



Cuadernos de Estrategia 211-B
**The future of NATO after the
Madrid 2022 summit**

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Presentation

Margarita Robles Fernández
Defense Minister of Spain

We live in unpredictable times in which the foundations of the international system that have guaranteed our peace, our security, and our well-being for decades are being questioned. The Russian aggression against Ukraine with its tremendous dose of violence and destruction is going to represent a turning point in the international order, changing our perception of security and defense and making them more proactive.

At the same time, we are witnessing continued instability in North Africa and the Middle East, as well as the growing threat of terrorism in the Sahel or hybrid and cyberattacks. All this while an increasingly confident and powerful China is questioning the balance of power as we know it and new disruptive technologies are accelerating global trends and dynamics that have been brewing for years and are here to stay.

The Atlantic Alliance remains, seven decades after its creation in 1949, a necessary, cohesive and credible defense and security actor. The formulation of its various Strategic Concepts at critical moments in its history shows its ability to constantly adapt to profound changes in its security environment. The new Strategic Concept that will be approved in Madrid must respond to these challenges in 360°, reinforcing the importance of NATO's collective

defense and incorporating the new forms of hybrid warfare and the new spaces of confrontation that are cyberspace and space outer space.

The Madrid Summit comes at a crucial moment for NATO and for the Western world. The Strategic Concept that will be approved in Madrid in June 2022, must serve to renew the solidarity and commitment of the Allies in the defense of our values and our interests and must be a motor for change, modernization, and improvement of the operational capacity of our Armed Forces to deal with current and future threats.

The Atlantic Alliance is a success story and the approval of the new Strategic Concept is the best proof of its ability to adapt to the historical times we are living through, so as to continue guaranteeing the permanence of Euro-Atlantic solidarity and the credibility of its ability to deterrence and response, the two pillars on which the Alliance's strength lies.

This Strategy Paper of the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies has been written by a select group of Alliance authorities and Spanish academics, taking advantage of the circumstance of the approval of the new Strategic Concept in Madrid and aims to reflect Spain's commitment with the Atlantic Alliance and its defense of the shared values of individual freedom, democracy, and the rule of law that the Washington Treaty proclaims and Spain defends as a responsible, committed and reliable partner.

Foreword

40 years of Spain at the heart of the NATO Alliance

Mircea Geoana

Forty years ago, Spain became the 16th member of the NATO Alliance, cementing its transition to democracy. NATO is a family of nations that spans the Atlantic Ocean and unites Europe with North America and Spain sits at its heart. NATO exists to protect our peoples and our values: freedom, democracy and the rule of law - the values that define modern Spain.

Spain has always fascinated me. When I was a young man growing up in Romania under communism, I dreamt of being able to travel the world as a free man. For this reason, I learned Spanish and looked forward to a time when I could visit the country and meet with its people, an experience I have now enjoyed many times.

Spain's membership of the NATO Alliance, and later, its membership of the European Union, put the dark days of dictatorship behind it. Ever since, it has stood as a beacon of democracy and as a strong and respected NATO Ally.

Spain's membership of NATO has helped make its military more modern, more capable and more deployable. Spanish servicemen and women have long helped maintain peace and security in Europe. They played an important role in NATO missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. They contributed to our mission

in Afghanistan and I pay tribute to all who served so bravely there, especially the 35 Spanish soldiers killed in action and the 62 soldiers who lost their lives in a tragic air crash as they were making their way home to their families.

Today, Spanish forces continue to play an essential part in NATO's deterrence and defence. Its pilots take part in Baltic air policing, to secure the skies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; its sailors serve in our maritime forces to protect Allies from threats at or from the sea; soldiers operate a Patriot missile battery to reinforce Turkey's air defences; and Spain hosts the Aegis ballistic missile defence ships in Rota.

In response to Russia's deployment of over one hundred thousand troops and advanced weapons in and around Ukraine, NATO Allies are sending additional forces to Eastern Europe. Spain has sent ships to join NATO naval forces and air policing in Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic States, to help protect and defend all NATO Allies.

Spain is also an influential voice in supporting the 360 degrees approach to deterrence and defence. And is a strong preponderant of an ever more robust NATO-EU strategic partnership.

Our societies also face many other threats. Brutal terrorism, sophisticated cyber-attacks, disruptive technologies, nuclear proliferation and climate change all challenge our security. NATO can rely on Spain to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with all other Allies. And Spain can rely on NATO to do whatever is necessary to protect our people and our nations.

Spain is playing an important role in adapting our Alliance to face these challenges. Spain will host NATO leaders when we meet in Madrid in June for the next NATO Summit. They will take decisions that will shape the future of our Alliance for the coming decade. These decisions will ensure that NATO remains the essential forum for Europe and North America to discuss, decide and, when necessary, act together to maintain our security.

Spain's leadership at the Madrid Summit will ensure our Alliance remains strong and continues to be a bastion of freedom in a more dangerous world.

Introduction

The road to Madrid

Miguel Fernández-Palacios M.

Ambassador Permanent Representative of Spain in the Atlantic Council

There are only a few weeks until allied heads of State and Government meet in Madrid. The Spanish capital will be the focus of international attention for more than two days, as the leaders of the countries that represent half of the world's GDP and make up the most important political-military alliance in the world will meet in Madrid.

But Madrid is not just another NATO meeting: no, far from it. The 30th Allied Summit will be the meeting that will shape the Alliance's medium- and long-term future. A future that will logically be affected in its definition, configuration, and scope by what is happening in Ukraine. A more political, militarily stronger and more global NATO will come out of Madrid. In short, a NATO fully capable of formulating an appropriate response to the threats and challenges facing the Allies at this point in the 21st century, of which there are many.

It is not for nothing that the Allies have been engaged for more than two years in a profound transformation process that will culminate in the Spanish capital. Indeed, the Brussels Summit in June last year marked the first firm step in adapting our Alliance to the new and challenging global strategic landscape. To this

end, the Secretary General, Norway's Jens Stoltenberg, got Allied leaders to prologue his "instruction manual" for the new NATO: the "NATO 2030" initiative.

This initiative, which the heads of State and Government launched at the aforementioned Brussels Summit, is the result of a reflection on what kind of organisation we want to have in the future and, consequently, on how to face a strategic panorama subject to threats and challenges of various kinds. These range from the more classical —Russia and its renewed assertiveness: think Ukraine, a factor to which I will refer at the end of these introductory pages— to the newer ones —China and its new global agenda— and, of course, the ever-present jihadist terrorism and the omnipresence of cyber, hybrid and disruptive emerging technology threats. This will require us to strengthen our traditional military capabilities and the resilience of our societies. It will also force us to talk to each other more. And to speak politically, because let us not forget that NATO remains the great platform for concerted action between the two sides of the Atlantic.

In Madrid, we will hold what is likely to be the most important Allied Summit in recent years. In terms of timing —once again the war in Ukraine will frame our agenda— in terms of content, strategic bets, identification of challenges and threats and, in short, in terms of the window that will open in Madrid towards the future ally.

The NATO 2030 decision package will then see the light of day and with it a new Strategic Concept, which, incidentally, will be known as the "Madrid Strategic Concept". But make no mistake: the Concept is only one of the vectors of the NATO 2030 decision package, although it is the most characteristic of the "package" and will probably also be the most known to the general public. And it is and will be because the Concept is, after the Washington Treaty, the Alliance's most important document because it defines NATO's nature and continuing purpose, as well as its core functions.

Since September last year, the Alliance has been engaged in a consultative process that will allow the Secretary General to draft a concept that is probably, as you read this, being negotiated by the Allies. This consultation process allowed the Allies' analyses, concerns, stakes, and priorities to be gathered in order to inform the first draft of the Concept. And the consultations involved

a multiplicity of actors: from Allies —both at ministerial and permanent representative ambassadorial levels— to partners, think-tanks and civil society representatives. It was, in short, an open, complex, profound and extensive process of reflection that will allow —and we are in the process of doing so— the drafting of the guiding document for the Alliance for the next decade.

We intend to replace the “Lisbon Strategic Concept” approved at the Lisbon Summit in 2010 with a new concept that is capable of adapting to the new geostrategic landscape and that is also capable of not “expiring” at the slightest change in it. The 2010 Concept “expired” perhaps too soon. We must now take into account the strategic acceleration of history in which we are immersed and define the document that will help us to respond to the threats and challenges we face, but from the values that define us as free nations, which are none other than those present in the preamble of the Washington Treaty: democracy, individual liberties and the rule of law.

Alongside the “Concept”, Allied leaders will endorse the other vectors of the NATO 2030 package, which ultimately constitute eight areas through which allied heads of State and Government intend to outline what kind of Alliance they want for the coming decades. The areas identified by the Secretary General —and which ultimately constitute mandates for action— are: increasing political consultation and coordination among Allies; strengthening deterrence and defence; enhancing resilience; maintaining the technological edge; supporting the international rules-based system; advancing partner training and capacity building; combating and adapting to the impact of climate change on our security; and, of course, adopting a new Strategic Concept. To all these mandates, we must add an additional one —that is why we speak of 8+1— to provide the Alliance with the necessary resources to cope with this transformation.

The first vector —“increasing political consultation and coordination among Allies”— responds to the core of the mandate given by heads of State and Government to the Secretary General at the London Allied Leaders’ Meeting in December 2019, from which the NATO 2030 initiative would derive: to strengthen the political dimension of the Organisation. It is a commitment to strengthen dialogue and consultation among the Allies, respecting the principle of consensus, and exploring both new areas of discussion and new formats for doing so, while reinforcing existing ones. NATO has been, is and will be —and the war in Ukraine has reconfirmed

this— the great table of dialogue and consultation between the US, Canada, and Europe. And the challenges we are facing require a more permanent and, above all, deeper political interaction at this table. We have the “table” and we need to equip it with the instruments of dialogue and reinforced political consultation that will enable this political dialogue to lead to political decisions that, based on the values and principles that inspire us, are capable of providing an adequate response to the challenges and threats that will confront us in the future.

The second vector is defined by the commitment to further strengthen the Alliance’s “deterrence and defence” as an essential instrument of collective defence in an increasingly unstable and complex international environment. This will require continued implementation of plans to strengthen the deterrence and defence posture and modernise the force structure. It is clear that the unjustifiable invasion in Ukraine will give this vector a new impetus. Indeed, allied military authorities are already working to adapt —by strengthening— the Allied deterrence and defence posture in the medium and long term. Putin broke the strategic deck on 24 February and his war in Ukraine leads us to conclude that those who believed —even within the Alliance— in the need to *relax* the Posture of Deterrence and Defence were mistaken insofar as the classic agenda of jihadist terrorism or the new agenda of a China with global aspirations did not require militancy in the orthodoxy of a posture that has always developed with Russia as a point of reference.

The third vector is called “strengthening resilience”. While there is recognition of the national ownership of resilience policies, Allies express their willingness to strengthen coordination under Article 3 of the Washington Treaty through the design of a set of objectives to guide national resilience goals. New threats require new responses, responses from the Administration as a whole and, by extension, from society as a whole. Only resilient societies will be able to stand up to threats that creep into the hallways of our citizens’ homes. The challenge is enormous, and our response cannot and must not be minuscule. It should be commensurate with the scale of the threat.

The fourth vector is “maintaining the technological edge”. In light of the growing importance of the technological dimension of security, the Allies are committed to promoting technological cooperation and the development and adoption of technological solutions for military needs, including the establishment of a

Defence Innovation Accelerator. There is no strategic supremacy without technological advantage. It is that simple and that complex.

The fifth vector is defined by the willingness to support the “rules-based international system”. Indeed, NATO is committed to playing its part in preserving the rules-based international order, for which coordination and cooperation with a range of international actors, most notably the EU, but also a range of partners in neighbouring and more distant areas of the globe, is essential.

The sixth vector seeks to promote “training and capacity building of partners”. NATO links the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area to that of its neighbourhood, which implies the need to contribute to strengthening the capabilities of neighbouring partners. This implements one of the Alliance’s three core tasks, cooperative security. The world has become such a complex *polis* that our security is only guaranteed if our partners and neighbours are secure. We cannot protect ourselves with walls. We will protect ourselves better with values at home and abroad and with training —military— also for our partners.

The seventh vector is about defining how to combat and adapt to “climate change”. The NATO 2030 package of measures is a boost to the Alliance’s climate change and security agenda, with the aim of contributing to the international debate on the issue, within the scope of its mandate, and developing a series of actions that, without affecting the security of troops or the effectiveness of the deterrence and defence posture, allow a better understanding of the effects of climate change on security and guide the actions carried out by the Organisation.

The eighth vector —although the general public identifies it with the whole package of decisions envisaged by the NATO 2030 initiatives— concerns the future strategic concept. The Strategic Concept, which since the early 1990s has lasted approximately ten years or a little longer, codifies what the Organisation has accomplished in the preceding years, sets the Alliance’s strategic direction for the decade ahead, and sends a powerful public message to Allied societies and other international actors alike.

And in the ninth vector or 8+1, insofar as it is a cross-cutting element of the previous eight elements, is the analysis of the resource needs that the Alliance will have in the coming years to face the different challenges that are foreseen and objectives that

are proposed. This work will frame the decisions to be taken for the civilian, military and investment budgets of the Organisation. This is what is known as the Alliance's common funding, which should not be confused with national defence investments.

Allied leaders were coming to Madrid —and, as I have already noted, we had been preparing for it for more than two years— to define NATO for the next decade. To define what Alliance we wanted and how we would equip it to meet our common challenges and challenges. But strategic reality always ends up imposing itself and setting international agendas. And this time that reality has a name of its own: Ukraine.

On 24 February 2022, the current strategic paradigm definitively expired and the "post-Cold War" that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall on 2 October 1989 came to an end. 32 years, 3 months and 5 days when we thought the world had changed forever. What 9/11, the so-called war on terror, the invasion of Georgia and even the invasion of Crimea did not achieve, the war in Ukraine has achieved. The third time was the charm: First Abkhazia and Ossetia, then Crimea and the Donbas, and now Ukraine, or almost all of it. And what lies ahead? Well, we don't know, but it will probably look a lot like a combination of classic war and cold war.

Beyond the tragedy that is the Ukrainian war in terms of casualties and destruction caused by Putin's militant irrationality, Ukraine has shattered the global security paradigm and, by extension, the European security and defence architecture as it has been conceived since the demise of the Soviet Union. Therefore, without realising it, today we are already beginning to define what the new paradigm will be like, on what pillars it will be based and what values it will want to project. The task is neither easy, nor is it simple, because at this historic moment, as I pointed out earlier, there is a very complex combination of elements on the global geostrategic chessboard that will not make the task any easier. Yesterday's threats coexist with today's; state actors with non-state actors; the analogue with the digital world; kinetic with cybernetic actions; the hybrid with the concrete; the parameters of 20th century conflict with those of the 21st century; the conventional with the nuclear; and to all this let us add, to further complicate the strategic equation, the revolution brought about by emerging and disruptive technologies, and I am referring to artificial intelligence, 5G and the internet of things, Big Data, quantum computing, hypersonic weapons systems

and new missile technologies, autonomous weapons systems, space or biotechnology—all of which will shape a conflict that is bound to be multi-domain, multi-region and multi-actor. With all these ingredients, we must begin to build a NATO that meets the strategic security needs of the Allies. The task is enormously complex and the first steps will be taken in Madrid. Therefore, as I said earlier, I have no doubt that the Summit to be held on 29 and 30 June in the Spanish capital will be one of the most important in the history of the alliance.

It only remains for me to introduce you to the authors of this single topic issue, which I have the honour of coordinating, and which has been written with the aim of helping you to understand where we are in the Alliance. Let us hope that we can live up to their expectations.

Our single topic issue begins with a few words from the Minister for Defence—my sincere thanks for her availability—who has not hesitated to present this collective work, which comes out at a moment of profound historical significance: it is being published on the fortieth anniversary of our accession to the Alliance and only a few weeks before the Madrid Summit.

NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoană continues with a foreword in which he stresses that NATO can rely on Spain when it comes to helping other Allies and, reciprocally, Spain can rely on NATO to protect our citizens and our nations.

In the first chapter, *The Eight Strategic Concepts of Allied History*, Colonel Fuente Cobo, Senior Analyst at the Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies—and my great support in coordinating this document—reviews the history of the seven Strategic Concepts that have preceded the one to be adopted in Madrid and explains how strategy-making has been the tool that has enabled the Alliance to cope with the succession of existential threats and external challenges during its more than seven decades of existence.

Chapter two, *The Great Strategic Competition of the 21st Century and the Transatlantic Link*, written by Luis Simón, Director of the Elcano Royal Institute's Brussels Office, describes the importance of the transatlantic link as a compass for navigating in an era marked by the return of strategic competition between great powers and examines the challenges that China and Russia pose to NATO.

David van der Weel, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, explains in chapter three, *New*

Security Challenges in a Changing Strategic Landscape, how increasing pressure on the rules-based international order from assertive and authoritarian regimes is affecting our democracy and freedom and how, in order to meet new multifaceted threats that transcend geographical borders, NATO needs to improve its deterrence capabilities through greater engagement among partners.

Baiba Braže, Ambassador and NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, in chapter four, *NATO and Russia's New Disinformation Agenda*, highlights the idea of Western societies aware of the harmful impact of disinformation on their daily lives, to the extent that information activities by Russia and other malign actors —increasingly sophisticated and with growing use of cybernetics— have become a security issue for NATO, which is obliged to combat them by working with other international actors with whom it shares its value model.

In chapter five, *The Alliance and its 360-degree Approach to Security*, Javier Colomina, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political and Security Affairs, reminds us that the Alliance's mission to deter adversaries and, if necessary, defend Allies has not changed, but the strategic environment has, with threats and challenges coming from all strategic directions and operational domains. This is why the 360-degree concept now has a crucial dimension and importance, which implies accepting that the Southern dimension must be given the same importance as other strategic directions.

Along chapter six, *The European Union's Strategic Compass and NATO's Strategic Concept: Two Sides of the Same Coin?*, Manuel Selas, Deputy Director General for International Security Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation, argues for taking advantage of the coincidence in time of the two multilateral redefinition of strategies processes – the one carried out by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the one carried out by the European Union – to strengthen the alignment and coordination of both organisations, in the belief that a stronger Europe in defence strengthens NATO and vice versa.

Professor Pere Vilanova, Professor of Political Science and Administration at the Faculty of Law of the University of Barcelona, in chapter seven, *NATO: Rear-view Mirror and High Beams*, presents NATO, above all, as a compendium of paradoxes, which makes it difficult to define a stable and global strategic doctrine

and to translate this doctrine into a functional and operational military structure adapted to credible intervention scenarios, questions that will have to be answered in the new Strategic Concept.

Finally, in the last chapter, the eighth, *The Spanish Armed Forces after the Madrid Summit*, Lieutenant General López del Pozo, Director General of Defence Policy, points out that Spain's geographical location is a value in itself for the Alliance and that Spain provides the capacity of its territory to become a key area for ensuring the mobility of military forces in the Euro-Atlantic area and to respond rapidly to threats in any direction. It also points out that Spain can contribute its experience in the field of cooperative security.

I will now end, but I do not want to do so without stressing that the Madrid 2022 Summit is the most tangible demonstration of Spain's commitment to NATO and NATO's commitment to Spain. We will host the Summit because the Allies and the Alliance itself regard us as a politically reliable and militarily committed Ally. An Ally that demonstrates its commitment every day with deeds. Because the fact that we are deployed under the NATO flag in practically all the Alliance's activities, missions, and operations escapes nobody; I am referring to Iraq, Turkey, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, the Standing Naval Forces, Operation Sea Guardian in the Mediterranean, Romania —until recently— and the almost 20 years that we paid a high cost in lives in Afghanistan. Indeed, the quiet and professional work of the men and women of our armed forces deployed for many years under NATO's blue flag has much to do with the diplomatic success achieved. My appreciation and thanks to all of them.

Madrid will change the Alliance, and we are expected to be both in form and content. Beyond logistics and protocol, the Secretary General wants a proactive Spain in the effort to build a new Alliance for new times. I have no doubt that we will be up to the task, as we were at the Madrid Summit in 1997 and as we have always been since our accession in May 1982.

Chapter one

The Eight Strategic Concepts of Allied History

Ignacio Fuente Cobo

Abstract

Since it was founded in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has been a fundamentally strategic alliance because of the breadth of its mandate, the sheer power of its partners and the ambitious nature of its mission, and strategy has been the unifying element that has held Alliance policy together throughout its history. Strategy-making is so much a part of its genetic code that it has been the tool that has enabled the Alliance to cope with the succession of existential threats and external challenges it has faced during its more than seven decades of existence. The drafting of successive Strategic Concepts has involved, in each case, aligning complementary strategic, geographic and resource considerations, but also antagonistic concepts such as nuclear deterrence and conventional forces, the different regions and *flanks* of the Alliance, and the various assets and contributions of the Allies. Success in achieving this by consensus has ensured the indispensable unity of purpose that has characterised NATO throughout its long strategic journey.

Keywords

Concept, deterrence, security, defence, response.

Creation of NATO and formulation of the first Strategic Concept (1950)

From 1949 to the present day, NATO has adopted seven Strategic Concepts. The first four, drafted during the Cold War era, were based primarily on deterrence and collective defence, although with an increasing focus on dialogue and *détente* as the latter waned. From 1991 to the present day, three Strategic Concepts have been issued—in 1991, 1999 and 2010—that respond to the geopolitical and security context the Alliance has faced in each historical moment.

NATO's first strategy document was *The Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Area* of 6 January 1950 and in it, the Alliance defined its primary mission as deterring aggression, so that it would act militarily only if deterrence failed, and it was attacked. NATO warned the North Atlantic Treaty nations not to be misled by conditions at the end of the Second World War, when the Allies had enormous military power and deterrence could only be based on nuclear weapons to compensate for their numerical inferiority in conventional terms to the USSR.

In this regard, the Strategic Concept stated that the Alliance should insure the ability to carry out strategic bombing promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons, without exception on the assumption that the Soviet Union would do the same to reach the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The Alliance believed that it could only rely on a credible conventional force if it could convince the Soviet Union that 'war does not pay' and that, should it provoke war, NATO was capable of successfully defending the Euro-Atlantic area of responsibility.

However, this first Strategic Concept was short-lived and was soon overtaken by international developments.

The Korean War and the Second Strategic Concept (1952)

The invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 by Soviet-backed North Korean forces had an immediate impact on Allied strategic thinking. Unexpectedly, Americans and Europeans realised that Western Europe also had a country divided along ideological lines, Germany, which could become the Soviets' next target. Conventional inferiority made it imperative to address two key issues for the Alliance: increasing the effectiveness of NATO's

military structures and improving the responsiveness of NATO's military forces.

