham House's Jacob Parakilas (2019) puts it, NATO »reflects the internal politics of its membership to a far greater degree than it shapes them« and is not equipped to enforce values in its member states. Svein Efstad and Rolf Tamnes (2019: 10), contributing to a RUSI publication, make the rare proposal that NATO members should »make more vigorous use of its various venues and instruments, including the NATO Council, to scrutinise infringements of fundamental rights and abuse of power«. But even they hasten to add that other »organisations such as the Council of Europe and the EU have a more explicit obligation to enforce adherence to democratic values and human rights«.

ARMS CONTROL

Arms control issues are mainly a specialist discourse in the United Kingdom and do not figure prominently in the broader debate about NATO's future. At times, the end of the INF is noted with some concern but mainly because it is yet another issue which makes divisions among NATO members visible (Raine 2019). The responsibility for the collapse of the INF is clearly assigned to Russia and Macron's proposal to study Russian proposals in this context has met with vehement criticism (Morrison/Heinrichs 2020).

NATO's nuclear policies receive some modest criticism because they are perceived as putting too little emphasis on disarmament. There are no calls for Britain to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. However, there are calls for NATO not to stress its opposition to the

¹ The British discourse is no exception in this respect as Southern concerns are rarely discussed as an issue for NATO, whereas the Arctic and the Wider North figure somewhat more prominently (see below).

TPNW too strongly and instead to search for points of agreement with TPNW supporters and to play a more proactive role in nuclear disarmament. Only if NATO can demonstrate how its nuclear posture can be reconciled with the goal of nuclear disarmament, as enshrined in the NPT, can it expect non-proliferation to survive (Caughley/Afina 2020). The United Kingdom's recent *Integrated Review* highlights rather than alleviates this tension between the abstract goal of nuclear disarmament and actual reliance on nuclear weapons (for example, Williams 2021).

There is also advocacy work to save the Open Skies Treaty (European Leadership Network 2020) and for the United Kingdom to engage more proactively in arms control relating to the use of drones and Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (UNA-UK 2017).

es and capabilities accordingly (Boulègue 2018; Ejfestad/Tamnes 2019: 1617), but without militarizing the region itself (Boulègue 2019b).

OTHER CHALLENGES FOR NATO

The defence of NATO's eastern flank against Russia and countering Chinese ambitions are the most prominent external challenges for NATO in the British discourse. They are also reflected in some additional topics that are discussed occasionally. Some analysts argue that NATO needs to pay more attention to **space** as a domain that is significant for military security. Stickings (2020), for example, argues that NATO's response to Russian and Chinese activities in space should not remain confined to designating space an »operational domain«. He calls especially for clarification of the distribution of responsibilities in space between NATO and its member states and a discussion of possible scenarios for incidents in space. Unal (2019) adds the **cyber** security of space-based assets as a topic to which NATO should pay attention. Some commentators call on NATO to generally put more effort in the resilience of systems vulnerable to cyber attacks, including critical networks and C3 systems (Besch 2018b; Afina et al. 2020).

Finally, British think tanks appear to look at the **regional** distribution of threats through a specifically Northern lens. While the concerns of Southern members about migration, terrorism and instability around the Mediterranean are occasionally mentioned, there are few concrete suggestions about what NATO as an organization could do about them. At best, NATO may help other nations to defend themselves and train forces in the MENA region (Besch/Bond 2018; Ejfestad/Tamnes 2019: 19; Olsen 2020) or support more robust peacekeeping in Libya once internal tensions with Turkey are resolved (Scazzieri 2021). In contrast, some commentators regard the North as a region in which NATO should step up its defence efforts. Russia has been active in the Arctic for a while, China has designated itself a »near-Arctic state« and the Arctic, or the Wider North (including the Baltic states), is of strategic importance for NATO because of its significance for trade and communication routes. Moreover, NATO is militarily vulnerable in the North through the »GIUK gap«. Given this situation, some commentators recommend that NATO (and the United Kingdom) pay more attention to the region (Kennedy-Pipe/Depledge 2019) and develop forc-

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COUNTRY CASES NON-NATO STATES

RUSSIA AND THE DIVISIVE DISCOURSE ON NATO

Hans-Joachim Spanger

THREAT PERCEPTION: A MIXED BAG – IN EVERY RESPECT

There is a seamless consensus among the Moscow political class, which has remained unaltered for years, namely that NATO poses a problem for Russia, that its expansion exacerbates this problem, and that Russian security interests in Europe are best served by a pan-European security system with Russia included on an equal footing.

This attitude took root as early as 1993/1994, when NATO began discussing the admission of new members from Central and Eastern Europe. In the course of a few months, all the arguments emerged that comprise the Russian critique, which even today determine the debate about NATO and its expansion plans. The complaint is that, in contrast to the Warsaw Pact, the West refused to dissolve its military alliance at the end of the Cold War. This reflects the fact that it does not appreciate Russia's decisive contribution to ending that war, but instead continues to celebrate its supposed victory. This arrogant attitude corresponds to the West's broken promises not to unilaterally expand the scope of its alliance, in line with the spirit of the 1990 CSCE Charter of Paris, to which it had committed itself in concrete terms within the framework of the Two Plus Four negotiations on German unification. Reference is also made to Russia's national interests, because with its expansion NATO deliberately marginalizes the Russian Federation politically, pushing it to the European periphery and building up a qualitatively new level of military capacity, even if the alliance does not yet pose an acute military threat (cf. Spanger 2012).

As in the past, Russia's confrontation with NATO therefore brings together all the fundamental problems and visions with which the Moscow political class was confronted after the end of the Soviet Union: from uncertainty about the country's place in the international community to the question of how and by what means Moscow could conceivably influence developments beyond its own borders, and also how – this was added with the gradual emergence of Putin's autocratic rule – it can shield itself from undue influence from outside, namely from the West.¹ This dilemma

has produced a vast amount of analyses and commentaries, so only a concise summary of the debate can be presented here.

For about ten years the view has prevailed in the Moscow political class that Russia has established itself as an »independent centre of power« after its »geopolitical knockout« had been overcome (Lukyanov 2010).² However, from this basic attitude it does not necessarily follow how Russia can assume this role in the international system and what this means for the relationship with NATO, except for one thing: any thought of Russia joining NATO – and its transformation into a collective security organization, which would go hand in hand with it – is now obsolete.

This, however, is where the consensus ends, because the exact nature of the threat posed by NATO and, even more so, how NATO is to be dealt with, are judged very differently in the Russian security debate. Take, for instance, the basic question of whether NATO has a future at all and what it looks like. Donald Trump's disregard for the alliance in particular stimulated some optimism among some Russian think tankers. Timofei Bordachev of the Higher School of Economics (HSE), for example, came up with the bold claim that »NATO itself is already a historical relic« (Bordachev 2019), with which dialogue is no longer worthwhile for Russia. Yet, publishing on the same platform, the Valdai Club, Igor Istomin of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), counters: »Judging by

Foreign Minister Kozyrev this sounded like this: »It is quite possible that the now much-discussed question of NATO's eastward enlargement will become a less pressing problem through the dynamic further development of the partnership, as well as through cooperation within the CSCE and the NACC« (Kozyrev 1994: 6). For an early critic such as Sergei Karaganov, this was, in retrospect, an expression of the »desire to please the 'rich uncles' in the 1990s, lack of intelligence, i.e. stupidity, or simply weakness« and thus Russia's »co-responsibility for the resurgence of confrontation in Europe« (Karaganov 2019b). Vladimir Putin made it clear at the Valdai meeting in 2017 that he shares this view, because »our most serious mistake in relations with the West is that we trusted you too much« (Putin 2017).

- 2 Or in the words of Dmitry Trenin (2009: 4f) of the Carnegie Center: »Russia has defined itself as a major power in its own right with global reach. Its current goal is to become a full-fledged world power, one of a handful of more or less equal players in the global system of the twenty-first century. The goal is to become a world power in the twenty-first century. (...) The goal is to create a less US/Western centered system«.

