

# DGAP REPORT

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## NATO's 2030 Reflection Process and the New Strategic Concept

Views from Berlin, London, Oslo,  
and Washington

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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Security in Northern Europe (SNE) is a perennial research program (2019-2021) that explores drivers, opportunities, and constraints related to the security of Northern Europe. Through research projects, transatlantic collaboration, conferences, and seminars, the purpose is to provide insight into the dynamic development of the security situation and cooperative patterns in the region. SNE is a joint effort between the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies (IFS), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), and the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP). SNE is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Defence.



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## VIEW FROM BERLIN

# The New Government's Cold Start To Hot Conflicts

Dr. Christian Mölling & Dr. Claudia Major

Germany's new government started out with great ambitions in security and defense policy. The first statements and foreign trips of the new government officials to France, Poland, the US, and Ukraine, were reassuring. However, after this rather ambitious start, hesitations, inconsistent action and messaging vis-à-vis allies, worries about how the German public would perceive government decisions, and irritatingly over-cautious moves towards Russia, have overshadowed initial impressions. For many allies, Germany seems to be once again a weak link and an unreliable partner in European defense.

The new government's faltering policy has uncovered four things:

**1** The government came into power ill-prepared on security policy. Instead of being outward-looking, the government's focus was on domestic issues, ranging from corona politics to climate change. In the fall of 2021, most observers had already warned that the new German government would coincide with Russia further escalating over Ukraine. Hence, it was foreseeable that the government's first crisis to manage would be on international security. Despite this, there was little systematic preparation on this issue during the transition phase. The chancellor's party is deeply divided over the direction of its foreign policy, which limits the policy options that Chancellor Olaf Scholz can offer to the overall three-party government, the German public, and international partners. The desire to maintain party cohesion and the stability of the government coalition limits what Scholz can openly say. The result has been a litany of vague or late statements.

**2** The objectives driving the current crisis policy are the same ones Germany is well-known for: avoiding war at all cost, safeguarding European unity, being a good ally, limiting the use of military force and defense exports, dialogue with Russia, and defending German economic interests. On the latter point, this includes protecting energy supplies that are important for the German economy. If the policies sound familiar, so is the reasoning, which is based on a selective interpretation of the consequences of German history, legal constraints, and the need to accommodate Russia in the European security architecture. All of these things still matter to Germany.

**3** Germany struggles to recognize that its objectives are interconnected, and to some extent mutually exclusive. Germany is not in full control of its destiny and cannot achieve its goals alone. It needs Russia to avoid war, NATO allies to express unity and avoid war, or even both for a security dialogue. Germany's categorical refusal to export arms contradicts the overall goal of empowering Ukraine to defend its sovereignty and the UN Charter (Art 51).

**4** The ideas and strategies in Germany's toolbox to achieve its security objectives remain limited and lack coordination. While many allies and competitors no longer define conflict along the dichotomy of war and peace, Germany still does. This way of thinking contrasts with its allies and adversaries, who think of conflict as a constant engagement and competition in which all instruments from the toolbox need to be used in a coordinated way.

## THE ETERNAL GERMAN QUESTION AND EUROPEAN SECURITY 2030

These hesitations and inconsistencies leave allies with mixed messages or very late and timid responses to pressing issues. A case in point is how late Germany confirmed that the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) project would be sacrificed in the event of Russian aggression. Unsurprisingly, some allies are tempted to interpret Germany's current position according to a broader picture of Germany as an unreliable foreign policy partner. Germany has earned this reputation by missing NATO's 2 percent defense investment guideline, failing to deliver promised military hardware to NATO, supporting the NS2 pipeline, and announcing that it will join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as an observer. For some

of its allies, Germany weakens the political cohesion at the core of NATO's power.

This is not the first time Germany's actions (or inaction) have raised concerns among allies. Some may still remember the 2011 UN Security Council vote on the intervention in Libya, where Germany found itself in one camp with China and Russia, while NATO allies sat in the other. In the wake of the 2014 Russian invasion into Ukraine, Germany was at first hesitant to recognize the increased threat to peace posed by Russia.

In fact, the current government has so far largely continued the Merkel-era policy path on Russia and Ukraine, and security policy more broadly. Perhaps that's not much of a surprise since the social democrats had a say in shaping the Merkel government's policies as its junior coalition partner. This also points to the fact that there are deeper historical roots to this approach than party politics.

The government's particular way to act comes at a crucial time for European security. Not only because Russia aims to rewrite the principles of security and stability in Europe, but because Europeans are in the process of shaping their new strategic concept. The EU writes a Strategic Compass and NATO writes a Strategic Concept. Both documents aim to set the course of Europe and NATO security readiness for the next decade. To remain valid until 2030 and beyond, these documents need to deal with issues spanning from well-known structural ones, such as how to deal with Russia and the European neighborhood, and with nuclear deterrence, to ongoing developments like the US pivot to Asia, Europe's need to take more responsibility for its own security, and technological developments. Let's not also forget that the plans must factor in the changing nature of conflict, too. In all these questions, Germany's position is key. But so far, it is not well-defined.

## THE WAY FORWARD: DELIVERY AND PRIORITIZATION

Despite the current disappointment at the government's goofed-up start and murky track record, it's not in any European country's interest – except Russia – to see Germany isolated and inactive in defense.