On 19 December 1950, given his prestige, the Atlantic Council requested the appointment of General Dwight D. Eisenhower as the first Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and entrusted him with the creation of the new Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), whose HQ was activated on 2 April 1951. A year later, in 1952, Allied or Atlantic Command was created and a third NATO core area was established in the English Channel. These measures were intended to facilitate the rapid access of transatlantic reinforcements in the event of a Soviet invasion of Europe. On 18 February 1952, Greece and Turkey joined the Alliance and, shortly afterwards, at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Lisbon on 20-25 February 1952, the Alliance improved its organisational structure, creating the post of Secretary General.

These changes prompted the drafting of NATO's second Strategic Concept, which adopted the name *Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Area* (MC 3/5) and was approved by the Atlantic Council on 3 December 1952¹. The new Strategic Concept respected the basic principles described in the previous version —from which it did not differ in substance— and merely updated its strategic orientation to reflect the addition of two new members and recent organisational changes².

A collateral issue raised by the Korean invasion was to address the delicate question of what role Germany should play so that NATO could define a *forward strategy* in which it would place its defences as close to the Iron Curtain as possible. Although the Soviets in the so-called *Stalin note*³ had proposed the reunification of Germany and the withdrawal of the four occupying powers on condition of the neutralisation of the country, the United States together with

¹ NATO Archives: NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969.

² A new supplementary document, the 'Strategic Guidance' (MC 14/1), approved by the Atlantic Council on 15-18 December 1952 in Paris, stated that the Alliance's strategic objective was 'to ensure the defence of the NATO area and to destroy the will and capability of the Soviet Union and her satellites to wage war.....'. Although this would be achieved through an air offensive and, in parallel, air, land and sea operations, the use of nuclear weapons was maintained and even increased, stating that Allied air strikes would use 'all possible means with all types of weapons, without exception'. NATO Archives: NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969.

³ Fisac Seco, J. (2013). *De la II Guerra Mundial a la Guerra Fría*. Volume II. London, Lulu com Edit. P. 174.

France and Great Britain rejected this proposal, thinking, in the words of the former West German Chancellor Conrad Adenauer, that *neutralisation meant Sovietisation*⁴. The Federal Republic of Germany thus joined NATO on 6 May 1955 in what was described as 'a turning point in the history of our continent'⁵.

Massive retaliation and the third Allied Strategic Concept (1957)

In 1953, the Eisenhower administration's *New Look*⁶ US defence policy placed greater emphasis on the use of nuclear weapons by fully integrating nuclear policy into NATO's strategy, which would increase effectiveness without having to spend more on defence. The broad outlines of this new strategy, which became known as *massive retaliation*, were set out in a speech by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles on 12 January 1954 and became the key element of NATO's new strategy. He stated that, in a world in which 'the advent of atomic weapons systems will drastically change the conditions of modern warfare'⁷, nuclear weapons should be used from the outset.

These new concepts, together with the Soviet Union's attempts to exploit the Western split during the 1956 'Suez Crisis' to suppress Hungary's attempt to move towards democratic socialism⁸, accelerated the development of the new 'Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area' (MC 14/2) and the complementary document 'Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept' (MC 48/2).

⁴ Steininger, R. (1990). *The German Question: The Stalin Note of 1952 and the Problem of Reunification*. New York, Columbia University Press. P. 1.

⁵ The definition was given by Halvard Lange, Norway's Foreign Minister and one of the members of the 'Committee of Three' who were planning non-military forms of cooperation for NATO. See Christopher Cox, C. (26 April 2007). Speech by SEC Chairman: Address to the American Academy in Berlin and the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany. Berlin, Hans Arnhold Center. <https://www.sec.gov/news/speech/2007/spch042607cc.htm>

⁶ David, F. (2010). The doctrine of massive retaliation and the impossible nuclear defence of the Atlantic Alliance. *The Routledge Handbook of Transatlantic Security*. Routledge. <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780203846698>

⁷ MC 48, NATO Archives: NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969, XVIII.

⁸ Wampler, R. A. (1990). NATO Strategic Planning and Nuclear Weapons 1950-57. *Nuclear History Program Occasional Paper 6*. College Park, Center for International Security Studies.

Given its inferior conventional military capabilities, NATO did not accept the concept of limited war with the USSR, stating that 'If the Soviets were involved in a hostile local action and sought to broaden the scope of such an incident or prolong it, the situation would call for the utilization of all weapons and forces at NATO's disposal, since in no case is there a concept of limited war with the Soviet'. Therefore, the aim was for NATO to ensure its ability to carry out an instantaneous and devastating nuclear counter-offensive at the earliest opportunity by all available means and, at the same time, to develop its capacity to absorb and survive an enemy attack - all at the lowest possible cost.

While NATO was hardening its strategic and military posture, it decided to strengthen its political role as an Alliance following the recommendations of what came to be known as the 'Report of the Three Wise Men'⁹, or 'Report on Non-Military Cooperation in NATO', which had been prepared by three NATO foreign ministers: Lester Pearson (Canada), Gaetano Martino (Italy) and Halvard Lange (Norway). The report proposed reinvigorating political consultation between member states on all aspects of East-West relations, as well as increasing cooperation between partners at a time when the Suez crisis had highlighted the fragility of transatlantic solidarity.

This report, together with the Harmel report published in 1967, should be seen as NATO's first steps towards a more cooperative approach to security issues, a concept that would become increasingly important in the years following the end of the Cold War.

The doctrine of flexible response and the fourth Strategic Concept (1968)

Such a categorical Strategic Concept as that of massive retaliation was soon questioned. The main reason was that the Soviet Union had extraordinarily developed its nuclear capability, including ballistic missile capabilities, so that as its nuclear potential increased, NATO's comparative advantage in deterrence diminished to the point where it was nullified.

⁹ NATO. (13 Dec. 2016). News: The Three Wise Men Report and the origins of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_139363.htm

Deterrence now based on nuclear balance came to be known as 'mutually assured destruction', or MAD for short¹⁰. It stated that neither superpower was prepared to launch a massive nuclear attack, on the understanding that the residual nuclear capability of the attacked power would be sufficient to destroy the aggressor. But nuclear deterrence did not prevent the Soviet Union from threatening the Allied position in local crises, as it did during the second Berlin crisis of 1958-1962, so the problem facing NATO was how to react to threats that were below the threshold of an all-out attack. The conclusion reached was that the increase in Soviet nuclear capabilities had rendered the Strategy of Massive Retaliation obsolete, and there was no justification for unleashing an all-out nuclear war over a crisis of limited scope, such as Berlin¹¹.

The answer came with the arrival of President Kennedy's new US administration in the White House in 1961. During his inaugural address, he described a United States and a Soviet Union, competing to "alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war"¹². The US now began to advocate a stronger non-nuclear posture for NATO and the need to develop a 'flexible response' strategy¹³ using a wide range of diplomatic, political, economic and military options to deter an enemy attack, beyond nuclear weapons.

By the mid-1960s, the internal resistance of several countries to this Strategic Concept had been overcome, especially after France's departure from the integrated military structure in 1966, and the Alliance adopted its fourth NATO Strategic Concept, or Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Area (MC 14/3), on 16 January 1968¹⁴.

The flexible response strategy proposed to counter an unfavourable situation of nuclear balance but Soviet conventional

¹⁰ Extended deterrence and mutual assured destruction: 1950-1968. (1982). *The Adelphi Papers*, 22:175, pp.6-12. DOI: 10.1080/05679328208457401

¹¹ Adán García, Á. J. (April 2019). *Seventy years of strategic evolution in NATO*. IEEE Framework Document, 14. IEEE web link and/or bie3 link.

¹² Jhon F. Kennedy: Inaugural Address. U.S. Inaugural Addresses. (1989). <https://www.bartleby.com/124/pres56.html>. This term had been anticipated by Albert Wohlstetter of the RAND Corporation in an article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine in January 1958. See *The Delicate Balance of Terror*. RAND. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P1472.html>

¹³ Legge, J. M. (1983). *Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response*. RAND Corporation. P. 8.

¹⁴ NATO Archives: NATO Strategy Documents 1949-1969.

superiority¹⁵, by identifying three types of military response to aggression: direct defence to defeat aggression at the level at which the enemy chose to fight; deliberate escalation that added a series of possible steps to defeat aggression by increasing the threat of nuclear weapons use as the crisis escalated; and finally, generalised nuclear response, seen as the ultimate deterrent.

While many Europeans doubted that, at the end of the escalation, a US president would be willing to sacrifice a US city for a European city¹⁶, the reality is that both the new Strategic Concept (MC 14/3) and the companion document 'Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area' (MC 48/3) proved so inherently flexible in substance and interpretation that they remained valid until the end of the Cold War.

The Harmel Report and the cooperative approach to Allied Security

While setting its strategic objectives for the next 20 years, NATO decided in 1966 to draft a report that would look at security from a dual political and military approach. The 'Harmel Report' or the 'Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance'¹⁷ was drafted in the context of some Allies questioning NATO's relevance triggered by France's withdrawal from the integrated military structure¹⁸.

It argued for the need to maintain adequate defence while seeking to reduce tensions in East-West relations by searching for political solutions to the underlying problems that divided Europe. The report defined two specific tasks for this purpose: a political task, with the formulation of proposals for balanced force reductions in Eastern and Western Europe; and a military task, with the defence of exposed areas, especially the Mediterranean.

The Harmel Report introduced the notion of deterrence and détente, expanding on the Report of the Three Wise Men, which

¹⁵ To this end, in addition to a growing nuclear capability, the Soviet Union had 80 divisions that could be launched against Western Europe within 4 to 15 days. See Decisions of Defence Planning Committee in Ministerial Session (DPC/D (67)23) of 11 May 1967. <https://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a670511a.pdf>

¹⁶ Legge, J. M. *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁷ NATO. (13 Dec. 1967). Official text: The Future Tasks of the Alliance: Report of the Council ('The Harmel Report'). https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_26700.htm

¹⁸ Locher, A. and Nuenlist C. (eds.). (2004). Parallel history project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP). The Future Tasks of the Alliance: NATO's Harmel Report, 1966/67. *PHP Publications Series Washington, D.C.* Zurich. P. 4.

from 1991 onwards would enable NATO to take its first steps towards a more cooperative approach to security issues.

Between 1967 and 1991, there were still moments of great tension between the two blocs, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, or the deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles. NATO reacted to this by adopting its 'Double-Track Decision' in December 1979¹⁹: it offered the Warsaw Pact a mutual limitation of medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, while threatening Moscow, if it did not accept this proposal, to deploy Pershing tactical missiles and cruise missiles in Europe, which it eventually did.

In the mid-1980s, the strategic equilibrium was broken by the so-called 'Revolution in Military Affairs'²⁰ (RMA), a new US-launched offset strategy that relied on technology to counter the Soviet Union's conventional and nuclear superiority. The result of this technological conception of warfare were the weapons developments that shaped conflicts in the 1990s and the first decade of this century, such as laser-guided missiles, computerised command and control systems, drones and stealth aircraft, among other military capabilities, which enabled the Allies to gain a decisive advantage over a Soviet Union unable to keep up with the accelerated pace imposed by the Americans.

At the same time, Soviet fears of a new escalation that it could not afford, together with its internal difficulties that would come to light years later, created a new climate conducive to détente that allowed the signing of the US-Soviet agreements on Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I and SALT II, the latter not ratified) and anti-ballistic missile systems, as well as the signing of the US-Soviet Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF).

The fifth Allied Strategic Concept (1991) and the end of the Cold War

During the Cold War, the Alliance's strategic role as a deterrent to war was undisputed, with the result that NATO never had to defend itself. But, with its demise, the formidable adversary that

¹⁹ The Euromissile Showdown. *Air Force Magazine*. <https://www.airforcemag.com/article/the-euromissile-showdown/>

²⁰ Chapman, G. (2003). An Introduction to the Revolution in Military Affairs. XV Amaldi Conference on Problems in Global Security. Helsinki. <http://www.lincci.it/rapporti/amaldi/papers/XV-Chapman.pdf>

had been the Soviet Union disappeared and Russia, along with the Warsaw Pact countries, became NATO's partners, in many cases even new candidates for membership. After 1990, NATO became a more proactive strategic actor by adopting a broader and more ambitious approach to its strategy, complementing the basic concepts of deterrence and defence with notions of cooperation and security, while the Alliance's scope of action was extended beyond the area covered by the Washington Treaty²¹.

The fifth Strategic Concept adopted by NATO Heads of State and Government at their Rome Summit in November 1991 optimistically reflected the political and military turbulence and uncertainty of the times, with popular uprisings in Central and Eastern European nations, the United States intervening in the Persian Gulf at the head of a coalition, and Yugoslavia disintegrating in the midst of a brutal civil war.

NATO's assessment of these developments led it to conclude that the security environment had undergone a profound transformation and the Soviet threat had disappeared. Nevertheless, NATO's essential purpose 'to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means' was still valid in the new security context, as was the need to preserve the strategic balance within Europe. As a result, the Allies decided to adopt 'a broad approach to security. This is reflected in three mutually reinforcing elements of Allied security policy; dialogue, co-operation, and the maintenance of a collective defence capability'²².

Ultimately, the collapse of Soviet military power and the emergence of the United States as the only global 'hyperpower'²³ once again raised the question of the Alliance's usefulness, while the replacement of mass for technology pushed the Allies into a race to reduce their armies²⁴. The solution to the existential doubts about NATO's role in a post-Soviet Europe was to focus on a contribution to crisis management and conflict control outside its traditional geographic scope, a concept that was facilitated by the resurgence, from 1991 onwards, of conflicts in the Balkans.

²¹ Ruiz Palmer, D. A. (2012). Two decades of operations: taking stock, looking ahead. *NATO Review*. Chicago, IL. Summit special edition.

²² NATO. (7 Nov. 1991). Official text: The Alliance's New Strategic Concept. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm

²³ Les États-Unis: hyperpuissance or empire? *Cairn.info*. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-cites-2004-4-page-139.htm>

²⁴ Adán García, Á. J. *Op. cit.*, p.19.

In July 1992, the Allies agreed to consider the possibility of participating in peacekeeping activities on a case-by-case basis, under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. This commitment was extended the following December to include UN activities under Chapter VII of the San Francisco Charter.

The sixth Allied Strategic Concept (1999) and lessons learned in the Balkans

The lessons learned from these years of Balkan wars led the Alliance to the conviction that, in the future, NATO could and should, play a more active role in crisis management operations, even if the area of intervention was outside the North Atlantic Treaty scope and the operation did not involve collective defence commitments. For these operations, which became known as 'Article 5' operations, the Alliance could draw on Article 4 of the Treaty, in which the Allies undertook to 'consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened'.

At the 1999 Washington Summit, coinciding with NATO's 50th anniversary, the Allies adopted a new Strategic Concept²⁵ based on a broad definition of security, which recognised the importance of political, economic, social and environmental factors in addition to the defence dimension. In a strategic context defined as 'promising' but which had undergone major changes since the end of the Cold War, the transformation of the concept of collective defence into that of shared security opened the debate on NATO's future role.

To address this, the new Strategic Concept proposed maintaining 'an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe'²⁶, making them credible to fulfil the full range of Alliance missions. The core security tasks of a NATO that 'does not consider itself to be any country's adversary' were security through peaceful conflict resolution, consultation, and deterrence and defence, to which crisis management and partnership were now added.

²⁵ *NATO Review* – N.º 2. (Summer 1999). Pp.19-22. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/1999/9902-04.htm>

²⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (24 Apr. 1999). The Alliance's Strategic Concept. Approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C. *Press Release NAC-S(99) 65* Issued. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_27433.htm

To make the Alliance an effective instrument of global military power and projection, NATO adopted two major initiatives in Prague in 2002: the so-called Prague Capabilities Commitment (PCC) and the better-known NATO Response Force (NRF). The first was a clear commitment to improving the military capabilities of European partners, prioritising investment in technologically advanced military capabilities. However, the problem was that it was only a political declaration, without binding legal force, and more importantly, without any kind of spending commitment attached to it, and so, in the era of the 'peace dividend', it was soon abandoned.

More important was the approval of a NATO Response Force (NRF) defined as 'a robust, highly available force capable of rapid deployment when and where required and capable of participating in the full spectrum of NATO missions'²⁷ and due to become operational in 2006. This force was to be the catalyst for NATO's transformation, acting as the driving force for increasing the military capabilities of the European Allies. Thus, although small in size (up to 20,000 men), it should be able to interoperate with the Americans without too many problems.

With regard to out-of-area action and counterterrorism, intrinsically linked to national capabilities, NATO took the decision to take over the UN-mandated Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (ISAF). This mission was considered by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop to be 'NATO's top priority'²⁸ and would remain so for years to come.

The seventh Allied Strategic Concept (2010) and new threats

The need to respond to terrorist attacks such as those in the United States in September 2001 forced the Alliance to make substantial changes to its strategy to reflect a security environment that was no longer geographically limited to Europe. A first step in the new direction was taken in November 2006, when NATO leaders approved the 'Comprehensive Political Guidance' that set out the framework and priorities for Alliance planning and intelligence

²⁷ NATO Response Force. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49755.htm

²⁸ Sarmelando, J. (6 January 2004). El nuevo secretario general de la OTAN sitúa a Afganistán como primera tarea. *ABC*. https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-nuevo-secretario-general-otan-situa-afganistan-como-primera-tarea-200401060300-230488_noticia.html

capabilities for the next 10 to 15 years in a security environment in which the Alliance recognised the possibility of unpredictable events.

Subsequently, at the Strasbourg-Kohl Summit in April 2009, Allied leaders endorsed the 'Declaration on Alliance Security' which, among other matters, called for a new Strategic Concept. This led to a thorough debate and analysis of the Alliance's problems and provided an opportunity to rethink, reprioritise and reform a NATO whose partners were mired in a severe economic crisis. This gave rise to the 2010 Strategic Concept 'Active Engagement, Modern Defence', adopted at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010.

The new Strategic Concept drew on the expeditionary experiences of the first decade of this century and envisaged, somewhat complacently, a Euro-Atlantic area at peace and a partner Russia, making a conventional attack on NATO territory unlikely. Now, the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction associated with the use of ballistic missiles, along with terrorism, border instability, cyber-attacks and energy security had become the new threats to the Alliance.

Thus, alongside traditional collective defence, NATO incorporated crisis management and cooperative security as essential core tasks. Crisis management aimed to employ the political and military tools necessary to manage crises before they escalate into conflicts, to stop ongoing conflicts that affect Alliance security, and to help consolidate stability in post-conflict situations in a way that contributes to Euro-Atlantic security.

Cooperative security, on the other hand, was aimed at stability in bordering countries to which NATO offered the possibility of partnership primarily in the fields of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, and to which it kept the door open for Alliance membership as long as they were European and democratic (but not North African countries) and met NATO standards.

The Alliance shifted the centre of gravity of continental security away from Central Europe and increasingly to the periphery. With European countries stable and European powers becoming security 'providers', the more conventional Allied strategy was geared towards strengthening defences on the continent's vulnerable flanks²⁹.

²⁹ Simon, L. (April-May 2015. Understanding US Retrenchment in Europe. *Survival*. International Institute for Strategic Affairs. Pp.162-165.

At the same time, the reduction of forces in Europe in recent years led NATO to insist on the need to increase interoperability between European forces and, in particular, between European and US forces. To achieve this, the Chicago summit in 2012 launched the 'Smart Defence' initiative³⁰, aimed once again at reducing European capability 'deficits' through mechanisms such as pooling and sharing of resources, or national specialisation in certain military tasks.

Cyberattacks on Estonia's critical structures in 2007 also highlighted the fragility of NATO's defences in this area and put cyber security at the heart of its transatlantic agenda with the creation of a Cyber Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, the capital of Estonian. Both the Strategic Concept and the final declaration of the NATO Chicago Summit³¹ underlined the increase in number and cost of cyber-attacks on European societies and the need for greater efforts to address them.

On nuclear strategy, NATO maintained its traditional nuclear policy of the three noes: 'they have no intention, no plan, and no reason to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of new members'³², with the understanding that Europe's existing arsenals were sufficient to maintain nuclear balance and avoid falling into the trap of further escalation.

The 2010s and changes in the security environment

However, the situation of relative 'strategic tranquillity' at the end of the first decade of this century was soon to change with new international developments. The Arab Springs of 2011 and Russia's intervention in Ukraine in 2014 highlighted the Alliance's difficulties in containing Russia in the East and in dealing with risks and threats from the southern shores of the Mediterranean. The Alliance was forced to adapt its strategy to the new security circumstances on the fly, without changing the Strategic Concept given the lack of consensus and did so through *ad hoc* decisions taken at various Allied summits.

³⁰ Giegerich, B. (June/July 2012). NATO's Smart Defence: Who is Buying. *Surviva*. Vol. 54, n.º 3, IISS, pp. 69-77.

³¹ NATO. (2012). Chicago Summit Declaration. http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87593.htm?selectedLocale=en

³² Pifer, S. (2020). US nukes in Poland are a truly bad idea. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/05/18/us-nukes-in-poland-are-a-truly-bad-idea/>

Thus, at the Wales summit in September 2014, the allies approved the so-called 'Readiness Action Plan' (RAP), which envisaged an increase in the NATO Response Force (NRF) to 40,000 troops, as well as the creation of a 'Very High Readiness Joint Force' (VJTF) composed of five battalions and capable of deploying in a period of less than five days. These measures, along with the activation of a Multinational Division Southeast HQ in Bucharest (inaugurated in December 2015) and a commitment by all allies to increase their defence spending to 2% of their gross domestic product by 2024³³, were to be sufficient to respond to a Russia whose aggressive actions represented 'a threat to Euro-Atlantic security'³⁴.

At the same time, the situation in Iraq, Syria, or Libya, as well as the terrorist threat - affecting all Allies to a greater or lesser extent - and the concern of southern European countries about the situation in the Mediterranean, led NATO to realise the need to stabilise a region that had traditionally received little attention. At the June 2015 summit of defence ministers, the Alliance adopted a political declaration affirming the need to provide a '360-degree vision'³⁵ of challenges and threats.

At the 2016 Warsaw Summit a year later, NATO introduced the concept of 'projecting stability', broadly understood as a combination of the crisis management and cooperative security missions set out in the 2010 Strategic Concept³⁶ and aimed at shaping the strategic environment of neighbouring regions by making them more secure and stable, which would be in the Alliance's interest.

³³ The 2% decision was understood to be unrealistic, but it assumed political significance beyond its face value in the years that followed, at a time when the US footprint in Europe had been reduced and there had been a significant reduction in European military capabilities. See *The Politics of 2 Percent: NATO and the Security Vacuum in Europe* - Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. [Accessed: 16 September 2021]. Available at: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2015/09/02/politics-of-2-percent-nato-and-security-vacuum-in-europe-pub-61139>

³⁴ La pugna de intereses que supone el AUKUS. [Accessed: 20 September 2021]. Available at: https://atalayar.com/content/la-pugna-de-intereses-que-supone-el-aukus?_se=aWZjb2JvQG9jLm1kZS5lcw%3D%3D

Ruiz, R. (July/August 2021). En la Cumbre de Madrid de 2022 se aprobará el nuevo concepto estratégico de la Alianza. *Revista Española de Defensa* N.º 385, p. 9.

