

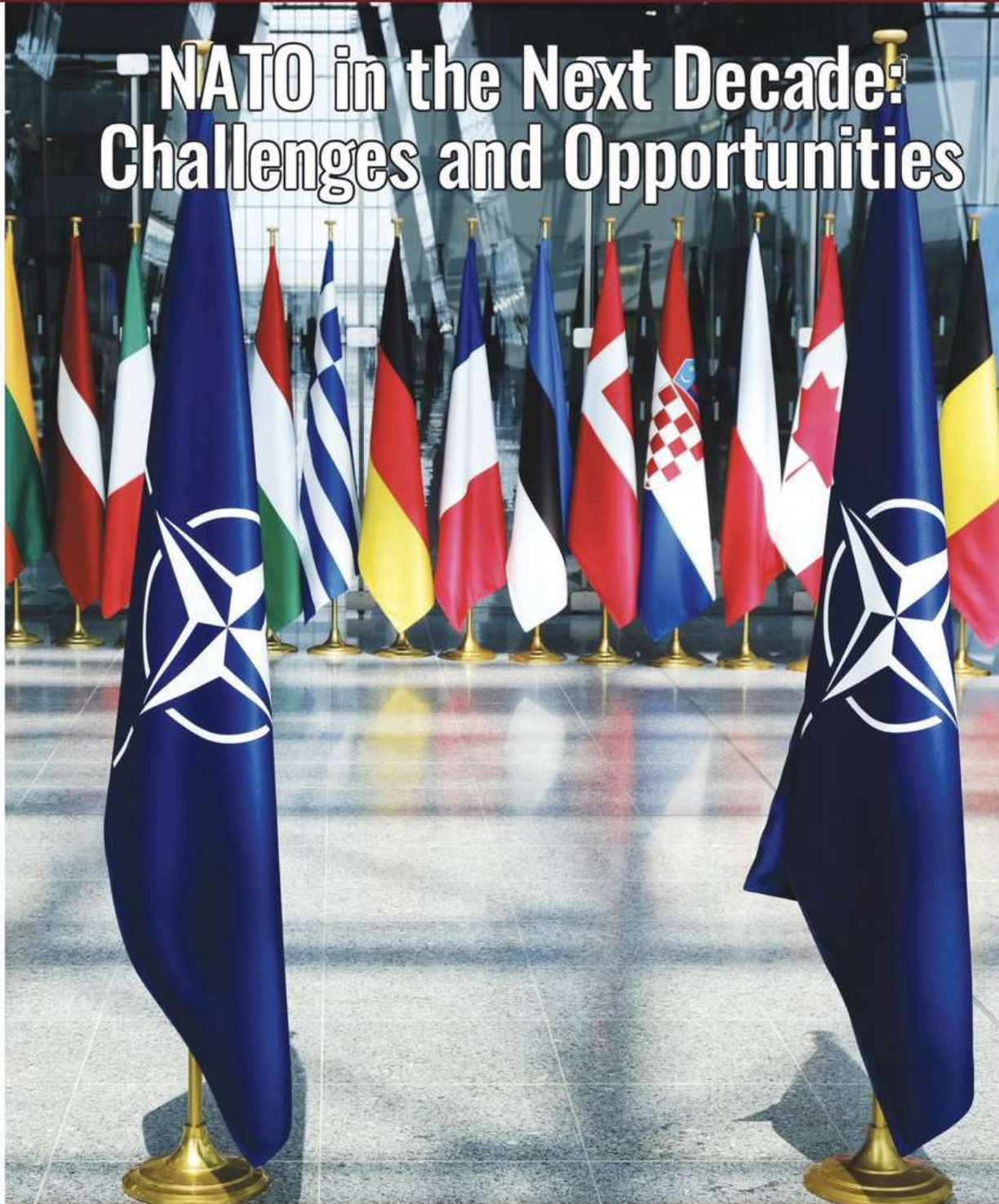
TPO

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NATO in the Next Decade: Challenges and Opportunities



Mircea Geoană

NATO 2030: Keeping
us Safe in a More
Competitive World

Jamie Shea

Getting NATO Ready for
the Rest of the 21st
Century: Is NATO 2030
the Right Roadmap?

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Defense in Space:
Same Mission, New
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Biden's Transatlantic
Offset

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Foreword

NATO is once again in the spotlight. A NATO summit concluded on 14 June 2021 in Brussels, ending with important decisions charting the Alliance's path over the next decade and beyond. NATO has served as a pillar of stability and security for more than seven decades, while the world has become more complex, with a host of new players, threats, and challenges. Allied leaders endorsed an ambitious NATO 2030 agenda to ensure that NATO can meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. While the Alliance concluded to improve NATO's political consultations, collective defense, and resilience, leaders agreed upon providing better training and capacity building to its partners in order to stand up for the rules-based international order. In light of these commitments, TPQ's Summer 2021 issue serves as a starting point for a well-informed debate by synthesizing and comparing expert discourses from a wide range of NATO member and non-member states on key issues concerning NATO's future. As we address the issues at stake, we also seek a better mutual appreciation of divergent geographical, historical, and political perspectives. This special and timely issue has been published in collaboration with NATO, our long-standing partner.

Mircea Geoană, NATO Deputy Secretary General, expresses that the security environment has never been more uncertain and contested than it is now, due to the emergence of global competition and a wide variety of complex threats. He underlines the importance of NATO summit in Brussels last June, at which the Alliance's leaders made bold decisions to adapt to a more unpredictable world and to ensure that its one billion people will be safe for the next decade and beyond. In his view, the Transatlantic Alliance will remain capable of coping with today's challenges and future-proof against ones yet to come through an ambitious and forward-looking agenda.

When President Biden visited Brussels in June, he declared: "America is back." According to Jamie Shea, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at NATO, this also means that NATO is back, as Biden reaffirmed the U.S.' solemn commitment to the defense of its European allies and Washington's willingness to once again lead a transatlantic alliance that was heavily criticized during the Trump years. He writes that at first sight, this is all good news for NATO; but could it turn out to be a mixed blessing for the Europeans in the longer run? He analyzes whether the NATO 2030 initiative is up to the task and if it provides the right answers.

Due to NATO's reliance on space assets for operational effectiveness and the increased vulnerabilities of those assets, the militarization of outer space presents a

range of policy and legal challenges. Having to rely on space-based assets and services to conduct military operations has proven to be NATO's Achilles heel as rivals work on counter-space techniques. Aurel Sari, Associate Professor of International Law at University of Exeter and Hitoshi Nasu, Professor of International Law at University of Exeter ask given the vulnerability of space-based assets and services to hostile interference, under what circumstances the collective defense commitment as set out in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT), arises in space.

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TURCOS

NATO 2030: KEEPING US SAFE IN A MORE COMPETITIVE WORLD

In this new age of growing global competition and increasing complex threats, our security environment is more uncertain and contested than ever before. At the NATO Summit in Brussels in June, Allied leaders took bold decisions to adapt our Alliance to a more unpredictable world and ensure that NATO will continue to keep our one billion people safe in this new decade and beyond. Through our ambitious and forward-looking NATO 2030 agenda, our transatlantic Alliance will remain fit to face the challenges of today and future-proof against those of tomorrow. As a highly valued member of NATO, Turkey makes important contributions to our Alliance and its ongoing adaptation.