The current government has only been in power for two months and it is too early to make harsh judge-

ments. There is still hope that Germany adopts a more consistent and responsible approach. Allies can support Germany by recognizing that German politicians and the public might have different preferences to them. Yes, Germany often acts late in international crises, but when it does take action, it does the right thing. For example, in 2014, after the annexation of Crimea, Germany first hesitated, but then tried to make up for its actions once it had realized what a devastating message its behavior sent for European defense and for European and transatlantic cohesion. Berlin took up a leading role within the EU by shaping the sanctions against Russia, in NATO with strong support for military and political adaptation, in other areas like the Normandy Format, and by starting to reset its defense policy.

Germany now has one short-term and a long-term task to remedy the current lack of prioritization, reliability, and clarity.

In the short-term, Berlin should define what it wants to do and deliver on those plans, instead of talking to allies about what it cannot do. Here are some actions Germany can start with:

- Germany should prioritize the delivery of its promises to NATO and on European security: The 2021 coalition agreement paves the way to procure nuclear capable aircraft, armed drones, and the next generation European aircraft. The government can prioritize and speed up these investments.
- Accordingly, Germany should also commit to increasing its general defense budget – which is set to be published in spring 2022 – to put an end to the toxic 2 percent debate. Germany has promised to become the backbone of multinational divisions to be put at NATO's disposal. However, the implementation is still missing.
- Germany should also increase commitments to NATO allies, including by making additional deployments as part of reassurance measures.
- The government should set up an emergency fund for the shutdown of NS2. This could be used to pay fines, compensation, and retaliation costs. This would signal to allies and Russia that Germany is willing and able to increase its energy independence. Pausing NS2 immediately until there is a significant withdrawal of the Russian military build-up would send a strong signal to Russia and allies alike.

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According to the coalition treaty, Germany wants to come up with a national security strategy (NSS) by the end of 2022. This would give the government an opportunity to prioritize the security policy wishlist of the coalition agreement. It will also help identify how the different security interests are linked and shape a toolbox that works by integrating different instruments.

To do this, Germany will need to take a different approach. Instead of focusing on security, the document should focus on a strategy for action in the event of conflict. The big challenge for Germany is to understand that its often binary way of classifying war and peace no longer reflects reality. The key feature of systemic competition is that conflict and contestation are continuous and happen below the threshold of war. In our current times, conflict can change forms and intensity. Comprehensive and sustainable peace is rare. But to achieve it, preventive, coordinated and comprehensive action is necessary.

Moreover, the constant nature of modern conflict requires continuous action. But Germany's action has been neither preventive, coordinated, comprehensive, or constant.

The next option to improve on some of the criteria, or on all, would be a chapter in the NSS that outlines the new dynamics of permanent conflict and how Germany will act in a more preventive, coordinated, comprehensive and continuous way.

A chapter in the NSS that speaks to the current nature of conflict can only be aspirational. To be implemented, Germany needs more than words in a document. Powerful political engagement is necessary to bring this message to the bureaucracy and society. In essence, this would mean revisiting the comprehensive approach that Germany made a key concept of its international engagement back in 2006. However, even then it failed to forcefully implement it. Today, the need to widen the concept of security and include more policy fields, especially technology, innovation, and internal security, is pressing. And these changes will inevitably impact the current setup of authorities and political powers – which makes it so terribly difficult.

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## VIEW FROM LONDON

# The Risk of Attempting Too Much

Paul O'Neill

In Europe, the threat of war looms large. Russian troops have amassed across Ukraine's border,<sup>1</sup> peace is fragile in Nagorno-Karabakh after the 2020 conflict, and tensions are high in the Balkans, not to mention along the borders of Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus. Meanwhile, China's rise – economically and now militarily – raises concerns about how nations with divergent values will act if their aims are thwarted.<sup>2</sup> The post-Cold War euphoria about peace and harmonious state relationships is over. Now the United Kingdom and other Western governments have fallen back on the language of great power competition to frame international relations in the 21st century.

While some questioned NATO's role in the late 20th century, the importance of the Alliance is once again self-evident to many. Criticism by Presidents Donald Trump and Emmanuel Macron was aimed at how well NATO is configured to deliver on its purpose rather than its overall existence. Such attacks have drawn strong support for NATO from most members, for whom the Alliance remains the principal guarantor of continental security.<sup>3</sup> The overall desire to do better prompted a period of reflection that has resulted in a new Strategic Concept, which is very welcome.<sup>4</sup>

While NATO's credibility has been dented by the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan,<sup>5</sup> its *raison d'être* –

providing collective defense and Euro-Atlantic security – is not seriously challenged by any members. Vulnerable non-NATO countries still queue up to join the Alliance, despite increasing their tensions with Russia. Russia's attempts to limit NATO expansion, notably in connection with Georgia and Ukraine, have been rejected, but there remains a need to engage with Russia even if common ground can be difficult to find.<sup>6</sup>

This is much easier said than done, but if, in that memorable phrase attributed to Churchill, "to jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war", maintaining dialogue in areas of legitimate concern is crucial, especially given historic misunderstandings that have contributed to a sense of Russian isolation, betrayal, and mistrust.<sup>7</sup> The sides must still move beyond a Manichean view of each other, even if the best outcome is a 'dialogue of difference' rather than constructive debate that leads to immediate outcomes.<sup>8</sup>

The UK's security interests are inexorably bound to those of its continental neighbors. And, like its neighbors, the UK needs NATO's collective mass. NATO's importance is clear in the UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development, and Foreign Policy, which asserts the government's commitment to being "the leading European Ally within NATO".<sup>9</sup>

Since Brexit, NATO is the primary multilateral institution through which the UK can engage with European partners. The significant overlap of NATO-EU membership – 21 countries – offers a collective communication channel to EU members, alongside numerous bilateral and unilateral formats, that is less politically charged and fractious than direct UK-EU relations. However, even relationships within NATO may be strained due to negative spillover from how the UK is perceived by NATO's EU partners.