³⁵ NATO. (25 Jun. 2015). Official text: Statement by NATO Defence Ministers. [Accessed: 21 September 2021]. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_121133.htm

³⁶ Díaz-Plaja, R. What Does NATO Need to "Project Stability" in Its Neighbourhood? *Nd*, 4.

In the same vein, at the Warsaw summit on 8-9 July 2016, the allies announced a series of measures aimed at strengthening this concept, including increased capacity-building support for partners such as Ukraine, Georgia, Iraq and Jordan, as well as maritime security activities in the Mediterranean and the Aegean to control migration, and support for the Global Coalition to Combat Da'esh. At the same time, a 'Hub' was created in Naples, strategically directed towards the South, understood as an element of 'contact, consultation and coordination'³⁷ and that was to become one of the fundamental pillars of the Alliance's response to conflicts such as those in Syria, Libya and Iraq, as well as to crisis situations such as those caused by illegal immigration to Europe.

More recently, the realisation that NATO needed to better prepare for high-intensity conflicts led to the adoption of the 'NATO Readiness Initiative' (NRI) at the Brussels Summit in June 2018. Known as the 'Four Thirty', the initiative requires NATO member states to collectively maintain 30 mechanised battalions, 30 naval vessels and 30 air squadrons ready for NATO employment within 30 days of activation³⁸.

This agreement is part of a package of initiatives aimed at enhancing NATO's ability to respond rapidly to crises by improving strategic mobility in Europe, as well as streamlining the Alliance's political and military decision-making process. NATO thus recovered a preference for Article 5 missions of deterrence and collective defence, to the detriment of the crisis management that had dominated Allied interventions in the first decade of the century.

Towards an eighth NATO Strategic Concept

However, behind all these initiatives and the numerous —and in many cases reasonable— misgivings raised by Allied nations, more than a decade later, NATO needs to update a Strategic Concept, many of the terms of which have been overtaken by the events of recent years. It was understood this way when a group of experts were commissioned to prepare a report entitled 'United for a New

³⁷ The "Nebulous" Naples Hub: Is There a Strategic Direction for the South? Nato Defense College Foundation. [Accessed: 16 September 2021]. Available at: <https://www.natofoundation.org/food/the-nebulous-naples-hub-is-there-a-strategic-direction-for-the-south-alessandro-minuto-rizzo/>

³⁸ NATO. (7 Jun. 2018). News: Defence Ministers to agree NATO Readiness Initiative. [Accessed: 16 September 2021]. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_155348.htm

Era³⁹, which was issued in November 2020 and whose proposals for NATO's 2030 agenda⁴⁰ were accepted at the Brussels summit.

These proposals included a new Strategic Concept to replace the 2010 strategy, taking into account the experience of conflicts such as Libya, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, focusing on the fight against terrorism, as well as the new challenges posed by Russian revisionism. The new Strategic Concept will also need to address the implications for the Alliance in the coming years of continued instability in the Mediterranean and the Sahel, the exponential growth of cyber and hybrid attacks, and the continuing threat of terrorism. All this together with an emerging and increasingly powerful China that is challenging the global balance of power, and new disruptive technologies that are continuously transforming our societies.

Other important aspects will also weigh heavily, such as European demands for greater strategic autonomy, or the consequences of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and its preference for regional alliances in the Asia-Pacific. As French Foreign Minister Le Drian said, "The upcoming NATO summit in Madrid will be the culmination of the new Strategic Concept. Obviously, what has just happened will have to do with this definition"⁴¹.

The new Strategic Concept —the eighth since the Alliance was founded— will be approved at the Madrid Summit in June 2022 and will undoubtedly signal a major realignment of the Alliance's strategic priorities in an era marked by the 'return of systemic rivalry and rising global threats'⁴². The new Strategic Concept should reflect a strategic culture based on common interests and reinforce a transatlantic link that has weakened in recent years. It should also serve to enhance allies' operational capabilities in the face of current and potential threats.

³⁹ 201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

⁴⁰ 2016-factsheet-nato2030-en.pdf https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/2106-factsheet-nato2030-en.pdf

⁴¹ Sous-marins australiens: Jean-Yves Le Drian dénonce une 'rupture majeure de confiance' avec les Etats-Unis et l'Australie. (18/9/2021). *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2021/09/18/sous-marins-australiens-jean-yves-le-drian-denonce-une-rupture-majeure-de-confiance-avec-les-etats-unis-et-l-australie_6095174_3210.html

⁴² This is recommended in its report *NATO 2030: United for a New Era* by the 'panel of wise men' appointed by the Secretary General in November 2020 as the best allied response NATO 2030 – United for a New Era – Global Review. [Accessed: 22 September 2021]. Available at: <https://www.global-review.info/2020/12/29/nato-2030-united-for-a-new-era/>

Success in achieving such ambitious goals will be the best test of the usefulness and credibility of an Alliance that is still based on a solidarity-based commitment to collective defence. As Secretary General Stoltenberg stated in his speech to the US Congress in April 2019, "The strength of a nation is not only measured by the size of its economy, or the number of its soldiers, but also by the number of its friends"⁴³. And NATO is currently the best forum for Americans and Europeans to do so.

⁴³ NATO. (3 Apr.- 2019). Opinion: NATO: good for Europe and good for America - Address to the United States. Congress by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. [Accessed: 20 September 2021]. Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_165210.htm?selectedLocale=en

Chapter two

The great strategic competition of the 21st century and the transatlantic link

Luis Simón

Abstract

At the NATO Heads of State and Government Summit in Brussels in June 2021, Allied nations mandated NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to begin work on a new strategic concept, to be approved at the next NATO Summit in Madrid in June 2022. After the Washington Treaty, the Strategic Concept is the most important policy document for NATO; it outlines a political-strategic vision that should prefigure the Alliance's actions for around a decade (the average lifespan of these documents since the end of the Cold War). The future strategic concept must, on the one hand, take into account the process of adaptation that NATO has undergone in recent years and, on the other, anticipate future challenges and articulate a forward-looking vision. It thus has a new aspect of codifying recent practices and anticipating future challenges.

The main challenge of the Madrid summit and strategic concept will undoubtedly be to strengthen the transatlantic link, adapting it to an era marked by the return of strategic competition between great powers, as stated by Allied leaders at their 2021 summit in Brussels, and as expressed in the NATO 2030 Report

commissioned by the Secretary General from a group of experts¹. NATO specifically identifies Russia and China as its main 'strategic competitors' and, ultimately, as the main challenges to the transatlantic community (a broader reference of which NATO is an indispensable part, and even aspires to represent, but which goes beyond the Alliance itself).

This chapter analyses the connection between the transatlantic link and strategic competition. It begins with some general considerations on the transatlantic link and its relevance in the context of the debate on Madrid's strategic concept. It then analyses the concept of 'strategic competition' and examines the challenges that China and Russia pose for NATO. Finally, it concludes with remarks on the importance of strengthening the transatlantic link in an increasingly competitive international environment.

Keywords

Security, link, competition, challenges, systemic, priority, compass.

¹ See NATO. (14 June 2021). Brussels Summit Communiqué. Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm; NATO 2030: United for a New Era. (25 November 2020). Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General. https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

The transatlantic link and the Madrid Strategic Concept

References to the importance of the transatlantic link and NATO's political nature often serve as a prologue whenever the Alliance develops a new strategic concept. That said, a number of factors further underline the importance of strengthening the transatlantic link and the idea of NATO as a political community in view of the summit and the Madrid strategic concept.

Initially, it was doubts about transatlantic cohesion that led Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to push for new strategic thinking. Donald Trump's rise to the US presidency in January 2017, his unusually explicit criticism of NATO and European countries, and his fixation with China, specifically raised significant doubts among European allies about US commitment to the defence of the old continent. This, in turn, helped push forward the 'strategic autonomy' agenda within the European Union (EU), fuelling speculation about the compatibility between Defence Europe and NATO.

Against this backdrop of political uncertainty, at the NATO leaders' meeting in London in December 2019, SG Jens Stoltenberg was mandated to initiate a process of reflection to strengthen the Alliance's political dimension. This fed into the NATO 2030 process (an initiative that aims to outline a set of recommendations to adapt the Alliance to an increasingly competitive international environment) and should lead to the Madrid Strategic Concept².

There is no doubt that the election of an Atlanticist US President in November 2020 has helped to alleviate doubts about the US commitment to Europe's defence³. Indeed, we have recently seen some toning down of the EU's autonomist rhetoric in the area of security and defence. That said, certain European circles continue to argue that the US may re-elect a president disinterested in Europe and NATO, drawing on the recent experience of the Trump administration and recalling that the best way to prepare for such an eventuality is to develop a European defence capability autonomous from the US, preferably at EU level⁴.

² See Arteaga, F. and Simón, L. (2021). La OTAN se actualiza: el concepto estratégico de Madrid. *ARI* 106. Real Instituto Elcano.

³ García Encina, C. and Simón, L. (2021). Biden y el futuro de las relaciones transatlánticas. *ARI* 48. Real Instituto Elcano.

⁴ See, for example, Alcaro, R. and Tocci, N. (July 2021). Seizing the Moment: European Strategic autonomy and the Biden Presidency. *IAI Commentaries* 37.

Beyond this, more structural factors could undermine transatlantic cohesion, including the increasing US prioritisation of China and Asia, and the erosion of democracy and the rule of law in several Western countries (an issue of particular importance to the Biden administration). The spectre of a decoupling strategic priorities between the US and Europe, and the rise of anti-liberal and anti-democratic forces within NATO countries' own parliaments, points to rifts within the transatlantic community, which would facilitate any attempt by external competitors to undermine its political cohesion. This would highlight the need to reaffirm the political component and unity of the transatlantic community, which is particularly important in a context of increasing strategic competition.

Strategic competition and the Madrid Strategic Concept

NATO's current Strategic Concept, adopted in Lisbon in 2010, seeks a balance between the Alliance's three main tasks: collective defence, cooperative security and crisis management. The Lisbon concept draws on NATO's post-Cold War experience, a historical period characterised by Western political hegemony and military-technological supremacy, and the apparent absence of peer rivals.

This strategic concept draws heavily on its predecessor (adopted in Washington in 1999) and represents a kind of crystallisation of NATO's post-Cold War experience: a unique period characterised by political unipolarity, Western military-technological supremacy and the apparent absence of rivals or peer competitors. During this long post-Cold War period, from the early 1990s to the mid-2010s, collective defence and deterrence (which had monopolised NATO's attention during the Cold War) are taken for granted and play a secondary role. On the other hand, cooperative security and crisis management are the focus of much of NATO's attention.

However, after the long post-Cold War hiatus, strategic competition between great powers has once again become NATO's primary concern. This is starting to become apparent after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, which shows Moscow's willingness to review Europe's security and geopolitical architecture, as also illustrated by the recent crisis in Ukraine. But also, perhaps more significantly, because of China's strategic rise and growing assertiveness, both in East Asia and beyond. Peer competitors are once again challenging the balances of power in

Europe and East Asia, as well as the institutional and regulatory infrastructure that underpins the open international liberal order. This is the central message of the NATO 2030 report, which is also reflected in the national security documents of the Trump and Biden administrations and endorsed by NATO leaders at their last summit in Brussels in 2021⁵.

What is strategic competition?

It is important to note that while 'strategic competition' has recently become an indispensable reference for NATO, the Alliance itself does not offer a clear definition of this concept, around which there is no consensus.

The term 'strategic competition', reflected in Trump's national security strategy (2017) and national defence strategy (2018), and in Biden's interim national security strategy guide (2021), has a long history in the US. According to the Pentagon, 'competition' is somewhere between conflict and cooperation, and presupposes the presence of both elements. It is further assumed that competition is to some extent inevitable, although its effects can be partially mitigated by arms control treaties or diplomacy⁶.

Competition is ultimately of a political-strategic nature, involving all instruments of power, although the military sphere would be of particular importance⁷. Moreover, the military aspects of the competition would not be limited to the operational aspects of defence or deterrence but would also include elements such as capability building, technology and industrial projection, putting emphasis on the long term. In the same vein, NATO itself has highlighted the importance of so-called hybrid threats in the context of strategic competition with Russia (above all) and China, as well as the importance of military-technological innovation⁸.

⁵ See The White House. (December 2017). National Security Strategy of the United States of America. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> ; The White House. (March 2021). Interim National Security Strategic Guidance. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>

⁶ For an in-depth analysis of the concept of 'strategic competition' as it has developed in the Pentagon, and its genealogy, see Mahnken, T. G. (2012). *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice*. Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.

⁷ Marshall, A. W. (April 1972). Long-Term Competition with the Soviets: A Framework for Strategic Analysis. *RAND Corporation R-862-PR*. Declassified 30 March 2010.

⁸ NATO. Brussels Summit Communiqué.

Beyond the Pentagon's elaborate doctrine of competition, different US administrations have approached competition differently, prioritising different areas (e.g., economic vs military), placing more or less emphasis on cooperation or conflict, and giving greater or lesser importance to the role of allies. For example, the conflict and rivalry component virtually dominated Trump's approach to competition with China, which he dealt with unilaterally and focused primarily on trade and economics. Biden, meanwhile, while alluding to a supposed 'extreme competition' with China, made an effort to identify areas of cooperation with Beijing (such as the fight against climate change) and stressed the importance of allies in dealing with China's challenge. Both Trump and Biden recognised Russia as a 'strategic competitor', albeit of a less systemic nature, as they understood the Russian challenge as primarily military and in the European theatre.

The EU (and most European countries) seems to have embraced a similar logic to the Biden administration in relation to China, which is simultaneously labelled as 'competitor, partner and rival': competitor in the technological and economic sphere, partner in tackling global challenges (highlighting the climate sphere), and systemic rival as a promoter of international rules and norms that clash with European values. On the other hand, the relationship between the EU and Russia has been deteriorating significantly in recent years, especially after the Ukraine crisis in late 2021 and early 2022. That said, the EU continues to stress the importance of maintaining dialogue with Russia, and its interdependence in the economic and energy fields.

While NATO has clearly identified China and Russia as 'strategic competitors', it is also at pains to highlight the potential for cooperation with both in certain areas. For example, Alliance Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has insisted that China is not an 'adversary'⁹. However, in contrast to the US and EU (which have a variety of instruments at their disposal, including economic), NATO's limitation to the military sphere restricts its possibilities for cooperation with China beyond very specific areas such as arms control. Regarding Russia, the Alliance is engaged in a process of diplomatic dialogue (through the NATO-Russia Council) and has also extended an offer of disarmament cooperation to Russia in the wake of the current crisis in Ukraine.

⁹ Stoltenberg, J. (15 March 2021). China no comparte nuestros valores pero no es un adversario. Interview in *El Mundo*.

That said, conflict currently dominates the relationship, and the Ukraine crisis has put Russian deterrence at the centre of the Alliance's agenda. The differences between China and Russia as NATO's 'strategic competitors' should in any case be explored further.

China as a systemic competitor

According to the Biden administration, China is the 'only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system'. It is the top US strategic priority, but also a growing focus of strategic interest for European allies and the EU itself, especially as a potential challenge to an open international order. China is therefore surely the main systemic challenge to the transatlantic community broadly conceived. In fact, China has become a key point in the US-EU trade and technology dialogue, an important vector of the transatlantic relationship¹⁰.

As the bulwark and focal point of the transatlantic community, NATO has taken note of the challenge posed by China's strategic rise and has initiated an intense debate on how to add value in this context¹¹. China first burst onto the Alliance's agenda at the London summit in 2019 and its space has only grown since then. Having said that, the fact that the military challenge posed by China in the Euro-Atlantic region is relatively limited, and the reservations of some allies, set limits to NATO's role vis-à-vis China.

The NATO 2030 Report contains one of the most elaborate reflections on what China's rise could mean for NATO. The starting point is that while the rise of China is a systemic phenomenon whose implications will transpire in relation to multiple regions and challenges, NATO should focus on those aspects related to China that may affect military security in the Euro-Atlantic region. This sort of principle articulates any NATO discussion on China, and also sets clear limits on NATO action in the Asia-Pacific or

¹⁰ García Encina, C. and Simón, L. Biden y el futuro de las relaciones transatlánticas.

¹¹ See, for example, Heisbourg, F. (2020). NATO 4.0: The Atlantic Alliance and the Rise of China. *Survival*, 62:2, pp. 83-102; Bloch, A. and Goldgeier, J. (October 2021). Finding the right role for NATO in addressing China and Climate Change. The Brookings Institution.

Indo-Pacific region. But it ultimately reflects political consensus within NATO. Any idea addressing NATO's role vis-à-vis China must respect this principle. But the devil is in the detail, as the answer to the question of *how China's rise affects Euro-Atlantic security* can be more or less creative or expansive. The 2030 Report itself specifically identifies two starting points in relation to China, both related to deterrence and collective defence.

The first relates to the global reach of China's military capabilities, in other words, capabilities whose potential is not geographically delimited or necessarily confined to Asia or the Indo-Pacific. This includes Chinese capabilities in areas such as space and cyberspace, but also intercontinental range missiles. China's progress in these areas is certainly of interest to NATO, regardless of Beijing's intentions. After all, a state's intentions can change from one day to the next, and the mere fact that China has the capacity to threaten Euro-Atlantic security directly is a challenge in itself. In this regard, it is worth noting that the Washington Treaty not only commits the US and Canada to the defence of Europe, but also commits European allies to the defence of North America.

Many of China's military capabilities are directed at the US, with whom Beijing is engaged in a process of direct military competition in East Asia. Such a process could result in contingencies that might lead the US to invoke Article 4 of the Washington Treaty (which gives any ally the right to activate a NATO consultation process whenever it believes its territorial integrity, political independence or security is threatened) or even Article 5 (which obliges NATO to assist any ally that suffers an attack on its territory). It is true that the Washington Treaty limits its coverage to attacks against allies in Europe or North America, a requirement historically linked to the US desire to avoid engaging in the defence of European countries' adventures in their (former) colonies; and which would now serve to disengage Europeans from US adventures beyond the Euro-Atlantic region. That said, the US has legal defence obligations within the framework of its alliances in Asia, of which its European allies are fully aware. What would happen if, within the framework of these obligations, the US were to suffer an attack on its territory or the threat of an attack on its territory? To what extent would this create an expectation that NATO would respond to, or even help deter, such a hypothetical attack? This debate is not limited to theory, as deterrence has implications in the realm of capability planning,

force structure and force posture. Such a debate is ultimately political in nature, and the current context of Europe's security crisis means that the US itself expects European allies to focus on that theatre. However, an escalation of tensions in Asia (let alone a war) would surely generate US demands on NATO for technical, logistical and even operational support.

The second starting point relates to China's activities in and around the Euro-Atlantic region. While these activities do not necessarily pose a threat to deterrence (NATO's primary task), they may still affect the Alliance indirectly. The NATO 2030 Report cites China's acquisition of important infrastructure nodes in Europe, both digital (e.g., 5G networks in allied and partner countries) and physical (ports, airports, etc.). This could affect the interoperability and readiness of NATO armed forces, whose deployments, movements and communications depend on the secure use of physical and digital infrastructure in Europe in both peacetime and wartime. The NATO 2030 Report therefore warns of the importance of monitoring Chinese investments and taking into account their potential security implications. Another relevant issue, also highlighted in the NATO 2030 Report, relates to China's military exercises with Russia, and the intermittent presence of People's Republic of China armed forces in the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas. While not necessarily targeting NATO (which is questionable in any case), these exercises do contribute to strengthening Russian capabilities. In any case, any activity taking place in NATO's area of military responsibility can affect deterrence and should be monitored.

To the two points above we must surely add Chinese arms transfers not only to Russia but also to the Middle East and Africa, as well as Chinese infrastructure acquisitions in Africa and the Middle East, which need not directly affect deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic region but undoubtedly represent a long-term strategic challenge for Europe.

Russia: NATO's priority

While Russia may not pose as systemic a challenge to the international community as China, it certainly poses a much more direct threat to the Euro-Atlantic security architecture, NATO's primary direct remit. Following Russia's military annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, the Alliance embarked on a major process of political and military adaptation, led by the

Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016) summits. This process has put collective defence —and deterrence— back at the centre of the NATO agenda and of European security in general. The crisis in Ukraine has only underscored this fact, highlighting that the main external threat to Euro-Atlantic security and geopolitical architecture comes from Russian revisionism in Eastern Europe.

While Biden has warned that he would not unilaterally send troops to defend Ukraine against a possible Russian invasion, the US has doubled its arms supply efforts to Kiev and warned the Kremlin that military action would not only bring new diplomatic and economic sanctions but would also lead the US to strengthen its military presence in Poland, Romania and other Eastern allies increasingly alarmed by Russian revisionism. Other allies (including the UK, the Netherlands, Spain and France) have also announced additional military deployments in Romania, Bulgaria and the Black Sea¹². The UK, Poland and Ukraine are also negotiating a trilateral security partnership.

Meanwhile, both the US and NATO have reached out to Russia and insisted on the importance of a way out of the crisis based on dialogue and diplomacy, even putting a disarmament negotiation offer to Russia on the table. The hope is that this 'carrot and stick strategy' (based on the threat of sanctions and allied military deployments in Eastern Europe, and also on dialogue and détente) will dissuade Putin from military intervention in Ukraine.

Depending on how events in Ukraine unfold, there is a risk that the question of how to deal with the renewed Russian threat in Eastern Europe will eventually dominate NATO's agenda and partially compromise the Alliance's ambition to focus on strategic competition more broadly. In contrast to China, which presents a more cross-cutting and indirect challenge, Russian revisionism in Eastern Europe has a significant military and direct threat component, thus highlighting NATO's added value as an institution (compared to other benchmarks, including the EU itself), both in the eyes of European allies and the US. This surely makes the question of how to strengthen deterrence against possible Russian aggression in Eastern Europe the top strategic priority for NATO, especially in the wake of the current crisis in Ukraine.

¹² See, for example, España enviará en febrero cuatro cazas a Bulgaria para reforzar la disuasión de la OTAN. (23 January 2022). *El País*; Netherlands to deploy F35s to Bulgaria for air policing. (20 January 2022). *Aviation Week*.

The transatlantic link as a compass for navigating strategic competition

That said, the Atlantic Alliance will not want to compromise a broader agenda, which includes the need to deal with the Chinese strategic challenge, but also with instability in the southern neighbourhood, counter-terrorism or the climate-security connection. The current emphasis on 'strategic competition' may indeed encourage NATO to look at other (second order?) challenges through such a lens. The growing presence of Russia and China in other regions of interest to NATO and the wider transatlantic community (e.g. the Middle East, Africa, Latin America), the need to strengthen the link between these regions and the West in a context of strategic competition, and NATO's potential role in this regard should be highlighted.

In an increasingly competitive international environment, in which NATO's main competitors are seeking to consolidate their influence in Europe and Asia but also beyond, and in which the Euro-Atlantic region is losing its former centrality, there is a clear need to strengthen and reimagine the transatlantic link, emphasising its political component and giving it a more global slant.