Mircea Geoană*



* General Mircea Geoană is Deputy Secretary General of NATO.

The leaders of NATO's 30 countries met in Brussels on 14 June 2021 at a pivotal moment for our Alliance and for our shared security. We have entered an age of growing global competition, coupled with increasingly complex threats to our security. Russia and China are leading an authoritarian push-back against the rules-based international order. At the same time, we face ever more sophisticated cyber-attacks, the misuse of disruptive technologies, and a deluge of disinformation. We have also seen the rise of brutal terrorist networks, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and the security impacts of climate change. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the resilience of our societies and broadened our understanding of security.

As we look at the world now and into the future, the foundations of our freedom and prosperity are under greater pressure than ever before. We are not only confronted with conventional military threats and accelerating and interconnected hybrid activities, but more fundamentally we are in the midst of an ideological struggle over our democratic values and way of life. No country or continent can face today's and tomorrow's global challenges alone. In NATO, we stand 30 Allies strong. We represent one billion people, and half of the world's economic and military might. Together, there is no challenge that Europe and North America cannot overcome.

Brussels Summit: A New Chapter in Transatlantic Relations

The NATO Summit was an historic opportunity to open a new chapter in transatlantic relations. NATO leaders demonstrated unity and resolve in the face of complex global challenges, and reiterated their determination to work together in NATO to defend our common interests, values and security. The Secretary General welcomed US President Joe Biden's commitment to strengthening alliances, starting with NATO, and to our sacred Article 5 pledge that an attack on one Ally is an attack on us all.

Through NATO 2030 we set a substantive and forward looking agenda to make sure NATO remains fit to face the challenges of today and future-proof to tackle those of tomorrow. We also took important decisions on a range of key issues.

Russia's aggressive actions continue to constitute a threat to Euro-Atlantic security. NATO leaders condemned Russia's destabilising actions, including its repressive domestic policies, its military build-up on our borders, and its cyber and hybrid attacks across NATO territory. We expressed our concern about the situation in Belarus, our unwavering support for Georgia and Ukraine, and our hope for new momentum in international arms control, with the recent US-Russia decision to extend the New

START Treaty. We remain ready to talk with Russia, to make our positions clear, avoid misunderstandings and prevent escalation. NATO leaders reaffirmed our dual track approach, therefore, of strong deterrence and defence combined with meaningful dialogue.

*“We, the Heads of State and Government of the
30 NATO Allies, have gathered in Brussels to reaffirm our unity,
solidarity, and cohesion, and to open a new chapter in
transatlantic relations, at a time when the security
environment we face is increasingly complex.”*

2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué¹

We also addressed China and agreed that there are opportunities to engage on issues such as arms control and climate change. However, China does not share our values, and its massive military modernisation, lack of transparency, and coercive policies at home and abroad present challenges to our security. There was agreement that we should meet these challenges together as an Alliance. There has been a considerable convergence in our common understanding of the implications of China’s increasing global influence, since leaders first put this issue on NATO’s agenda in London in 2019. In Brussels, we called on China to uphold its international commitments, and act as a responsible global actor in line with its global ambitions, including in space, cyberspace and the maritime domain.

NATO 2030: A Transatlantic Agenda for the Future

At their meeting in London in 2019, NATO leaders asked NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to lead a forward-looking reflection to strengthen NATO’s political dimension and make our strong Alliance even stronger. Over the past year, the Secretary General consulted widely with Allies, a group of independent experts he appointed to support his work on NATO 2030, parliamentarians, the private sector, civil society and young people. Based on these consultations, the Secretary General developed concrete proposals to ensure our Alliance remains fit for the future.

¹NATO, “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” 14 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

“None of our countries can face [global] challenges alone, but the nations of Europe and North America are not alone. We stand together in NATO. This is what NATO 2030 is about, standing strong together.”²

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

Through the NATO 2030 agenda, we will strengthen our unity and cohesion. NATO leaders agreed to use NATO even more as the unique and indispensable transatlantic forum to discuss, decide, and where needed, to act on all matters affecting our shared security, including arms control, climate change and new technologies. For this, we will hold more frequent meetings of NATO Foreign Ministers, consult more with Allied capitals, including with National Security Advisers, and seek coherent positions in other international fora like the UN and G20. We will also consult on security-related economic issues, like export controls and technology transfers.

We will strengthen Allied deterrence and defence against any threat at any time, including through an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities. We will fully and rapidly implement agreed plans to enhance our military posture, continue to modernise our capabilities and increase the readiness of our forces.

Strong militaries are vital to our security, but if the past 18 months have shown us anything it is that we need strong societies too. They are our first line of defence. So through NATO 2030 we will broaden our approach to security to tackle new challenges, from resilient societies, to emerging technologies, and the security impacts of climate change. We will reinforce the resilience of our supply chains and critical infrastructure by developing concrete national goals and implementation plans based on clearer and more measurable NATO-wide resilience objectives.

We will sharpen our technological edge by launching a new Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic – or DIANA – and a NATO Innovation Fund. This will help us build a truly transatlantic innovation eco-system, and avoid innovation gaps among Allies. We will work with our world-class businesses, start-ups and universities to harness the potential of new technologies and develop innovative solutions to our defence and security needs. I am proud to lead efforts across the

²NATO, “NATO 2030: a transatlantic agenda for the future,” 4 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_184636.htm?selectedLocale=en

Alliance to encourage a culture of innovation, including as Chair of our Innovation Board.

For the first time, we have put climate change at the top of NATO's agenda. Leaders agreed to set the gold standard when it comes to addressing the security impacts of climate change. We will conduct regular assessments of its impact on international security, and NATO's assets, installations and activities. We will integrate climate considerations into our planning, procurement and exercises. Leaders also made a clear political commitment to significantly reduce military emissions and set concrete targets to contribute to the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Through NATO 2030, we will raise our ambitions when it comes to our invaluable partnerships around the world, another personal priority of mine, so that we can continue to play our part in safeguarding the rules-based international order and the common values on which our shared security depends. We will strengthen our dialogue and practical cooperation with existing partners, including the European Union, aspirant countries and our partners in the Asia Pacific. We will seek new engagements with countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. We will also substantially step up our training and capacity-building support for partners in areas like counterterrorism, crisis management and defence reform, to tackle pervasive instability on our borders.

To achieve our NATO 2030 aims, our resources must match our higher level of ambition. To do this, Allies recommitted fully to the defence investment pledge to increase defence spending made at the Wales Summit in 2014. We have already made positive progress. 2021 is the seventh consecutive year of increased defence spending by European Allies and Canada, with over \$260 billion of additional spending on defence since 2014. Leaders showed their strong resolve to continue this momentum and work for fairer burden-sharing across the Alliance.

However, to do more together, we also need to invest more together, so as well as increasing national defence spending, Allies also agreed to increase NATO common funding across all three budgets – military, civil and infrastructure. This can support, for example, more joint training and exercises, stronger cyber defences, and more capacity-building for our partners amongst other things. Spending more together in NATO is a more efficient use of our resources, it is a force multiplier, and it sends a strong message of our unity and resolve.