This paper considers some of NATO's challenges against two key proposals for the Strategic Concept 2030 – the political dimension of decision-making and deterrence.

1 Dan Sabbagh, "Russia's activity on the Ukraine border has put the West on edge", *The Guardian*, 2 December, 2021.

2 Alex Gatopoulos, "Desperately Seeking Relevance: NATO in the 21st Century", *Al Jazeera*, 14 June, 2021.

3 "NATO is suffering 'brain death', argues French president Macron", *France24*, 7 November, 2019.

4 NATO, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era*, 25 November, 2020.

5 Amie Shea, "NATO withdraws from Afghanistan: short-term and long-term consequences for the Western alliance" Friends of Europe, 3 September, 2021: <<https://www.friendsofeurope.org/insights/nato-withdraws-from-afghanistan-short-term-and-long-term-consequences-for-the-western-alliance/>> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

6 Steven Erlanger and Anton Troianovski, "NATO and Russia Talk Frankly, but Past One Another for Now", *New York Times*, 12 January 2022.

7 Patrick Wintour, "Russia's belief in NATO betrayal - and why it matters today", *The Guardian*, 12 January 2022.

8 Mathieu Boulégué, "Russia and NATO: A Dialogue of Differences", *Chatham House*, 29 April 2019.

9 HM Government. *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, 2021, p.6.

## STRATEGIC CONCEPT 2030

The new Strategic Concept<sup>10</sup> endorsed in June 2021 and scheduled for adoption at the Madrid Summit in June 2022 generally responds well to the political and military challenges of the day and justifies NATO's continued relevance. NATO's view of contemporary threats, its approach to China, and ambition to become a regional alliance with global partners, reflect the UK's goals in its Integrated Review.

## DECISION-MAKING

While NATO's intergovernmental nature is more in tune with the conservative government's political beliefs than the supranational EU, the requirement for unanimity means decision-making is complicated.

The political dimension – the first of nine proposals to be considered in the Strategic Concept – is crucial given political tensions within NATO that strain the cohesion of the Alliance. Challenging though these are, they need not be existential. NATO has survived many previous challenges, including French withdrawal from NATO's integrated command structure in 1966 and severe military tensions between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus in 1974.

A crucial issue for NATO is to ensure that political decision-making can happen quickly enough to respond to modern crises. Mechanisms that allow like-minded nations to cooperate on a case by case basis, including through frameworks such as the ten-member Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF),<sup>11</sup> or ad-hoc European military coalitions of the willing, are helpful.<sup>12</sup> They also permit non-NATO members to participate, such as the JEF. Disappointingly in this regard, unlike the US, Canada, and Norway, the UK has chosen not to partner with the EU in military mobility under a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) arrangement.<sup>13</sup>

Calls for a greater European military contribution to defense and security under 'European Strategic Autonomy' are cautiously welcomed, although there are still competing visions of what this might mean.<sup>14</sup> However, from a UK perspective, there is a clear preference that these are coordinated within NATO and do not compete with one another.<sup>15</sup>

Military decision-making needs to keep pace too. NATO should review the procedures and authority chains for commanders to react to events. Such procedures were routine during the Cold War but became less important when NATO was operating "out of area". The increasing threat level on the European continent means old delegations, freedoms, and constraints need to be validated to confirm they are still adequate. This may be particularly acute in the context of cyber or missile defense.<sup>16</sup> If NATO's response to a cruise or intermediate-range missile attack is to convene the North Atlantic Council (NAC), the missile may well have struck before the Council can sit to discuss the issue. Moreover, the limited capacity of NATO's missile defense capability probably means that not all capitals can be defended from a major attack. Establishing and agreeing the frameworks for how decisions will be made in advance of a real-life situation gives the best possible chance of an effective NATO response.

## DETERRENCE

The Strategic Concept's second proposal is to strengthen deterrence and defense. This moves beyond the old focus on defense expenditure to include the need to improve the readiness of forces assigned to NATO. With the focus now on Russia and China, there is a risk that forces will be split and spread too thinly. This is particularly true for the UK which, despite its willingness to declare forces to NATO – including the UK's nuclear deterrent and its new carrier strike groups – will have to balance this with its tilt to the Indo-Pacific.<sup>17</sup> While the tilt is currently

10 NATO, NATO 2030, <<https://www.nato.int/nato2030/>> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

11 UK Ministry of Defence, *Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) – Policy Direction*, 12 July, 2021: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-expeditionary-force-policy-direction-july-2021/joint-expeditionary-force-jef-policy-direction>> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

12 Ed Arnold et al, *Ad-Hoc European Military Cooperation Outside of Europe*, RUSI, 20 December, 2021.

13 "PESCO: Canada, Norway and the United States will be invited to participate in the project Military Mobility", *Council of the European Union*, 6 May 2021: <<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/05/06/pesco-canada-norway-and-the-united-states-will-be-invited-to-participate-in-the-project-military-mobility/>> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

14 Lucia Retter, Stephanie Pezard, Stephen J. Flanagan, Gene Germanovich, Sarah Grand-Clement and Pauline Paille, "European Strategic Autonomy in Defence: Transatlantic visions and implications for NATO, US and EU relations", RAND, 2021.