In particular, the idea of a transatlantic community or a broadly conceived political West that appeals to links with regions such as Africa and Latin America (two continents bathed by the Atlantic and with a common experience with Euro-Atlantic countries) takes on relevance, especially given the presence of strategic competitors in these regions. Defending democracy and the need to confront Russian and Chinese advances in Latin America and Africa (which, to some extent, constitute a geopolitical rearguard for North America and Europe respectively) would underline the importance of this fact. In this regard, NATO would pay greater attention to the need to strengthen ties with 'geopolitical rearguard' regions of Europe and North America (Eastern Europe, Africa, and Central and South America), but also with democracies such as Japan, Australia, India and South Korea.

Chapter three

The new security challenges in a changing strategic landscape

David van Weel

Abstract

One of the clearest changes in our strategic environment is the return to an era of systemic competition. The increasing pressure on the rules-based international order by assertive and authoritarian regimes is openly undermining global norms, affecting our democracy and our freedom which are the fundamental values our society is built upon.

To be able to deal with multifaceted threats, NATO needs to strengthen the Alliance by improving its deterrence capacity. Since many of today's threats transcend geographic borders, cooperation frameworks need to match this need. Only through greater engagement with our like-minded partners can we uphold the rules-based international order and shape the strategic landscape in accordance with our values.

Keywords

Competition, threats, deterrence, resilience, opportunities.

Introduction: a changing strategic landscape

While some of the security challenges have shaped our strategic environment for as long as Spain has been in NATO, other are new in form and scale. Over the past few years, significant changes in the international arena make clear we have entered a new strategic context.

We have witnessed the emergence of systemic competition between states, with the differences between democratic and authoritarian governance on display across many fronts. The rules-based international order is under confrontation, as both China and Russia contest basic principles of international law and adopt hybrid tactics to assert their dominance internationally. These irregular warfare tactics do not easily fit within the simple «peace, crisis, or war» framework, nor do those of other non-state adversaries and armed groups.

These tactics and confrontations are seen far beyond traditional battlefields. Today, our security and defence depend on connections between emerging domains, technologies, and threats. In cyberspace, the intensity, scale, and speed of attacks have become a mainstay in the ways we must safeguard our security and defence. Accelerating technological change, with the potential to reorder military and economic capabilities, is already having disruptive effects on our societies and international environment. And the security implications of climate change are clear, both in the exacerbation of root causes of conflict, as well as in extreme operating conditions that introduce risks to our forces.

For the Alliance, defining the interlinkages between these challenges is critical to not only respond to them, but also to shape them to successfully drive peace, security, and prosperity.

Age of systemic competition

Since the issuance of NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, one of the clearest changes in our strategic environment is the re-emergence of an age of systemic competition. This is characterised by breaches in the rules-based international order, increasing nuclear arsenals, and hybrid threats coming from Russia and China challenging our resilience. We see contestations of power on various frontiers, extending from the geographic and military, to the technological, informational, and normative.

The growing pressure on the rules-based international order is one such critical issue. Assertive and authoritarian regimes are openly undermining global rules, affecting our democracy and freedom —the fundamental values that our society is built upon. We see this in the way that Russia is adopting hybrid tactics to interfere with other sovereign countries' political affairs, as in the example of electoral interference in the United States and other nations. New attack surfaces are exploited in information operations, and malicious cyber-attacks are striking at the core of our governance. Attacks on Ukraine's governmental institutions coming from Belarus in tandem with large-scale military build-up by Russia illustrate the increasingly frequent adoption of hybrid manoeuvres by adversaries.

Meanwhile, China is becoming increasingly assertive internationally – investing in emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) and leveraging its economic and military power to assert control over global supply chains and critical infrastructure in our region and beyond. China's use of disinformation and lack of transparency are other covert tactics that present systemic challenges that show the ways in which competitors are seeking to challenge our democracies in various domains. This makes collaboration and cooperation all the more urgent. To be able to face multifaceted threats, NATO needs to foster its military Alliance and partnerships. The Alliance has placed a renewed emphasis on discussions about nuclear weapon deterrence and arms control for the purpose of bolstering deterrence.

In this present age of systemic competition, one associated challenge is enhancing our resilience in the face of near-peer competitors, while simultaneously deterring and defending against nefarious non-state actors. This includes terrorist organisations, as well as extremists and political groups operating within our nations, undermining the very notions of rule-of-law and democracy.

Global security challenges require cooperation on a global scale, which is why partnerships are pivotal to NATO's approach going forward. As many of today's threats transcend geographical borders, forums and frameworks of cooperation must match this need. In addition to valuable forums such as the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the NATO-Ukraine Commission, this means intensifying engagement with Partner nations in the Indo-Pacific, as well as Africa and Latin America, as well as regional and international organisations including the European Union and

United Nations. Only through enhanced engagement with our like-minded partners can we defend the rules-based international order and shape the strategic landscape in line with our values.

Cyber defence and resilience

In this current age of systemic competition, cyberspace is a domain where constant activity is an *expectation*, rather than an exception. The fact that cyber events appear as familiar examples of statecraft and asymmetric influence show how embedded cyber power has become in our defence and security environment. When NATO first developed cyber capabilities in 2002, it was a primarily technical issue. Twenty years later, cyberspace has become core to NATO's approach to deterrence and defence.

This journey has been marked by a few landmark events, including Allied recognition of cyber defence as part of NATO's core task of collective defence in 2014, the upgrading of cyberspace to a domain in 2016, and most recently with a new cyber defence policy for NATO in 2021. But much like the constant activity in the domain, NATO's ongoing efforts are characterised by a more proactive, consistent approach.

It is clear that cyber power offers means of influence for state and non-state actors alike. But the contours of that power are in flux, as are key concepts for the Alliance. Critically, there are active debates on whether the notion of «cyber deterrence» applies as it does in the traditional land, air, and sea domains. Cyberspace is constantly contested, with persistent friction making it infeasible to deter or defend against all activity.

Nevertheless, as part of collective defence, one of NATO's three core tasks, this means that a serious cyberattack on one Ally is treated as an attack on all, and as such could trigger Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. There are no pre-defined thresholds – and at the same time, the Alliance must also reinforce its defensive mandate and be ready to respond to malicious cyber activity even when Article 5 is not invoked.

Facing threats this varied requires coherence between political, diplomatic, economic, and military approaches on a continuous basis. This extends not only to military developments, but also to resilience in our societies. As such, a comprehensive and proactive approach is needed to account for the wide range of vectors that can be attacked in the changing strategic landscape.

To this end, NATO can serve as a platform to connect and enable the sharing of lessons learned between Allies, facilitating political consultations and collective action in response to cyber-attacks.

Cyberspace is also often exploited by adversaries for the purpose of spreading dis —and misinformation and propaganda— forms of hybrid threats that further complicate the security environment, as they are aimed to undermine societies from within by influencing decision-making at institutional levels. Maintaining a competitive advantage in a world where norms and international laws governing cyberspace are unceasingly contested is more crucial than ever.

As our world becomes increasingly interconnected and networked, the virtual effects of cyberattacks become increasingly more blended with physical repercussions. The security of our critical infrastructure depends on the security of our networks. This makes robust and resilient defences so central to NATO's approach going forward. In this context, Allies have recently revisited the concept of resilience and agreed that to enhance it, it is important to adopt a more coordinated approach between Allies.

Although resilience remains a national responsibility, Allies have developed baseline requirements during the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit, which Allies can use to assess and evaluate their levels of resilience. The requirements concern vital public services, including energy supplies, transport and telecommunication networks, medical care, critical infrastructure and food and water resources —all necessary components to support military operations. The decision how to invest in individual areas resides with nations, which can build their resilience according to their own national competencies and processes. The result has been an increase in investments in strategies, capabilities, and skills, informed by shared good practices among Allies and partners.

Ensuring the security of our next-generation telecommunication networks will be even more important with the integration of 5G networks, as they become the foundation of many of the existing and new technologies that are transforming security.

In addition to a focus on standardisation for the infrastructure of our digital economies, norms are critical to governing cyberspace, in order to align with our values and advance peace, security, and stability, norms and the rules-based international order. Continuing to adapt rules and norms to accommodate our

changing strategic environment becomes all the more pressing in the face of technological change.

As even more of our devices and interactions are digitalised, the nexus between cyberspace and emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) will only widen. In other words, new avenues to disrupt our societies, security, and defence are likely to accelerate change in our strategic environment, affecting each of NATO's core tasks.

Accelerating technological change

Already today, our shared security environment is witness to these new avenues for disruption. The effects span all domains, from the sea to space. At critical maritime choke points, we have seen Houthi rebels weaponise unmanned surface vessels to disrupt shipping lanes. In space, the same technologies that prove promising to remove debris could also be used as anti-satellite weapons that threaten our resilience. These are but two examples of the clear trend of technologies that have both commercial and military uses. Of course, this is not to suggest that the development of so-called «dual-use» technologies is new. In the public sector, decades-long attempts to capitalise on them have fallen short. Meanwhile, weeks- or months-long development cycles continue to propel innovation forward at impressive speed.

To ensure that the Alliance maintains its technological edge, accelerating principled adoption of EDTs cannot rely on the same ways of doing business we used in the past. Allies agreed to *foster* and *protect* the development of EDTs—including data, artificial intelligence (AI), autonomy, quantum science, biotechnology and human enhancement, space, and hypersonic weapons—to this end.

To *foster* the development of EDTs that respond to our defence and security challenges, our strategic environment requires us to consider new partnerships and linkages. Rather than going to traditional defence contractors, much of the innovative potential across the Alliance resides in start-ups, small businesses, and universities which don't have traditional links to the defence sector. Building trust and meeting these innovators where they are is necessary in order to adapt at the speed of relevance and continue out-innovating our competitors.

Simultaneously, the changes in our strategic environment mean we must also take greater initiative to *protect* our innovation ecosystems from adversarial technology transfers, as well as help safeguard technology from security threats. Both legal and illegal transfers of technology hamper our ability to leverage EDTs in line with our values and in support of our political, security, and defence objectives. Rather than just imposing consequences on the innovators with which we wish to build trust, it is vital to create and incentivise alternatives borne in high-integrity environments.

Along both lines of effort, we must also create the conditions that will allow our militaries to efficiently adopt and implement the cutting-edge equipment developed in our private sectors. To that end, Allies have agreed during the Brussels Summit in 2021, as part of the NATO 2030 agenda, agreed to establish the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic, or DIANA, and the NATO Innovation Fund.

Through these initiatives to foster and protect our technological edge, as well as policy and strategy developments, Allies and NATO see the alignment of technological development with our values, norms, and commitment to international law as critical. With states seeking to shape the development and use of EDTs in their image, techno-nationalist visions of the future are also becoming increasingly tied with systemic competition. In addition to the vast military implications, the stakes of this technological competition reach into our societies, and to the core of our values. Forums like standards developing organisations form part of this competition. As such, increased coordination between technology-oriented countries with like-minded values will be critical to embedding our shared commitments to responsibility into the design, development, adoption, and use of technology that will affect our societies and security alike.

NATO strives to be a thought leader in the ethical use of emerging technologies in defence and security, and at the centre of the Alliance's policy efforts in this space is the integration of values and principles in every step of the technology lifecycle —from development to deployment. Last year, Allies agreed to NATO's first strategy on AI, which is founded in robust principles of responsible use. Concurrently, Allied endorsement of the Data Exploitation Framework Policy includes activities to monitor and improve the Alliance's ability to treat data as a strategic resource, in coherence with our Principles of Responsible Use.

Climate change

In addition to responsible technology development and use, NATO is committed to responsible action in the face of one of our greatest security threats ahead: climate change.

Climate change is a threat multiplier, and it will influence where and how our armed forces must operate, under what environmental conditions as well as the frequency and type of deployments. The effects of climate change shape our geopolitical environment and may influence state behaviour. For example, thawing permafrost, desertification, and the opening of new shipping lanes are factors that can contribute to increased instability and geostrategic competition.

Higher temperatures, rising sea levels, and more frequent extreme weather events will lead to drought, soil erosion, and marine environmental degradation. These can lead to famine, floods, loss of land and livelihood, and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls as well as on poor, vulnerable or marginalised populations. This could give rise to political and economic stability being put at risk. Climate change can fuel conflicts, and lead to displacement and migration.

While NATO is not the first responder for every challenge related to climate change, it has recognised that to fulfil its task of safeguarding the security of its almost one billion citizens, NATO must consider the impact of climate change on security. At NATO's 2021 Summit, NATO Heads of State and Government agreed that NATO should aim to become the leading international organisation when it comes to understanding and adapting to climate change and security. They also endorsed an ambitious Climate Change and Security Action Plan based on four pillars: Awareness, Adaptation, Mitigation and Outreach. The Action Plan comprises specific goals for the Alliance, as well as tasks for NATO as an organisation along with a mechanism to ensure monitoring, visibility, and Allied ownership.

On Awareness, NATO will undertake a comprehensive Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment, which will examine the consequences of climate change for NATO's strategic environment, for military installations, assets, missions, and operations, as well as resilience and civil preparedness. Another important consideration is that NATO will leverage its science and technology programmes and communities to support research on

the impact of climate change on security. This will include gender perspectives in the context of NATO's Women, Peace and Security policy.

On Adaptation, NATO will integrate climate change considerations into all its major work strands, such as defence planning, capability delivery, procurement, innovation, and resilience work. NATO will also address the need to adapt its capabilities to the changing climate more prominently in its procurement practices and its partnership with industry.

On Mitigation, NATO will develop a greenhouse gas emissions mapping and analytical methodology. This could help Allies in formulating voluntary national goals to reduce such emissions. Furthermore, data on energy demand and consumption in the military could inform Allies' investment decisions, help define the role of Emerging Disruptive Technologies and innovative energy efficient and sustainable technologies, as well as inform operational planning.

Given that climate change and security was an integral part of the NATO 2030 decisions taken by Heads of State and Government at the 2021 Brussels Summit, NATO's Secretary General was invited to develop a concrete and ambitious target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This will be focused on NATO's political and military structures and facilities. NATO will also assess the feasibility of reaching net zero emissions by 2050.

On Outreach, NATO will strengthen exchanges with partner countries and other international organisations on climate change and security issues. NATO will also begin to hold a regular high-level dialogue on climate change and security. A Progress Report will be presented at NATO's 2022 Summit, setting out achievements to date and, since climate change will have implications for decades to come, the way ahead for NATO.

Conclusion: converging on future opportunities

In an ever-evolving strategic landscape, the Alliance's future advantage will be based on the ways it develops a holistic, comprehensive approach that draws on combinations between the areas outlined above. The convergence between our rules-based international order, hybrid threats and shocks to our resilient societies, new attacks in new operational domains, technological advancements, and climate change are vital. Convergence carries

with it the threat of disruption, but at the same time, it brings opportunities for novel approaches and innovation.

Already, we see these novel approaches defining our responses to this changing strategic environment. One can look toward green technologies, which have several tactical benefits over their fossil-fuel powered counterparts. For instance, as they are able to operate more independently and flexibly, and thereby proving to be more secure. NATO is taking a lead in this area by developing hybrid vehicles, making use of biofuels, and improving the energy efficiency of its military bases.

We also see responsible technology development and adoption as both strategically salient and operationally valuable. In addition to helping garner trust with publics and with like-minded partners, our Principles of Responsible Use can drive legal and policy bases for enhanced interoperability between Allied systems. The focus on lawfulness and accountability is as important to these aims, as is a focus on reliability and security for end-users to progressively build trust in the technology.

Consultation and cooperation open up more avenues for Allies to collectively react to sub-threshold and hybrid threats, meaning that near-peer competitors seeking to disrupt in cyberspace, space, or any other domain will face imposed costs if they seek to identify a clear Article 5 threshold as the only trigger for collective responses.

And lastly, as an Alliance at 30, strengthened partnerships give us a more global outlook, allowing us to capitalise on the strengths of like-minded partners and organisations that share core values to defend our way of life. Together, these interlinkages and sources of cooperation can help reduce uncertainty. In doing so, we can shape the strategic environment for the better.

Chapter four

NATO and Russia's new disinformation agenda

Baiba Braže

Abstract

Our societies are increasingly aware of the harmful impact that misinformation has on their daily lives. Recent events, including the pandemic, have highlighted the scale of hostile reporting activities directed at the Alliance and its allies, as well as the threat that disinformation poses to our countries and our citizens. Disinformation has become yet another tool for Russia and other malign actors to interfere in our societies and try to undermine our values, democracy, the rule of law and the rules-based international system. Hostile information activities are becoming more sophisticated and cyber activity is increasingly being used to enable and support disinformation campaigns.

But disinformation is also a security issue where NATO has a role to play, as disinformation narratives attack the West as a whole and target our values. NATO's approach to countering disinformation involves a two-pronged model, which has two pillars: understanding the news environment and proactively engaging with audiences. As it is a truly global phenomenon, to combat it effectively, the Alliance has to work with other international actors with whom we share our model of values.

Keywords

Disinformation, Russia, evil, global, understanding, commitment.

Introduction

NATO has been facing foreign interference since its creation — subversion, hostile actions, propaganda, and disinformation. While old methods have not disappeared, today we see a greater sophistication, intensity and scale of hybrid activities, including disinformation, enabled by technological development. Today's threats are partly invisible and largely non-kinetic. Foreign actors use a hybrid combination of military and non-military tools to create ambiguity and blur the lines between peace, crisis, and conflict.

NATO and individual Allies have been the target of hostile information activities since the Alliance's inception. Large-scale efforts are underway by external actors —including state and non-state actors— to influence and manipulate public perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. In the past decade, our societies have become more aware of the harmful impact that disinformation has on their day-to-day lives. Recent events, including the pandemic, have put into sharp relief the scale of the hostile information activities targeting the Alliance and individual Allies and the threat disinformation poses to our countries and our public.

It is not a secret that hostile information activities have become part of geopolitical considerations to achieve strategic gains. Adversaries' efforts to manipulate public opinion aim to polarise societies and weaken public trust in institutions. Furthermore, manipulative online activities can influence citizens' decision-making and inspire real-world action, undermining fundamental underpinnings of democratic society.

Disinformation and propaganda has indeed become another tool for Russia and other malign actors to justify aggressive actions, interfere in our societies and try to undermine our values, democracy, rule of law, and the international rules-based system. To achieve these goals, Russian hostile information activities exploit various societal vulnerabilities and divergence in order to sow division and confusion, and in this way they are able to infiltrate our information space with lies, half-truths, falsifications, and manipulations, paving the way to toxic discourses and disagreements that make finding consensus more difficult.

Paraphrasing Aeschylus, the first casualty of war is always truth, and this has been notably the case in Russia's brutal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Following a playbook used

in many other occasions, the Kremlin first tried to deny the obvious military build-up in Ukraine's borders and inside Belarus, and shifted the attention to blame NATO and Ukraine for creating a threat to Russia's security. Then, they moved to fabricate a pretext for the invasion, and after initiating military action, the Kremlin flooded the Russian-speaking information space with a variety of false narratives that seek to present Ukraine and the West as aggressors and Russia as a bona fide humanitarian actor seeking to protect Ukrainians.

Another textbook example of the above, perhaps more subtle, is how state-owned Russian media and Russian-backed actors interfered in Spanish affairs in relation to the illegal independence referendum in Catalonia. While President Putin himself openly supported the Spanish Government, state-owned Russian media and an army of hackers based in Russia backed the pro-independence movement in Catalonia and worked to exacerbate even more the crisis. Russian outlets published false and distorted stories, claiming that the EU would recognize Catalonia as an independent country or comparing Catalonia with Crimea¹. Research from the George Washington University found out that anonymous accounts in social media disseminated in a coordinated manner content from Kremlin-controlled outlets such as Sputnik and RT (formerly known as Russia Today)². An investigation by The New York Times unveiled that Russian intelligence officers had a role in the run-up to the organization of the illegal referendum³.

As seen in the Catalonia case, the development of technology has enabled hostile information activities to increase exponentially in scale, speed, and sophistication, and unconstrained by borders or geographical distance. While traditional media has lost its monopoly and its place as the undisputed primary source of information, access to online media and the popularity of social media have exacerbated the phenomenon of disinformation, as they allow false and unverified information to spread easily, despite attempts to legislate and fact-check the information. Today, any person or group of individuals can publish information, and mass audiences can be reached easily and rapidly due to the diverse ways in which information is distributed.

¹ https://elpais.com/politica/2017/09/22/actualidad/1506101626_670033.html

² https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/12/inenglish/1510478803_472085.html

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/world/europe/spain-catalonia-russia.html>

A low-risk, high-reward endeavour, disinformation can be easily deployed, difficult to attribute and challenging for us to measure its impact. For these reasons, it is far from disappearing.

Kremlin disinformation 101

Today's information environment is increasingly characterised by the spread of misinformation and disinformation, and over the last decade, a range of state actors, in particular, have developed and implemented digital marketing techniques, enhanced with both cyber and psychological operations.

The Russian propaganda and disinformation ecosystem is comprehensive. As highlighted by the U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Centre (GEC)⁴, Russia uses five pillars in its propaganda and disinformation ecosystem to create a media multiplier effect: official government communications; state-funded global messaging; cultivation of proxy sources; weaponization of social media; and cyber-enabled disinformation.

State-controlled media, such as RT (formerly known as Russia Today) and Sputnik, use news stories that contain both true and false elements, which bypass people's natural filters for detecting disinformation. Through organisations including the St. Petersburg 'troll factory'—officially called the Internet Research Agency—Russia uses fake or automated accounts to spread information to amplify stories on social media and blogsites. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the EU suspended the broadcasting activities of Sputnik and RT in the EU "until the Russian Federation and its associated outlets cease to conduct disinformation and information manipulation actions against the EU and its member states"⁵ because of the role it plays in the aggression against Ukraine and the threat it poses to the EU's public order and security.

Russian communications continue to move towards domestic social media platforms likely as a means to strengthen and sustain Russian foreign policy strategy among domestic and

⁴ https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pillars-of-Russia%E2%80%99s-Disinformation-and-Propaganda-Ecosystem_08-04-20.pdf

⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/02/eu-imposes-sanctions-on-state-owned-outlets-rt-russia-today-and-sputnik-s-broadcasting-in-the-eu/>

foreign Russian speakers, and to mobilise the Russian diaspora in support of Russian's actions and against the West.

In the case of NATO, Russian propaganda regularly targets our military posture. They aim to undermine NATO's military exercises, forward deployments such as the enhanced Forward Presence groups, or NATO's operations and missions.

We have seen increased hostile information activities targeting NATO presence in Baltic countries and Poland, including national contributions to enhanced Forward Presence and to the Baltic Air Policing. Russian state-linked outlets have claimed that NATO troops deployed to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are aggressive and threaten the local population.