¹ The latter came about in contrast to the beginning, when both sides »sought to develop cooperation based not only on common interests, but also on shared values« (Zagorsky 2017: 138). For then Russian

the steps it has taken rather than by rhetoric, NATO remains a completely vital organization« (Istomin 2019). Despite all its difficulties, »NATO will remain the central institution for Transatlantic coordination that also ensures the projection of the power to adjacent regions« and »[r]ecent apocalyptic expectations concerning disintegration of normative consensus seem exaggerated« (Istomin/Bolgova 2018: 5, 47). Andrey Kortunov of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) goes one step further, arguing that »simply going back to a world without NATO is not only impossible but also undesirable, since the world of the past has never been the ideal for the future«. This is all the more true since the alternatives to NATO need by no means be better for Russia:

Will it be better if Turkey or Germany start to think about acquiring their own nuclear weapons, while Poland attempts to create an anti-Russian »three seas« military and political alliance, uniting the states of Central Europe? Will it be better if another president of the United States turns out to be entirely free of all the obligations and restrictions imposed on him by NATO's multilateral rules and procedures? (Kortunov 2019a)

These diverging views of NATO express one thing above all: profound differences on the question of who owns the future. There are essentially two opposing standpoints. On one hand, an exuberant self-confidence that in the wake of the global power shift the world has already become multipolar and a few great powers – Russia included – will shape the future global order. Hence, Russia is back. In the words of Sergey Karaganov, whose mode of argument is often neatly timed and geared towards achieving a political impact: »the 2010s were probably the most successful period in terms of foreign and defence policy, at least since the 1970s when the USSR's foreign policy influence and military security were at their height«:

In the 2010s, Russia managed to halt the expansion of Western alliances which threatened vital interests of its security. In Syria, a series of imposed »colour revolutions« that destroyed entire regions was stopped. Russia has gained advantageous, including economically, positions in the Middle East. It has built a de facto allied relationship with China, which markedly strengthens the positions of both countries in the world system. (...) Having begun its turn to the East, Russia has significantly changed the balance of power in relations with the West, especially Europe, in its own favour. While Europe's periphery was willing to gravitate towards the centre and prepared to pay for this, Russia is now turning into the centre of a new vast Eurasian space and regaining Eurasian identity.

But »[u]nlike the Soviet Union, Russia this time took »the right side of history«« (Karaganov 2017) because, in even more emphatic historical terms, »Russia, not even fully realising it yet, has finally knocked the foundation out of the West's five-hundred-year dominance in world politics, economy, and culture« (Karaganov 2019a).

This contrasts significantly with a much more sceptical assessment, which also admits Russia's foreign policy successes, especially in the Middle East, and concedes that the global balance is shifting to the detriment of the West. At the same time, it expresses serious reservations that, according to Andrey Kortunov, »the material foundation of Russia's foreign policy has not gotten any stronger, to say the least«. He also cautions that, despite all successes »the strategic risks here outweigh the tactical advantages« (Kortunov 2019b). Andrey Zagorsky, Institute for World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO), adds that, especially with regard to European security, Russian options have not become better, but worse, »towards the possible isolation (or self-isolation) of Russia. The actual choice today is not between integrating Russia into a »political West« or a bipolar system, but between isolating Russia and agreeing to maintain a modus vivendi« as the best option (Zagorsky 2017: 138).

These differences reveal a peculiar paradox: Karaganov's diagnoses – or rather vision – of Russia's rise as an »Atlantic-Pacific power« to become the »centre of rising Eurasia« clearly strike a chord with the political class in Moscow, as the similar-sounding official pronouncements from the Kremlin and the Foreign Ministry in recent years demonstrate. The vast majority of think tanks, on the other hand, subscribe to the sceptical, cautious position of his critics – a difference that is also reflected in their recommendations on how to deal with NATO.

WHAT ABOUT THE MILITARY THREAT?

It is striking that in the assessment of the immediate military threat from NATO, there is again greater agreement – and composure dominates.³ The explanation, however, again differs in that some refer to Russian military capabilities, others to NATO's »relatively limited direct military deployments« (Istomin 2019) on Russia's western border: »the real level of pressure will most probably be limited [substantially below the Cold War level to which the modern situation is often compared]. The West relies more on other instruments in its rising tensions with Moscow« (Istomin/Bolgova 2018: 47). This, as well as the continued communications, allegedly signals that the alliance does not harbour very threatening military intentions. According to Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) authors, however, this hybridisation only amounts to »an extended deterrence strategy that would encompass the military, political, information and economic spheres« (Kosarev 2020: 17). More generally, the issue of hybrid warfare has become a subject of mutual finger-pointing between NATO and Russia, each side referring to alleged doctrinal changes by its opponent.

³ With the notable exception of the worst-case analyses of NATO which are to be found in the works of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI) and which are a mirror image of the alarmism at NATO's eastern flank (see, for example, Kosarev 2020).

Karaganov agrees, irrespective of his basic assumption that NATO is inherently aggressive⁴ and can be neutralised only through effective deterrence: »Russia's armed forces are quite efficient, and I do not think that NATO should expect anything more than a quick defeat in the event of a conflict, if, of course, Russia uses all the necessary means for that. But there are no signs indicating that the Alliance is preparing direct aggression. Russia does have sufficient deterrent forces« (Karaganov 2019b). Why, however, he believes that there is currently an »acute pre-war situation (...) comparable to the time right after the Cuban missile crisis« remains his secret (Karaganov 2019c).

In line with his last argument there is again agreement – and it is emphasised throughout – that the current climate of confrontation between Russia and the West harbours inherent dangers, namely of unintended military escalation and accidental war, which must be jointly contained (see, for example, Institute of Europe 2020). The same applies to the »emerging arms race« (see, for example, Zagorsky 2017: 139), although in Karaganov's view this race is already over before it has really begun: »Russia has pre-emptively ruined the United States' hopes to regain military superiority, and has so far won the arms race without getting involved in it« (Karaganov 2019a).

DIALOGUE WITH NATO?

RIAC and IMEMO in particular, but also the other academic institutes, have in recent years not tired of exploring options to forge a common understanding in all conceivable combinations with Western think tanks: from joint workshops to a myriad of joint policy proposals. Their minimum goal is to contain the dangers described above and stabilize the current standoff; their maximum goal is to establish something like a »modus vivendi« (Zagorsky 2017) or a »positive coexistence« in the sense of an »equilibrium founded on yet-to-be-agreed rules of behaviour« (Trenin 2018, 4) between Russia and NATO. The minimum goal can be tackled immediately and, with sufficient flexibility and foresight on both sides, can be achieved relatively quickly. The maximum goal, however, can be achieved only after the completely destroyed trust has been restored and after tensions have been reduced and the current crisis has been overcome. The restoration of a partnership, on the other hand, is ruled out by all for the foreseeable future.

With regard to the minimum goal, almost all think tanks advocate a resumption of the NATO-Russia Council, at least at ambassadorial level, better still at a higher level and in »a more predictable rhythm«, as stated in a joint paper by RIAC and the European Leadership Network (Kubiak 2019). A joint discussion group with Western academics initiated by academy institutes and the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Security at MGIMO in addition suggests that the 1997 NATO-Russia

Founding Act should be better utilized in the sense of »restraint, transparency and confidence-building measures« and, if necessary, expanded (Institute of Europe 2020).

Here, too, Karaganov, together with his colleagues at the HSE,⁵ takes an at first glance radical counter-position, demanding that »under no circumstances should Moscow agree to resume the hollow political dialogue within the framework of the Russian-NATO Council« (Karaganov 2019b):

The desire to maintain a political dialogue with NATO is completely incomprehensible. Didn't we take our appeasement efforts a bit too far? With our willingness to maintain an empty dialogue in the past, we legitimised an irrelevant alliance that had outlived its usefulness, and helped it endure and expand. (Karaganov 2019c)⁶

Elsewhere, he concedes that *faute de mieux* the Cooperation Council, like the OSCE, could be used »instrumentally (...) wherever they can be useful – to regulate crises or prevent conflicts – but otherwise be pushed aside« (Karaganov/Suslov 2018: 79). His preferred alternative is »a modern active policy of peace or peace-saving (a new language is needed). It should combine strong deterrence with the rejection of direct threats and with the promotion of the slogan »Russia is the main provider of peace, a defender of sovereignty and freedom of choice for all countries and civilizations, a guarantor of a new non-aligned movement and the prevention of hegemonism«« (Karaganov 2019a).

A similar formation can be observed in the assessment of arms control. The RIAC in particular, frequently represented by its president Igor Ivanov (for example, Ivanov 2019), as well as the IMEMO as represented by Aleksey Arbatov in particular (for example, Arbatov 2019) spare no effort in defending the existing arms control regimes and pleading for negotiations on new ones. For Karaganov, on the other hand, this process is »practically dead now«, and that is to be commended, because »the arms control process was also used to militarise politics and thinking. It was based mostly on an artificial criterion, namely, the parity or numerical equality of the parties' armaments and armed forces« (Karaganov 2019c). However, even this extravagant position cannot be that serious, because in a major report by the HSE, which he presented together with Dmitry Suslov in 2019 and which has evidently been well received in the Foreign Ministry, he advocates measures to secure strategic stability, which de facto represent nothing more than a partially redesigned negotiated arms control (Karaganov/Suslov 2019).

⁴ »When democracies are not militarily contained, they commit acts of aggression under the banner of protecting human rights, ethnic minorities and democracy itself« (Karaganov 2019b).

⁵ And in line with RISI authors who argue that NATO is willing to have dialogue with Russia only »from a position of strength« (Kosarev 2020: 16).

⁶ And he points out: »How can we now justify our hope for »equal cooperation« with an alliance that has stained itself with bloody aggression? This line is not only morally flawed, but also impractical, for it encourages the worst in our partners« (Karaganov 2019c).

HOW TO COPE WITH FUTURE NATO EXPANSION?