15 Julian Lindley-French, "Lost in Translation? European Strategic Autonomy", *Speaking Truth Unto Power*, 7 December, 2021: <<https://lindleyfrench.blogspot.com/2021/12/lost-in-translation-european-strategic.html>> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

16 Sidharth Kaushal, Archer Macy and Alexandra Stickings, *The Future of NATO's Air and Missile Defence*, RUSI, 12 July, 2021.

17 Kathrin Hille, Jasmine Cameron-Chileshe and Demetri Sevastopulo, "Britain 'more helpful' closer to home than in Asia, says US defence chief", *Financial Times*, 27 July 2021.

relatively modest (two offshore patrol vessels and a littoral response group), mission creep is probable if the UK wishes to bolster its presence in the region, perhaps through temporary deployments to support AUKUS or the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

If maritime forces are operating around the world in support of Britain's global ambitions, they are not rapidly available to NATO elsewhere. In the land domain, the decision to reduce activity at the British Army Training Unit Suffield in Canada (BATUS) and move the armored equipment closer to the threat makes sense, but relocating it to Oman, as the UK has proposed, does not improve its readiness.<sup>18</sup> Moving it to Germany or Poland would have been more useful. Even if the training value was diminished, its deterrent effect would be greater. Forces that can't get to where they are needed in time are not particularly useful to NATO. This leaves the Royal Air Force (RAF) as the most useful force for NATO. But it is currently far too small. Concerns about the RAF's size are exacerbated by its withdrawal of Typhoon Tranche 1, which it does not plan to replace, and the likelihood of a smaller-than-expected purchase of F35 jets.

The emphasis being afforded to hybrid threats and investing in the ability to respond below the threshold for military action risks another split in NATO's focus. While Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty allows members to bring issues of concern to NATO other than armed attacks, NATO is now seeking to 'arm' itself with capabilities to respond, notably in cyber and strategic communications, as well as by building resilience. While all are important issues, investing in below-threshold capabilities diffuses defense spending, potentially into areas where militaries may not be the best lever or best-placed to act. It may be better for NATO allies to invest in relationships with others that have the right levers and authorities, such as the EU. This may cause problems for the UK, but just as it makes sense for the EU to collaborate with NATO rather than compete in military capabilities, the same is true in reverse for non-military activity, where the EU has the greater capacity.

NATO is a nuclear alliance, and this remains central to its ability to deter the most severe threats. This was confirmed when NATO reaffirmed its collective opposition to the Treaty on the Prohibition on Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2020.<sup>19</sup> However, the meeting of the state parties scheduled for Vienna in March 2022 will include Norway, which plans to attend as an observer rather than a signatory.<sup>20</sup> Germany's new government is also expected to seek observer status while committing to remaining within NATO's nuclear power-sharing agreement.<sup>21</sup> This may encourage adversaries to open a fissure in the Alliance's position. How NATO states respond to the TPNW during development of the Strategic Concept will have to be seen, but it could impact on NATO's deterrence given that deterrence rests not only on capability but also on the will to use it when necessary.

## CONCLUSION

NATO's Strategic Concept is consistent with the UK's worldview. However, there is a risk that in attempting too much, NATO loses its focus. Strategic Concept 2030 is a helpful lens to focus NATO's efforts and must address the key issues of decision-making, deterrence, and dialogue, amongst others. Hybrid threats seek to undermine the Alliance's unity and decision-making, but in trying to build below-threshold capabilities, NATO risks weakening its ability to deliver the fundamental deterrence it is known for. Moreover, the twin focus on Russia and China may also spread capabilities too thin. Working with others, such as the EU, is vital, however difficult that might be for the current UK government.

Fundamentally, NATO must retain its pre-eminence as a military alliance that can stand up to threats, including those to its own cohesion. This requires strong leadership. The appointment of the next Secretary General will be crucial to NATO's unity, credibility, and standing when Jens Stoltenberg leaves office in September 2022.<sup>22</sup>

18 Jonathan Day and James Knuckley, "BATUS: Army's Canada training base to see 'change' but won't close, Wallace says", *Forces Net*, 24 November 2021.

19 "North Atlantic Council Statement as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Enters into Force", NATO, 15 December, 2020: <[https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_180087.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180087.htm)> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

20 "Norway first NATO state to commit to participating at the MSP", *International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, October 21, 2021: <[https://www.icanw.org/norway\\_msp\\_observer](https://www.icanw.org/norway_msp_observer)> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

21 "New German Government to remain part of NATO's nuclear sharing while also seeking observer status at UN nuclear ban treaty meeting", *NATOWatch*, 27 November 2021.

22 Stefano Graziosi and James Jay Carafano, *Next NATO Secretary General*, *The Heritage Foundation*, 16 December, 2021: <<https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/commentary/next-nato-secretary-general>> (accessed 20 December, 2021).

## VIEW FROM OSLO

# Balancing Consolidation and Change in NATO's new Strategic Concept

Robin Allers and Johannes Gullestad Rø

NATO's adaptability has been one of its key strengths since it was formed in 1949. At irregular intervals, allies have started a process of reflection and strategic adaptation as the international security situation has shifted. The double crisis of 2014, when Russia illegally invaded and annexed Crimea and the terror group ISIS assumed control of large swaths of land in the Middle East, led NATO to rethink its role in coping with revisionist power politics and terrorist threats. Since then, the ramifications of a rising China and the security implications of borderless global challenges such as climate change and natural disasters – including a pandemic – added to the perception of a rapidly evolving and more complex security landscape.