According to the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Labs who report routinely on hostile information activities targeting enhanced Forward Presence, the following narratives are most common:

- NATO is obsolete/cannot protect its allies;
- NATO is unwelcome/NATO troops are occupants;
- NATO's actions are provocative/aggressive;

A narrative that gains significant traction is "NATO's actions are provocative/aggressive". In reality, Spanish and NATO troops contribute to deterrence and defence of the region and enjoy broad support of the local population. The Baltic States also have very high trust levels in Allies⁶. And the primary aim of NATO's deterrence and defence is to prevent a conflict and preserve peace, as the Alliance has done during its over 70 years of existence.

Russia's unprovoked and brutal invasion of Ukraine has highlighted once more hostile information activities from Russia targeting Ukraine but also NATO Allies and Partners, looking to create a justification for their military actions. While Russia was placing more than 100,000 troops and offensive capabilities at Ukraine's and NATO's borders, Russian propaganda networks portrayed NATO as irresponsible, incompetent or aggressive, and denied any intent of attacking Ukraine. In the days leading up to the invasion, Russian disinformation and propaganda intensified, repeating totally bogus claims of genocide of ethnic Russians in Ukraine, and portraying an artificial humanitarian emergency

⁶ From NATO's own polling.

in the separatist controlled areas of the Donbas. Days into the invasion

In addition to long-standing disinformation and propaganda narratives coming from Russian officials and Kremlin-linked sources, Chinese and Belarussian regimes also intensified their disinformation efforts aimed against NATO.

Over the past two years, we have observed increasing convergence of Russian and Chinese anti-Western disinformation and propaganda narratives. During the coronavirus pandemic, China's "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy and increasingly assertive communications targeted individual Allies and NATO as whole.

Chinese officials on Twitter as well as state-owned and state-controlled media alleged that NATO does not assist the Allies in handling the pandemic, that the Alliance is disunited, outdated and aggressive⁷. Some sources even alleged that the virus originated in NATO "biological laboratories" or "military bases". None of these claims were backed with evidence.

The violent crackdown against the protests in Belarus that began in 2020 was followed by attacks on independent media and journalists. Meanwhile, Russian state media representatives were deployed to Minsk to share their "best practices" with Belarussian media outlets. As a result, pro-Lukashenko outlets adopted many of disinformation and propaganda tactics used pro-Kremlin outlets. Belarussian regime accused NATO of "orchestrating the protests" and alleged that NATO is preparing provocations or even a military invasion into the country. These claims have been debunked by Allied governments, independent fact-checkers and international organisations.

Generally, we have observed that hostile information activities are becoming more sophisticated. For example, there is an increasing use of cyber activity to enable and support disinformation campaigns. Today, cyber tactics are being incorporated into disinformation campaigns more frequently, and often much more under the radar. Another example of how the threat is becoming more complex is the role of fringe platforms. Platforms and researchers have been successfully exposing coordinated and inauthentic behaviours on their mainstream platforms, which has driven actors to fringe platforms likely as a means to avoid detection.

⁷ <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/177273.htm>

Eliminating free media

Russian efforts to disseminate propaganda and disinformation would not be as effective with a strong and trusted independent media that could counter it by reporting objectively and encouraging healthy debates in our societies. While Russians can still access some foreign media⁸, the Kremlin has been very effective at stifling, and ultimately eliminating, independent Russian media, thus allowing disinformation and propaganda to flourish and leaving false narratives unchecked.

In addition to intimidation and harassment, the Kremlin continues to use legislative and economic means to eliminate or get under control local and independent media. The pressure on media outlets that started with Putin's arrival to power in 2000, intensified in the aftermath of the anti-government Bolotnaya protests of 2012 accompanied by an unprecedented civil society crackdown, and has grown steadily since. However, in the past couple of years, the scale of the repression against independent media and investigative journalists has reached new heights, culminating with a severe crackdown in the days after the invasion that all but criminalized journalism.

Over the past decade, vaguely worded legislation designed to target extremism, public disorder, or offensive content, along with old-fashioned trumped-up charges, has been aggressively used to intimidate journalists and bloggers, encouraging self-censorship and even forcing to exile independent media. At the same time, the Kremlin uses legislation and indirect pressure to engineer ownership changes and editorial shifts at private outlets, including a 2016 law that restricts foreign ownership of media companies.

Since 2017, the government has been selectively labelling media outlets receiving foreign funding as "foreign agents," and as of 2020 many individual journalists have been added to the foreign agent registry as well. In 2021 for the first time, a media outlet was designated as an undesirable organization, which can carry fines and harsh prison sentences. The defamatory "foreign agent" label is not less harmful for media as it stigmatizes them, damages public trust and contributes to the notion that whoever criticises the Russian government does so because they are being paid by a foreign government.

⁸ As of 9 March 2022.

For example, the investigative media outlet *Proyekt* was declared an undesirable organization in 2021 after publishing investigative reports on President Putin's daughter, Chechen leader Ranzam Kadyrov, and the interior minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev. Many independent media critical of the Kremlin have been designated foreign agents without much evidence, including TV Rain. Most recently, Russian media watchdog Roskomnadzor ordered media to delete reports covering Alexei Navalny's investigations into corruption of high-ranking Russian officials.

The final nail in the coffin for independent media arrived few days after the invasion, when Russia enacted a draconian law imposing prison terms up to 15 years for disseminating "false information" about the war in Ukraine and in practice meant that media outlets could only distribute official information from the Russian government. Using words such as "war" and "invasion" is now out of limits.

As a result, many independent online media outlets have been taken off the air or forced to shut down for the safety of their own journalists. In an unprecedented move, international media and news agencies such as BBC, Bloomberg News, the New York Times, ABC, CNN International, EFE and others have stopped reporting from Russia out of fear of prosecution. In addition, Roskomnadzor blocked or slowed down access to several social media sites and to almost all remaining Russian independent media based inside and outside Russia. It is also worth mentioning that media freedom is severely curtailed in some regions, including Crimea, which was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014, and Chechnya. Propaganda runs rampant, while threats of violence, murders and physical attacks against journalists and bloggers continue to go unpunished.

Against this backdrop, it is easy to understand how Russian-government narratives, and propaganda and disinformation coming from the Kremlin have virtually no resistance inside Russia and can spread easily not only to Russian speaking audiences in neighbouring countries, but beyond.

Fake news are a real threat

We have witnessed that disinformation can have real-world consequences. For example, Covid-19 has shown how this can undermine our democratic systems and – in the worst case – cost

lives. NATO's mission is to keep 1 billion citizens safe. Disinformation is also a security issue and NATO has a role to play.

The Covid-19 pandemic was also used to spread disinformation against NATO. The Alliance was the subject of a number of specific disinformation attacks in the period March-June 2020, coinciding with the COVID-19 lockdown in many NATO Allies.

As described in NATO's own report on Covid-19 disinformation⁹, Russia spread false claims that NATO continued to hold large-scale exercises with no regard for limiting the spread of the virus. For example, Sputnik claimed the NATO exercise Steel Brawler in Latvia would put civilians at risk and increase the number of COVID-19 infections¹⁰. It made similar claims about the BALTOPS maritime exercise in the Baltic Sea¹¹. Steel Brawler actually took place solely on military training grounds, specifically to avoid contact with the local population, and BALTOPS took place almost exclusively at sea¹².

The US-led exercise DEFENDER-Europe 20, which deployed thousands of US-based forces to Europe, was also a consistent target of disinformation¹³. Due to the pandemic, the exercise was reduced in size and scope¹⁴, yet Russian sources continue to claim it ignored travel restrictions and spread COVID-19 across Europe. While criticising NATO exercises for potentially spreading the virus, the Russian military continued to hold exercises¹⁵ during the pandemic. The Russian Minister of Defence announced the start of its routine summer military exercise programme¹⁶, and that Russia will hold around 3,600 combat training events between June and September 2020.

In January 2022, Latvian media exposed disinformation in Russian media claiming that the Baltic states could be excluded

⁹ <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/177273.htm>

¹⁰ <https://lv.sputniknews.ru/analytics/20200413/13553446/Chumovye-manevry-NA-TO-Latvia-tseli-sredstva-veroyatnye-posledstviya.html>

¹¹ <https://sputnik-ossetia.ru/analytics/20200608/10694176/Protiv-kogo-napravleny-karlikovye-manevry-Pentagona-v-Polshe-i-ucheniya-NATO-v-Baltike.html>

¹² <https://news.usni.org/2020/06/11/baltops-2020-will-only-hold-at-sea-events-with-ships-commanded-from-shore>

¹³ <https://www.rt.com/op-ed/480044-nato-defender-europe-russia/>; <https://www.rt.com/news/483138-nato-defender-europe-coronavirus-drill/>

¹⁴ <https://shape.nato.int/defender-europe/defender/newsroom/exercise-defendereurope-20-announcement-covid19-implications>

¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53161450>

¹⁶ https://military.pravda.ru/news/1503578-shojgu_obyavil/

from NATO 'in order to reach an agreement' with Russia over the security guarantees¹⁷. This is yet again another example of how Russia aims to foster division within the Alliance.

In the lead up to the invasion, several elaborate disinformation schemes were revealed by Western governments, including one from February 2022 by U.S. officials about a Russian plan to fabricate a pretext for an invasion of Ukraine using a fake video. This would have built on other disinformation campaigns, such as bogus claims of genocide or unsubstantiated plans to start a major military operation against the separatist-controlled territories in the Donbas, or even claims that Ukraine was seeking to develop nuclear and biological weapons.

After the invasion, Russian propaganda maintains that the "special operation for the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine" is confined to the Donbass and focuses on humanitarian support, and that any attack against Ukrainian cities or civilians is done by the Ukrainian forces seeking to blame Russia. At the same time, and following the official time, Russian media outlets continue to insist that Russia had no other option but to start a the "special operation" because NATO ignored its security concerns and were ready to deploy military infrastructure in Ukraine.

NATO's approach

NATO's approach to countering disinformation involves a dual-track model, which has two pillars: understanding the information environment and engaging proactively with audiences.

The first pillar focuses on monitoring the information environment. Understanding the information environment, specifically disinformation, is crucial to enable a credible response. This includes tracking, monitoring and analysing information relevant to NATO. NATO's regular monitoring allows us to provide actionable insights and recommendations to inform our own communications and of Allies, and it detects the growing scale and truly global nature of the problem. It also enables NATO to evaluate the effectiveness of its communications.

The second pillar of our approach is 'Engage'. This means to conduct proactive communications, embedding the insights we see in the information space. We see what works, what doesn't

¹⁷ <https://www.la.lv/putina-saprteju-ieteikumi>

work and the impact of information activities, and this allows us to tailor our strategic communications where it will most effectively to counter disinformation.

NATO is convinced that fact-based, evidence-based and credible communications are the best way of countering disinformation. Our communications are based on the Alliance's core values of democracy, freedom of speech and the rule of law. We cannot compromise our credibility nor our transparency. In our view, engaging the public and building resilience over the medium to long term is the most effective way to inoculate people against hostile information.

NATO will continue to expose disinformation through a wide range of media and public diplomacy engagements including statements, rebuttals and corrections, and briefings to inform a wide variety of audiences about disinformation and propaganda, as it has since before the pandemic.

One example of how NATO exposes disinformation is through its "Setting the Record Straight" web portal. NATO exposes and debunks disinformation emanating from foreign actors, where appropriate. Setting the Record Straight is a one-stop shop for the facts about NATO's relations with Russia. The content aims to inform and set the record straight on many false claims against NATO. It is available in English, French, Russian and Ukrainian. Setting the Record Straight has been regularly updated since 2014, when it was launched, in response to increasing disinformation about NATO following Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine. NATO relaunched the portal during the last quarter of 2021, which had significant impact on Twitter in comparison to the Russian MFA's version of Russia-NATO myths.

Last but not least, coordination with Allies and partners is the cornerstone of all NATO's work both to understand the information environment and to engage audiences. This is particularly important when dealing with a fast-moving crisis. It is crucial for NATO that nations, other international organisations, such as the EU, as well as civil society and the private sector, work together to build resilience in our societies.

Disinformation is a truly global phenomenon and in order to fight it effectively, we need to work with others. Oftentimes, disinformation narratives attack the West as a whole and target values we share with other international actors. NATO coordinates with partners and international organizations to identify, analyse

and counter disinformation. NATO's cooperation with the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission, the U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center, the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism and the United Nations improves our ability to address disinformation.

NATO partners, such as Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova are major targets of Russian disinformation. NATO public diplomacy projects help build society resilience against disinformation in allied and partner countries. NATO provides support to NGOs, academics, think tanks as well as civil society and fact-checking initiatives. Strategic communications are also one of the key areas of NATO's cooperation with partner nations. In addition, NATO communications and public statements dispel propaganda narratives aimed against NATO's partnership with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, Russian disinformation exploits pre-existing disagreements and political debates in our societies to sow division and undermine trust in democratic institutions, posing an existential threat to our countries. Therefore, we need to improve our resilience across the board. Unfortunately, there is no single solution, and we cannot act alone. From international organisations and national and local governments, to private companies, civil society and a free and independent media, all actors have a part to play. Our citizens must be confident that the information they receive is correct, and NATO will continue to play its part by working together with Allies, partners, our civil society, the industry to protect our citizens and beat disinformation.

The following recommendations can help NATO, Allies and Partners to effectively counter, not only Russian disinformation, but any kind of hostile information activities:

1. Invest in strategic communications capabilities of our countries

We all understand the need to invest in military capabilities, such as planes, ships, drones, equipment. The same applies to Strategic Communications (StratCom) capability – we need to invest in people, technology, knowledge and skills to make sure we have the awareness, the understanding, and the ability

to communicate proactively and professionally, in line with democratic values.

2. Conduct proactive communications

As a values-based organization, NATO uses fact-based, credible communications to tell our story. We use the full spectrum of media engagements, digital communications, face to face engagements, social media, and other tools to make sure that our publics and our potential adversaries hear NATO's story first. In cases of disinformation we carefully evaluate whether we need to respond, debunk or simply ignore.

3. Build societal resilience

Building resilience in our communities against disinformation from foreign actors requires a whole of society approach. Everyone has a role to play - the media, the private sector, academia, civil society, families and all relevant groups to ensure that our societies are equipped to resist hostile information activities. Allies must continue to invest in media literacy, journalism training, research on impact of disinformation, among other activities. This should be done by adopting a whole-of-society approach, leveraging civil society and the private sector, institutions and networks at the local level.

4. Cooperate and coordinate with partners, such as the EU and across the globe

We particularly appreciate the support and engagement we have with our partners at the EU – the Commission, the Council, EEAS, and now the European parliament. We exchange information, lessons learned, we amplify each other work, and have the ability to rely on each other during crisis. We also cooperate with the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism, the United Nations, UNESCO, and global partners. Working in concert with our partners strengthens our collective ability to address the challenge of hostile information activities, including disinformation from foreign actors.

Chapter five

The Alliance and its 360° approach to security

Javier Colomina

Abstract

NATO's objective is to deter its adversaries and, if necessary, defend the Allies against any threat. This mission has not changed, but the strategic environment facing the Alliance has as it emerges threats and challenges coming from all strategic directions and affecting all operational domains. That is why the 360-degree concept now takes on a crucial dimension and importance, which implies the Alliance fully and honestly incorporating an integrated vision of the South where an ever-increasing range of security threats and challenges come up. Consequently, the South dimension must have the same relevance and importance as other strategic directions and the relationship between the partners must be a two-way one and it must combine different interests in the conviction that the relationship is beneficial for all.

Only in this way will NATO be able to respond to any threat coming from anywhere and at any time. To do so, the Alliance must help build stronger security and defense institutions and capabilities in the South, while promoting interoperability and fighting terrorism. The new Strategic Concept must include a concept as simple as this one.

Keywords

South, 360 degrees, threat, security, strategic.

Introduction

It turns out NATO's 360-degree approach to security can be summed up in a simple phrase, an easy-to-remember slogan: we aim to be able to deal with any threat, from anywhere, at any time. More specifically, faced with a strategic environment that presents challenges from the North, East and South, our goal is to deter our adversaries and, if necessary, to defend Allies against any threat.

This, and no other, has been the goal of the Alliance since it was created in 1949. However, it is not the mission that has changed, but the strategic environment facing the Alliance, with threats and challenges coming from all strategic directions and affecting all five operational domains: land, sea, air, air, cyber and space. This is why the concept of 360 degrees now takes on a crucial dimension and importance.

A simple slogan that nevertheless requires an unprecedented collective effort to implement. For decades, since its creation in 1949 following the adoption of the Washington Treaty, the Alliance has set its objectives and identified its adversaries on its eastern flank. As an extension of that flank and given the imposing presence of the former USSR, the Alliance's North was reasonably well covered. Deliberately, it is true, without entering the Arctic, a region that is traditionally described as 'low tension' and where governance is still ensured by the Arctic Council, with eight full members, five of which are currently members of the Alliance: Canada, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and the United States.

Further work was therefore needed on a more global and comprehensive threat analysis, more 'holistic' as the Anglo-Saxons call it, with the aim of making the Alliance effectively able to respond to any threat from anywhere, i.e., a 360-degree response. And this means for the first time incorporating into that vision an inclusive view of the Alliance's South, which was not part of the strategic vision during the Cold War decades.

OTAN 2030

The umpteenth Alliance adaptation process began in 2014, the year that marked the end of the post-Cold War period. Beginning in the 1990s, this period was characterised by efforts in crisis management —Kosovo, Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq— and in the

field of cooperative security —with the development of a broad network of partners, gradually incorporating one by one the countries that until then had been part of the Soviet orbit, and even the Russian Federation— playing a leading role in the Alliance’s activity. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the emergence of DAESH turned Allied objectives on their head, restoring one of the essential axes of the Alliance since its creation, collective defence, and strengthening the Alliance’s hitherto limited role in the fight against terrorism.

The need to adapt to a new strategic environment marked by great power competition and the obligation to respond to more global challenges —the rise of China, climate change— and to hybrid or cyber threats for which conventional responses are no longer sufficient, prompted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to launch the NATO2030 Initiative in early 2021.

The latest twist in the Alliance’s adaptation process resulted in a series of decisions taken by heads of state and government at the Brussels Summit in June 2021. These aim to keep NATO militarily strong, more politically integrated, and more globally focused. This is in order to be able to play the role that NATO must play in ensuring the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area, and on the basis of a broader concept that moves from traditional collective defence, as enshrined in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, to collective security.

First, and with the aim of keeping NATO militarily strong, decisions were taken to further strengthen our deterrence and defence by enshrining NATO’s role, and the strength of the transatlantic link, as the linchpin for the defence of the Euro-Atlantic area. And the importance of the Defence Investment Commitment agreed at the Wales Summit in 2014 was reiterated, which sets targets for both investment —the famous 2%—, capabilities —20% of investment should go to new capabilities— and contributions to activities, operations and missions. Even earlier, since the events of 2014, NATO had already begun that process, culminating in the largest reinforcement of our collective defence in a generation; increasing our ability to defend Allies on land, sea, air, cyberspace and space; improving the readiness and availability of our forces; and strengthening and modernising NATO’s Command and Force Structure to meet current and future needs.

This objective has been the focus of much of the Alliance’s collective defence efforts, working around the clock to ensure

that NATO rises to the challenge, including from a doctrinal viewpoint, notably through by adopting the Euro-Atlantic Area Deterrence and Defence Concept this year. For the first time in the Alliance's history, this concept regulates the use of the Allied military instrument in a 360-degree, multi-region, multi-domain approach.

Second, NATO must become stronger politically. To this end, Allies decided at the highest level to increase the level and scope of consultation within the Alliance, making NATO the principal forum for Euro-Atlantic consultation. NATO has always been defined as a political and military organisation, where decisions are of a political nature and the main instrument of implementation is military. It is now a matter of increasing the political facet, broadening the issues to be debated in line with the evolution of the concept of collective defence to that of collective security, a broad concept that includes elements very present in the day-to-day life of our societies, such as resilience or climate change, and which requires a comprehensive effort, a 'whole of government approach'.

NATO is an Alliance of shared values, democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law, all of which are enshrined in the preamble of the founding Washington Treaty. Unity around these values must be the basis of our future decisions and the strength of the political commitment that underpins the transatlantic link.

And third, NATO must become more global, to be capable of meeting challenges that are also more global. With this in mind, it already has a network of partners around the world, including the six European partners (Ireland, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Malta); the seven Mediterranean dialogue countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, Mauritania and Israel); the four Gulf partners of the Istanbul Initiative (Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain); five Central Asian partners (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan); three Caucasus partners (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia); the Eastern neighbourhood partners (Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Moldova and Ukraine); the Asia Pacific partners (Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand), and Iraq, Afghanistan, and Colombia, the latest to join the group of partners.

An important and effective network that the Alliance wants to strengthen both by increasing the level and depth of relations

with our partners, making better use of existing partnership instruments, and by extending the network to new countries wishing to join the network and whose eventual incorporation is in NATO's strategic interests, a combination of what we call 'demand driven' and 'interest driven'.

This third objective of the NATO2030 Initiative is one of the conceptual keys to the current process of strategic reflection within NATO, a process that will culminate at the Madrid Summit next June with the adoption of the next Strategic Concept, to which I will refer later. It is key because we start from the conviction that the challenges ahead can only be met effectively based on unity and allied cohesion, and with the help of our partners. The Alliance remains and will remain a regional, Euro-Atlantic, Alliance, but to fulfil its mission to protect more than a billion people on two continents, it must be able to have a more global outlook and reach. Only in this way will it be able to face the challenges of an era of strategic competition in which some of the threats are generated in diffuse areas and without a clear geographical framework.

A NATO that is therefore stronger militarily, more political and more global, with the goal of being able to respond, from a perspective no longer of collective defence but of collective security, to the threats and challenges of today and tomorrow, with a 360-degree approach. A major change, which, if it is to be implemented decisively, will also require a sharp increase in financial and military resources available to the Alliance, and which must, of course, also include the South and the threats present there in the conviction that security is indivisible.

NATO's role in the South

Euro-Atlantic security is necessarily linked to that of the South. Security challenges in North Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East affect and will continue to affect the security of allies. Over the past three decades, NATO has developed partnerships with countries in the Mediterranean and North African region, as I noted earlier, using cooperative security tools in order to increase their stability in the belief that this has a direct impact on our own security.

Cooperative security is one of NATO's three main tasks, along with Collective Defence and Crisis Management. Enshrined in the 2010 Strategic Concept adopted at the Lisbon Summit, this

core task remains a fundamental aspect of Alliance action, an essential part of the NATO2030 Initiative and of the decisions taken at the Brussels Summit in June 2021. NATO must continue to invest in its partners, strengthening practical cooperation and political dialogue, drawing on their expertise to address specific regional challenges, intrinsically linked to Allied security. This conviction will undoubtedly be at the centre of the debate at the next Summit, to be held in Madrid at the end of June 2022, given that Spain has been a traditional advocate within NATO of the importance of ensuring stability in our strategic neighbourhood, both in the North and East, and of course, given our own geographical situation, in the South.

And it is clear that there is a growing range of security threats and challenges emanating from the South, both from state and non-state actors, including conflicts stemming from fragile and failing states, instability in the Sahel and Iraq, the multiplication of transnational terrorist cells belonging to Daesh or Al-Qaeda, illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons, migration issues, or aggressive disinformation campaigns. In the certainty that security is indivisible, these threats are not only indivisible for states in the region, but ultimately also represent challenges to our own security.