NATO leaders invited the Secretary General to lead the process of developing NATO's next Strategic Concept in time for our next summit, which will take place

in Madrid in 2022. Whilst the 2010 Strategic Concept has served us well, our world has fundamentally changed in the decade since it was agreed. The next Strategic Concept must better reflect the changes in our security environment and chart a common course ahead. This is also an important opportunity to reaffirm NATO's enduring purpose and recommit to our fundamental values, freedom, democracy and the rule of law. These are the very foundations of our peace and prosperity, they are what define and unite us as an Alliance.

At the Summit, we also took decisions on the newest operational domains adopted by NATO, to make sure we are able to defend Allies in space and in cyber space as effectively as we do on land, at sea, and in the air. We affirmed that the cumulative impact of significant malicious cyber activities, as well as an attack from space and on space assets, could trigger an Article 5 collective defence response. We also adopted a new cyber defence policy, to ensure we always have the initiative in the digital domain, as well as the political, military and technical capabilities in place to detect, prevent and respond to malicious cyber activities.

Finally, we addressed Afghanistan. After almost 20 years, NATO's military operations are coming to an end. At the Summit, we paid tribute to all those who have lost their lives, including Turkish troops who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. We expressed our appreciation to everyone who has deployed under the NATO flag in Afghanistan, in the largest-ever coalition of NATO Allies and partners to serve together. Withdrawing our troops does not mean that we are ending our relationship with Afghanistan. NATO leaders reaffirmed their commitment to continue to stand with the Afghan people and authorities, with training and financial support for the Afghan security forces and institutions, and funding for the continued functioning of the international airport in Kabul to enable diplomatic and development support. We thank Turkey and the US for their decisions to play a role in securing the airport, under Turkey's leadership.

Turkey in NATO: a Highly Valued Ally

NATO leaders agreed on a substantive agenda at our Summit in Brussels this year and we face a busy year ahead as we start to implement the NATO 2030 proposals in time for our Summit in Spain next year. We count on Turkey's continued support as we chart a new strategic direction for NATO and continue to strengthen our Alliance.

“Turkey is a valued NATO Ally, making important contributions to our shared security.”³

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg

Turkey has been a highly valued and committed Ally from the moment it joined the Alliance in 1952. Turkey has the second-largest army in NATO. It occupies a strategic location, at the forefront of the instability in the Middle East. No other NATO Ally hosts more refugees than Turkey, or has suffered more terrorist attacks. Turkey is the only NATO Ally that borders Iraq and Syria and it has played a key role in liberating the territories controlled by ISIS there. All NATO Allies including Turkey have played a key role in the fight against terrorism, as members of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, including through AWACS surveillance flights out of the Konya airbase.

Turkey also makes significant contributions to NATO operations and missions. It currently leads our very high readiness force, with a mechanised infantry brigade ready to deploy within days. Turkish jets participate in our Baltic Air Policing mission. Turkey played a lead role in Afghanistan with hundreds of troops in our Resolute Support Mission and funding for the Afghan national army and security forces. It participates in our NATO training mission in Iraq, and helps build stability in the Western Balkans through our operation in Kosovo. Turkey was an active contributor to the NATO 2030 process, including through the participation of the former NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy Ambassador, Tacan Ildem, in the group of independent experts advising Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

Just as NATO can count on Turkey, Turkey can count on NATO. NATO has increased its military presence in recent years to help Turkey respond to a more challenging security environment. We have augmented Turkey’s air defence against missile attacks from Syria, and increased our air and naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean Black Sea. NATO has a maritime presence in the Aegean helping to implement the EU-Turkey agreement and manage the refugee and migrant crisis with FRONTEX.

NATO is also an important platform to address concerns between Allies as we have seen, for instance, in the Eastern Mediterranean. NATO established a military

³NATO, “Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the joint press conference with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, 5 October 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_178528.htm?selectedLocale=en

de-confliction mechanism between Greece and Turkey, to minimise the risks of incidents and accidents, and create the space for dialogue. Even when we disagree, it is essential that we bring difficult issues to the NATO table, so that we can discuss them frankly and openly and work towards common approaches. Through NATO 2030 we seek to do this even more.

NATO: Ready, Strong and United

In a world of growing global competition and increasingly complex security challenges, standing strong together in NATO is more important than ever before. We are an Alliance of independent nations, bound by our commitment to freedom, democracy and rule of law, and by our solemn pledge to protect and defend each other, one for all and all for one.

“NATO is an Alliance that constantly modernises and adapts to new threats and challenges... With our decisions today, we have opened a new chapter in the transatlantic relationship and set the direction for the Alliance’s continued adaptation towards 2030 and beyond.”⁴

2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué

NATO’s unity and our ability to adapt to an ever-changing world have been the foundations of our success for more than seven decades. Through NATO 2030 and the support of our steadfast Allies like Turkey, NATO stands ready, strong and united to keep our one billion people safe in this new decade and for many more years to come.

⁴NATO, “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” 14 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

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GETTING NATO READY FOR THE REST OF THE 21ST CENTURY: IS NATO 2030 THE RIGHT ROADMAP?

Visiting Brussels in June, President Biden proclaimed that “America is back”. This also means that NATO is back, as Biden reconfirmed the United States’ solemn commitment to the defense of its European allies and Washington’s willingness to once again lead a transatlantic alliance that was much derided during the Trump years. At first sight, this is all good news for NATO; but could it turn out to be a mixed blessing for the Europeans in the longer run? This article analyses whether the NATO 2030 initiative is up to the task, and whether it provides the right answers.

Jamie Shea*



* Jamie Shea is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at NATO.

When the US President, Joe Biden, held his first summit with his fellow NATO heads of state and government in mid-June, his priority was to heal past transatlantic rifts and to mark a new beginning. Yet this did not mean that the new U.S. administration sought to return to the old alliance pre-Trump or to mark a return to business as usual. As at the G7 in Cornwall just a few days earlier, Biden's quest was to recast transatlantic security relations within a new global narrative: that of the struggle between western liberal democracies and a newly assertive, self-confident set of authoritarian states, rivalling the classical west for geopolitical power and influence. From a historical perspective, this takes NATO back to its roots when it was conceived in the late 1940s as a pillar of the liberal-democratic pushback against the expansionist authoritarianism of that period, namely Soviet communism. The Biden narrative takes NATO out of its familiar anchorage in a European regional setting focused on border collective defense (to which it had returned after Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014) and re-positions the Alliance within a new multilateral framework designed to deal not just with the armies of the authoritarians but with the nature of their political and economic systems more fundamentally. This is quite a shift in gears from the more narrow direction NATO seemed to be heading in during the Trump years, bereft of U.S. leadership, playing a reduced role on the global stage, and challenged in its own neighborhood by the EU quest for "Strategic Autonomy". Now that "America is back" in NATO, NATO is also back in America, again at the core of the U.S.'s global vision for the rest of the 21st century. It is a flattering but equally challenging, and at times uncomfortable position to be in.