Rewriting NATO's Strategic Concept became necessary given all of these developments. An updated strategic document is a way for NATO to restate its fundamental aims, signal its continued relevance, and solidify cohesion.

## NORWAY'S MAIN PRIORITY IN NATO

Norway's leverage in shaping NATO's general outlook is limited. In most cases, Norway speaks up and supports positions and initiatives promoted by like-minded allies. Norwegian governments traditionally see maintaining cohesion and unity as a key

interest and tend to approach intra-allied discussions with the goal of avoiding disruption. However, Norway has specific interests that it voices when the opportunity arises.

In October 2021, a coalition government of the social democratic and center parties was inaugurated. It has not yet pinned down the details of its NATO policy. Work on NATO's new Strategic Concept will run in parallel to the government's own process of fine-tuning its priorities and assessing the implications of long-term trends in international security. A new Defence Commission has just been installed to guide forthcoming Norwegian defense planning. Its conclusions are expected in May 2023.

Given the broad consensus among parties on security and defense, Norway's position will typically reflect a mixed set of well-known motives. Norway will want to keep the United States and other key allies committed to defending NATO's northern flank, maintain cohesion and balance in fulfilling NATO's core tasks, and keep NATO relevant and credible.

Norway gives priority to NATO's first core task: collective defense. This position, due to Norway's geostrategic location, is well-known among NATO allies. In 2008, at a time when NATO documents still included references to a strategic partnership with Russia and the out of area mission in Afghanistan loomed large, Norway launched a "food for thought" paper that called on the Alliance not to forget its founding rationale. The arguments presented in this paper, while well-received, and partly incorporated in the 2010 Strategic Concept, only gained limited traction. It was only after the annexation of Crimea shock and the NATO summit in Wales (2014) that collective defense and deterrence made their way back to the top of NATO's agenda.

From a Norwegian perspective, NATO has made considerable progress since 2014, and anchoring NATO's post-2014 achievements in the new Strategic Concept – in particular, reinforced collective defense and improved credibility of deterrence – is Norway's highest priority.

## POTENTIAL STICKING POINTS

Translating the results from the NATO 2030 reflection process into a new Strategic Concept would require further negotiations about the wording. Some issues are likely to be sticking points.

### Russia

NATO's previous Strategic Concept presented Russia as a potential "strategic partner".<sup>23</sup> A far more alarming depiction is warranted. Agreed language from official declarations since 2014 is probably the best guide to how NATO will account for Russia in its new Strategic Concept. That said, laying it on too thick might also complicate efforts to continue NATO's dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue towards Russia. The presumption that Russia's enmity is fixed and not liable to astute diplomatic craft is questionable.

Since the days of the Cold War, Norway's has strived to balance unyielding commitment to NATO with an accommodating attitude towards Russia. This has led successive Norwegian governments to uphold dialogue and cooperation with Russia even in times of tension between east and west. Striking this balance has been more difficult since 2014 but has not been abandoned as a strategic guidepost.

The new Norwegian government wants to lower tensions, expand the security policy dialogue in the European Arctic and expand bilateral cooperation with Russia on regional issues. Such an approach might appear daunting amid a crisis where many observers rightly point out Russia's unwillingness to engage and others even consider the prospect of war. Some NATO allies are fast to decry any engagement with Moscow as evidence of complacency and they fear that engagement with Putin signals a lack of resolve. Others, like the new German government and the Biden administration, seem to agree that talking to Russia is necessary even in times of turmoil.

Norway is likely to support a portrayal of Russia that is clear about the Putin regime's misconduct and threatening behavior, but encourages continuous attempts at political dialogue, despite the travails this entails.

### China

The absence of China in the previous Strategic Concepts needs to be rectified. Its growing global importance since 2010 is not lost on any ally. In addition, Washington's strategic orientation towards the Pacific region and its increased alarm over China's rise instigates the need for NATO allies to develop a common stance. As with Russia, NATO's portrayal

of China will likely draw on agreed language from previous declarations. China was first addressed in the London declaration from December 2019, but the language was more specific in the June Summit Communiqué of 2021.<sup>24</sup> Here, China was considered a "security risk" that apparently posed "systemic challenges to the rules-based international order". The potential sticking point relates to how antagonistic NATO portrays China and perhaps what NATO as a collective will bring to bear as part of a "political strategy".

China is clearly on Norway's radar and all recent security policy documents take account of the challenge it presents. China's infringements on certain areas are already profound: Its ownership of strategic and electronic infrastructure, its potential involvement in gray-zone activities, its improved military technological proficiency, its intelligence activity, its disdain of the rules-based international order, and its disinterest in non-proliferation and arms control.

The new government of Norway intends to interact with China through a bilateral, a Nordic, and a European framework. Within NATO, Norway's stance on China typically coincides with that of European allies. On some dimensions, the United States is more confrontational in its approach, and is likely to gently nudge allies to endorse its overarching strategic analysis. To avoid frustrating the Americans, Norway is probably prepared to accept some US suggestions when NATO determines its position on China.