Here, too, the basic disagreements outlined above prevail, whereby there is little doubt that NATO is not moving away from its axiomatic willingness to accept new members, even if, apart from the Balkans, no expansion is currently expected, especially not with regard to Georgia and Ukraine. While one side advocates taking the concerns of the NATO candidates seriously and finding acceptable solutions, especially for the countries between Russia and NATO, the other relies on a policy of strength. It is again Karaganov who formulates this latter position particularly succinctly, because in his view it was Russia's resolute and military-backed response in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 that unmistakably showed NATO its limits: »Russia's resolutely swift takeover of Crimea and support of the rebellion in the Donbass have prevented the further expansion of the Western bloc« (Karaganov/Suslov 2018). He thus supports the overwhelming majority of Moscow's political class who advocate a strategy of preventing further expansion of NATO through the existence – and, if necessary, intensification – of territorial conflicts among the accession candidates. This follows the logic of a great power policy which claims »special interests« in neighbouring regions but does not show much consideration for the concerns and needs articulated there.

Critics maintain that in order to counter NATO enlargement effectively, the »demand side« must be taken much more seriously and the motivation of the accession candidates carefully studied. These must be flexibly addressed and hence Russia's previous policy in its neighbourhood corrected, because the policy of recent decades of filling the »geopolitical vacuum« has in any case not proved »particularly successful« (Kortunov 2019a). According to Andrey Zagorsky, such flexibility presupposes resolving the »central contradiction in the current debate« and finding a »balance between the principle of freedom of choice of alliances and the need to take into account the legitimate security interests of other states (the principle of equal and indivisible security)«, as well as providing »security guarantees for countries caught between Russia and NATO-EU« (Zagorsky 2017: 139) that allow them to maintain a non-aligned status.

This is where the EU comes in. In the course of the confrontation, it has become customary in Moscow to equate the enlargement of NATO with that of the EU, especially because, with a few exceptions (Austria, Sweden, Finland), the former regularly preceded the latter. There are proposals to decouple the two again. Dmitry Trenin, for instance, proposes for the sake of his »stable equilibrium« a compromise involving »NATO stopping any further enlargement into the post-Soviet space and Russia dropping its objections to former Soviet republics' rapprochement with the EU« (Trenin 2018). Kortunov even sees conflict-dampening potential in the EU's debates on its »strategic autonomy«, which could reduce the »appeal of NATO membership for post-Soviet states«, but in return would require that Russia not view the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) programme in security and defence »in a solely negative light«, as it has

done so far. In the best case, this could even lay »the foundations of long-term defence cooperation between Russia and Europe outside the framework of the highly toxic Russia-NATO relations« (Kortunov 2019a). And even Karaganov, who around 2010 called for a »Union of Europe« as a »last chance« (Karaganov 2010), and who today considers the EU caught in a dead end, sees opportunities for cooperation beyond NATO – but »as part of the efforts to build a greater Eurasian space of development, cooperation, and security« (Karaganov 2019b). On the horizon, even more ambitious goals appear in the shape of »a China-Russia-Europe triangle of peace and development within which Russia would act as a link and as a balancing power« (Karaganov/Suslov 2018: 79).

WHAT ROLE FOR CHINA?

As far as China's role in the Russia-NATO equation is concerned, there is again greater agreement. Prosperous relations with China are indispensable not only for economic reasons – after all, China has been Russia's most important trading partner for years – but also as geostrategic reassurance, which China offers as a force multiplier. However, the accompanying balancing vis-à-vis the United States, which is desirable to both parties – albeit within variable limits – requires at least hedging, if not balancing vis-à-vis China as well. This is all the more true as the balance in the bilateral relationship is continuously shifting in China's favour; no one in Moscow makes any secret of this.

Against this background, it is understandable why the idea of a new bipolarism, which is becoming increasingly clear in the confrontation between Washington and Beijing, meets with little enthusiasm in the Russian strategic community, because this would entail the danger that Russia would switch from being a subject to an object. Because, as Andrey Gromyko of the Academy's Europe Institute notes, such »poles can have only one indisputable leader« and »China–Russia relations are largely asymmetrical in favour of China« (Gromyko 2020), there can only be one loser in this constellation.

This ambivalence can be found even with Karaganov, who has vigorously promoted Russia's »turn to the east« over many years. On one hand, he welcomes the »de facto strategic alliance with China« (Karaganov 2017), but on the other he too sees the risks resulting from the growing asymmetry between the two countries: »China needs us now. But as it becomes economically, and most importantly, militarily stronger, it may objectively become less inclined to take our interests into account. Beijing may start pursuing a tougher policy«. His solution: »integrate it into the system of balances and institutions within the Greater Eurasia concept« (Karaganov 2019a). This is one of the rare points of agreement with Andrey Kortunov, who also calls for »multilateralism« with China and considers the potential of the »multipolarism« jointly advocated so far to be exhausted in view of the bilateral power shift (Zhao/Kortunov 2020). The problem is that China has so far shown little inclination to allow itself to

be integrated multilaterally, which it perceives to be as much a Procrustean bed as Russia does, which is trying to shed it in its relationship with the West. At least there is some relief, on the part of some pundits: the transformation of NATO into a »global security organisation« is considered unlikely, hence the alarmism that is so popular in Moscow when it comes to NATO may be not well-founded (Istomin/Bolgova 2018: 4). But here again RISI authors disagree, positing that in its drive towards »destabilising hybridisation« NATO is intent on covering ever more regions of the world and more areas of activity (Kosarev 2020: 42).

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UKRAINE DEBATES THE FUTURE OF NATO

Mikhail Polianskii

In recent years, Ukraine has not formulated a clearly outlined and articulated global foreign policy strategy, but rather has focused on a set of priorities (Gaber et al. 2020: 5). To a great extent, this has to do with the fact that Ukraine has been preoccupied for years with the conflict with Russia, for which NATO (and accession to it) is viewed as the ultimate solution. The think-tank and NGO landscape is therefore significantly shaped by this topic. The main institutes involved in framing the discourse about NATO include the National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS), the Foreign Policy Council «Ukrainian Prism» (UP), the Razumkov Centre (RC) and the International Centre for Policy Studies (ICPS). There are also a number of academics from various university-affiliated research organisations. Most are unconditionally pro-NATO/West in their stance, with the exception of ICPS, which represents a more moderate position towards both Euro-Atlantic integration and relations with Russia.

Discussions about NATO in Ukrainian discourse are in many respects synonymous with relations with the United States, as Kyiv set itself the ambitious goal. However, according to Ukrainian experts, the prerequisite for this is that Russia remains a significant security challenge for the entire Euro-Atlantic area, which would make Ukraine a Western bulwark to contain Moscow's belligerent and aggressive foreign policy (Getmanchuk/Solodkyi/Porchkhidze 2020: 9).

After pursuing a «non-aligned» foreign policy for its nearly 25 years of independence, Ukraine's commitment to a transatlantic orientation in its strategic culture, including the pursuit of NATO membership, was increased significantly as a result of the 2014 crisis (Glebov 2017: 49–50). Currently the overwhelming majority of foreign policy experts agree that (the road to) joining NATO would help Ukraine to achieve three main foreign and security policy goals: (i) provide a credible deterrent against its main geopolitical threat, Russia; (ii) modernize its armed forces and navy; and eventually (iii) restore full Ukrainian sovereignty in Donbass and Crimea (Kravchenko 2021). At the same time, Ukraine does not view its Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations only through military and foreign policy lenses, but also considers the path to NATO membership as a powerful mechanism that would help it to finally turn the tide domestically, most prominently, in fighting corruption.

INTERNAL ADAPTATION AND A LONG ROAD TO MEMBERSHIP

The aspiration to become a NATO member (along with EU accession) has been anchored in the Ukrainian constitution since February 2019, and it is fully supported by a clear majority of the expert community (Kapitonenko 2018: 23). On the societal level, general support for NATO accession has been growing consistently over the years. It continues to be a problem, however, that half of the population is struggling to grasp the rules under which the Alliance really functions, which some specialists relate to constant disinformation campaigns and pro-Russian propaganda (National Institute for Strategic Studies (NISS) 2020: 22). Without the full confidence of Ukrainian society, potential NATO membership will remain unattainable (Symonova 2020). Under Ukrainian law, a countrywide referendum is required to start the process of NATO accession, but recent polls indicate that support for NATO membership among the population as a whole has been hovering around 50 per cent (as of October 2020 it was 41 per cent¹), with up to one-fifth of all respondents still undecided or indifferent (Centre for Insights in Survey Research (2019): 62). A better public information policy about the benefits of NATO membership for the whole country is therefore seen by the expert community as essential to finally tip the balance towards accession (Kravchenko 2021).

Even the most ardent champions of Ukraine's NATO accession agree that the country still has a lot of homework to do, in particular with regard to democratization and parliamentary control of the armed forces. With the Membership Action Plan (MAP) for Ukraine still at least a few years away, think tankers argue that the country should adopt a more pragmatic approach and focus on the essence of co-operation rather than on declarations of intent or the official status of the accession process (Kapitonenko 2018: 25). This has to come from an increased awareness that reforms are carried out first and foremost in the country's own interest, meaning that joining NATO would strengthen not only foreign policy but also domestic stability (Lytvynenko 2020).