Almost in anticipation of the change in the political wind in Washington, NATO has done a lot of work over the past year to analyze the new global security environment and determine how it needs to respond and adapt. The Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, appointed a team of experts, chaired by Thomas de Maiziere of Germany and Wes Mitchell of the United States, to come up with ideas on how NATO could enhance its political role, and better coordinate not just military tasks but also political strategies among its members. This group reported its findings late last year and Stoltenberg has followed up with his own outreach project, called NATO 2030. This has engaged think tanks and younger audiences to gather their ideas and inputs on the Alliance's future course. The NATO 2030 report of the young leaders group shows an interesting generational contrast with the more senior experts group in its focus on transnational security threats, such as climate change and pandemics, rather than on the more traditional great power competition from Russia and China, not to mention familiar military challenges such as nuclear deterrence. The senior group produced 138 recommendations which were obviously far too many for the NATO summitters to digest. The advantage of Stoltenberg's NATO

2030 initiative is that it has allowed the Alliance's leadership to filter all the multiple ideas and proposals collected in the outreach exercise and to boil them down to a more manageable set of eight recommendations. These are aligned with the key reform areas. The good news for Stoltenberg is that this broad package, although not all the details and individual recommendations, was approved by the NATO summit and can now form the basis for the drafting of the Alliance's next Strategic Concept, due for submission to next NATO summit in Spain in 2022.

“Given the turbulent state of international relations, it makes sense for the allies to use NATO more to share their analyses and try to forge common approaches on regional conflicts and global challenges.”

The Alliance's current Strategic Concept dates back to the Lisbon Summit in 2010. It is clearly out of date having been conceived in the days when terrorism and energy cutoffs seemed to be the major threats, and the Alliance's primary role seemed to be to carry out stabilization missions and cultivate partnerships with non-member states rather than to face up to aggressive great power rivals. Managing regional crises as they came along (and against inferior opponents), such as in the Balkans or later Libya, seemed to be more likely tasks than defending democracy against a global authoritarian onslaught or preparing to fight major high tech wars far from the Alliance's home base. The 2010 concept does not even mention China and described Russia as a partner, albeit a prickly one. Yet the security environment has sharply deteriorated over the past decade making crises the norm rather than the exception and giving NATO a much broader and tougher spectrum of threats, both internal and external, to deal with. For some time already, a new Strategic Concept has been urgently needed to ensure that the Alliance can defend its norms, strengthen its politico-military instruments and deter adversaries that are demonstrating an increasing appetite for risk and confrontation. Whether this is Russia harassing NATO warships in the Black Sea or China pushing outwards into the Taiwan Strait. A new Strategic Concept will not provide solutions to every challenge; but it can clarify thinking, establish priorities and refocus the allies on collective goals and efforts rather than the usual immediate national interest driven perspectives, hobby horses and talking points. So how are Stoltenberg's eight big ideas likely to go down with the 30 allied delegations at NATO HQ?

The first on enhancing political consultations among allies will probably receive a favorable reception. After all the initial impetus for the NATO 2030 exercise was an interview that President Macron of France gave to *The Economist* in 2019. Macron declared that NATO was “brain dead”, a statement that shocked many allies at a time when the Alliance was already facing attacks on its credibility from the Trump administration. As they rushed to defend NATO from Macron’s outburst, the allies gave the Alliance a much-needed public relations boost. Macron subsequently clarified that he felt that NATO was working fine as a military planning organization but that it had failed to rein in Turkey over its interventions in Syria or Libya and that too many allies were acting unilaterally without prior notification in the North Atlantic Council. Yet those same allies were then coming to the Council and invoking Article 4 of the NATO treaty to request diplomatic backing for their unilateral and often surprise actions.

Given the turbulent state of international relations, it makes sense for the allies to use NATO more to share their analyses and try to forge common approaches on regional conflicts and global challenges. Indeed some former alliance officials have suggested that NATO could be the forum where the global democracies could discuss and coordinate grand strategy on China. Yet this expansion of NATO’s political role has been tried in the past and has not worked. Some allies believe NATO should only discuss regional issues where it has a direct responsibility, such as troops on the ground. The Western Balkans comes to mind here. Others worry that if NATO discusses a regional crisis it will be interpreted by others as the Alliance preparing to take action and could be destabilizing. Allies have also preferred to discuss sensitive issues bilaterally or in smaller groups like the Quad (U.S., UK, France and Germany) or the Five Eyes or a country or issue specific Contact Group. Many EU allies think that the EU (because it links security, diplomacy, trade and humanitarian resources) is a better instrument for coordinating with the U.S. in a major crisis than NATO. So whereas most allies will support the calls for a more political NATO, putting it into practice in concrete cases will no doubt prove more difficult. One area where the Secretary General may have more success is in broadening NATO consultations to more areas of government. Terrorism, attacks on critical infrastructure, disinformation campaigns extreme weather events and pandemics are more likely to be handled by interior ministers, national security advisers, local mayors and police chiefs than by foreign or defense ministries. NATO could, therefore, invite these homeland defense authorities to meet with or participate in the North Atlantic Council to help allies share expertise and enhance their preparedness. A good example was set in 2019 when national security advisers met at NATO to discuss hybrid warfare and a playbook of diplomatic and economic counter-measures. When it comes to budgets, meetings of finance ministers could prove useful. Finance ministers actually met

frequently at NATO in its early years in the 1950s when the Alliance was trying to find the resources to fund its initial Lisbon military force goals totaling 96 divisions.

“The challenge for NATO is to engage with the civilian innovation sector and the venture capital markets where the most groundbreaking ideas are spotted and developed.”

The second area is resilience. The years since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 have seen NATO turn its attention to hybrid warfare and non-conventional threats as well as more classical conventional defense. The civil emergency planning structures that the Alliance developed during the Cold War to handle things like sufficiency in foodstuffs, water, fuel, communications, air and surface transport and continuity of government have been revived. NATO planners have established seven baseline requirements to cover these areas and have extended their scope to new forms of connectivity such as cyber space, satellite availability and data integrity. Allies were asked to answer detailed questionnaires regarding their investment, redundancy, and preparedness, allowing NATO planners to identify any gaps and vulnerabilities. The proposal now is to go beyond reporting and to the next step which is to formulate concrete resilience goals which will be apportioned among allies in the same way as the defense planning capability targets. These resilience goals would then become highly visible national commitments which the allies would assess collectively every two years or so. They would come with obvious financial and investment implications.

However some allies believe that this benchmarking by NATO would be too intrusive in a domain of critical infrastructure protection which can be highly sensitive. They feel that this should remain a national responsibility and not something managed or decided by NATO. Hence, it is still to be determined whether resilience goals will be largely generic and aspirational rather than specific and constraining. However, the Alliance could come to an agreement on an annual vulnerability assessment, particularly in regard to the critical transport, energy, and telecommunications infrastructure on which it relies for its military deployments, and could also conduct regional exercises to stress test the resilience of critical supply chains and nodes. Here the cooperation with the EU on military mobility (where the EU has launched its own project under PESCO) can help to generate EU funding and capability support for the connectivity upgrades that NATO needs most urgently.