That said, Norway might speak up to tame the recent tendency to consider Russia and China in the same breath. While it makes sense to group the two together as actors undermining the rules-based international order, Norway would vouch that the countries pose distinct strategic challenges and the new concept should reflect these differences. Stating clearly that NATO has a role in the strategic competition with China, appears necessary and sound. But from a Norwegian point of view, a firm stance on China should not call into question NATO's principal goal: to defend the Euro-Atlantic area.

### Common funding

The catalogue of nine initiatives that were launched because of the NATO 2030 reflection process was

23 NATO, "Strategic Concept 2010", 3 February, 2021: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_82705.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_82705.htm) (accessed 26 January, 2022).

24 NATO, "Brussels Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State of Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 14 June 2021", 14 June, 2021: [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_185000.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm) (accessed 26 January, 2022).

both comprehensive and ambitious. The principal approval of them during the Brussels Summit in June 2021, suggests broad agreement on their scope and direction.<sup>25</sup> However, making good on the initiatives would require increased common funding. While it is hard to dispute that common funding is a politically significant symbol of cohesion and a means to share responsibility, no ally is exempt from constrained national budgets.

As a comparatively wealthy country, Norway is prepared to share the costs of maintaining NATO as a relevant and credible alliance. The symbolism of common funding is also something Norway regards highly. According to the last defense plan, NATO's resources must reflect the current level of ambition as well as measures to address new security challenges.<sup>26</sup> However, this does not mean a *carte blanche* for the secretary general's initiatives. If allies cannot agree on raising common funding, Norway will propose carefully weighing new initiatives against existing tasks. As a guardian of the view that NATO is primarily a regional defense organization, Norway might be reluctant to support ambitious but underfunded initiatives that expand NATO's scope.

### Arms reduction and non-proliferation

Nuclear weapons remain NATO's most important source of security and insecurity. Reconciling NATO's fundamental reliance on nuclear deterrence with its efforts on arms-control and nonproliferation, is delicate. Striking the appropriate balance has become even trickier today as nuclear weapons are afforded increased strategic importance while the nuclear prohibition movement, spearheaded by the TPNW process, is gaining momentum and is growing stronger even in some allied countries.<sup>27</sup>

Norway approves of NATO's reliance on nuclear deterrence although the issue is contested domestically. Norway is also a vocal supporter of NATO's work on arms control and non-proliferation. The dilemmas of this duality came to the fore when the new government announced its intention to become an

"observer", not a signatory member, to the TPNW treaty. The decision was not well-received in NATO where some worry that other allies may follow suit with the cumulative effect of questioning the credibility of NATO's nuclear doctrine.

Aware of NATO's reception, Norway might curb its voice slightly on this issue in the work on the new Strategic Concept. However, rather than backpedaling, the government is likely to emphasize that observing the TPNW discussion does not upset Norway's approval of NATO's nuclear strategy. On his first visit to Washington, Defence Minister Odd Roger Enoksen said that Norway had "high ambitions" for arms control but wanted to make clear that one-sided disarmament was not an option.<sup>28</sup> However, since the ripple effects of this decision have not entirely been put to rest, Norway is likely to calibrate its words on NATO's nuclear policy very carefully to avoid further uncertainty. That said, Norway will probably endeavor to make the arms reduction and non-proliferation wording as strong, if not stronger, than in the previous edition.

## DEDICATED TO A RESILIENT NATO

If allies decided that NATO needs a fourth core task,<sup>29</sup> building resilience would probably be a good candidate. Strengthening resilience is not new to NATO.<sup>30</sup> The commitment to maintain the capacity to resist an armed attack can be found in the Washington Treaty's Article 3, and NATO supported allies in building resilient emergency structures throughout the Cold War. The double shock of 2014 not only led NATO towards military adaptation, but also made allies increasingly aware of challenges in the civilian-military area.

At the Warsaw summit in 2016, allies agreed on seven baseline requirements for civil preparedness, including securing continuity of government, the availability of energy, food and water, critical public services, transport, and communication. Since then, the rise

25 NATO, "Brussels Summit Communiqué, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 14 June 2021", 14 June, 2021: <[nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_185000.htm](https://nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm)> (accessed 15 January, 2022)

26 Norwegian Ministry of Defence, "The defence of Norway: Capability and readiness": <<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/7d48f0e5213d48b9a0b8e100c608bfce/long-term-defence-plan-norway-2020---english-summary.pdf>> (accessed 26 January, 2022).

27 United Nations, *Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons*: <<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

28 Regjeringen, "Enoksen møtte den amerikanske forsvarsministeren", 17 December, 2021: <<https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/enoksen-motte-den-amerikanske-forsvarsministeren/id2887897/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

29 Hans Binnendijk and Timo S. Koster, "NATO needs a new core task", *DefenseNews*, 22 June, 2020: <<https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2020/07/22/nato-needs-a-new-core-task/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

30 Wolf-Siether Roepke and Hasit Thankey, "Resilience: the first line of defence", *NATO Review*, 27 February, 2019: <<https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2019/02/27/resilience-the-first-line-of-defence/index.html>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

of populist and nationalist movements has brought the attention to threats undermining democratic values and eroding society's resilience from within. During the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, many of these elements have come together, as governments and international organizations strive to retain legitimacy as effective crisis managers. Since threats against civil infrastructure and societal cohesion affect all allies, independent of their size or geostrategic position, there will be broad support to integrate resilience into the next strategic concept.