¹ Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=ukr&cat=reports&id=979&page=5>

Utilizing pursuit of NATO membership for domestic purposes has increasingly been endorsed by the new president of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky. Even though he is sometimes criticized for his »inertial approach to NATO« the successful continuation of engagement with the Alliance through implementation of the Annual National Programme (ANP) and the Enhanced Opportunity Partnership (EOP) has been recognized by all sides of the think-tank spectrum (Litva/Getmanchuk 2020: 38). These programmes envisage the intensification of intelligence sharing between Ukraine and NATO states, as well as reform of the country's air force and navy. As far as the latter is concerned, some experts have proposed (recently included in Ukraine's Strategy for the Naval Forces 2035²) of a »mosquito fleet« of small, manoeuvrable vessels to strengthen coastal defence, in which NATO (primarily the United States and the United Kingdom) could play an important part by training military personnel (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2020: 24). What is missing in this »pragmatic« approach, however, is a vision of how to overcome the biggest stumbling block on the road to NATO, namely Crimea and the conflict in Donbass.

SOLVING THE CONFLICT IN DONBASS AND CRIMEA

Children who go to school for the first time on September 1, 2021, will be the first generation, for whom Ukraine has been a »foreign country« for their entire lives. Ukrainians are clearly dissatisfied with the status quo, but at the same time fatigue with the impasse in resolving the conflicts is becoming more tangible. Even though some still argue that reintegrating Crimea and Donbass back into Ukraine should be tackled together (Lytvynenko 2020), others now believe that they should be viewed independently. For them Donbass is the absolute priority for economic and military reasons, while Crimea should be dealt with at a later stage. For instance, former diplomat and currently a think tanker Filipchuk (ICPS) proposes to introduce shared governance with Russia over Crimea and after two decades to carry out another referendum (Filipchuk 2017).

With regard to the conflict in Donbass, a compromise is generally regarded to be a more tangible prospect than on Crimea, for several reasons. First, there is a functioning negotiating process in the form of the Normandy format with the Trilateral contact group under OSCE chairmanship, with working committees on technical issues. Furthermore, the military conflict in Donbass is more pressing as it continues to claim the lives of hundreds of people every year and is a heavy financial burden on the budget. Nevertheless, there is no consensus on whether the continuation of dialogue with Russia in its present form makes sense or whether it should be reformed (notably by including the United States and the United Kingdom in the multilateral formats) to build additional pressure on Russia. Opponents of such suggestions

argue that Russia rarely yields under pressure and might be more likely to compromise with Germany and France than with other leading Western partners. Moreover, by further delegating responsibilities for negotiating with Russia to NATO members, Kyiv risks being considered only in the context of conflict with Moscow rather than as an independent actor (Dubovik et al. 2021).

To change the status quo Taras Kuzio, for instance, argues that the military option should still be considered, as post-Soviet peace-making has proven to be anything but effective. In that context he talks about »learning an important lesson« from Azerbaijan and how the latter recaptured parts of Nagorno-Karabakh last year (Kuzio 2020). He points out that after decades of Minsk Group inactivity, Azerbaijan challenged the Russian guarantees for its ally Armenia and has shown that they are not always reliable, because Moscow did not directly engage in the conflict alongside an official CSTO ally. Furthermore, he also underlines the importance of building strong regional security partnerships (especially with Turkey, which supplies Azerbaijan with parts for its military drones). Last but not least, Kuzio stressed that the Azerbaijani victory in Nagorno-Karabakh is a practical demonstration of the importance of military innovation against the background of the ongoing military reform in Ukraine.

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

An absolute majority of experts consider Russia to be Ukraine's main geopolitical threat. In this regard, it is argued that Putin can be stopped only by a policy of containment and that the re-establishment of good neighbourly relations with Russia is impossible for Ukraine until the full restoration of the country's territorial integrity (Koretska 2020b: 4). However, a small number of other experts also argue that dialogue and contacts with Russia should be maintained for pragmatic reasons as long as full membership of NATO is out of reach (Filipchuk/Yaroshenko/Ivashko/Kyian 2017).

In the conflict with Russia, time is generally against Ukraine. Some think tankers assume that a »Ukraine fatigue« in the West is setting in, slowly but surely, given that no tangible developments on Donbass are in sight (Galouchka 2020: 4). In the Ukrainian view, if Russia maintains its position as a »neutral mediator« in the Donbass conflict, waiting for »the West« to lose interest in the conflict in Ukraine and thus be ready to compromise in the future, the pressure on Kyiv will continue to rise, sometimes leading to reckless moves, such as the Zelensky administration's official commitment to the so-called »Steinmeier formula« in 2019, which led to an outbreak of civil unrest (Pashkov 2020).

At the same time, experts believe that the pause in personal contacts and summits between the United States and Russia ushered in by the pandemic has slightly mitigated the negative effects of recent years (Shelest 2021). But even if the Biden administration is not expected to reset relations with Russia, it is also unlikely that the new US administration will actively pursue Ukraine's NATO membership, as the Trump

² Available at: <https://navy.mil.gov.ua/strategiya-vijskovo-morskyh-syl-zbrojnyh-syl-ukrayiny-2035/>

heritage of so-called »Ukraine-gate«, among other things, is still quite present (Dubovik et al. 2021). Ukrainian think tankers rather expect the new American administration to focus more on climate issues and arms control (for example, New START and the Iran nuclear deal), and less on Eastern Europe, even if Russia does not occupy such a prominent place on the foreign policy agenda anymore (Getmanchuk/Solodkyi/Porchkhidze 2020).

Overall, Ukraine views itself in relation to NATO not only as a net consumer, but also as a contributor to NATO's security, especially as far as the Russia–NATO stand-off is concerned. Ukrainian think tankers believe that Kyiv has unique experience and knowledge in hybrid warfare with Moscow. Moreover, the Ukrainian army has actual combat experience against Russian armed forces that few NATO members have. This knowledge could be shared in joint exercises with NATO participating states (in 2020, officially, seven such drills took place) (Rohulia 2018: 11–12).

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: PURSUING COOPERATION WITH CHINA AND SIMULTANEOUS EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION?

Although Russia remains one of the biggest challenges to NATO, some Ukrainian experts fear that Beijing might replace Moscow as the main threat of the United States in its »pivot to the East«. This could potentially diminish Kyiv's role for the West, as it views itself as one of Russia's main antagonists in the bigger NATO–Russia stand-off (Fakhuridinova 2020: 33–34). In that sense Donald Trump's presidency confirmed Ukrainian's worst suspicions, as beside China side-lining Russia as the main geopolitical threat, internal NATO clashes (for example, concerning the 2 per cent of GDP pledge debate) took over from expansion at the top of the agenda (Shelest 2019). To patch up the relations with its Western European allies, Ukrainians fear that the Biden administration will avoid risking new points of conflict with them, which might include halting the active promotion of NATO membership for Ukraine (Getmanchuk/Solodkyi/Porchkhidze 2020).

Ukrainian cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners, however, does not exist solely through partnership with the United States. Germany is also seen by many think tankers as an essential partner and is generally viewed more favourably than the United States. Getmanchuk and Solodkyi (2018: 604–605), for instance, argue that Ukraine should avoid engaging with Berlin only on the issue of military conflict, but expand the scope of cooperation both thematically as well as in depth. Beyond cooperation in the de-mining programme in eastern Ukraine or participation in peacekeeping missions, the Ukrainian side seeks more support, especially with regard to possible cooperation platforms through the EU's CSDP programmes. These programmes could involve Ukraine in the development of a Black Sea security initiative, in NATO's air defence systems as well as in the defence infrastructure against cyberattacks (Fedorenko/Polyakov/

Koziy 2019: 23–24). But because of the asymmetric nature of relations between Ukraine and its Western partners (Kyiv is constantly on the receiving side), the country is still struggling to establish a functioning military-technical cooperation with its transatlantic partners, despite the similarity of security interests between the EU and Ukraine in relation to Russia (Filipchuk 2017).

While NATO/EU accession will remain the absolute priority in Ukraine's foreign policy, Kyiv is pursuing cautious but active cooperation with Beijing despite increasingly anti-Chinese rhetoric in the West in recent years, with a premium put on partnerships in areas that do not overlap military or political domains (Fakhuridinova 2020: 33). Ukraine prefers not to feel obligated (or rather has no better option because of the poor condition of its economy) to confront Chinese activities in Europe, even though some member states have officially expressed some reservations about Kyiv's growing cooperation with Beijing. A case in point is the Skyrizon company, which sought to buy the Ukrainian engine manufacturing firm MotorSich several years ago. After the Chinese firm had already agreed to invest USD 100 million, the deal was put on hold after then national security advisor John Bolton's visit to Ukraine in 2019. The US government tried to persuade the US-based Oriole Capital Group to take over the investment plan, but failed (previously, the Trump administration had promised to support the Kharkov aviation factory with USD 150 million, with the same result).