Third is climate change. As a former UN Special Envoy on climate change, it is not surprising that Jens Stoltenberg has chosen to lead on this subject. Although NATO made a passing one-line reference to the security implications of global warming in its 2010 Strategic Concept it has not systematically addressed this challenge until now. Back in March, NATO foreign ministers approved the Alliance's first collective assessment on this topic. The Secretary General has now put some concrete ideas on the table. They have the merit of staying well within the Alliance's field of competence, which helped to have them adopted at the recent NATO summit. For instance, NATO will adopt common standards for military vehicles and equipment that use carbon reduction technologies. An associated aim is to develop a methodology to measure how much carbon NATO forces emit on an annual basis. Moreover, NATO will adapt and train its forces to be able to operate in more extreme weather environments, and do an impact assessment on how its military infrastructure could be disrupted by immediate and longer-term climate-related events. Military bases and essential infrastructure such as ports need to be made more resilient to sea level rise and higher temperatures. Finally NATO, with its intelligence sharing and strategic forecasting capabilities, can serve as a hub for developing early warning and foresight among allies and partners regarding geo-political shifts engendered by climate change or more imminent political and social stresses leading to possible crises and humanitarian disasters. These are all sensible and, given the growing evidence of the impact of climate change, long overdue measures. As such, they have been largely welcomed by the NGO community although some NGOs have criticized NATO for not signing up now to binding and verifiable CO₂ reduction targets. Predictably some allies were hesitant to accept binding targets because of the constraints these could put on alliance exercises and conventional defense readiness. Yet by so publicly associating itself with the highly visible domain of climate change action, NATO will put itself under close scrutiny.

Another proposal is in the area of capacity building and training. As NATO has terminated its mission in Afghanistan and will do the same in Kosovo before too long, the era of major interventions seems to be coming to an end. The focus is now moving to training and mentoring local forces so that they can handle domestic stabilization tasks largely on their own, with the support of international advisory teams on the ground. The EU is already going in this direction with its EUTM missions in the Sahel and its new European Peace Facility. NATO has also set up a number of advisory missions in places such as Ukraine, Georgia and Jordan, and NATO defense ministers back in February decided to expand the Alliance's training mission in Iraq across the country, with an extra 1200 NATO trainers under a Danish command (now to be assumed by Italy). Stoltenberg has proposed to put these activities on a more structured basis by setting up a new training command HQ as part of the Alliance's integrated military

command system. Yet there are two questions here. The first is: does NATO have enough training clients to justify such a large new structure? The EU is already doing many of the training missions in areas of strategic interest to NATO, such as the Sahel, and persuading non-EU allies, such as the U.S. and the UK, to also make a military contribution (if not in the framework of the EUTMs but under the UN flag or bilaterally). That said, the future demand for NATO's training services, beyond the continuing operations in Iraq and Kosovo, is uncertain; and there is already a regional training center in Kuwait which is under-utilized. So the second key question is whether the allies will be prepared to establish a new, expensive HQ, with extra manpower requirements, or decide that training should be carried out by the current and recently expanded NATO command structure.

The next is burden-sharing. When US Secretary of State, Tony Blinken, was at NATO in March, he reminded allies of their commitment to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense. Nonetheless, he also added the helpful suggestion that the US would look at more than this target when assessing the burden shared by allies. Contributions to NATO operations and meeting important capability targets for new equipment and greater readiness would also be taken into account. This will be music to the ears of many allies who have long advocated broader and, in their view, fairer criteria. The Secretary General has now proposed a significant increase in NATO's common funding (around 25 billion US dollars annually) which could be used to support or reimburse allies who deploy forces on NATO operations or help to pay for frequent and intensive exercises involving reinforcements over large distances such as High North and Black Sea). More common funding could incentivize allies to volunteer contributions, especially when operations come out of the blue and have not been anticipated in constrained annual national defense budgets. The UN practices this type of reimbursement for its peacekeeping forces. Yet France has resisted this idea, arguing that it would result in a considerable increase in NATO's collective budget at the expense of national programs. France has also long argued that "costs should lie where they fall"; in other words that it is a national responsibility of each ally to provide adequate resources to its armed forces and to cover both planned and unplanned national operations. Given France's reservations, Stoltenberg can count it as a success that the NATO summit adopted his proposal for more NATO common funding in principle. The Secretary General had to back-track on his idea to use the extra funds to pay for allies' missions and the additional resources, once agreed, will probably be less than what he had hoped for. Yet given all the new roles and responsibilities that the summit has placed on the Alliance, increasing NATO budgets and staffing is unavoidable if these new activities are not to lose credibility quickly.

In sixth place comes Russia. The NATO summit communique included over 60 references to Russia, so Moscow remains by far the Alliance's top concern on both a political and military level. Yet the forum where these concerns could be addressed, the NATO-Russia Council, has not met since 2019. Jens Stoltenberg has suggested these meetings should now be revived, arguing persuasively that it is even more important to talk and understand each other during times of tension than during more cooperative moments. There is however a dilemma here for the allies. They insist, rightly in my view, that Ukraine and Russia's destabilizing hybrid warfare activities (such as cyber-attacks, disinformation campaigns and election interference) should be top of the agenda when the NATO-Council meets. But this makes Moscow reluctant to accept NATO's invitations to meet as it knows it will be put on the defensive. As things stand, Russia is more interested in resuming military contracts with NATO than in carrying on a political dialogue which, in its opinion, cannot be productive under the current circumstances. NATO and Russia do indeed need to talk about military stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and transparency, risk reduction and incident prevention. Russia has also made proposals regarding moving exercises away from borders and a moratorium on intermediate-range missile deployments. It has offered to put its new 9M729 missile batteries in Kaliningrad into the mix as a potential sweetener. Given Russia's current regional preponderance in armor and missiles, these offers may not be acceptable to allies, but there is undoubtedly an important arms control agenda that needs to be discussed with Russia. It includes the issue of what to do with lapsed treaties such as Conventional Forces in Europe, Open Skies or the OSCE based Structured Dialogue and Vienna Documents providing for data exchanges and discussions on threat assessments. If the U.S. succeeds in reviving some of these issues in its bilateral Strategy Stability Talks, which Biden and Putin agreed to resume at their recent summit in Geneva, there may be scope to use them to restart the NRC consultations with Russia at NATO HQ. But how can this discussion be held without the Alliance compromising on Ukraine and Crimea and giving Russia the impression of a return to business as usual? The agenda of arms control talks needs to be clear and concrete to overcome this stumbling block.

Technology inevitably also has to be part of NATO 2030. The Alliance has been working on understanding better the impact of emerging and disruptive technologies on modern warfare, particularly in the information and data management space. NATO has identified 7 such technologies which it needs to be able to exploit against potential adversaries while preventing those adversaries from using the same technologies to gain a war fighting-edge over NATO. The focus here is on space and cyber, artificial intelligence driven processes, data integration, synthetic biology, bio-technologies, quantum computing, new materials and hypersonic

velocity missiles. The challenge for NATO is to engage with the civilian innovation sector and the venture capital markets where the most groundbreaking ideas are spotted and developed. This has been a weakness of NATO given its dependency on long-standing relationships with the major traditional defense contractors in its NATO Industry Advisory Group. One major step forward taken by the NATO summit was to establish an Innovation Accelerator modeled on the highly successful U.S. advanced projects DARPA agency. The idea is to create a hub on both sides of the Atlantic where startups can interact with the NATO scientific and technological community and potential private investors to conduct experimentation and form government-industry partnerships to take the most promising innovations to the market. NATO is currently seeking €75 million in startup funding to launch the Accelerator and incentivize initial research projects to come forward. It is yet a modest sum compared with what allies such as France and the UK, let alone the US, are spending on similar national initiatives. We should also include in this list the European Defense Fund with €7 billion over 7 years and the additional funding for defense research and space with €8 billion available through the new DEFIS Directorate in the European Commission. So to help NATO move forward, and avoid a gaping interoperability problem between the technologically enabled allies and those lacking these force multipliers or unable to use them, the new NATO Accelerator will need to draw on the work of the EU and national R&D technology hubs. Moreover, it must obtain better results from the Alliance's already existing structures, such as Allied Command Transformation, the Office of the Chief Scientist and the Science and Technology Organization in Paris. Given this already extensive civilian-military bureaucracy, NATO simply has to perform faster and more agilely in embracing emerging and disruptive technologies where the acceptance of risk, tolerance of failure and the ability to move fast without over-tight regulation and control are key to success.

