



One Plus Four: Charting NATO's Future in an Age of Disruption

NATO Task Force Report: Executive Summary

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This report is the result of discussions among and written contributions by independent non-government participants from across the Atlantic Alliance who participate in the NATO Task Force, hosted by the Transatlantic Leadership Network. While we also discuss issues with current government officials from many countries, this is an independent report. The Task Force initiative receives no financial or other support from any outside party.

The Transatlantic Leadership Network provides a broad umbrella enabling participants from a number of policy research institutes to cooperate and exchange views. We are pleased to acknowledge these partner institutions and thank them for their permission to feature their logos.

The Task Force participants listed on the next page, in their personal capacity, endorse the thrust of this report, though they may not support each individual recommendation. Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only; views do not necessarily reflect those of any institution or organization. We thank them and all contributors for their insights.

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Executive Summary

I. The Age of Disruption

The Atlantic Alliance stands today at an historic inflection point, between a fading era of relative stability and a volatile, dangerous Age of Disruption. *As this Task Force Report is being issued, Russian troops are poised to further invade NATO partner Ukraine. Should the deterrent efforts created by a fairly united NATO fail, this age of disruption will take a dramatic turn for the worse.*

The Age of Disruption is global in nature and broad in scope. The Alliance faces strategic competition with a revisionist Russia and a militarily powerful and technologically advanced China, each of which seeks to disrupt the international order. Terrorists threaten our people. Disruptive challenges extend to emerging technologies that are changing the nature of competition and conflict and digital transformations that are upending the foundations of diplomacy and defense. The scale and complexity of critical economic, environmental, technological and human flows, as well as the dependency of many societies on such flows, have increased dramatically. Destructive capabilities unthinkable a few decades ago are now in the hands of big powers, smaller states, and non-state actors. Climate change and energy transitions pose new security dilemmas and amplify crises. Europe's periphery has turned from a ring of friends to a ring of fire.

The Atlantic Alliance faces the most complex strategic environment in its 73-year history. North America and Europe must use the Alliance's new Strategic Concept to reaffirm their mutual bonds, recast their partnership, and retool their institutions – particularly NATO – for the Age of Disruption.

NATO's new Strategic Concept should be framed by an approach we call "One Plus Four." The One is Alliance cohesion, which must be the central strategic underpinning of a new Concept. NATO must then be repositioned for current and future challenges, many of which are unconventional and unpredictable. This will require the Alliance to update and upgrade its three core tasks -- collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security – and to add a fourth core task: building comprehensive resilience to disruptive threats to allied societies.

II. The One: Alliance Cohesion

The foundation for NATO's next Strategic Concept must be renewed Alliance cohesion rooted in a common commitment to shared values and effective decision making. Today, those values are under assault from external and internal challengers. This is why a mutual affirmation of NATO's democratic foundation must begin with humility. Democratic deficits exacerbate mutual doubts, which can gnaw at allied commitments to collective defense and mutual security. They can be used by strategic competitors to destabilize individual allies or NATO as a whole. Deficits in internal values can become external threats. Allied cohesion, grounded in resilient democratic institutions with robust and transparent mechanisms of accountability, is the most formidable defense against these threats. This should be coupled with streamlined decision-making mechanisms allowing the Alliance to make cohesive and timely decisions.

III. The Four: NATO's Core Tasks

1. Collective Defense

a) Make It the Principal Core Task. Of NATO's core tasks, collective defense is *primus inter pares* – first among equals. It is the only core task mentioned explicitly in the North Atlantic Treaty. That priority should be made clear in the new Strategic Concept.

The Alliance must be able to dissuade and deter threats to its members, from whatever source and across all domains, while being prepared to defend all parts of NATO territory and to protect the critical functions of allied societies. That means countering challenges from Russia, which is likely to remain NATO's pacing adversary, as well as addressing pressures emanating from NATO's south and southeast. The Alliance

needs to bridge gaps in its ability to better integrate its political, military and technological capacities across all five operational domains: land, sea, air, cyberspace, and outer space. NATO has been good at addressing each domain on its own. Being good at multi-domain operations is exponentially harder.

b) *Improve Conventional Deterrence and Defense.* Since the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO has approved a number of initiatives for conventional rapid response. The new Strategic Concept will need to give additional political impetus to their full implementation while advancing additional initiatives. NATO and U.S. forward presence should be further strengthened. NATO's maritime posture must be upgraded. Critical capability gaps must be filled, including those needed for rapid reinforcement of allies under threat as well as those required to deal with Russia's anti-access/area denial capabilities. NATO's Special Operations Forces should be strengthened, and NATO interoperability improved. The U.S. should take a more visible, active role in the NATO Response Force.