There is no doubt that the fight against terrorism is one of the most urgent challenges of our time. It has been for decades, as Spain knows well, and the emergence of international terrorism with Islamic roots —with the rise of DAESH in 2014— has highlighted, if possible to an even greater extent, the need for NATO to play a role in the fight against terrorism. With this determination, the Alliance decided to join the Global Coalition Against Daesh, to which it contributes with strong political support and its AWACS aircraft to increase knowledge on the ground and the intelligence essential to the fight against terrorism.

To the same end, the Alliance has in recent years promoted increased sharing of information and intelligence among Allies, improving their analytical capabilities, enhancing our readiness and responsiveness to terrorist threats through Special Forces training and improving our military capabilities, and strengthening interoperability with our partners through integration into NATO —and Allied— led operations.

Terrorism, 'in all its forms and manifestations', as all Alliance documents state, is one of the two threats recognised by NATO.

The other being Russia, which, we must not forget, is also present in the South. And while it is an inseparable part of the allied analysis of the South, our agenda in that region of the world intends to be broader and deeper, with clear strategic objectives and lines of work. At the Brussels Summit in 2021, NATO leaders therefore agreed to strengthen our political dialogue and practical cooperation with partners in the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

The relationship with our partners is two-way, combining their interests and ours, in the belief that the relationship is mutually beneficial. Our aim is to build stronger security and defence institutions and capabilities, promote interoperability and help combat terrorism. To do this, we are continuously improving existing cooperation quality: through training and providing more training opportunities for partners; increasing the quality of our mobile teams, which regularly provide training to our partners where it is most needed; providing better support through our Defence Capacity Building (DCB) Initiative in Tunisia, Jordan and our advisory and training mission in Iraq; and expanding areas of common interest and collaboration, including, for example, the impact of climate change on our security. This has enabled our partners in the region to modernise their security and defence sectors, increasing their interoperability and adopting NATO standards in their own armed forces.

Proof of this is that many have actively contributed to our operations in the Balkans or in Afghanistan, demonstrating a high level of professionalism and a high degree of interoperability with our forces.

In the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), comprised of our Gulf partners —Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain—, we are intensifying the use of our Regional Centre in Kuwait, which opened in 2017, as a hub for education and training as well as public diplomacy activities. The NATO ICI Regional Centre has welcomed around 1,000 participants from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to its courses and seminars. It also hosted the North Atlantic Council in 2019, reflecting the importance of NATO's partnerships with ICI countries.

NATO also seeks to expand its public diplomacy activities in the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa). This is critical to achieving our objectives, as national audiences do not always understand the nature of our activities with our partners, nor

our role in the region. Hence the need to increase our political engagement and visibility through high-level visits and activities of various NATO institutions, such as the Defense College in Rome. The so-called 'Hub' for the South is particularly worthy of mention. Established in 2017 as part of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, this centre aims to contribute to a better understanding of the region, improved information sharing and cooperation with regional partners, and enhanced coordination with allies' bilateral activities in the region.

This public diplomacy has been essential in recent months in the wake of the Alliance's abrupt exit from Afghanistan after 20 years of military presence and great economic and human investment. This unexpected ending opened a process of internal reflection that ended in late November with the adoption of a series of conclusions and lessons for the future on crucial aspects of NATO's action, such as crisis management and relationships with our partners, which will no doubt have to be taken into account when drafting the next Strategic Concept in Madrid.

Special mention should be made of the Sahel. Absent from NATO's thinking until recently, it was the subject of a first report adopted by foreign ministers in late 2020 that concludes that the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel and the terrorist threats destabilising several nations in the region have the potential to affect transatlantic security.

However, NATO has only one partner in the Sahel region, Mauritania, with whom it has a strong partnership relationship, and has very recently initiated contacts with the structures of the G5 Sahel, both its secretariat and its Defense College, but not yet with its Joint Force. A multitude of state and multilateral actors already operate in this region, but where it seems clear that an organisation with NATO's experience and excellence in advising and training armed forces and security sector reform would have something to contribute.

The aim would in any case be to contribute to increasing stability in a region that affects our own security, and to do so by seeking our own added value, in coordination with other efforts —both regional and international, in particular those of the European Union and the Coalition for the Sahel— and avoiding duplication and overburdening limited local absorption capacities. This is still an embryonic debate within the Alliance, and the forthcoming Madrid Summit is an excellent opportunity to take it forward.

The Madrid Summit and the new Strategic Concept

One of the key decisions taken at the Brussels Summit, in the framework of the NATO2030 Initiative, was to develop the next Strategic Concept in time for the Madrid Summit in 2022. The Strategic Concept (SC) is the Alliance's highest-ranking document, second only to the Washington Treaty itself. Adopted approximately ten years apart, the current version was adopted in Lisbon in 2010, so a new SC was imminent that realistically reflects the new security environment, reaffirms our unity and values, and underscores NATO's importance as an organisational framework for the collective defence of the Allies, and a transatlantic forum for consultation, coordination and joint action on all matters affecting our defence and security.

A simple glance at the otherwise excellent Lisbon SC clearly shows that a new or at least a revised concept is needed. To give just two examples: the Lisbon SC makes no mention of China and, perhaps most disturbing today, it was drafted when the Russian Federation was an active partner of the Alliance, participating in many of its partnership instruments and with an intense and cordial political dialogue channelled through the NATO-Russia Council. Things have changed greatly.

A new SC must incorporate many of the elements that are at the heart of what the Alliance already does, and what it intends to do in the future. Much of what I have already discussed in this article: strategic competition —again Russia and China— cyber and hybrid threats, resilience, the advantages and challenges of new technologies —AI, quantum technology, 5G or Big Data—, the growing importance of our partners, the need to strengthen our relationship with the EU —unique and essential as the Brussels Summit communiqué points out—, the relevance of the South in our strategic thinking, or global challenges, such as climate change and its impact on security.

And it must do so while retaining the elements of the Lisbon SC that have served us well over the past decade and are widely supported by allies, notably the three core tasks mentioned above, Collective Defence, Crisis Management and Cooperative Security, and the 360-degree approach, which must be consolidated in the new Madrid Strategic Concept, as it will be known from the moment it is adopted at the NATO Summit to be held in the Spanish capital in late June 2022.

As noted at the outset, the 360-degree approach is simple to describe: NATO must be able to respond to any threat, from anywhere, at any time. And I have no doubt that this simple slogan will remain part of the new Strategic Concept. Added value will lie in increasing its weight in the Alliance's thinking and work, fully and honestly incorporating the Southern dimension which, despite consensus and efforts already made by the Alliance, still does not have the same presence and importance as other strategic directions. Working closely with our partners in the region, making the best possible use of our partnership instruments and increasing the financial resources dedicated to cooperative security activities, with the aim of better understanding their needs and making them compatible with our strategic interests.

Spain has much to say in this respect. And not only because the Summit is taking place in our country. Madrid hosted the NATO Summit in 1997, and it was an important occasion, an acknowledged milestone, in the process of NATO's enlargement to include the then Eastern European partners and now allies. And this time, part of our country's DNA is also expected to be present at the Summit itself and to influence the documents adopted there, in particular the Strategic Concept.

The implementation of a true 360-degree approach, shared by all partners —North, East and South— and with the necessary means for its development, will depend to a large extent on it.

Chapter six

The European Union's strategic compass and NATO's strategic concept: two sides of the same coin?

Manuel Selas González

Abstract

The change in the international security paradigm has prompted in recent years numerous exercises to redefine national security strategies. In the European framework, two exercises of multilateral redefinition of strategies have come to coincide in time, which are the result of the initiatives from both organizations trying to respond to the threats and challenges presented by this new paradigm: the one carried out by the Organization of the North Atlantic Treaty and the one carried out by the European Union.

The simultaneity of both processes offers an extraordinary opportunity to strengthen the alignment and coordination of both organizations. Nothing can help the harmonious development of European defense more than following strategic lines coordinated with those of the Alliance, in the conviction that a stronger Europe in defense strengthens NATO and vice versa. From this perspective, at least for the Allies that are also EU Member States, it can be said that Compass and Concept are sides of the same coin, which is that of European security and defense.

Keywords

Compass, concept, alignment, simultaneity, harmonic.

Introduction. A new security context, new responses

We are facing a change of cycle in international relations characterised, among other elements, by the questioning of the conventional security architecture developed after the end of the Cold War. This comes on top of the action of non-state actors, notably transnational terrorist networks, the main protagonists of international instability in the period immediately prior to the current period.

This change, in which Russia's aspiration to regain the Soviet security sphere—in its immediate neighbourhood but also in other arenas such as the Mediterranean and the Sahel— and the emergence of China as a global actor—beyond its economic power—, has accelerated geostrategic competition at all levels and forced other actors to seek ways to confront it, particularly the United States and its European and Eastern allies.

A return to the task of analysing the security context, potential threats, possible support, priorities, objectives, lines of action, instruments has become necessary, or in other words, to define a strategy, understood as the procedure through which decisions are taken in a given scenario in order to achieve one or more objectives. In the end, strategy is nothing more than the connection between the ultimate objectives and the actions to be implemented in order to reach this objective; a plan seeking to achieve a goal, which can be applied to various fields, whether military, political or economic.

The aforementioned security paradigm shift has prompted numerous exercises in redefining national security strategies in recent years (the most recent example being the UK¹), exercises which, in the case of global actors such as the US, have major repercussions at collective level.

Two exercises of multilateral strategy redefinition have coincided in time: by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and by the European Union (EU), the result of initiatives in both organisations that seek to respond to the threats and challenges of this new paradigm. Are the two exercises different sides of the same coin, or are there differences that make them separate

¹ Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy. (16/3/2021).

initiatives, despite having common protagonists? We must look at their essential elements in order to try to answer this question.

Origins

The Strategic Concept

In the case of NATO, the Strategic Concept is a well-established document in the organisation's practice, although it has evolved over time, and three periods can be distinguished²:

- From 1949 to 1968, four Strategic Concepts were elaborated for internal consumption by the organisation, complemented by the so-called 'Three Wise Men Report' of 1956 and the 'Harmel Report' in 1967.
- Two unclassified Strategic Concepts were published in the immediate post-Cold War period, in 1991 and 1999, which responded to the great global change, but especially in the European context, brought about the demise of the Soviet bloc on the one hand (enabling NATO's eastward enlargement) and of the USSR itself on the other (with the establishment of the Russian Federation as successor and new states to the east, west and south).
- Terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 brought the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction to the forefront. NATO underwent major internal reforms to adapt military structures and capabilities to equip members for new tasks, such as the mission in Afghanistan, but also political tasks, deepening and broadening its partnerships. These changes are reflected in the current Concept in force, approved at the Lisbon Summit in November 2010.

The drafting and adoption of the Lisbon Concept was preceded by the work and recommendations of a 'Panel of Experts', selected by the Allies and chaired by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. Again —although there had certainly already been comments on the matter in the corridors of NATO headquarters in Brussels— it is the recommendations of the Panel of Experts launched after the London Leaders' Meeting (December 2019)

² https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm

that openly state that³ 'NATO must update the 2010 Strategic Concept'.

The Group, co-chaired by former German Defence Minister Thomas Mazière and former US Under Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Wes Mitchell, noted that changes since 2010 prevented the current Concept from being an adequate basis for responding to the current geopolitical environment and that not having an updated Strategic Concept significantly affects the ability to anticipate major threats, while increasing the risks of disagreement or improvisation in times of crisis.

The recommendation was taken up by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in his 'NATO 2030 Initiative' for the Alliance's political adaptation⁴, finally endorsed at the June 2021 Summit in Brussels⁵, with a succinct Allied invitation to the Secretary General to 'lead the process to develop the next Strategic Concept, to be negotiated and agreed by the Council in Permanent Session and endorsed by NATO leaders at the next Summit', referring to the Madrid Summit in 2022.

The Strategic Compass

European security and defence policy, which affects an area of exceptional sensitivity for Member States, has always been conditioned by its intergovernmental nature, by the rule of consensus and the extra-budgetary funding that accompanies it.

Its progress has been much slower and more limited than the rest of the Union's policies, one might even say that of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in which it is embedded (first as the Foreign Security and Defence Policy, FSDP, and currently as the Common Security and Defence Policy, CSDP). The background to the current Strategic Compass can be found in the Security Strategies elaborated by the EU in the first two decades of the 21st century:

- The first, the 2003 European Security Strategy ('A Secure Europe in a Better World'), was promoted by the then Secretary General of the EU Council and High Representative for the

³ NATO 2030: United for a New Era. (25/11/2020). Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group appointed by the NATO Secretary General.

⁴ Food for Thought Paper: NATO 2030. (11/2/2021). A Transatlantic Agenda for the Future. Unclassified PO(2021)0053.

⁵ NATO Brussels Summit Communiqué. (14/6/2021). Para 6.h.

Common Foreign and Security Policy, ('Mr. CFSP') Javier Solana, appears in a context of deep division among member states over the Iraq war and on the eve of the biggest enlargement in the organisation's history. It was a first attempt to comprehensively address the EU's role as a global security actor, albeit essentially conceptual and without assigning specific measures to be taken.

- The second, the 2016 Global Strategy for the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union ('Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe'), promoted by the High Representative and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini, establishes priorities for external action in which security aspects stand out, revealing a clear evolution with respect to the 2003 text, 'an important qualitative leap in what is expected of a strategic document, starting with the use of a more precise language on security and defence, followed by the importance given to strategic autonomy and the acquisition of military capabilities, and ending with the will to get involved in the processes of conflict resolution and international crisis management'⁶.

Attached to the 2016 Strategy was a 'Security and Defence Implementation Plan' that proposed a 'level of ambition' and a list of concrete measures (13) to achieve it 'in a credible manner'⁷, in conjunction with the European Commission's European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), setting out three strategic priorities: responding to external conflicts and crises, strengthening partners' capabilities, and protecting the Union and its citizens.

In developing this plan, and with the added incentive of the imminent exit of the United Kingdom from the EU—a country that had systematically been blocking the progress of the CSDP— numerous initiatives were launched that are linked to fulfilling this 'level of ambition', such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Defence Review (CARD), the European Defence Fund and the Civilian CSDP Compact, basically linked to the development of the capabilities needed to achieve strategic EU autonomy.

⁶ Alaminos Hervás, M.ª Á. (27/11/2018). Las estrategias de seguridad de la UE (2003-2016): contexto político, cambios esenciales y evolución de las prioridades políticas europeas relativas a África en materia de seguridad. *Comillas Journal of International Relations* N.º 13.

⁷ Implementation Plan on Security and Defence. (14/11/2016). Note 14392/16 from the HR/VP to the Council of the European Union.

It is in this context that, in the framework of a workshop dedicated to 'coherence between EU defence initiatives' in September 2019, Germany presented a proposal it called 'Strategic Compass', with the aim of improving synergies between the different initiatives and meeting the EU's level of ambition in the area of security and defence, which would be placed hierarchically just below the 2016 Global Security Strategy.

The aim was to 'operationalise' the level of ambition set by the latter, since there would be a gap to fill between the level of the Implementation Plan and the technical level of results of the different initiatives and instruments, which would be taken care of by the Member States (as opposed to the responsibility of the EEAS and the Commission in the Implementation Plan and the EDAP).

Internal debate on the German proposal led to the approval, at the informal General Affairs Council of Defence Ministers in June 2020, of 'the start of work towards the adoption of a Strategic Compass in 2022', based on an analysis of the security context, setting out and prioritising EU security and defence objectives, proposing specific measures to address the challenges and threats identified, developing capabilities for them, and relying on partners where necessary.

Objectives - content

The Strategic Concept

NATO's Strategic Concept, a document with more than seventy years of history, 'outlines NATO's enduring purpose and nature, its fundamental security tasks, and the challenges and opportunities it faces in a changing security environment. It also specifies the elements of the Alliance's approach to security and provides guidelines for its political and military adaptation'⁸. The organisation itself, therefore, does not state specific objectives, but rather points out their content. In other words, it is basically a statement of what should guide NATO's action, what it should do, in sufficiently flexible terms. There is, however, a second objective, closely linked to the main goal, which is to show the rest of the international community how NATO views the security context and what the organisation's course of action will be in the coming period.

⁸ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm

In the organisation's current Strategic Concept, the Lisbon 2010 Strategic Concept, this relationship between objectives and content takes the form of a brief analysis of the threats in the environment and the establishment of the Alliance's core tasks: collective security, crisis management and cooperative security (partnerships). The rest of the document, except the section on NATO adaptation and reform, is devoted to developing these fundamental tasks, such as deterrence and defence associated with collective security (including capabilities and the nuclear issue), crisis management mechanisms (with proposals for measures to be developed) and the most important partnership relations (with respect to key partners such as the EU and the UN, the 'open door policy').

The Strategic Compass

The Council Conclusions of June 2020⁹ describe four objectives for the document:

- First, it must 'enhance and guide' the implementation of the level of ambition outlined in the 'Implementation Plan' agreed in the context of the 2016 Global Security Strategy.
- Secondly, 'it could further contribute to the development of the European security and defence culture'.
- Third, it will 'define policy orientations, goals and specific objectives in areas such as crisis management, resilience, capacity building and partnerships'.
- Finally, it must 'provide coherent guidance' to EU security and defence initiatives that have emerged since 2016.

HR/VP Josep Borrell used perhaps much more explicit terms in the statement he sent to the press on 12 November 2021¹⁰, when member states received the first draft of the document for discussion in the Council in 'jumbo' format just three days later: 'The compass is designed to answer three questions: Which challenges and threats do we face? How can we better pool our assets and manage them effectively? And what is the best way to project Europe's influence as both a regional and global actor?'

⁹ Council Conclusions on Security and Defence. (17/6/2020). Note by the General Secretariat of the Council 8910.

¹⁰ A Strategic Compass for Europe. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/eu-strategic-compass-by-josep-borrell-2021-11/spanish>

The European External Action Service (EEAS) proposed translating these objectives into the Compass text with a 'scoping paper' distributed in February 2021¹¹ which implicitly proposes a content proposal: an initial chapter with an analysis of challenges and threats, including principles and values to guide action; and a second part that should describe what, in the light of the analysis, the EU should do in terms of crisis management (first 'basket') and resilience (second 'basket'), what capacities will be needed (third 'basket') and how to strengthen EU support and cooperation with partners (fourth 'basket').

After outlining the structure, the scoping paper comprehensively sets out, basket by basket, a proposal for general EU objectives in each of these areas (a total of 14), including initiatives already underway in these areas —PESCO and the civilian Compact in the capabilities basket— and others that are potentially on the horizon.

Process

The Strategic Concept

NATO has not codified a procedure for drafting such documents; according to the mandate issued by Allies at the last Brussels Summit, the NATO Secretary General is in charge of leading the drafting process, and therefore has a significant degree of discretion. Consultations with the Allies certainly began immediately after the Summit, with the aim of ascertaining the elements of consensus and controversy among member states in shaping their proposal.

On this occasion, in a similar way to how he managed his 'NATO 2030 Initiative', Secretary General Stoltenberg has decided to bring the debate on the Strategic Concept to Member State audiences (and also, of course, to other security and defence actors) by holding a series of seminars entitled 'Towards NATO's Strategic Concept', on elements that are considered fundamental to this reflection.

Deterrence and defence, international stability and defence of the rules-based order, future challenges (new technologies) and partnerships have been chosen as themes for the seminars,

¹¹ Scoping Paper: Preparation of the Strategic Compass. (8/2/2021). Note from EEAS to Delegations 5986.Document partially accessible to the public 21/5/2021.

which combine a restricted Allied format with a public diplomacy component.

Following the NATO 2030 model, the NATO International Secretariat is likely to organise further public diplomacy events related to the Concept, with a view to the Madrid 2022 Summit. The contribution these actions can make to the process is not negligible, especially those coming from public organisations in Allied states, such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly or recognised centres of thought in the field of diplomacy and defence. However, the negotiations that will take place in the second half of 2022 within the Atlantic Council will have a view to adopting a final text to be presented in Madrid in June will certainly be definitive.

The Strategic Compass

In accordance with the timeline established following the Council Conclusions of June 2020¹², the process started with the development of a '360 degree' risk and threat analysis by the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), composed of the EU Intelligence Centre (INTCEN) and the EU Military Staff Intelligence (EUMS) based on input from Member States' civilian and military intelligence. It was presented to them in November 2020.

Although its content is classified, the EEAS made public a memorandum¹³ which includes some key points about its content: it points out global trends, regional trends and finally those directly targeting the EU; it does not offer a worldwide view of risks or crises, but focuses on those directly affecting the EU, without prioritising, or which was foreseeable since it was decided that intelligence agencies (technical level) would provide the elements of the analysis, avoiding potentially divisive discussions given the variety of interpretations of what poses a risk or threat to each of the member states.

Distribution of the analysis was followed by a 'strategic dialogue' phase that was to lead to the development of the Compass document during the second half of 2021. This phase has been going on for almost a year, until HR/VP Borrell forwarded the first

¹² https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/towards_a_strategic_compass-2021-11.pdf

¹³ Questions and answers: Threat Analysis - a background for the Strategic Compass. (20/11/2020). https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020_11_20_memo_questions_and_answers_-_threat_analysis_-_copy.pdf

draft of the Strategic Compass to member states in November 2021. The dialogue took the form of informal documents, 'non papers' or 'food for thought', which served to negotiate and establish positions between states.

Seminars and workshops were also held—including at ministerial level— by Member States themselves and by other EU institutions, notably the EU Institute for Security Studies, EUISS. All this, informing the work of the EEAS, which is the penholder of the exercise.

After the first draft was distributed in November 2021, work on the text will be carried out through the usual channels for discussion of documents in the field of the Common Security and Defence Policy; debates in the Security Policy Committee, PSC, and its working groups—political-military and civilian crisis management—to then move on to the general mechanism for approval by Member States, which for the Strategic Compass is scheduled for March 2022.

Euro-Atlantic security vs European security?

A comparative analysis of the two processes yields a first obvious result: the chronology would offer a possibility of interaction, since in both cases the processes coincide in time; that of the NATO Concept's content began at the very moment Allies agreed to its revision in June 2021—although it will not enter a conclusive drafting stage until a few weeks before the Madrid Summit—and that of the Compass had begun in 2020. However, the fact that the Compass is to be adopted three months before the Concept could also lead one to think that, objectively, the former is more likely to influence the latter, since the Concept debate would still be open when the Compass debate has already been concluded.

On the other hand, the time factor leads to major differences in terms of process. The Concept is an instrument that NATO has been using for seven decades, refined by practical experimentation and established as a guide for the organisation, while The Compass is a novelty within the EU, with no precedent as previous strategy documents are not comparable in objectives or scope. The current Concept will be revised within a year, the year between the Brussels and Madrid NATO Summits, while the Compass, which starts from scratch, will be completed when it is endorsed by Member States, plus two years since its proposal emerged.