Yet simply acquiring and integrating the new technologies into a multi-domain concept of operations is only one half of the story. As the technologies advance so the concepts regarding their operational use need to evolve as well. Here the NATO summit approved 3 important steps. The first is that NATO will produce a joint evaluation of the policy and ethical framework for the use of artificial intelligence. This is badly needed at a time when China and Russia are actively pursuing their research into the military applications of AI and fielding it in their next generation of sensors, drones, data exploitation and semi or even fully automated weapons. This is a competition where NATO cannot afford to be left behind. A second step was to link the Alliance's Article 5 collective defense clause to attacks on NATO's space-based assets. This was a logical step after the Alliance declared space as its 5th operational domain at its London summit in December, 2019. The task now is

to conceptualize and define what an armed attack in space might look like in terms of disruption or destruction of satellites, their short or long-term impact as well as refining the toolbox of deterrence and response strategies. Thirdly, in cyberspace, NATO lowered the threshold for a collective response to a cyber-attack from a major aggression, equivalent to an armed attack, to a series of lower level but persistent cyber intrusions. This was in line with U.S. policy after it suffered a number of ransomware attacks against its pipeline system and food distribution, along with attacks on management control software in the spring. Yet these attacks are frequently the work of criminal gangs rather than nation states and do not justify a military response. So lowering the cyber threshold will oblige the Alliance to intensify its work on attribution, in cooperation with law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as well as to expand its toolbox of diplomatic, economic and technical response options below the Article 5 level.

Finally, in eighth place but certainly not in terms of importance, comes NATO's future role in the Indo-Pacific. NATO's summit will be remembered in history as the moment when China moved to the top of NATO's agenda, based upon a more consensual assessment of China as a systemic competitor and existential security challenge than had seemed possible just a few months ago. China's more aggressive rhetoric and its clampdown on human rights in Hong Kong and Xinjiang province undoubtedly contributed to this rapprochement. For the first time, NATO's next Strategic Concept will have to state how the Alliance can face up to two great powers and strategic rivals at the same time. In addition to the fact that Russia and China challenge western democracies in very different ways, they are also increasingly working together, particularly in the military sphere. Russia is bringing China closer to Europe, especially with their joint maritime exercises in the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean. So NATO needs to develop separate strategies for how it deals with Russia and China but also a joint approach for how it deals with them together. Putin at the recent Valdai conference did not exclude that they could conclude a formal military alliance in the future. NATO has spent a lot of time trying to better analyze and understand China, which is no bad thing as China has spent several decades analyzing the NATO countries and their strengths and vulnerabilities. This work has given China its newfound confidence in the way it deals with the democracies today and pushes back hard against criticism and perceptions of interference. Yet the Strategic Concept must now go beyond studying China and set out a strategy for handling systemic competition with Beijing over the long run. Outcompeting China is clearly a better strategy than trying to confront it. This means that NATO's future China strategy is likely to focus first and foremost on managing the challenge of China's rise in its own European theatre. The priority will be on improving the

resilience and autonomy of supply chains, watching investment patterns and improving the science, technology and defense industry bases of allies. NATO will also keep an eye on joint Chinese-Russian military exercises or operations in the Arctic or the Baltic and Mediterranean, as well as in Russia's western military district. The Alliance will also have to track China's use of soft power through influence campaigns and the media, as well as any overt hybrid warfare tactics.

This approach seems more realistic than a NATO military presence in the Indo-Pacific region, given its long-term and heavy military responsibilities in the European neighborhood. The more the U.S. leaves this task to its European allies the more they will need to devote their limited military capabilities fully to it. In other words, deployments in the Indo-Pacific will be primarily a matter for individual allies rather than NATO as a whole. In this respect, the UK has decided to send its new aircraft carrier, the Queen Elisabeth, to the South China Sea, and France recently sent a submarine on a freedom of navigation mission to the same location. France, Germany and Belgium have also sent frigates on port visits to the Indo-Pacific and to join multinational exercises. If allies send more assets to the Indo-Pacific, NATO planners will need to figure out how to plug potential gaps in the Alliance's collective defense and exercise posture in the European theatre. This leaves two key questions that the new NATO Strategic Concept will need to resolve.

First, the Alliance will have to identify a format for talks with Beijing. The more it concentrates on the challenge from China, the more it needs to open up a channel of dialogue with this country. Otherwise misunderstandings and mutual threat perceptions are bound to grow. NATO 2030 recommends this step and the summit too endorsed the need for dialogue although it stopped short of advocating the creation of a NATO-China Council, with associated working groups and sub-structures, along the lines of the NATO-Russia Council. The two co-chairs of the Secretary General's senior group of experts thought that such a Council would be premature until the allies have harmonized their assessments of China. So other interim channels will be required instead. For instance a military dialogue and confidence building such as that between NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe and Chairman of the Military Committee with the Russian defense chief, Gerasimov, annual strategic talks between the NATO International Staff and senior Chinese foreign and defense ministry officials and a parliamentary track through the partnership outreach of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

The second question is what will be the future shape of the Alliance's relationship with its Asia-Pacific partners, such as Australia, Japan and South Korea? These countries were invited to the G7 meeting in Cornwall but they were not part of the

NATO summit which put China on NATO's strategic radar. This may have been wise to avoid the impression of a new anti-China alliance being summoned into existence. Only one of the partners, Australia, is currently part of NATO's Enhanced Opportunity Partnership. How interested will these Indo-Pacific democracies be in stepping up their cooperation with the Alliance if NATO is not taking on compensating military roles and responsibilities in the Indo-Pacific? Will they be content with a more intellectual form of partnership which is limited to exchanges of assessments on Indo-Pacific security and emerging challenges such as terrorism, piracy, cyber or climate-driven threats; or will NATO propose some more concrete activities such as an annual maritime exercise in the Indian Ocean to practice freedom of navigation or anti-piracy procedures? If NATO is not ready to deploy ships or air assets in the region, will it at least consider establishing military liaison and diplomatic offices in the region to improve allies' situational awareness and connectivity with Asia-Pacific partners? This could be of value at a time when countries like Australia have announced military modernization programs and increases in their naval deployments and regional training and engagement activities.