To compensate for the not always successful cooperation with the leading Western and Eastern powers, Ukraine has attempted to work out a consistent neighbourhood policy, especially in relations with Poland, Hungary, Romania and Lithuania, as they are viewed as an additional channel of influence on overall EU decision-making vis-à-vis Russia. However, because of the lack of a good regional strategy, relations with these states have become increasingly strained (ICPS 2017). Even though the Zelensky administration has put a premium on cooperation with these states (for example, in the »Lublin triangle« with Poland and Lithuania),³ this relationship is regularly disrupted by scandals, such as the introduction of the Ukrainian language law, which prohibited Hungarian and Romanian communities in western Ukraine from teaching in their native languages.

Turkey has recently become an important NATO partner for Ukraine too, especially as far as the military-industrial complex is concerned. Turkish helicopters are equipped with Ukrainian engines, while Ankara supplies Kyiv with brand new corvettes for its navy. Joint Turkish–Ukrainian drone ventures are also considered to be a success.⁴ Last, but not least, the Turkish side has been an ardent supporter of Ukraine on the question of Crimea and puts special emphasis on the rights of Crimean Tatars living on the peninsula.

³ Available at: <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/dmytro-kuleba-gabrielius-landsbergis-and-zbigniew-rau-agree-strengthen-lublin-triangle-role-central-europe>

⁴ Available at: <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/ukraine-awaits-turkish-corvettes-drones-this-year>

UKRAINE AS PART OF A WIDER EUROPEAN SECURITY COMPLEX

Even without a concrete prospect of accession, Ukraine will intensify its engagement with NATO for both domestic and foreign policy reasons (Getmanchuk/Solodkyy/Porchkhidze 2020: 15). Meeting the MAP criteria would not only help Ukraine to reform its armed forces and build democratic institutions, but it could also have wider spillover effects on sustainable peace in Europe (Getmanchuk/Solodkyy/Porchkhidze 2020: 16).

And even if the prospect of NATO accession remains the subject of heated debates without tangible results over the next 10–15 years, it is unlikely that Ukraine's ambitions of joining NATO will disappear soon (Sukhankin 2019). Prior to taking the next steps, however, Ukraine should stop ignoring the elephant in the room and propose a realistic solution concerning how to get rid of the major stumbling block on the road to membership: the conflict in Donbass (Makarchuk 2020: 239–240). If the current consensus on that issue does not shift from »all-out containment of Russia« and »unconditional return of Crimea and Donbass« the goal of NATO membership before 2030 risks remaining merely an ambition. Even though Ukrainian officials (Kuleba 2020) sometimes entertain the idea of NATO accession without the two breakaway regions (the so-called »West German scenario«), the consensus remains that as long as Eastern Ukraine continues to be a war zone, there can be no discussions about Ukraine's membership of NATO (Yalta European Strategy 2017).

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COMPARISON OF COUNTRY CASES AND CONCLUSION

THROUGH THE KALEIDOSCOPE: COMPARING VISIONS OF NATO

Matthias Dembinski and Caroline Fehl

As the preceding analysis highlights, national discourses on the future of NATO are shaped by members' (and non-members') different geographical locations, historical experiences, economic interests, threat perceptions, security cultures, bilateral relations with key global actors, and domestic politics. As a consequence, hardly any key issue area in our analytical matrix is marked by full agreement among experts across the states we analysed. Scholars are in agreement on one important point, however: NATO is here to stay. Discourses reflect the shared conviction across our sample of member states that the alliance serves their interests. With few (US) exceptions, even critical think tanks and NGOs on both the left and the right agree that states are better off within NATO than outside it. However, they also agree that NATO lacks cohesion and a sense of purpose and that it needs to be adapted to a changing external environment and internal challenges. Externally, NATO needs to prioritize threats and choose its geographical focus. Internally, it will have to adjust its architecture and the balance between American leadership and European self-reliance, between alliance solidarity and member state autonomy, and between interests and values. Cross-cutting challenges include the scope of NATO's agenda, the future of arms control and issues of force modernization. As we will show, geographical priorities are connected to debates on cross-cutting and internal challenges. In what follows, we provide a detailed comparison of national expert discourses on these key issues, beginning with a mapping of different positions on NATO's future geographical focus. We then compare viewpoints on cross-cutting policy areas, and finally analyse diverging views of NATO's internal challenges. In conclusion, we sketch three alternative futures that could emerge from contending national discourses, discussing risks and opportunities attached to each of them.

GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS

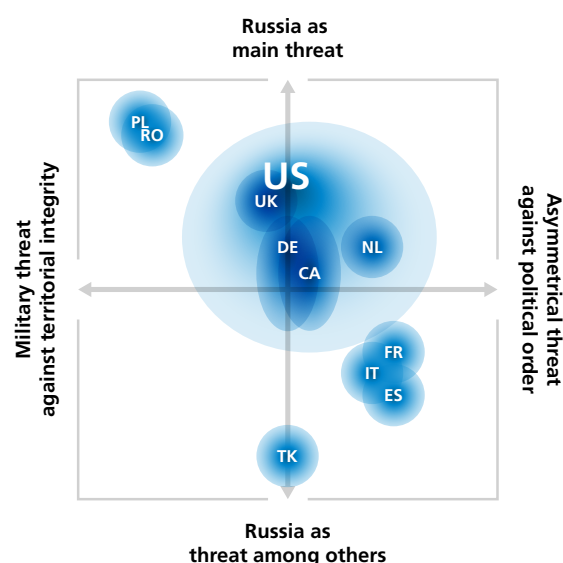
In contrast to the Cold War period during which it was founded, opinions about where NATO should direct its attention and defence efforts have been shifting continuously over the

past three decades. In contemporary debates, three potential geographical priorities can be distinguished that are not viewed as mutually exclusive but are nevertheless discussed with very different degrees of emphasis in different NATO member (and non-member) states: Russia, China, and the MENA region. Related to these geographical priorities are different threat perceptions. Is NATO threatened most by kinetic and non-kinetic aggression from Russia; by Chinese infringements of its normative and technological sovereignty; or by instability, state failure and terrorism in the MENA region?

RUSSIA: OFF THE BEATEN (DUAL) TRACK?

Presently, Russia is still perceived by a majority of experts as NATO's main threat. However, scholars differ with regard to the significance and nature of the Russian threat and preferred responses.

Figure 1
National expert discourses on Russian threat



CA	Canada	IT	Italy	TK	Turkey
DE	Germany	NL	Netherlands	UK	United Kingdom
ES	Spain	PO	Poland	US	United States
FR	France	RO	Romania		

* The visualizations in this chapter are based on collective deliberation by the study editors and the authors of the individual country chapters. They represent authors' assessments of expert discourses in the respective countries in relation to each other, on the basis of their qualitative analysis of interviews and secondary literature.

Scholars in Poland and Romania perceive the Russian threat as predominant and are more concerned about military threats than about non-military threats directed against the stability of the political order in member states. Scholars in Southern NATO states and France perceive Russia as one threat among others and are more concerned about asymmetric challenges such as disinformation campaigns. The Northern European states and Canada sit somewhere in between, while the US expert community is split between these poles. Turkey is an outlier and regards Russia as a »frenemy« in its neighbourhood.

Threat perceptions shape the responses preferred by scholars in our sample. The stalling of NATO's dual-track approach of combining deterrence and defence with dialogue is pulling member states in different directions. According to Eastern European governments and pundits, as well as the Atlanticist mainstream view within the United States, the dual track has led to a dead end, having produced no tangible progress in seven years since the Russian annexation of Crimea. Consequently, NATO should meet Russia's increasingly aggressive posture with increased counter-pressure. This means deterring and preventing cyber-attacks, disinformation, and other non-kinetic threats emanating from Russia, but also reinforcing the alliance's defence posture on its Eastern flank with more boots on the ground. These reinforcements should be made on a rotational basis or even, in the eyes of most Eastern European

governments and pundits, permanently, in defiance of the NATO-Russia Founding Act that many Eastern European observers consider obsolete following Russian violations. At the same time as strengthening deterrence and defence, Russia hardliners advocate maintaining NATO's open door policy, at least in the medium to long term, even short of offering full Membership Action Plans. Dialogue with Russia should be restricted to areas of common interest and pursued from a position of strength. Whereas NATO Reflection Group chairs Mitchell and de Mazière agree with this approach, other voices within NATO and pundits in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom are less in agreement on the need to strengthen the deterrence part of NATO's dual-track approach. In contrast, they deplore that the recent focus on deterrence has prevented NATO from developing a constructive dialogue that would give Russia a greater stake in Europe's security order. At the other end of the spectrum, actors in France, Italy and Spain, as well as some realist and isolationist voices in the United States, instead advocate further strengthening dialogue with Russia, not least with the aim of peeling Russia away from China.

The path dependency created by the Bucharest Summit decision in 2008, according to which Georgia and Ukraine »will become members of NATO«, and Ukraine's incessant pressure to realize this pledge imply that NATO will find it difficult to put conflicts over its open door policy to rest.