c) *Bolster Deterrence and Defense Against Hybrid Threats,* which requires better EU-NATO coordination and planning. The U.S. might offer to be the framework nation in the next evolution of NATO cyber operations. NATO should create a full Cyber Defense Forces Headquarters. Collective defense efforts should incorporate cyber resilience and "safe-to-fail" principles.

d) *Enhance Nuclear Deterrence.* NATO should be forthright about why nuclear deterrence remains critical to Alliance security. Modern, safe and survivable U.S. weapons and allied-dual capable delivery systems should be maintained. A clear nuclear doctrine is needed to deter Russia's "escalate to deescalate strategy." NATO should press hard for a return to nuclear and other arms control agreements.

e) *Deter and Defend in Outer Space.* NATO must follow through on its Space Policy, agreed in June 2021, by realizing the Strategic Space Situational Awareness system at NATO headquarters, and working out procedures for NATO response to incidents in outer space.

f) *Be Prepared to Engage with Moscow.* Enhanced measures of deterrence and defense should be reinforced by NATO offers to engage with Moscow. Engagement is not a favor to Putin; it is in NATO's own interests. Efforts could include minimizing escalation risks, avoiding inadvertent incidents or miscalculations in all five domains, improving transparency and confidence-building measures, and returning to nuclear and other arms control agreements.

2. Crisis Management

Europeans and North Americans must anticipate and plan for contingencies related to additional armed conflicts, further displacement, persistent terrorist threats, and security challenges arising from political, economic, and environmental instabilities. The chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan after two decades of military engagement by NATO and its partners will be a cautionary tale that may limit future NATO engagement. The Strategic Concept will need to strike the right balance between necessary engagement in these operations and national reluctance to do so.

To strike the right balance, NATO will need to design a more comprehensive southern approach. Southern security challenges are extraordinarily complex, in both form and force. In some circumstances NATO may lead, but in most situations, it is more likely to play a supporting role. Still, these complex challenges cut across each of NATO's core tasks. Taken together, those elements should support a broad and flexible southern approach of "comprehensive support" that should include: NATO backing for lead nation and coalition operations undertaken by NATO members; collective defense incorporating missile and air defenses, maritime surveillance and counter-terrorism missions; continued implementation of NATO's Framework for the South and investment in expeditionary capabilities; encouragement of European strategic responsibility; and deterrence and defense measures, particularly along the Turkish-Syrian border.

3. Cooperative Security

Cooperative Security focuses primarily on NATO's partnerships. They consist of three categories: 1) partners who seek NATO membership, 2) partners along NATO's periphery that are not likely membership candidates; and 3) like-minded countries around the globe, including in the Indo-Pacific region. Each must be adapted to the age of disruption. Cooperative security must also address the security implications of climate change, emerging and disruptive technologies, and challenges to the global commons.

First category partners need urgent attention because of Russian threats to their security. Ukraine and Georgia in particular need a new focus. A Ukrainian Deterrence Initiative (UDI) and a Georgia Deterrence Initiative (GDI) could be created that would be extensions of the Alliance's Enhanced Opportunity Partners (EOP) program. Allies would make it a strategic objective to do everything possible, short of extending an Article 5 guarantee, to help these countries defend themselves and resist Russian destabilization.

The Alliance should prioritize mechanisms to assist Jordan and inject life in bilateral partnerships with Israel, Morocco and Tunisia. NATO can be a platform for security risk assessment, information-sharing and resilience support. NATO should forge a true strategic partnership with the EU; extend elements of the Deterrence Initiatives to Finland and Sweden if requested; strengthen its Enhanced Operational Partnership with Australia; and pursue similar arrangements with Japan and South Korea.

Cooperative Security programs can be expanded to address the security implications of climate change. The Alliance's 2021 Action Plan on Climate Change and Security must be further elaborated. Training, education, exercises and standards need to be rethought. The purchasing power of the military should be used to fuel investments in cleaner energy, infrastructure and preventive technologies. Consideration should be given to how climate and energy-related elements can be incorporated into NATO Defense Planning Process and Security Investment Program decisions. Reducing energy demand and increasing energy resilience is essential for the armed forces to ensure readiness and sustainability.