In conclusion, NATO 2030 has been a useful exercise in mapping out for the allies the key issues and choices that they will confront in adapting the Alliance to today's rapidly mutating and unfortunately deteriorating security environment. NATO's Secretary General deserves the credit for grabbing the bull by the horns and putting his ideas on the table. Having spent so much of his time and energy on managing crises, as much in relations among allies as between allies and their adversaries, he has now taken the lead in the debate on NATO's longer term future. Stoltenberg was rewarded by seeing his key proposals, at least in their broad outlines, adopted at the recent NATO summit. Biden too will be pleased that he was successful in giving the Alliance a more global orientation and branding, and putting China on the agenda as a strategic challenge rather than only an economic or trading rival. This will help to shore up support for the Alliance in Washington. The attentive reader of the summit communique will see China even in those paragraphs where Beijing was not explicitly mentioned: in space, cyber, resilience, new technologies and innovation, and enhanced political consultations. Yet the success of the summit in emphasizing all the new directions for NATO came at the expense of a relative quiescence on many traditional and unfinished items of business. Strengthening NATO's collective defense forces in Europe, helping Ukraine and Georgia to resist Russian pressures, stabilizing the Balkans, finding a way forward in Afghanistan, and sorting out a better synergy between NATO and EU defense research and capabilities efforts are arguably just as important for NATO's future as a viable security institution as addressing China or climate change. The old business does not go away, or become less important just because

the new appears on the horizon. The authors of NATO's next Strategic Concept will have to provide the policy substance on Global NATO while ensuring that Europe NATO does not stagnate or go into reverse.

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NATO AND COLLECTIVE DEFENSE IN SPACE: SAME MISSION, NEW DOMAIN

The progressive militarization of outer space presents a range of policy and legal challenges for NATO due to its reliance on space assets for operational effectiveness and the increased vulnerabilities of these assets. Indeed, dependence on space-based assets and services in the conduct of military operations has become something of an Achilles heel for NATO as peer and near-peer competitors are honing their counter-space capabilities. Given the vulnerability of space-based assets and services to hostile interference, the question presents itself whether, and under what circumstances, the collective defense commitment, as set out in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT), arises in space. NATO's ability and resolve to counter threats in space could be challenged due to the uncertain parameters of the right of self-defense itself when exercised in space and the geographical limits that Article 6 of the NAT imposes on the operation of Article 5 of the NAT.

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In 2019, NATO adopted its first-ever space policy and formally recognized outer space as a new operational domain, alongside the existing domains of air, land, sea and cyberspace.¹ The following year, NATO defense ministers announced the creation of a space center at Allied Air Command in Ramstein, Germany, to serve as a focal point for Allied space activities.² And on 14 June 2021, at their summit held in Brussels, Allied leaders for the first time formally recognized that “attacks to, from, or within space ... could lead to the invocation of Article 5” of the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT).³

These developments signal the growing importance of outer space for NATO. By treating space first and foremost as an operational enabler,⁴ NATO is preoccupied with enhancing the integration and interoperability of space assets belonging to its member States,⁵ rather than preparing to conduct hostilities in space. Indeed, as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has emphasized, NATO has no intention of placing weapons in space.⁶ This means that NATO is not currently pursuing the development or deployment of counter-space capabilities that deny an adversary’s access to or use of space assets.

Even so, the progressive militarization of outer space presents a range of policy and legal challenges for NATO and its member States. These include ever-greater reliance on space-based assets and services, their growing vulnerability to disruption and attack, and the continued threat of legal “grey zone” operations by hostile powers.

NATO and Military Operations in Space

Armed forces around the world increasingly depend on space-based assets and services, in particular for communication; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); and positioning, navigation and timing (PNT). Existing space powers are steadily enhancing their military capabilities, while other actors are investing in space systems at a growing rate. Space has evolved into an essential feature of modern military operations.

¹London Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London 3–4 December 2019, Press Release (2019) 115, *NATO*, 4 December 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm

²“NATO Agrees New Space Centre at Allied Air Command,” *NATO*, 23 October 2020, https://ac.nato.int/archive/2020/NATO_Space_Centre_at_AIRCOM

³Brussels Summit Communiqué, Issued by the Heads of State and Government Participating in the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels 14 June 2021, *Press Release (2021) 086*, 14 June 2021, para. 33.

⁴See North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *AJP-3.3, Allied Joint Doctrine for Air and Space Operations*, April 2016, chap. 5.

⁵Alexandra Stickings, “Space as an Operational Domain: What Next for NATO?,” *RUSI Journal* 40, no. 9, 2020.

⁶“Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Foreign Ministers,” *NATO*, 20 November 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_171022.htm

In line with this trend, NATO too has become heavily reliant on space in five core areas: positioning and navigation; integrated tactical warning and threat assessment; environmental monitoring for mission planning; command and control communications; and ISR capabilities.⁷ For example, ISR platforms were key to effective target acquisition and for minimizing the risk of civilian casualties during Operation Unified Protector conducted by NATO in Libya in 2011.⁸

“Overall, the Brussels Communiqué sends a strong signal that the Allies are prepared to defend their interests in space, including through the use of force if necessary.”

NATO is not a newcomer to space. The Alliance first began to explore the possibility of operating its own satellites in the mid-1960s. Between 1967 and 2005, it owned and operated four generations of communications satellites and ground stations.⁹ Since then, NATO transitioned from an ownership approach to procuring space-based communication services from its member States. Today, NATO does not have space capabilities of its own, but instead relies on national space assets. In 2019, the NATO Communications and Information (NCI) Agency concluded a memorandum of understanding with France, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (U.S.) for the provision of satellite services until the end of 2034.¹⁰ Yet the distribution of space capabilities across the Alliance is uneven. There is a heavy reliance on the U.S. for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities, with significant gaps and limitations in the European partners’ assets necessary to sustain effective combat operations.¹¹

While the use of space assets for military operations is nothing new, recent developments have generated greater awareness of the importance of the space domain.

⁷NATO Science & Technology Organization, *Science & Technology Trends 2020-2040*, 2020, 76, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/190422-ST_Tech_Trends_Report_2020-2040.pdf

⁸UK House of Commons, Defence Committee, *Operations in Libya: Ninth Report of Session 2010-12* (HC950, 2012) vol. 1, paras 107–8, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/950/950.pdf>

⁹Donald H. Martin, Paul R. Anderson and Lucy Bartamian, *Communication Satellites* (5th edn, El Segundo, CA: Aerospace Press, 2007), 191–2, 198–200, 215 and 252. See also P.A. Kelly, “The Evolving NATO Satellite Experience,” in *Space Systems as Contributors to the NATO Defence Mission (AGARD CP-580)* (Neuilly-Sur-Sienne: Advisory Group for Aerospace Research and Technological Development, 1997) 1.

¹⁰“NATO Begins Using Enhanced Satellite Services,” *NATO*, 12 February 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_173310.htm

¹¹UK House of Commons (2012), para. 88; Jason R. Greenleaf, “The Air War in Libya,” *Air & Space Power Journal*, Vol. 27, Issue 2, March-April 2013, p. 38.