Table 1
National expert discourses on policies towards Russia

Think tank positions	Pursue open door policy actively		Permanent deployment in the East/Southeast		Maintain commitment to NATO Russia Founding Act	
Canada						
France						
Germany						
Italy						
Netherlands						
Poland						
Romania						
Spain						
Turkey						
United Kingdom						
United States						

APPROVE

dominant position

minority position

REJECT

dominant position

minority position

Just like Western experts, their Russian counterparts discuss a spectrum of threat perceptions. While Russian experts concur that NATO and its open door policy pose the main threat, there are important nuances in perceptions concerning the future of NATO (decaying versus strong and staying), the character of threats (primarily military versus primarily political and asymmetric), the prospects of dialogue with NATO on arms control (irrelevant versus urgently needed but difficult to achieve), and responses to NATO's open door policy (counter from a position of strength versus diplomatic solutions).

CHINA: NATO PIVOT OR TRANSATLANTIC DIVISION OF LABOUR?

Pundits on both sides of the Atlantic see the global power shift towards China and sharpening US–Chinese competition as the most powerful future challenge to NATO's traditional architecture. This agreement exists despite considerable differences between US and European perspectives on the rising power and the character of threats connected to it. In the United States, China is recognized across the political spectrum as the most important challenge to US security; voices calling for US–Chinese cooperation on climate change and other key global issues are outweighed by advocates of a more confrontational stance, both outside and inside the Biden administration. European scholars tend to see China as a partner, for example, in climate policy, as well as an (economic) competitor and strategic rival that challenges European norms and standards. Yet, in Europe a willingness to engage China with a positive agenda and reap the benefits of (economic) cooperation is still the more widespread stance. Nevertheless, there is an acute awareness among European NATO members that the US–Chinese rivalry will shape the future of NATO in one of two conceivable ways.

The first possibility is that of a *NATO paying significantly more attention to security developments in East Asia*. Already during the late Trump administration, the United States pushed vigorously to define China as a top challenge to NATO, a campaign that the Biden administration appears set to continue. Some voices within NATO, such as Reflection Group chairs Mitchell and de Mazière, have vocally embraced this agenda, whereas Secretary General Stoltenberg, while highlighting the challenges of a China that is coming closer to Europe, is also emphasizing the opportunities of intensified NATO–China consultations. If the »China pivot« scenario carries the day, at a minimum NATO members will have to develop common positions and policies on aspects of the China challenge that hit close to home, particularly with regard to policy fields that might affect collective defence such as cyber, the security of communications and supplies, space, as well as export controls. In addition, NATO could deepen or even institutionalize cooperation with East Asian democracies, which in the most far-reaching long-term scenario could lead to some form of NATO military presence in the Indo-Pacific. In Europe, support for the American line of curtailing Chinese influence within Europe is strongest in Romania.

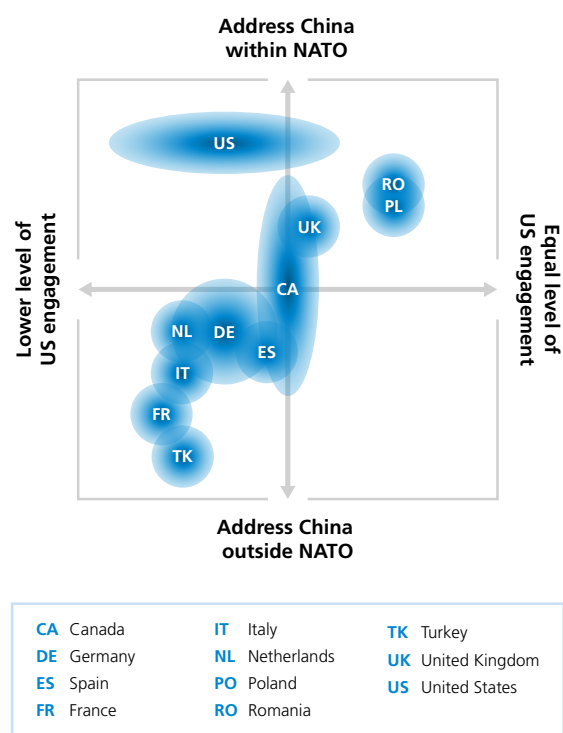
Sympathies for addressing China within NATO are also expressed by Polish, British, and some Canadian experts. Other member states privilege transatlantic consensus-building on China *outside* NATO, primarily through US–EU consultations.

An alternative scenario that receives much attention in Europe is that of a stronger *transatlantic division of labour*, with the US devoting increasing attention and resources to balancing China, while European NATO members, consequently, have to shoulder more of the political, military and financial burden of defending the European continent. Despite President Biden's promise that America is back, awareness of this possibility is strong across European member states, but has yet to translate into concrete plans for greater European engagement.

NATO 360 DEGREES: EAST VS SOUTH?

At a general level, there is broad agreement in both the United States and European NATO member states that the alliance must devote increasing attention to its Southern flank. However, member state governments and think tanks are far from agreed on the amount of resources that should be poured into this »360 degree« defence approach – and on its precise purpose. According to the NATO Reflection Group, the need to focus more on the South derives from the increased and destabilizing presence of Russia and China in the critical MENA region – and also from the need to avoid frictions among NATO member states. These frictions are clearly visible in the diver-

Figure 2
National expert discourses on reacting to China's rise



gent regional interests articulated by Eastern and Northern European NATO member states, on one hand, and Southern members, on the other. While the first group advocates largely sticking with the established distribution of interests and resources – and thus with a primary focus on the Eastern flank – the latter want a much stronger NATO engagement in the South. Still, there is disagreement on the forms that this engagement should take. While some pundits still consider the possibility of future interventions to either fight terrorist organizations or to substitute for a lack of governance, most advocates of a 360 degree approach see NATO's primary role in the projection of stability through government-to-government military cooperation and/or cooperation with civil society and other international organizations in the MENA region. Even NATO's Southern members set different priorities. France tries to draw attention to the region, its conflicts and the dangers of terrorism in particular, but is hesitant to give NATO a leading role and prefers the EU as the main agent for projecting stability and coalitions-of-the-willing, such as the bilateral military cooperation with the United States in the fight against terrorism. Italy is engaged in several military interventions and willing to continue this kind of engagement in the future. However, Italian scholars deem projecting stability and the fight against the economic and societal root causes of regional instability as paramount and see more merit in NATO's work with civil society organizations. Spanish experts see their country and the southern rim of NATO most affected by instability in the larger MENA region. At the same time, they are most critical of NATO's military interventions and disappointed by NATO's stability-building efforts so far. Although the failed intervention in Afghanistan and lessons to be drawn from it have to date played a surprisingly limited role in debates on the future of NATO, it can be expected that this experience will leave a mark on NATO's future intervention policy.

CROSS-CUTTING CHALLENGES

BROADENING THE AGENDA

Connected to debates about the alliance's future geographical focus and the nature of security challenges confronting it across different regions is the debate about the breadth of the agenda for which it is responsible. At the most traditional end of the spectrum of opinions, experts in Eastern European NATO members, as well as influential voices in France and the United States, advocate a focus on Article 5 of the Atlantic Treaty, the collective defence of member states. While the focus here is on deterring and containing nuclear and conventional kinetic threats, some broadening of the agenda is widely considered inevitable, particularly regarding space, as well as cyber and hybrid challenges emanating from state adversaries that directly impact NATO and its military and logistical infrastructure. As already mentioned, experts advocating a stronger focus on China propose an even broader agenda. Geographically, they suggest expanding the partnership with Asian de-

mocracies or even a NATO presence in the region; functionally, they see a responsibility for NATO in fields ranging from telecommunications to connectivity. Advocates of the 360-degree approach in Southern member states advocate a broadening of NATO's agenda in different directions. In addition to projecting stability, working with civil society in partner countries, government-to-government security cooperation at NATO's borders and peace-keeping, the fight against terrorism is an additional element of the stability projection agenda. Although its perceived relevance is nowhere near its position in the early 2000s, when it was framed as a new principal *raison d'être* for the post-Cold War alliance, the fight against transnational terrorism still figures prominently in NATO documents and is advocated as a major NATO task by pundits, particularly in Turkey.

While agreeing with the importance of Article 5, the report of the Reflection Group also incorporates the agenda of the »pivot to Asia « and the 360-degree proponents. It even proposes a yet broader agenda by also taking on board voices that emphasize the need for the alliance to boost societal resilience in the face of climate change, pandemics and other non-traditional threats. In fact, the 138 proposals for reform listed in the report seem to represent a NATO for everything and everybody. Sympathies for this broad agenda exist both in the United States and among Southern member states.

Besides discussing the breadth of NATO's future agenda, officials and pundits also debate how individual items on this agenda should be addressed. However, as the following analysis of debates on arms control and emerging disruptive technologies illustrates, policy priorities with regard to individual »old« and »new« issues are somewhat more consensual than the question of how to define the agenda itself.