Apart from the tradition/innovation binomial, the mechanisms put in place in both organisations to promote the drafting of documents clearly move at very different coordinates, both because of the very different scope of competence and pace of work of the respective 'penholders' (NATO's International Secretariat, whose structure is headed by the Secretary General, and the EEAS in the EU, headed by the HR/VP) and the number of bodies/agencies/institutions involved in the work (the entire CFSP structure, from the PSC and its working groups, the External Relations Group, RELEX, the Permanent Representatives Committee and finally the Council, on the EU side, while for NATO it is a competence reserved for the Atlantic Council). An example of this is the mobilisation of national and EU institutions necessary to complete the Compass threat and challenge analysis.

In terms of content (taking as a reference the background of the NATO Concepts and the elements that have been made public with respect to the Compass, because the draft of the latter is classified and no text of the Concept exists yet) both begin in a similar way, with an analysis of the risks and threats facing the respective organisations and the identification of the organisation's tasks, followed by the organisation's response through the establishment of a series of objectives and tasks, the 'core tasks' in the case of NATO and the 'baskets' in the case of the Compass.

The core tasks (collective security, crisis management and cooperative security) and baskets (crisis management, resilience, capacities and partnerships) appear to conceptually share objectives —and potentially measures or actions— with regard to crisis management aspects, and the status and treatment of partners to be counted on.

However, a first and significant difference can be noted: in its treatment of Alliance deterrence and defence, the Concept includes nuclear force, an element that cannot appear in the Compass since the only EU member with such a capability is France and it is not even integrated into NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, 'retaining an independent nuclear deterrent'¹⁴. In contrast, the Compass is likely to include, at some level of detail, elements

¹⁴ Statements by the President of the French Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy, on the occasion of France's return to NATO's military structure. Speech at the École Militaire de Paris. (11/3/2009).

relating to CSDP civilian missions, which will not appear in the Concept statements.

The different consideration of collective security is also a major difference in the prioritisation of the two documents. This 'core task', which is the founding essence of NATO, embodied in the famous Article 5 of the Washington Treaty¹⁵ (in fact, many Allies consider it to be the first of the three hierarchically) does not appear among the Compass objectives set out in the Council Conclusions of June 2020, even though there is a similar article in the EU Treaty, 42.7¹⁶, although it is true that this recognises that for EU member states that are also NATO members, NATO will continue to be 'the foundation of their collective defence and the organisation for its implementation'.

The centrality of the collective security task in the Concept and NATO and the lack of reference to it in the Compass objectives perfectly illustrates the essential difference in content between the two documents: the tasks defined in the Strategic Concept are the core tasks of the organisation as such, its *raison d'être*, while those included in the Compass are obviously only a part of those of the EU, and many of them in need of further development, while those of NATO have been in place for some time, with the new Concept providing new strategies for their development. Its importance for NATO is foundational, while the EU is innovating in the field of security and defence with the Compass.

¹⁵ '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 and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.'

¹⁶ 'If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States. Commitments and cooperation in this area shall be consistent with commitments under the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which, for those States which are members of it, remains the foundation of their collective defence and the forum for its implementation'.

One could use as a simile that of a building constructed over time, in which it is necessary either to reorganise the rooms, extend them or add annexes (the Concept) as opposed to a new construction, which must use certain pre-existing elements and coordinate with new ones (the Compass, which in addition to offering an innovative strategic guide must manage its coherence with the initiatives already underway in that area). From this point of view, the accumulated differences in analysis would lead to the conclusion that these are not two sides of the same coin, but rather two different currencies... were it not for the fact that 21 NATO members are also EU members, and for them, the web of relationships that dual membership generates transforms the vision of the scope and implications of both processes.

Allies and EU Member States share the principles and values linked to the defence of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the rules-based international order, and NATO and the EU generally operate along similar lines in terms of security needs, but the dissonances generated by the different national interests and geopolitical constraints of those member states that are not simultaneously members of both organisations —and even on certain issues those of some that are— create complex situations that have come to question the compatibility of EU progress in security and defence with the coverage provided by NATO.

Indeed, for the Allies that are EU members, the EU's progress in security and defence, especially since the publication of the EU's 2016 Comprehensive Security Strategy, the development of the CSDP, EU military operations and civilian missions, and the launch of initiatives aimed at providing the Union with a capacity to act, has made coordination between the two organisations less of an option and more of a necessity.

Efficiency in the allocation of limited resources, both in terms of contributing capacities to the actions and initiatives of both organisations and in terms of funding, is one of the reasons for establishing such coordination, synchronising the capacity cycle and investing in a smart and harmonised way in projects of common interest: complementarity is key.

With a view to raising the level of the relationship with the adoption of a new EU-NATO Joint Declaration, the third after those of 2016 and 2018, the simultaneity of the Compass and Concept processes offers an extraordinary opportunity to strengthen the alignment and coordination of both organisations, which the Joint

Declarations have extended to eight specific areas (from the fight against hybrid threats to political dialogue, including defence industries and strengthening partner capabilities) with more than 70 joint actions.

Nothing could be more conducive to the harmonious development of European defence than following strategic lines coordinated with those of the Alliance, in the belief that a stronger Europe in defence strengthens NATO and vice versa. From this point of view, at least for the Allies that are also EU Member States, one could say that Compass and Concept are in a sense flip sides of the same coin, that of European security and defence.

Chapter seven

NATO: rear-view mirror and high beam

Pere Vilanova

Abstract

NATO is, above all, a compendium of paradoxes. NATO's "strategic disorientation" stems from the fact that the scenario of a real war with Russia is highly unlikely and, as long as there is no military threat or attack against a member state, NATO cannot respond militarily. It is precisely this peculiar "worldview" in which NATO has lived since 1992, from which its "strategic disorientation" derives, being us unable to determine yet whether the crisis is "structural" or "conjunctural", or whether it has acquired an irreversible dimension or not.

But the conclusion is clear: it is very difficult to define the final meaning of NATO in the current 21st century's post-bipolar world, given the difficulty of defining a "stable and global strategic doctrine" in a deregulated world. It is also very difficult to translate a strategic doctrine into a functional and operational military structure adapted to intervening in scenarios, with a minimum of credibility. The new strategic concept should attempt to answer this question, although it cannot be expected to include major restructuring either in its principles or in the complex relations between Europe and the United States.

Keywords

Paradoxes, disorientation, peculiar, difficulty, plausible, question mark.

An organisation full of paradoxes

NATO, the military organisation of the Atlantic Alliance, has reached the respectable age of seventy-three - which is no mean feat. Some speak of a "third age", others of a "second youth", while the truth is, in fact, more difficult to read.

In 2022, NATO is, above all, a compendium of paradoxes. The first is that, although military in profile, NATO presents itself as an eminently political alliance that has traversed contemporary history from 1949 to the present day, surviving the Cold War, the fall of Soviet Communism —its very *raison d'être*— and these last twenty-five "post-bipolar" years that are so complicated to unravel.

The second paradox is that since 1949 the founding text, the Washington Treaty - or more formally the North Atlantic Treaty - appears to have successfully fulfilled its function as an international treaty. It has not had to be modified, except for two minor details: in 1951, when a mention of the Mediterranean islands, member state territory, was added (at the request of Turkey and Greece, who joined in 1951); and in 1962, when the anachronistic mention of the "French departments" (Algeria), which were included in the Alliance's concept of territorial defence, disappeared. Rather, what has changed - and more than once - are aspects like military operational structures, the number of members to reach the thirty there are today, and other complementary structures.

But the paradox lies in the detail. Where the Treaty is very precise is in its geographical field of application, which is literally the Atlantic north of the Tropic of Cancer, including the Mediterranean islands that are part of the Member States of the Treaty. It does not, however, speak of any Meridian, nor does it set any limits for action towards the East. Therefore, if we assume that the field of operations must literally be the North Atlantic, including the Mediterranean islands of the Balearics, Corsica, Sardinia and any island or islet belonging to Turkey or Greece, then should we not ask ourselves what NATO is doing in Afghanistan? In Brussels, the headquarters of the Atlantic Alliance, these questions do not seem to garner much interest.

A third paradox is even more serious. There is unanimous agreement among experts that NATO has fulfilled the functions assigned to it throughout the Cold War: deterrence against the central, indeed the only, enemy, which was the Soviet Union. There was no effective direct war between East and West, even

though NATO and the Warsaw Pact (the Soviet bloc's counterpart organisation) stared each other in the face for forty-five years. It is true that here have been a few scares - the Berlin crisis (1953, 1961), the revolts in Budapest (1956) and Prague (1968), the uprisings in Poland (1980), and the Cuban missile crisis (1961), to name some. In terms of deterrence, seen from today's perspective, it seems that NATO has worked because "nothing happened" directly between the United States and the Soviet Union (and their respective allies), at least in Europe. In other words, NATO can be said to have functioned on the basis of never having entered into operations: never, no operations.

However, since 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union, NATO has been involved in several real operations (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, piracy in the Indian Ocean). The problem is that the impression given by these operations (some of which worked well in relation to their intended purpose) is that they have not gone quite right, that they have not quite worked properly, even in the more successful cases like Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. This is the classic problem of moving from theory to practice: events - in international relations like in everyday life - often do not quite go "by the book". And this is no small question.

The fourth paradox is even more serious, and has really come to the fore in these years of the "post-bipolar" world. NATO won the Cold War, few doubt this, but it was so strategically disoriented by the disappearance of the visible and credible "enemy" that was the Soviet Union, its frontal threat, that it has still not recovered. This is partly because it won the Cold War without entering into a single military battle, with no surrender of enemy troops. In fact, "playing dirty", the adversary was volatilised from the inside, "imploding" as a result of Perestroika, which did a job that was enthusiastically completed by the fifteen federative republics that made up the USSR.

Although these republics became fifteen new internationally recognised sovereign states, Russia, long before President Putin, has wanted to make them to "come home", or at least be brought back under its direct sphere of influence. Many people in Europe do not seem to have understood much of what is happening in Ukraine, but since 1992, Russia has encouraged, tolerated, or condoned at least five territorial amputations of neighbouring ex-Soviet sovereign states: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria and now parts of Ukraine. The paradox is

that NATO, faced with this situation, can do little beyond token manoeuvres in the Baltic States or Poland.

NATO's "strategic disorientation"

Let us start from the basis that the scenario of an actual war with Russia is, in our view, entirely out of the question, and furthermore, Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty are clear: as long as there is no military threat or attack against a member state, NATO cannot respond. It is precisely this peculiar "worldview" that NATO has taken on since 1992 that has led to its "strategic disorientation".

This is why it is worth analysing what is an essential document in NATO doctrine, the so-called *Strategic Concept*, the essential reference document that NATO produces from time to time to set out its position in the world and in the different scenarios with which it may be confronted. The current one was produced in 2010, the previous ones in 1999 (50th anniversary of the Treaty) and 1991, and prior to this the few that were produced were much more "Cold War", that is, ideologically and operationally conventional. The 2010 report (like those of 1999 and 1991) is deserved of careful attention, because it describes this strategic "misalignment" well.

The first realisation is that Atlantic security debates attract very little attention in the United States; in fact, they attract almost no interest at all. This issue has given rise to very conflicting positions within the American political class, not to mention among public opinion¹. If there are nuances, they have more to do with the consequences that certain decisions, for example ones concerning the arms industry, may have on the other side of the Atlantic. It will not be easy, therefore, to *re-establish* the transatlantic relationship as it existed before 2000, let alone create a new one, or to achieve unanimities that no longer exist and are unlikely to return.

Ultimately, what has "always" (or since 1992) preoccupied analysts is one very specific thing: to determine whether Europeans will be able to move forward with a Common Foreign Security Policy (and its correlative Common Security and Defence Policy), and if

¹ As noted by Vilboux, N. (2003). Le débat sur la PESD aux Etats Unis. *Vers une politique européenne de sécurité et défense*. Paris, Economica.

so, whether this will be to the detriment of *solidarity* (according to some) or *discipline* (according to others) among its members.

Among the US elite, this translates into two different types of attitudes that are reflected in successive administrations: from Clinton to Biden to Bush and above all to Trump, there are significant differences that have mainly to do with their respective global conceptions of America's role in the world (*soft power* or *hard power*, leading or imposing, multilateralism or unilateralism). And this has always determined NATO's being and future.

The first, deeply rooted in the isolationist American tradition, distrusts Europe, and does not rule out a strategy of relative *disengagement*, based on the premise that Europeans must fully assume all of their defence obligations. This is above all a budgetary argument.

The second, more centrist, more cosmopolitan, and likewise aimed at pursuing the defence of the *national interest* (the true compass of all American foreign policy since F. D. Roosevelt), is genuinely concerned with relations with Europe and would, therefore, also like to see Europeans progress in security and defence matters, including improving their own capabilities, but in a way that is compatible—or even in synergy—with NATO, and under NATO's leadership. In other words, the better Europeans get at security, the stronger NATO will be, and the stronger NATO will be, the better it will be for everyone. Of course, the Brookings Institution, Foreign Affairs magazine, the Rand Corporation (with nuances), and the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, all advocate this view.

This second current of opinion considers, for example, that NATO needs to be flexible enough to allow its European partners to act autonomously on issues that have a uniquely European agenda—all or several of them—but in consultation with the Atlantic Alliance, thereby verifying that the United States does not consider the issue to be on NATO's agenda.

While in the early 1990s the United States considered the Balkans to be a matter "of and for" the Europeans, adopting an expressly isolationist attitude, in 1995 President Clinton burst decisively onto the scene, considering it to be "everybody's business", i.e., including his and NATO's.

Let us attempt, then, to start from the hypothesis that we are not yet in a position to determine whether the crisis (which few

question) of the transatlantic link is “structural” or “conjunctural”, and whether, if it is the former (structural), it has acquired an irreversible dimension. The erratic manner in which the Biden administration (as of mid-February 2022) has been acting is more disconcerting to his allies than anything else.

Against this backdrop, many continue to argue that the transatlantic link has been “positive” (or “good”), and that it will therefore “necessarily overcome its crisis”. Why is this assertion made? The truth is that there are numerous moments in history where institutional, political or normative phenomena, regardless of their performance, have entered into crisis and have subsequently disappeared when the objective conditions for doing so have come about. Insisting, for example, that the link will remain in place because the United States and Europe “share the same values” is a misleading argument.

While on the one hand they may share certain values, on the other they not only have different, but “qualitatively” different, perhaps even incompatible, worldviews. Indeed, the transatlantic link was an explicit product of the bipolar world, a direct consequence of the Cold War; and so, with bipolar logic gone, why would it not be affected?

In the same vein, it is worth remembering that military and/or economic superiority means we cannot ignore “interdependence” as a constant, determining, objective and unavoidable structural element. From this perspective, it is much easier to understand that, no matter how much military superiority one has, unilateralism is not an à la carte option, with the most powerful actor deciding to choose, not choose, use temporarily, or marginalise at will. On the contrary, multilateralism is the applicable version of interdependence and is unavoidable when you have tried to get out of it only to end up voluntarily going back to it, or else reality has done so.

The contradictions of US policy

And we have also witnessed an interesting large-scale confirmation of the interactions between foreign and domestic policy, which has taken place in the United States, in Europe and all around the world. In the case of the United States, 11 September 2001 produced a phenomenal national consensus, which then led to ways in which the administration’s exercise of power has, over

time, revealed its most devastating effects. From the Patriot Act and the Executive Order creating military tribunals to the excesses against prisoners in Guantánamo and Iraq, the track record is overwhelming.

Indeed, the Bush and Trump presidencies will, over time, be exceptionally useful for international political analysts both in terms of their global dimension and their effects on domestic politics. It should be noted, however, that they were very different from each other. President Bush had a foreign policy that we can analyse, describe and if necessary criticise from a global security point of view. President Trump's, no. His is a totally different case. His foreign policy can generally be considered erratic, difficult to make sense of, seemingly counterproductive and deliberately offensive to Europe, to NATO, and to the transatlantic link itself.

Let us recall that twenty years ago on 24 April 2001, just months before 9/11, the New York Times published a special monograph on "Bush's America", the front page stating, under the headline "A President with a New Vision", that President Bush:

"Arrives with a radically different vision of his government and of America in all matters relating to the world and its problems..." In global affairs, President Bush took on a much more limited international role on behalf of the world's only superpower. He does not believe that the US is responsible for Middle East peace negotiations. Nor does he believe that the United States should help 'nation-building', whether in the Balkans or the Middle East".

In other words, in the ten months following his election, specialists perceived the new president as a supporter of a return to the most closed isolationism (predominant, notably, in US foreign policy since Franklin D. Roosevelt).

But this localist phase was short-lived. One might think that this was true until 11 September when, as a widely held view goes, the attacks in New York and Washington changed the world system. But the diagnosis of the above-mentioned article is significant and is not, by itself, nullified by 11 September. What we need is a different answer, in the form of a question: in the absence of a clear and well-defined foreign policy, did 9/11 not perhaps provide the White House with a foreign policy simile, a substitute global strategy (understanding "*substitute global strategy*" here as a caricature of what George Kennan, or Henry Kissinger, meant by *Grand Strategy*), or even a strategic outlook on an international

scale? And why was there no “*moral*” dimension, no less global but serving the “*national interest*” of the United States? This is where NATO had to be brought into the equation.

In the same vein, in 1999 (under Clinton), Samuel Huntington published an article that had nothing to do with the clash of civilisations, entitled “The Lonely Superpower”², in which he analysed US foreign policy along the following lines:

“Neither the Administration, Congress nor citizens are willing to undergo the risks of unilateral global leadership...American public opinion sees no need to exhaust efforts and resources to secure hegemony. In a 1997 poll, only 13% of the population said they preferred the United States to have a pre-eminent role (in the world), while 74% said they wanted the United States to share power with other countries. A majority, between 55% and 66%, believe that what happened in Europe, Asia or Canada has little or no impact on their lives..... at the same time, by acting as if the world were unipolar, the United States may become increasingly isolated... In case after case, the United States is increasingly alone, with few fellow travellers, facing the rest of the world.” The cases in question include the debt to the United Nations³, sanctions against Iraq, Cuba, Libya, the landmine treaty, the greenhouse effect, the International Criminal Court and others. On all these issues the US is on one side and the international community on the other.

What Samuel Huntington said is extraordinary, and he said it in 1999, in an article much less well known and cited than his book “The Clash of Civilisations”, referring to a second Clinton term that we all now tend to remember as one of “soft” foreign policy leadership and a firm commitment to multilateralism, consensus-building and stable coalitions. This raises a number of problems. One is the fracture (or *gap*) between the American public’s perception of US priorities in the world and the global agenda of successive presidencies since 1945.

Another is how to distinguish between conjunctural and structural changes in US foreign policy and thus in the *transatlantic link*. Huntington’s reflections seemed to be about Bush’s policies, while they are really about Clinton’s; they are certainly not about

² In Spain, published in *Política Exterior* n.º 71. (1999).

³ It is well known that the United States was both one of the largest donors and the largest defaulter in late payments and, surprisingly, these payments were brought up to date in the weeks following 11 September 2001.

Trump's, and we don't know what they say to us about Biden. This is an analytical misunderstanding. Because in fact there is a strong element of *continuity* in US foreign policy, in the sense that every presidential administration since the second world war has pursued the defence of the *National Interest* on a global scale, and from a global strategic perspective.

At the root of this —if we agree on 1941 as the key date for the definitive burial of isolationism in foreign policy— is the end of the Second World War and, even more so, the beginning of the Cold War. In 1947, three key formulations emerged as the structure underpinning the new US agenda and worldview. The Truman Doctrine (and its global vision of the post-war world), the Marshall Plan (for economic reconstruction, but with an ambitious strategy of integration of the defeated countries, Germany and Japan), and the doctrine of "containment of communism".

The 1947 formulations related to the world strategic scenario established a clear and explicit linkage between the United States and Western Europe, based on a condition of the immediate past (the World War) and an element of the present (we refer to the "*present*" as the conjuncture of 1947).

The reference to the immediate past was, of course, the alliances forged during World War II within the Western bloc, and the 1945 consensus and its corollary in the creation of the United Nations. The conditioning factor of the time, in 1947, was convincingly the outbreak of the Cold War, the nature of the Soviet threat, and its complex expression through a clear territorial visualisation (East versus West, Europe split in two, later the Berlin Wall, etc.). This was accompanied by a clear structural confrontation, bloc versus bloc, with the term "bloc" including a territorial aspect, an explicit geographical delimitation, a certain type of system of government, an economic model, and an ideological formulation, capitalism/democracy versus communism/dictatorship. And, above all, a deployment of equally conceptually clear "defensive" means: conventional military arsenal and conventional military deployment, to which should be added nuclear deterrence, ideological competition, and competition to gain influence on the periphery (since, on European soil, the game rapidly turned into a "draw").

It is easy to understand from where we stand today that in a context like this, the transatlantic link had logic, it had substance, it made "sense", and above all it had "legitimacy" in political

and social terms. The nature of the Soviet threat was perceived with sufficient shared intensity that other divergent interests (between the US and Europe, and/or Europeans with each other) were seen as subsidiary. But the basic idea is precisely this: "The transatlantic link was born and grew in a very specific context, which left little room for European decision-making autonomy".

The difficulty of achieving a commonly accepted allied doctrine

But what does the Biden administration expect or demand of NATO at this juncture? Years ago, at the 2004 Atlantic Summit in Istanbul —where NATO welcomed seven new members and decided to expand its presence in Afghanistan and end its presence in Bosnia— the United States called for subordination, or if you prefer, "accommodation" of the Europeans to its agenda, disguised as a "partnership" among equals. Given that the "formal" rule of decision-making in NATO has always been consensus, tension has since been inevitable. Bush did not get from his partners what he demanded on Iraq, nor indeed on Afghanistan, although the ISAF mission later served to make amends.

In the intervening years, NATO's structure, however one looks at it, has been undergoing a not inconsiderable crisis. From Europe, as an organisation, NATO has traditionally been seen (in the context of the bipolar world) as a necessary and useful one, but at the same time as an uncomfortable expression of US hegemony in matters of collective security and defence.

During the Cold War, and despite the ups and downs of changing circumstances (tension, escalation, *détente*, containment, deterrence), this debate was never openly exposed, buried as it was under the perception of the Soviet threat. On the one hand, the US was accused of preventing the emergence of a genuine "European defence pillar", while on the other hand the Europeans, or it would be more accurate to speak of the European "establishment" (governments, economic elites, most of the political elites), readily admitted that they felt safer under the NATO umbrella.

Moreover, much of the European public (and not just the communist or radical left) took badly to the idea that what the United States wanted —and got— was NATO as an instrument of "its" foreign policy, rather than a common transatlantic policy. However, given that what the allies had in common on both sides

of the Atlantic outweighed what divided them (in terms of foreign agendas), tension of this kind within the Atlantic Alliance would be kept from mounting for several decades without too much trouble⁴.