Norway has something to offer on this topic. While certainly not unique to Norway, societal resilience and civil preparedness were key elements of Norway's defense planning during the Cold War. Since 2014, the so called "total defense concept" (*Totalforsvar*) has been modernized to cope with today's complex security challenges. The most recent defense plan was presented simultaneously with a white paper on societal security and the concept of "total defense" figured prominently in both documents. In large-scale exercises such as Trident Juncture 2018 and Cold Response, the concept was tested together with allies and partners. Lessons from these exercises and reform processes can inform NATO debates on resilience, delivering valuable insights on whole-of-government approaches to crisis management, on civil-military cooperation, and on the assessment of national vulnerabilities and preparedness.

Norway is aware of the risk that bad governance, abuse of power, corruption and excessive populism undermines societal resilience from within and makes countries more vulnerable to outside interference. That is why Norway is also actively engaged in initiatives to build integrity<sup>31</sup> and fight corruption in the defense sector. Norway has been a leading nation in NATO's Building Integrity Programme since it began in 2007 and has since funded the Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector<sup>32</sup> since 2012. Efforts to make "democratic resilience" an integral part of NATO connects well with recent initiatives by the Biden administration to push for anti-corruption measures in multilateral fora.<sup>33</sup>

However, establishing resilience as a new core task in the Strategic Concept is hardly on Oslo's bucket

list. Rather, building resilience is seen as a task that should be incorporated more and cut across all three existing core tasks.

## CONCLUSION

The NATO 2030 reflection process was sparked by the impression that the Alliance was about to falter as a forum for political consultations. Despite this, NATO now appears to be on track to overcome its crisis syndrome yet again. A new Strategic Concept with relatively few surprises is in the making. While there are internal sticking points, the fundamental consensus of NATO is not in question. Rather, it seems likely that the forthcoming discussion will solidify cohesion and testify to NATO's adaptability.

Norway consents on most matters regarding the current trajectory of NATO. Positions on détente vis-à-vis Russia and nuclear policy indicate that the new government might want to adjust the country's position in some areas, but these nuances are unlikely to affect Norway's overall interest in keeping the Alliance on its current track.

31 NATO, "Building Integrity: Latest News": <<https://buildingintegrity.hq.nato.int/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

32 Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector: <<https://cids.no/about-us>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

33 The White House, *United States Strategy on Countering Corruption* (December 2021): <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/United-States-Strategy-on-Countering-Corruption.pdf>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

## VIEW FROM WASHINGTON

# Rebalance to Asia 2.0

Rachel Ellehuus

January 2022 is likely to welcome a host of new strategic reviews from the United States, including of the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Nuclear Posture Review. These coincide with significant developments in NATO, such as its implementation of elements of the NATO 2030 reflection process and updates to NATO's Strategic Concept. Ensuring coherence among these US and NATO efforts will be critical to strengthening transatlantic deterrence and defense and maintaining a cohesive Alliance.

While the details and outcomes of the US's review process are not yet known, allies, partners, and adversaries, are anxiously anticipating what they might reveal about the US's approach toward their region. For European allies and partners, one outstanding question is the extent to which the US can rebalance to the Indo-Pacific while maintaining its commitments in Europe.

## GROUNDHOG DAY

For many transatlanticists, current calls for a rebalance to Asia are reminiscent of 2011, when then Secretary of State Hilary Clinton introduced the concept in her Pacific Century speech.<sup>34</sup> Citing the growing economic importance of and concerns about freedom of navigation in the Pacific, she called on the United States to devote more economic, diplomatic, and military resources to the region.

Unfortunately, real world events quickly derailed full implementation of these plans. In February 2014, just as the US Department of Defense released its Quadrennial Defense Review touting the rebalance to Asia, Russia initiated its illegal annexation of Crimea.<sup>35</sup> Assumptions about an imminent withdrawal from Afghanistan and Iraq also proved short-sighted, with even more forces and capabilities being sent to the Middle East in the subsequent years.

Today, the need to address the "pacing challenge"<sup>36</sup> of China is equally, if not more, pressing. Yet, once again, Russian aggression in Europe and persistent instability in the Middle East and North Africa threaten to disrupt any plans to shift focus to the Indo-Pacific. Leveraging the strategic reviews that are currently underway, European allies and partners will be asking themselves how they can help enable the rebalance while reinforcing security and defense in the transatlantic area of responsibility.

## ALLIES AND PARTNERS AS ENABLERS

At the grand strategic level, US allies and partners figure heavily in both the 2021 Interim National Security Strategy<sup>37</sup> and the outline for the 2022 National Defense Strategy.<sup>38</sup> Both documents cite allies as essential "to advance our shared interests and deter common threats". For Europe, the diplomacy-first focus endorsed in both strategies will be particularly welcome, even as calls for greater burden-sharing and continued military modernization are likely to continue. Implementation of this joined-up approach has begun – as seen in the recent sanctions coordination on Belarus<sup>39</sup> – but there is scope for more.

## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

The United States and its European allies and partners should have a candid conversation about expect-

34 Hilary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century", *Foreign Policy*, October 11, 2011: <<https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/americas-pacific-century/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

35 Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, March 2014: <<https://history.defense.gov/Historical-Sources/Quadrennial-Defense-Review/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

36 U.S. Department of Defense, "Remarks by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III at the Reagan Defense Forum (As Delivered)", December 4, 2021: <<https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/2861931/remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-loyd-j-austin-iii-at-the-reagan-national-defen/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

37 The White House, *Interim National Security Guidance (March 2021)*: <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

38 U.S. Department of Defense, "DOD Official Outlines 2022 National Defense Strategy in CNAS Forum", December 10, 2021: <<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2869837/dod-official-outlines-2022-national-defense-strategy-in-cn-as-forum/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

39 U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement on December 2 Sanctions in Response to the Situation in Belarus", 2 December, 2021: <<https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-december-2-sanctions-in-response-to-the-situation-in-belarus/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

tations for the future of the US presence in Europe and Europe's ability – or inability – to be a first responder in and around Europe. A recent CSIS report revealed that European NATO allies can single-handedly manage missions including security assistance, military engagement, limited contingencies, low-end crisis management, and some security and deterrence tasks.<sup>40</sup> However, they require significant assistance from the United States for collective defense, cyber, high-end crisis management, and high intensity conflict. This conversation about what Europe needs help with will help focus EU efforts to shore up its own security and defense profile, while ensuring European allies are also taking steps to reinforce NATO forces, capabilities, and authorities in areas such as collective defense, common funding, and more flexible decision-making.

These discussions are also an opportunity to identify which US forces and capabilities are most critical to deterrence and defense, such as long-range fires, theater and anti-missile defense, or carrier strikes, some of which may become available as hardware and troops are withdrawn from the Middle East.<sup>41</sup> While the recent US Global Posture Review did not recommend major changes to the positioning of forces in Europe, further adjustments are likely. By having such conversations now, European allies can secure necessary US assets or make their own plans to acquire them.

## IMPROVING PARTNERSHIPS

The United States should also ensure that European countries are partners in meeting the challenges presented by China. In the past year, there has been a gradual convergence<sup>42</sup> between the US and Europe on China, with allies such as France, Germany, and Lithuania expressing concern about China's unfair trade practices, human rights abuses, and challenges to freedom of navigation. One area of emerging

consensus is the need to address China's malign activities in Europe and North America.

Work has begun in both NATO and US-EU forums to ensure the resilience of critical infrastructure and supply chains, protect sensitive technologies, and ensure free and fair competition. To address the military challenge that China presents in the Indo-Pacific, the two natural partners for the US are the United Kingdom<sup>43</sup> and France,<sup>44</sup> both of whom have direct national security interests in the region due to overseas territories and standing defense arrangements. As the United States again attempts to rebalance to Asia, it can turn to these two allies to support a distributed force presence in the Indo-Pacific, strengthen regional partnerships, and coordinate force and capability deployments.

## INTEGRATING DETERRENCE

One final, near-term focus for transatlantic cooperation is the US concept of integrated deterrence, which will be a cornerstone of the forthcoming National Defense Strategy. As articulated by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, integrated deterrence<sup>45</sup> entails a cross domain, cross-government approach working across the spectrum of conflict and in cooperation with allies and partners. Implementing this approach will be challenging for the United States given its siloed federal government, military service-specific responsibilities, and legal division between peacetime and war.

The United States can learn from smaller European allies and partners, many of whom already organize their security and defense approach in an integrated manner. Finland, for example, does not draw a sharp conceptual line between conventional and gray zone security, considering both to be on the spectrum of conflict. As such, it integrates all elements of society in support of the country's

40 Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS), *Europe's High-End Military Challenges: The Future of European Capabilities and Missions*, November 10, 2021: <<https://www.csis.org/analysis/europes-high-end-military-challenges-future-european-capabilities-and-missions>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

41 Gordon Lubold, Nancy A. Youssef and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Military to Withdraw Hundreds of Troops, Aircraft, Antimissile Batteries From Middle East", *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 June, 2021: <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-military-to-withdraw-hundreds-of-troops-aircraft-antimissile-batteries-from-middle-east-11624045575>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

42 Plamen Tonchev, "Europe and the US: From Divergence to Convergence on China", *Merics*, 6 December, 2021: <<https://merics.org/en/opinion/europe-and-us-divergence-convergence-china>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

43 UK Parliament, *Integrated Review 2021: The Defence tilt to the Indo-Pacific*, 11 October, 2021: <<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9217/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

44 Pierre Morcos, "France's Shifting Relations with China", *War on the Rocks*, 4 January, 2022: <<https://warontherocks.com/2022/01/frances-shifting-relations-with-china/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

45 U.S. Department of Defense, "Remarks by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III at the Reagan Defense Forum (As Delivered)", December 4, 2021: <<https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/2861931/remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-at-the-reagan-national-defen/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

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defense.<sup>46</sup> Examining how European countries apportion responsibility and draw on both military and non-military tools can help the US improve how it implements an integrated deterrence approach.

Taken together, the failed rebalance to the Indo-Pacific a decade ago and the more recent fallout from the Australia-US-UK Agreement<sup>47</sup> (AUKUS) demonstrate the danger and missed opportunities of viewing Europe and the Indo-Pacific as separate priorities or a zero-sum choice. In reality, the secret formula to ensuring security and stability comes from helping European allies and partners step up in and around their own neighborhood and considering them as partners in the Indo-Pacific.

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<sup>46</sup> Yhteiskunnan Turvallisuus, *Security Strategy for Society: Government Resolution* (2017): <<https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/en/security-%20strategy-for-society/>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

<sup>47</sup> "The strategic reverberations of the AUKUS deal will be big and lasting", *The Economist*, 19 September, 2021: <<https://www.economist.com/international/2021/09/19/the-strategic-reverberations-of-the-aucus-deal-will-be-big-and-lasting>> (accessed 15 January, 2022).

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