ARMS CONTROL

With regard to arms control, the departure of the openly arms control-critical Trump administration has enabled the re-emergence of a broad NATO internal consensus on the revival of negotiated bilateral and multilateral arms control. Accordingly, early steps taken by the Biden administration, particularly its prompt extension of the New START treaty and its intention to revive the JCPOA, have been applauded in all NATO member states. A more ambitious (nuclear) arms control agenda that might be pursued by the Biden administration in the future would meet with a divided response in the European expert community. While experts in the majority of European countries would support a Biden initiative to restrict the role of US nuclear weapons to the sole purpose of deterring a nuclear attack and concomitant changes in NATO's nuclear doctrine, experts in France and in Eastern European countries are more critical. Unilateral or radical disarmament steps, such as an end to nuclear sharing or support for the new TPNW, receive less support beyond think tanks in individual NATO member states (specifically Germany and

Table 2
National expert discourses on nuclear policy and arms control

Think tank positions	Maintain nuclear sharing		Sole purpose/No first use policy		Support TPNW	
Canada	✓	✗	✓	○	✓	✗
France	✓	○	○	✗	○	✗
Germany	✓	✗	✓	○	✓	✗
Italy	✓	✗	✓	○	✓	✗
Netherlands	✓	✗	✓	○	✓	✗
Poland	✓	○	○	✗	○	✗
Romania	✓	○	○	✗	○	✗
Spain	✓	✗	✓	○	✓	✗
Turkey	✓	✗	✓	✗	○	○
United Kingdom	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
United States	✓	○	✓	✗	○	✗

APPROVE

✓ dominant position

✓ minority position

REJECT

✗ dominant position

✗ minority position

Canada). However, in some countries, NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements are not widely debated among experts and support for them, rests more on political justifications and loyalty to NATO partners than on security rationales.

EMERGING DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

The leeway for arms control is further restricted by calls within NATO and member states to maintain NATO's technological edge. The Reflection Group report mentions artificial intelligence, autonomous capabilities, space, hypersonic missiles, quantum technology and biotechnologies. This insistence on preserving NATO's technological edge is echoed more strongly in the United States and in some European member states with substantial arms industries, particularly in France and the Netherlands.

INTERNAL CHALLENGES

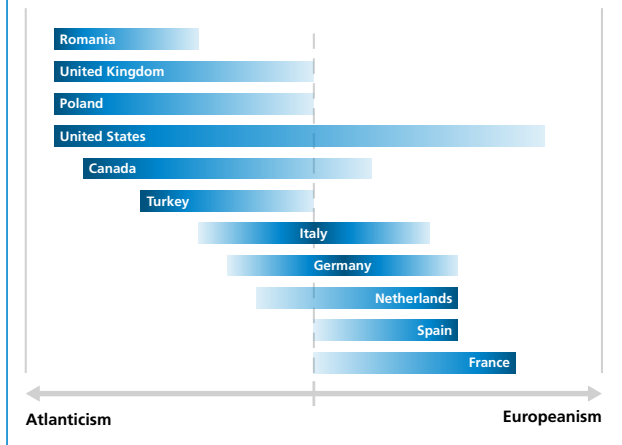
As discussed in the introduction to this report, it was less the ongoing global transformations in NATO's security environment than the widespread perception of internal problems that triggered the Reflection Group process and broader debates about adapting the alliance to the future. However, a detailed comparison of discussions on these internal issues suggests that they are in fact closely intertwined with de-

bates about external challenges. Perceptions of changing external demands and threats influence positions on *who* will have to take the lead in adapting NATO to its future tasks (a more European or US-led NATO), *how much* member states will have to invest in this effort (the perennial question of burden-sharing), *what* shared convictions should guide the alliance's adaptation process (is NATO a community of values or interests?) and *how*, through what norms and procedures, NATO should manage disagreements among its members in this adaptation process.

WHO LEADS? A EUROPEAN NATO?

As already mentioned, the multilateral approach of the new US administration and the rise of China are changing the debate on the relationship between NATO and the EU's security and defence policy. European self-reliance and/or a stronger European pillar within NATO are no longer pursued as a hedge or alternative to a unilateralist and increasingly capricious United States. Instead, more European responsibility for security and defence is increasingly perceived as a necessity to compensate for the likely redirection of American attention and military capabilities towards East Asia. Although pundits expect that the United States will remain engaged in Europe, they nevertheless assume that European states will have to compensate for a future partial withdrawal of US troops and crucial enablers such as drones and heavy-lift capabilities.

Figure 3
National expert discourses on Atlanticism/Europeanism in defence



As a consequence, the boundaries between Europeanists and Atlanticists are becoming blurred. But differences remain. While support for European defence is strongest among experts in France and Spain and – with some gradations – in Italy and Germany, traditionally pro-Atlantic countries such as the Netherlands are also moving towards the European camp. Support for a transatlantic NATO under the leadership of the United States and scepticism towards European defence are still running high among experts in Romania and to a slightly lesser degree in Poland. Turkish scholars are rather critical of both a stronger European voice and American leadership.

HOW MUCH DOES IT TAKE? REVISITING BURDEN-SHARING

This change of perspective is affecting the debate on burden-sharing. The critique of the 2 per cent metric is fairly widespread among experts, not only in the countries that fall short of this benchmark. Nevertheless, the Biden administration continues to insist on a fairer distribution of burdens, and pundits in Europe acknowledge that European states will have to increase their defence spending to compensate for a possible partial withdrawal of the United States from Europe. Thus, experts in the United States and Europe propose different benchmarks that reflect output and contributions to NATO's missions and operations.

WHAT GUIDES NATO? (RE)DEFINING THE TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNITY: VALUES VS INTERESTS?

In the face of a plethora of old and new threats, NATO's *internal* challenge is to reach agreement on the foundations of its community. Recent years have witnessed considerable democratic backsliding within NATO member states, not only through the authoritarian turn in Turkey and the erosion of the rule of law in Poland and Hungary, but also through the rise of right-wing populism in the United States and Western European member states. These different

counter-democratic pressures, as well as debates about NATO's external priorities, give rise to contending narratives about NATO as a community of values. According to the first, which is popular in the United States, but also among experts and government actors in Western European countries, forging a united democratic front externally against authoritarian China demands a reinvigoration of democratic principles also within. According to this view, democratic backsliding *within* NATO member states is a serious challenge that the alliance needs to confront head-on to preserve its common foundations. Other US pundits acknowledge that NATO has been and remains the West's bulwark against authoritarian powers, entailing a common, uncompromising stance toward both Russia and China, but also requiring a certain degree of compromise within. In contrast to both these narratives, Eastern European NATO members in particular, but also French experts, US realists and the majority of Turkish scholars define NATO much more soberly in terms of shared interests rather than values and insist that NATO should compromise on its values to keep countries like Turkey within the alliance.

HOW TO GUIDE? CONSULTATIONS AND COHERENCE

Related to the debate on values versus interests is the thorny question of national autonomy versus coherence of the alliance. Should NATO strengthen norms of solidarity and prior consultation with a view to increasing coherence even beyond Article 5 issues? Or should NATO tolerate national differences and even provide for the formation of coalitions of the willing within NATO? In this debate, Turkey sits at one end of the spectrum, while European medium powers with an expeditionary tradition also argue with varying degrees in favour of a flexible NATO. At the other end of the spectrum are scholars in Western and Eastern European states who fear that too much national leeway will undermine NATO's cohesion and in the longer term also its collective defence. The Reflection Group and most of our interviewees within the International Secretariat are closer to the latter group, even if the report of the Reflection Group refers to the institutionalization of coalitions.

MIX OR MATCH? WHAT NATIONAL DISCOURSES IMPLY FOR NATO'S FUTURE(S)

Based on our review of how NATO experts and key external actors discuss the possible evolution of the alliance, we see several alternative futures of NATO on the horizon. As shown in the preceding chapters, NATO officials as well as think tank experts debate many dimensions of NATO policy and argue over the fine-tuning of specific policy proposals. Yet, their different perspectives cluster around three broad visions, which flag different priorities for the alliance's future work. Each of these futures entails opportunities and risks for NATO itself and its ability to reconcile tensions between collective defence, collective security and common security.

Future 1: NATO Classic Plus

The first vision is the least expansive one and follows the formula »NATO classic plus«. It advocates a return to NATO's roots in refocusing the alliance's efforts on the core task of collective defence, primarily vis-à-vis a newly assertive Russia. While this geographical focus corresponds to the alliance's traditional Cold War posture, the nature of the present-day Russian threat is seen as going beyond the military realm that preoccupied NATO in the twentieth century. As the »plus« in the formula indicates, NATO must address not only the risk of a Russian conventional or nuclear attack, but also threats of hybrid warfare, cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns. The first vision has particularly strong support among Eastern European member states, but also has some vocal advocates in the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and France.