But the conclusion is undeniable: given that it is a disjointed and disordered international system, the ultimate meaning of NATO in the post-bipolar world at the beginning of the 21st century is hard to define. The reasons, which have already been exposed, are manifold, although they can really be reduced to two. The first is the difficulty of defining a "stable and global strategic doctrine" in a deregulated world, and one that, as a strategy, has the "visual clarity and performance" that sustained the transatlantic link during the forty years of the Cold War. The second difficulty is to translate this improbable strategic doctrine into a functional, operational military structure adapted to minimally credible and plausible intervention scenarios.

Ten years after the fall of the Wall, under the pretext of the 50th anniversary celebrations of its founding, the 1999 Washington Summit of the Atlantic Alliance attempted to resolve this equation by formulating an attempt at doctrinal recasting. The document, which today seems abstract, generalist, timeless and ill-adapted to current times, presents two pillars: the affirmation that the Alliance, as a political association between allies, is still fully valid and that its Charter has not lost its political meaning; and the will for the military structure to adapt to the new scenario.

The same intent is expressed in NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept. But this attempt at re-foundation - and one need only read its texts today to realise this - was undermined by two events. There is widespread temptation to mention only the first of these: 9/11. The attacks on that day "changed the world"; and while we do not conform to this thesis, we do concede that the impact on the "abstraction and timelessness" of NATO's supposedly "new doctrine" was considerable. Not to be forgotten is the assertion (repeatedly invoked by the White House since September 2001) that "it is operations that determine coalitions, not the other way around".

To this we can add the radical discrepancy over how to operate against international terrorism (the relationship between means

⁴ Although the crisis provoked by France in the 1960s and the "Euromissile crisis" in the 1980s were two episodes of major importance that precisely certify the Alliance's capacity to overcome its contradictions.

and ends, between effects and causes, and the legal limits to counter-terrorist action) and growing incompatibility in terms of the conception of rights and freedoms (what happened in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib was not simply a “mild misunderstanding” between allies, but signalled a fracture of incompatibilities and, at its core, of values), neither in any way minor or accidental. In the light of those years, Europe and the United States will have to seek common ground, and this can probably only happen within the framework of multilateralism, NATO, and especially the United Nations. But the current test of “material resistance” is mainly the Ukraine-Russia-United States-Europe Triangle or, if you like, Quadrilateral.

The NIC (*National Intelligence Council*), the think-tank of the US intelligence community, produced an outlook report called *Mapping the global future* in which it draws a vision of the world in a few years’ time, in reality an extension of previous works such as *Global Trends 2010*, produced in 1997, and *Global Trends 2015* of December 2000⁵, and so on periodically until today. Until the December 2000 report, this think-tank structured its results around four thematic axes: the evolution of globalisation, the geopolitical landscape, global governance, and international security, and along thematic lines such as demography, technology, economics, etc., with regional analyses.

The much more pessimistic 2004 version still mentions globalisation as a structural element but focuses on the development of “*asymmetric threats and terrorism*”, with the term “*hybrid wars*”, the impact of information technologies on global politics, the challenge for states of transnational phenomena, and the persistence of internal conflicts in many countries now taking centre stage. And an interesting observation is the persistence of the opposing argument to the United States, that it “remains the only complete power”, which is saying a lot.

In terms of novelties compared to the pre-2001 texts, these and other documents continue to affirm the strategic importance of Asia, economically and militarily, and in particular China, suggesting a “withdrawal from Eurasia”⁶, and above all “a review of the United States’ relations with its traditional allies”.

⁵ See *Defence et Strategie*, n.º 12. (January 2005). Electronic journal of the CRIS (Centre de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques). Paris 1-Sorbonne University.

⁶ In the sense of the term *Eurasia Z.* Brzezinski, former security advisor to Carter, J. (1998). *El gran tablero mundial*. Barcelona, Paidós.

Specifically, the CRIS article on *Defence et Strategie* cited here summarises this perspective in the following terms:

“Europe’s strength may be in offering a certain model of regional governance for emerging powers seeking an alternative to the United States. Despite the persistence of anti-Americanism other powers will not necessarily seek to counterbalance the United States, although growing mistrust of American intentions will fuel hostile policies in various parts of the world, including resistance to American objectives in international fora... The United States will retain a central role in a *Pax Americana* scenario, but should seek to re-establish its relations with Europe.

A final thought

The final diagnosis is highly significant, because while the power of the United States is reaffirmed, there will be a downward trend in terms of its role and scope for action⁷. Europe, for its part, has an uncertain future: while it has great potential to be a truly major power, its determination to do so is currently an unknown. In any case, the transatlantic relationship is recognised to still be critical for the United States and Europe and the belief is that NATO remains essential.

Ultimately, however, and in NATO’s defence, who has not been strategically disoriented for a quarter of a century? The dilemma is whether to adapt to a world that is difficult to understand and mutating, or retreat. And the new strategic concept, to be discussed at the Atlantic summit in June 2022, should try to respond to this, although it cannot be expected to include major restructuring either in its principles or in the complex relations between Europe and the United States. We will have to wait for its approval to see how the Transatlantic Link is ultimately reformulated.

⁷ See among others: Schmidtt, G. J. (2004). *La strategie de securite nationale de l’Administration Bush* and Kupchan, C. A. (2004). *La legitimite de la puissance americaine en question*. In Guillaume Parmentier (coord.). *Les Etats Unis aujourd’hui: choc et changement*. Paris, Ed. Odile Jacob.

Chapter eight

The Spanish Armed Forces after the Madrid Summit

Fernando López del Pozo

Abstract

The growing importance of the territorial defense of the Alliance together with the appearance of new forms of hybrid warfare and the confrontation in the new domains of cyberspace and outer space will mark the way ahead for the modernization of the Spanish Armed Forces and those of its Allies.

The geographical location of Spain in the Southwest of Europe is a value in itself for the Alliance. From its rearguard position, Spain contributes with its territory to become a key area in order to ensure the mobility of NATO military forces in the Euro-Atlantic region and to respond quickly to threats arising from any direction. Likewise, Spain contributes with its experience in the field of Cooperative Security.

The set of measures adopted by NATO to date will allow the Spanish Armed Forces to contribute, together with the rest of the Allies, to strengthening NATO's deterrent and defense posture, thereby better addressing the risk of conventional confrontation. At the same time, the Spanish Armed Forces must make a special effort to deal with hybrid warfare, investing with a higher priority

in areas such as cyber defense, information operations, or the exploitation of outer space.

Keywords

Situation, rearguard, contribute, investment, reinforcement, priority.

Introduction

The Madrid Summit (29-30 June 2022) comes at a crucial moment for the future of the Atlantic Alliance.

Heads of State and Government meeting in Madrid will have to take fundamental decisions in the framework of the NATO 2030 initiative; an ambitious package of measures to promote the comprehensive political, military and financial renewal of the organisation, approved at last year's Brussels Summit (2021); and to complete the process of strengthening the deterrence and defence posture that began in 2014, following the crisis in Ukraine and Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexation of the Crimean peninsula.

Of all the decisions to be adopted in Madrid, the most important is the approval of a new Strategic Concept¹ (SC), replacing the SC approved in Lisbon (2010). The new 'Madrid SC' will define the strategic environment as well as NATO's objectives, priorities and tasks for the next decade.

The Madrid Summit promises not to be 'just another summit'.

The aim of this article is to prospectively analyse the future of the Spanish Armed Forces in the light of the important decisions that will be taken in Madrid. These are far-reaching decisions that will affect the nature of the Alliance and will force the Allies to undertake a (military) adaptation effort unprecedented in recent decades.

The New Strategic Concept (Madrid, 2022)

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO has known three Strategic Concepts² with approximately a decade between them: 1991, 1999 and 2010. If only as a matter of time (12 years after the adoption of the Strategic Concept in Lisbon), it seems logical to think that the time has come for its renewal.

Apart from the timing, there are compelling reasons to address the renewal of the Lisbon concept. It became obsolete four years after its adoption, following events in Ukraine/Crimea.

¹ NATO's Strategic Concept is the organisation's most important document, second only to the founding Treaty (Treaty of Washington, 1949).

² In NATO's 72-year history, there have been only seven Strategic Concepts, four during the Cold War and three after the Soviet collapse.

Its obsolescence has become increasingly apparent as NATO's relations with Russia have worsened³. Add to this the emergence in recent years of a new model of transnational terrorism that seeks the physical occupation of territories (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS) and the emergence of China on the international stage as a power assertively seeking to accommodate its interests in the current international order, and it is hardly surprising that the Allies have agreed to take the plunge.

The decision to renew the Strategic Concept was taken at the Brussels Summit (2021). There, the Heads of State and Government gave a mandate to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to develop an SC proposal in time for adoption at the Madrid Summit in 2022.

Once approved, the new Madrid SC will guide NATO's comprehensive adaptation process, setting the level of ambition in the face of the threats and challenges of the present and near future. For the new SC to achieve its objectives, Allies will need to be able to reach consensus on two key issues:

1. Defining the strategic and security environment in the Euro-Atlantic region, including potential threats, challenges and risks to Allied security.
2. The key tasks with which NATO will have to address the threats, challenges and risks to its security.

How the SC addresses both issues⁴ will set the course for Alliance adaptation in the coming years and guide the transformation of Allied armed forces.

The strategic environment

The global and European security context has evolved over the past decade with the development of technology and the increasing realisation of climate change, and is clearly becoming more demanding for a variety of reasons, including: the re-

³ The Lisbon Concept gives Russia the status of a privileged partner.

⁴ At the time of writing, the new Strategic Concept has not yet been drafted. In the absence of a draft document, any analysis will necessarily be speculative. The first draft will be prepared by the Secretary General's office, expected in March/April, in light of the numerous indications that Allies, including Spain, have submitted in the months since the publication of NATO 2030. The formal negotiation phase between the 30 allies will then begin, culminating in their approval at the Madrid Summit.

emergence of Russia as an adversary, the evolution of China as a systemic rival to the Alliance, and the emergence of a new terrorism with territorial aspirations (ISIS).

In the new SC, emerging challenges associated with the use of disruptive technologies, artificial intelligence, climate change, etc., as well as risks inherent to the new operational domains (cyberspace and outer space) will undoubtedly gain relevance. All these factors are already mentioned in the Lisbon Concept, but growing Allied concern about the security implications of the misuse of these new technologies, or the consequences of climate degradation, will justify their increased presence in the document to be adopted in Madrid.

However, Allies widely believe that the deterioration of the security situation in Europe is largely due to Russia, which is determined to regain the role of NATO's main antagonist that has been vacant since the demise of the USSR. NATO's shift in focus towards Russia was a forced decision in the wake of the Ukraine crisis. From that moment on, Russia *de facto* lost its status as a NATO partner and the Lisbon SC's considerations in this regard ceased to be valid.

It is worth noting that this will be the first time since the end of the Cold War that NATO will grant a third state the status of adversary. Moreover, if we bear in mind that this is not just any Third State, but the only military power (along with China) that is militarily comparable to the Alliance⁵, we get an idea of the magnitude of the challenge involved in adapting militarily to the new reality⁶. This is a similar challenge, albeit in the opposite direction, to that posed in the early 1990s by the demise of the Soviet Union.

But perhaps the most novel aspect of the new Strategic Concept will be the emergence of China, for the first time, as a major player to be considered. It is too early to say what NATO's approach to the Chinese issue will be, but its mere presence in the SC will be enough to give it a prominence that Russia would otherwise monopolise.

⁵ The NATO term to refer to military powers that are militarily comparable to NATO: 'Peer State' or 'Peer Adversary'. In the case that one wants to emphasise that such comparison is not total, the term *de* is used: 'Near Peer State'.

⁶ The process of military adaptation to the new reality began in 2014, but it will not be until the entry into force of the new Madrid SC that the Alliance will have the political foundations for such a far-reaching transformation.

Finally, we must not forget international terrorism, which is still a major threat to Allied security. The last decade has seen the emergence of a new model of terrorism with territorial ambitions, embodied by ISIS. Without detracting from the (relative) success of the international community in its fight against ISIS in recent years, it should be clear that this is a long-term struggle. To date, terrorist organisations have entrenched their roots in countries in Europe's southern neighbourhood and demonstrate, day by day, their ability to destabilise entire regions of Africa and Asia. For all these reasons, international terrorism should and will be among the key factors in the strategic context (of the new SC), where it will share the limelight with two state actors: Russia and China.

NATO's core tasks

Alterations in the strategic environment, once reflected in the new SC, will determine the core objectives and tasks by which NATO should ensure the security of its citizens and uphold the shared values⁷ embodied in the Washington Treaty. No substantial changes are initially expected in terms of the definition of the core tasks, and the three tasks that appear in the Lisbon and previous SCs (1991 and 1999) are expected to be maintained⁸: (1) Collective Defence, (2) Crisis Management, (3) Cooperative Security. These same three tasks will probably figure in the new Madrid SC, but they will not necessarily have the same specific weight as they do now⁹.

Russia's growing opposition to NATO and tensions on the Eastern flank increase the importance of 'collective defence', a task that derives directly from Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and which, unlike the other two core tasks, has been part of the Alliance's DNA since its conception. This strengthening of defence (and associated deterrence) does not mean that NATO will cease to attend to its other two tasks, but it is clear that a greater collective defence effort will mean a decrease in the relative weight of 'crisis management' and 'cooperative security'. In any case, we must stress that this is not a 'zero-sum' game,

⁷ Individual freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

⁸ See article 70 años de OTAN: ¿Tiempo para un nuevo concepto estratégico? (July/August 2019). *Revista Ejército* N.º 940.

⁹ The Lisbon SC treats the three core tasks in similar terms, not implying that Collective Defence is a more important task than the other two. This perception is likely to change in the new SC.

as 'collective defence' will not be strengthened to the detriment of the other two tasks, but on the basis of increased resources, in line with the commitments made at the Wales Summit¹⁰.

In any case, the reinforcement of collective defence will force NATO nations' armed forces to redirect from the 1991 transition from a model based on heavy, static forces geared towards territorial defence to one based on light, deployable forces focusing on crisis management. The current strategic reality makes it necessary to have military capabilities fully dedicated to the traditional objective of deterrence and territorial defence. This redirection of military capabilities will logically pose a major challenge for armed forces from multiple perspectives: force generation, training and associated exercises, surveillance and early warning tasks, forward planning, planning for new capabilities, etc.

In any case, this is not a replay of the Cold War, as the strategic environment of our time is far more complex than it was in the second half of the 20th century. The areas of confrontation at that time were limited to 'land, sea and air' and the modes of confrontation were twofold: conventional and nuclear (NBRQ). On the contrary, today, spaces of confrontation have expanded both geographically, with the extension into outer space, and conceptually, with the creation of a new immaterial operational domain: cyberspace.

Thus, in addition to conventional and nuclear warfare, there is now a third form of warfare, known as 'hybrid warfare', which encompasses a wide range of non-conventional tools and activities Alliance adversaries will use to make it difficult to attribute responsibility and keep the conflict below the Article 5 (Washington Treaty) threshold in order to avoid a coordinated and mutually supportive Allied response.

With the potential expansion of areas of confrontation into outer space and cyberspace, collective defence is no longer determined solely by geography. The fact that a Third State, or a non-state actor, is in a position to harm the collective interests of the Alliance from the other side of the world requires a change in thinking about what the meaning of collective defence, which is

¹⁰ At the Wales Summit (2014), Heads of State and Government (HoSG) agreed the Defence Investment Pledge, committing Allies to increasing financial investment, aiming for 2 per cent of GDP in 10 years (2024). This political commitment has been reiterated by the HoSG at each post-Wales Summit: Warsaw (2016), Brussels (2018 and 2021).

no longer equated with territorial and border defence. From this perspective, the presence of China and other international actors in the new SC is much more clearly understood.

'Crisis management' and 'cooperative security' with both remain key pillars of the new SC, which will set the level of ambition for future NATO activities beyond NATO's borders. The withdrawal from Afghanistan will admittedly influence NATO's future decisions on its overseas interventions, but it will not affect the fundamental premise—which no ally questions— of NATO's need to maintain its capacity to intervene beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Spanish Armed Forces after the Madrid Summit. Implications of the new Strategic Concept

The re-emergence of a state-based adversary increases the importance of NATO's collective defence in the more traditional sense of the term: the territorial defence of the Alliance's outer edges. On the other hand, the emergence of new forms (hybrid warfare) and spaces of confrontation (cyberspace, outer space) and the so-called emerging challenges, call for a renewal of the traditional model of collective defence. The sum of these requirements will set the course for the modernisation of the Armed Forces of Spain and the Allies as a whole. It drives us to look East and also confirms that defence must be at 360°, in cyberspace and outer space, while pushing us to innovate.

The renewed importance of collective defence, in its most traditional and conventional sense, brings with it many demands. From the outset, territorial defence requires (almost) full-time military forces, which will either be permanently deployed in the Alliance's border regions (so-called 'in-place-forces') or will remain in their bases as immediate reinforcement forces, for which they will require a very high level of readiness.

We must not forget that the success or failure of territorial incursions largely depends on the surprise factor and the ability to create *fait accompli* situations that are difficult to reverse. Only a forward military presence and immediate reinforcement capability would enable NATO to react in time to confront situations such as those in Ukraine or Georgia.

From its rearguard position with respect to NATO's eastern flank, Spain can and should provide the capacity of its territory to be a key area for ensuring mobility in the Euro-Atlantic area, forces to

respond quickly to threats from any direction and its experience in cooperative security (360°).

Our geographical location is an asset in itself for the Alliance. The process that the Madrid SC will open will induce us to improve our infrastructure to accommodate forces and serve as a communications hub, while asking us to make an effort to strengthen our resilience in general terms.

In an unquestionable demonstration of solidarity, the Spanish Armed Forces will continue to contribute, to the same or greater extent than at present, to initiatives to reinforce deterrence and defence (the so-called 'Forward Presence', the reinforced Air Police, security measures in Turkey, etc.), but our Armed Forces must also be ready to contribute forces and capabilities almost immediately, to contribute to military reinforcement wherever necessary. It is true that Spain has already made an important contribution¹¹ to the NATO Readiness Initiative¹², which has allowed the Alliance to make notable progress in reinforcing the readiness of its forces, but in the current situation it seems insufficient. NATO decisions are expected to further increase the readiness of Allied forces in the near future.

In the near future, NATO is expected to ask the Spanish Armed Forces for a higher level of readiness than at present, so that units at 10-day and 30-day readiness levels will increase substantially. This higher level of readiness will also affect the command and control elements made available by Spain to the Alliance, such as the High Readiness Land Headquarters (Bétera) and the High Readiness Maritime Headquarters (Rota). This will have major implications in a number of areas.

It is easy to imagine that the commitment to keep a force ready to be deployed in as little as 10 to 30 days places very high demands on the level of personnel coverage, operational equipment (food, camp equipment, fuel reserves, engineer equipment, ammunition, spare parts, etc.) and the availability of means for projection and deployment.

¹¹ The contribution of the Spanish Armed Forces to the NRI goes beyond Spain's share if it were to be shared equally among the 30 Allies, and has been recognised by NATO military authorities as an example of commitment to the Alliance.

¹² The NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI) aims to at substantially increase the readiness of allied forces. In this context, NATO has asked all Allies to have 30 battalions, 30 frontline ships and 30 combat squadrons ready for combat in 30 days or less. For this reason, it is also known as the 4x30 initiative.

These very high levels of readiness will also require a certain degree of specialisation and familiarity with potential areas of deployment¹³. For this reason, different Spanish military units are expected to recover a certain specific orientation in the near future, either in geographical and/or functional terms, as was the case during the Cold War. As we must not lose the 360° approach, this new scheme will force increased training and, in any case, reduce the number of forces capable of dealing with any threat from any direction and in any theatre.

While the future NATO force structure has not yet been finalised (it will be approved in parallel with the new SC), we can get the idea that some Spanish forces will have to be specifically prepared for certain tasks in certain areas of deployment (known as the 'regionalisation' of NATO forces) and that, in all cases, their projection capability will have to be taken into account. This is a major change, which will affect the force's preparation processes.

Last but not least, the prioritisation of collective defence will have significant implications for defence planning, which NATO intends to use to guide Allies' acquisition of new military capabilities. Spain will thus have to make an investment effort, especially in heavy conventional weapons and in capabilities with a high technological component, as they are necessary to face a high-intensity conflict with guarantees against an adversary militarily comparable to NATO.

All of the above represents a challenge of enormous magnitude for Spain, which will require a multitude of changes and a considerable economic effort in line with the levels of investment in defence agreed at the Wales Summit.

The measures outlined so far will enable the Spanish Armed Forces, and those of the other allies, to contribute to the reinforcement of NATO's deterrence and defence posture, thereby averting the risk of conventional confrontation. However, we should not forget that adversary and competing powers have special knowledge of hybrid tools and know how to exploit the new operational domains (cyberspace and outer space). Based on this premise, the Spanish Armed Forces (and those of the other allies) must endeavour to take on hybrid warfare, investing in material, infrastructure, personnel, training, doctrine and organisation, giving priority to

¹³ The areas of deployment of Spanish units will be defined based on NATO operational planning requirements and the agreements reached between NATO and Spanish military authorities.

areas such as cyber defence, information operations (Info Ops) and the exploitation of outer space.

The continuity of the other two core tasks (crisis management and cooperative security) in the Madrid SC will require continued NATO effort, whether in the form of activities, exercises, resources, etc. Our Armed Forces will continue to make a major contribution to crisis management operations, as they have always done, and will participate in cooperative activities with southern partners, whether bilaterally or in the NATO framework. It is worth reiterating here that NATO's increased effort in collective defence will not come at the expense of the capabilities needed for the other two tasks, but on the basis of increased capabilities and resources NATO is requesting from the Allies.

Growing demands from our societies in areas such as climate change, the fight against inequality, human security or the gender perspective will be faithfully reflected in the new SC and, consequently, will have a logical impact on military adaptation processes. We believe that our armed forces are exemplary in these areas, but there is no doubt that the new Madrid SC will help us to improve our policies in conjunction with the Allies.

Conclusion

Up to this point, we have focused on the second of the missions the National Defence Act assigns to the Armed Forces: to contribute militarily to the security and defence of Spain and its allies within the framework of the international organisations of which Spain is a member. In fact, by faithfully fulfilling this mission we also make decisive progress in the fulfilment of two others: the defence of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the preservation of the well-being of citizens in the event of serious risk, catastrophe, calamity or other public needs.

The Madrid 2022 SC will renew the commitment of the Allies, including Spain's commitment, to an Alliance in which we are celebrating 40 years of peace and security for the Spanish people and an unprecedented engine of change, modernisation and improvement for its Armed Forces. The Madrid Summit comes at a crucial time for the Alliance, because it is also crucial for the Western world to which we belong. The Ministry of Defence, together with the Armed Forces and the rest of the State, will work to ensure that it meets the great expectations it has awoken

and, above all, provides a powerful impetus for Armed Forces that are increasingly capable of continuing to provide a security environment where the shared values of individual freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law that the Washington Treaty proclaims are a daily reality.

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