Cooperative Security should be used to address challenges to the global commons, including: 1) protecting freedom of the seas, 2) upholding the global information commons; 3) ensuring security and norms of peaceful behavior in space; and 4) protecting Alliance equities in Arctic security. In some areas, NATO will not be the lead institution, but it can offer specialized capabilities.

4. New Core Task: Comprehensive Resilience

The growing need to implement operationally the concept of resilience -- the ability to anticipate, prevent, and, if necessary, protect against and recover quickly from disruptions to critical functions of our societies -- has become a challenge on par with NATO's other core tasks. It is foundational to the other three, yet it is distinctly separate from them and equivalent to them as well. It must deal with a spectrum of challenges that are not addressed adequately by the other core tasks. NATO's efforts thus far betray a static understanding of resilience, which encompasses a wide range of dynamic interconnections. NATO must move beyond country-by-country resilience metrics and adopt a more comprehensive approach that embraces and operationalizes the mutually-reinforcing concepts of *democratic* resilience, *shared* resilience and *forward* resilience.

a) Democratic Resilience. In recent years, much strategic discussion has focused on competition among states of "great power." It is becoming clear, however, that this competition extends beyond traditional measures of power; it centers increasingly on forms of governance. Adversaries big and small are selling autocracy as "efficient." They tout their own systems and use a broad array of tools to amplify fissures and undermine confidence within democracies. When they can't do that successfully, they use diplomatic and other means of coercion. This puts democratic resilience at the heart of the new international system and international competition.

b) Shared Resilience. Resilience begins at home, but in this age of disruption, no nation is home alone. Few critical infrastructures that sustain the societal functions of an individual country are limited today to the national borders of that country. Allies must move from country-by-country baseline requirements to *shared* resilience, by establishing together metrics that can ensure their mutual security. Shared resilience efforts should include critical infrastructures but extend to many other connective elements that bind allies' critical societal functions. Enhanced NATO-EU cooperation should leverage combined resources.

c) Forward Resilience has two components, one spatial and one temporal. The spatial component essentially means projecting shared resilience forward to non-NATO partners. We see the importance of this today in Ukraine, but Ukraine is not a lone example. All across Europe's southern and eastern peripheries disruptive challenges to weak democracies can ripple back into NATO territory. The temporal component means thinking and acting forward in time – anticipating disruptive challenges, and acting to prevent, mitigate or adapt to them. This is another reason to consider a NATO Office of Net Assessment.

We recognize that there is resistance in some countries to adopting a fourth core task to complement the first three. We urge these nations to reconsider, because resilience is needed to implement the first three tasks but it is operationally very different in nature. Adding this fourth core task is critical to the success of the first three, and to allied ability to confront challenges not addressed by the other three. Failure to make resilience a new core task will only downgrade its importance.

IV. Rebalancing the Transatlantic Partnership

NATO must transform itself into a more balanced transatlantic partnership in which European allies assume greater strategic responsibility in two ways. First, they should provide half of the forces and capabilities, including the strategic enablers required for deterrence and collective defense against major-power aggression. Second, they should develop capabilities that lessen their heavy reliance on U.S. enablers so they can be the “first responders” to crises in and around Europe's periphery.

V. Connecting the North Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific

NATO's ability to address traditional and unconventional threats in Europe is becoming intertwined with related challenges to Alliance security interests posed by China. The Alliance should explore deeper coordination under Article 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty; bolster protection of defense-critical infrastructures and defense-related supply chains; create new North Atlantic-Indo-Pacific partnerships; and consider creation of a NATO-China Council to maintain diplomatic dialogue, explore potential areas of cooperation, and design crisis mitigation measures.

VI. Implementing NATO's Overarching Military Concept Informed by Innovative Technologies

NATO must maintain its technological edge. To this end, it has adopted its strategic plan to foster and protect Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDT). In addition, NATO's civil-military Defense Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic” (DIANA) is designed to help develop innovative technological solutions to address Allies military needs and promote interoperability. The Strategic Concept is an opportunity to connect these efforts with the implementation of the Alliance's Comprehensive Concept for Deterrence and Defense in the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) that undergirds NATO's overall strategic posture. It must be implemented in full and without any delay. This requires ongoing assessments of emerging and developing technologies and national progress and NATO standards in adopting prioritized military-technological capabilities; aligning on a set of NATO principles for the use of EDT in warfare; and establishing vibrant connections with industry partners and with EU institutions.

VII. Conclusions

One Plus Four: a NATO that is more cohesive, capable, balanced, and resilient—an Alliance prepared for the Age of Disruption.