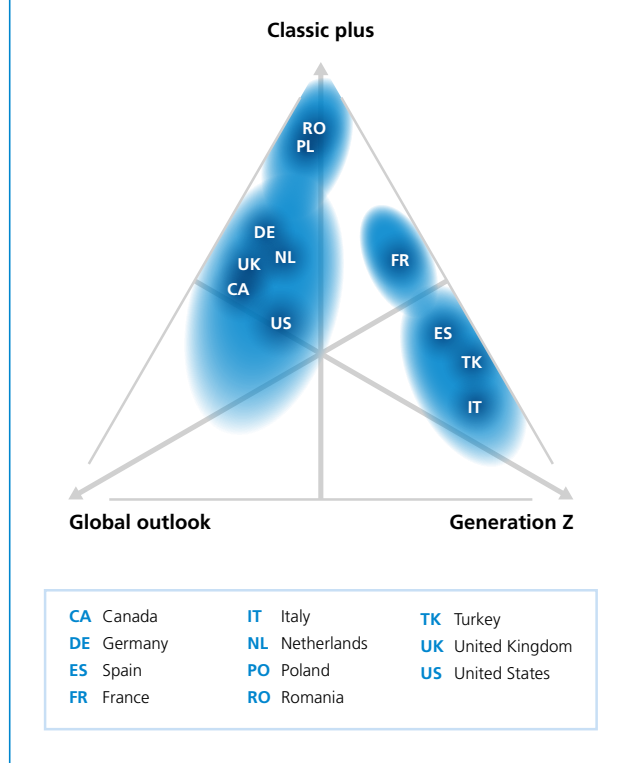
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

In our view, this vision offers opportunities. By focusing on its traditional core task of collective defence, NATO could reinvent itself as an »alliance-in-being«. By just being around, NATO would reassure its members, alleviate the security dilemma in the transatlantic area and would not have to look for new tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, internal conflicts over leadership, NATO's character as an alliance of values or interests, and ways to ensure cohesion with regard to non-Article 5 issues would be less divisive.

This vision, however, also bears the risk of overrating the Russian threat and of stymieing the dialogue part of NATO's dual-track approach. Russia has made remarkable strides in modernizing its forces and will remain a formidable military power.² But it also faces serious and structural limits. Its nominal GDP ranges between the Spanish and Italian levels, its economy is stagnant and without much innovative potential, and levels of trust in government are low. Overall, NATO should be able to check potential expansionist Russian ambitions towards its member states. Russia's non-military attempts to destabilize the alliance have achieved mixed results at best. Its cyberattacks, covert operations and disinformation campaigns have largely backfired and have undermined its reputation even in traditionally friendly countries, such as Italy and Spain. Thus, when going back to basics NATO does not need to invest more in its own military security. If anything, NATO should spend available funds more wisely. Instead, NATO should be more imaginative in restarting the dialogue with Moscow and in balancing collective defence and common security. Nuclear arms control and NATO's nuclear doctrine and posture should be

² According to SIPRI, Russian defence spending in 2020 was \$61.7 billion. The UK spent \$59.2 billion, Germany \$52.8 billion and France \$52.7 billion. The United States, by contrast, spent an astronomical \$778 billion; <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2021/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2020>. However, analysts assume that based upon purchasing power parity exchange rates, Russia's military spending is much higher than the nominal figures suggest (Meijer and Brooks 2021:37).

Figure 4
Alternative futures of NATO



high on the list of priorities when NATO starts the process leading to a new Strategic Concept. As by far the world's strongest conventional military actor, NATO has a responsibility and should have a strong interest in pursuing an ambitious nuclear disarmament agenda. The Biden administration will propose a sole-purpose doctrine, and expert debates in Canada and other European NATO states show support for such a change of doctrine. NATO's rejection of the TPNW, too, is less solid than it may seem at first glance. In some NATO states, experts and decision-makers are torn between conflicting allegiances: loyalty to NATO and loyalty to their traditional role as promoters of non-proliferation and disarmament. Thus, support for the TPNW runs higher and might become stronger in the future than NATO's official statements suggest. If NATO wants to retain consensus, it should start the debate on the future of nuclear disarmament and its own posture now.

Future 2: NATO with a Global Outlook (and a Stronger European Pillar)

The second vision, pushed most vigorously by US government officials and US think tanks, advocates a NATO with a global outlook. In contrast to discussions about a »global NATO« in the 2000s, the »global« in this second vision refers neither to terrorism and related transnational threats, nor to the kind of large-scale out-of-area interventions we saw in Afghanistan, which would be required to meet them or to project stability. Rather, the primary global dynamic on NATO's contemporary agenda is the ongoing power shift towards China. To address it, NATO does not have to be-

come an »Indo-Pacific NATO« in the sense of establishing a military presence in the region. However, it cannot but broaden its strategic outlook beyond its neighbourhood to recognize and tackle the (kinetic and non-kinetic) challenges that China poses to the unity and security of the alliance and its member states. Some of these challenges, such as cyber security or Chinese investments in critical infrastructure, must be addressed on the alliance's own territory, whereas others demand a stronger military component to counter China's presence in the Mediterranean. Still others call for expanding and institutionalizing NATO's network of political and military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

In our view, the rise of China will inevitably affect NATO's architecture. The European member states would be well advised to prepare in time for a shift of American capabilities and attention towards the Pacific. The major challenge ahead is the transformation of a hegemonic NATO into an alliance with greater European ownership. Beyond this, a global NATO that coordinates policies on China might strengthen the willingness of transatlantic and other democracies to pursue value-based policies and offers the advantage of reducing China's ability to divide and single out individual states and actors for retribution.

Focusing on China, however, might be more divisive than unifying as the United States and European member states are pursuing different approaches towards China. For NATO's European members, China is not (yet) a military threat. As China moves closer to the European region, it challenges Europe's norms, standards and regulatory autonomy, but remains an important state with whom European states will continue to interact. Given this mixture of cooperation and competition and the functional character of policy areas at stake, most Europeans ask whether NATO could add value. Moreover, by broadening its agenda NATO would run the risk of losing focus. Hence, most Europeans prefer the EU as an appropriate venue for devising responses.

A NATO with a global outlook might pose other risks as well. By emphasizing democracy as a rallying cry to mobilize internal unity against autocratic China, NATO might systematically undercut common security and its ability to contribute to global order and stability in a world in which fewer and fewer people live in democracies and where global functional challenges, such as climate change, demand cooperation with non-democratic states.

Future 3: NATO Generation Z

The third vision, less prominent than the first two but recently gaining support in the United States and Western European NATO member states, is that of a NATO Generation Z. In this vision, the alliance has to expand both its definition of security and its own competences to tackle a wide array of non-traditional threats. This includes the projection of

stability agenda, on one hand, and societal resilience against climate change, pandemics and other global health risks, on the other. NATO must develop this competence to address these new security challenges not only because of their inherent importance but also to secure the political support of younger generations who place much more emphasis on these issues than have previously dominant societal and political actors.

OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

The appeal of this vision lies in the fact that most external challenges confronting member states are non-military in character and not directed against their territorial integrity. The risks of broadening NATO's agenda, however, are two-fold. If the alliance retains its specific culture as a collective defence organization it would run the risk of inadvertently providing militarized solutions to problems that require a different response. The tendency to equate disinformation campaigns, including cyber attacks on civilian networks, with hybrid military strategies is a case in point. The inadequacy of NATO as a provider of stability is another example. Moreover, if NATO declares responsibility for a variety of challenges to societal resilience, it will inevitably lose its focus, risks dissipating its energies and might disappoint expectations and fail in what it tried to achieve in the first place: support from the societies of member states. Societies expect NATO troops to reduce their CO₂ footprint, respect gender equality and even to defuse myths about NATO itself. They do not expect and would not approve a leading role for NATO beyond tasks that are clearly linked to collective defence.

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* Additional interviews with NATO staff and national experts were conducted as background conversations under conditions of anonymity.

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GLOBAL AND EUROPEAN POLITICS

The Department of Global and European Policy provides advice on key European and international policy issues to policy-makers, trade unions and civil society organizations in Germany, Brussels and at the UN offices in Geneva and New York. We identify areas of transformation, formulate concrete alternatives and support our partners in forging alliances to implement them. In doing so, we reflect on national as well

as European and international policy. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its far-reaching political claim to promote a social-ecological transformation provides a clear orienting framework for pursuing our work.

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THREE VISIONS FOR NATO

Mapping National Debates on the Future of the Atlantic Alliance



Despite the gloomy headlines of recent years, NATO is here to stay. This analysis of national expert discourses on the future of NATO shows that the Alliance serves its members' core security interests. Beyond this minimal consensus, however, experts disagree strongly on NATO's future priorities and strategies.



Disputed are NATO's scope – both geographically and thematically – and its internal architecture. Will the United States remain the leading power or will it pivot to the Indo-Pacific region and be substituted by a stronger European presence? Will NATO protect democratic values at home and champion them abroad? And will NATO insist on unity and solidarity even beyond its core task of collective defence or learn to live with internal heterogeneity?



Three different visions of NATO's future can be distinguished: (i) ›**NATO Classic Plus**‹: the Alliance's focus remains Europe and collective defence and just a few new areas, such as cyber would be added to the agenda; (ii) a ›**NATO with a more global outlook**‹: the Alliance will set its sights on China and significantly extend political and military cooperation with democracies worldwide. In a third future (iii) ›**NATO Generation Z**‹ the Alliance would widen its agenda even further and address security risks ranging from climate change to democratic resilience.

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