This is primarily due to the increased vulnerability of space assets to a range of technological capabilities designed to degrade, damage or destroy them.¹² Such counter-space capabilities include kinetic kill vehicles, radio frequency jammers, directed energy weapons, and high-power microwaves. Many of these capabilities are ground-based (e.g. anti-satellite (ASAT) missiles), although satellites themselves could be equipped with offensive capabilities to neutralize other satellites in space, for example, through rendezvous and proximity operations (RPOs). Moreover, it should not be overlooked that cyberspace extends into outer space as well, making satellites vulnerable to cyber-attacks.¹³

NATO is facing challenges due to its reliance on space assets for operational effectiveness and the increased vulnerabilities of these assets. Indeed, dependence on space-based assets and services in the conduct of military operations has become something of an Achilles heel for NATO as peer and near-peer competitors are honing their counter-space capabilities.¹⁴ During Exercise Trident Juncture in 2018, jamming was reportedly employed to disrupt Global Positioning System (GPS) signals in northern Norway and Finland, causing electronic disturbances for civilian airlines operating in the region.¹⁵

The hostile exploitation of space-related vulnerabilities is not limited to traditional forms of physical violence, but is more likely to involve covert operations designed to disrupt activities that depend on space-based assets or services, such as command and control, tactical communications and intelligence gathering. For example, PNT signals used for the operation of unmanned aerial vehicles or weapons guidance systems could be spoofed with false coordinates so as to alter their course and target.¹⁶ Such operations can be effective in undermining confidence in the functioning of friendly systems and causing defensive systems such as missile early warning to fail at a critical moment. It can be difficult to attribute the origin of directed energy attacks and electromagnetic interference, especially those launched from space-based assets. Moreover, many counter-space capabilities are dual-use and capable of carrying out tasks for both military and civilian purposes, which makes it harder to regulate their development and use.

¹²See Tood Harrison et al., *Space Threat Assessment 2021* (Washington DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021).

¹³Beyza Unal, "Cybersecurity of NATO's Space-based Strategic Assets," *Chatham House*, 1 July 2019, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/07/cybersecurity-natos-space-based-strategic-assets>

¹⁴Benjamin Silverstein, "NATO's Return to Space," *War on the Rocks*, 3 August 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/natos-return-to-space/>

¹⁵Christopher Woody, "Finland and Norway Are Telling Airline Pilots to Be Ready to Fly without GPS, and Some Think Russia Is up to Something," *Business Insider*, 9 November 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/finland-norway-tell-pilots-to-fly-without-gps-and-some-blame-russia-2018-11?r=US&IR=T>

¹⁶See, for example, Andrew J. Kerns et al, "Unmanned Aircraft Capture and Control Via GPS Spoofing," *Journal of Field Robotics*, Vol. 31, Issue 4, 2014, pp. 617–36; Ali Jafarnia-Jahromi et al, "GPS Vulnerability to Spoofing Threats and a Review of Antispoofing Techniques," *International Journal of Navigation and Observation*, 2012, p. 16.

Implications for Collective Defense

NATO is a defensive alliance based on a commitment of mutual assistance. Given the vulnerability of space-based assets and services to hostile interference, the question presents itself whether or not this commitment, as set out in Article 5 of the NAT,¹⁷ actually applies in space.¹⁸ This is not some minor detail. The applicability of Article 5 to threats emanating from outer space goes to the very heart of NATO's credibility and ambitions in this domain.

“With a growing number of States ramping up their space arsenal, the vulnerability of space-based assets to a range of counter-space capabilities poses significant challenges to NATO.”

Article 5 of the NAT is concerned with the exercise of the right of collective self-defense in response to an armed attack. There can be little doubt that incidents amounting to an “armed attack”, in the sense the term is used in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations,¹⁹ may occur in outer space. For example, the destruction of another State's missile early warning satellite by an anti-satellite missile would clearly amount to a use of force that reaches the gravity threshold of an armed attack.²⁰ In such a situation, the right of self-defense under Article 51 of the Charter would be engaged, which opens the door to the invocation of Article 5 of the NAT.

At the June 2021 Brussels summit, Allied leaders formally recognized that “attacks to, from, or within space ... could lead to the invocation of Article 5” of the NAT.²¹ They also underlined that a decision as to when such attacks might lead to an invocation of Article 5 “would be taken by the North Atlantic Council on a case-by-case basis.”²² The Brussels Communiqué thus puts to rest any lingering doubts over the

¹⁷See Aurel Sari, “The Mutual Assistance Clauses of the North Atlantic and EU Treaties: The Challenge of Hybrid Threats,” *Harvard National Security Journal*, Vol. 10, 2019, p. 405; Michael N. Schmitt, “The North Atlantic Alliance and Collective Defense at 70: Confession and Response Revisited,” *Emory International Law Review*, Vol. 34, 2019, p. 85.

¹⁸The question has been raised repeatedly in the past, but rarely answered in depth. See, for example, Jan A. H. van Hoof, “Coalition Space Operations – A NATO Perspective,” *High Frontier*, Vol. 7, 2010, p. 8.

¹⁹Generally, see Tom Ruys, “Armed attack” and Article 51 of the UN Charter: Evolutions in Customary Law and Practice, *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*, 2010.

²⁰Cf. Case Concerning Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. USA), *Merits*, 1986 ICJ Rep. 14, para. 195.

²¹Brussels Summit Communiqué, para. 33.

²²Brussels Summit Communiqué, para. 33

applicability of Article 5 to outer space: NATO leaders unequivocally affirmed that the provision does extend to this domain. The Communiqué also clarifies that Article 5 may apply in three distinct scenarios: where attacks are launched against Allied space assets from Earth; where attacks originating in space are directed against targets elsewhere; and where space-based assets are employed to carry out attacks against other space-based assets. Finally, the Communiqué underlines that there is no automaticity in the operation of Article 5. As in other domains, attacks in or from space engage the duty to provide mutual assistance only following a decision to invoke Article 5.²³

This lack of automaticity in the operation of Article 5 is prudent. Even when faced with an incident in space that amounts to an armed attack triggering the right of individual or collective self-defense, the Allies are not bound to respond within the framework of Article 5, but may have recourse to other policy options. It is worth recalling that Article 5 has been invoked only on one occasion, in response to the events of September 11, but that this was neither the first nor the only instance where a member State of NATO has suffered an armed attack.²⁴

Assuming that history is an accurate guide in this matter, past practice suggests that it is highly unlikely that the member States of NATO will invoke Article 5 of the NAT in response to an incident in space *unless* it amounts to an armed attack of extraordinary political or strategic significance. Seen from the point of view of a hostile power, the Brussels Communiqué thus confirms what potential adversaries probably knew already: the Allies may decide to invoke Article 5 in reaction to significant incidents, but are unlikely to do so in relation to less severe events, leaving room for exploiting “grey zone” situations.

Strategic Ambiguity: How Much is Too Much?

Overall, the Brussels Communiqué sends a strong signal that the Allies are prepared to defend their interests in space, including through the use of force if necessary. However, the clarity of this message is diluted by the uncertainty surrounding the exact conditions which may prompt the Allies to invoke Article 5 in response to an armed attack. This ambiguity may be seen as an asset: leaving hostile powers guessing the exact conditions that could trigger a forceful military response by the Alliance may prompt those powers to proceed with greater caution.²⁵

²³ Cf. Sari (2019), 447.

²⁴ Other examples include the invasion of the Falklands in 1982 and the terrorist attacks on Paris in November 2015. Notably, the Paris attacks prompted France to invoke Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, rather than Article 5 of the NAT, to request military assistance from other member States of the European Union. See Outcome of the Council Meeting: 2426th Council Meeting—*Foreign Affairs*, 14120/15, 17 November 2015.

²⁵ Cf. UK Ministry of Defence, *Deterrence: The Defence Contribution*, JDN 1/19 (2019), pp. 46–7.

Strategic ambiguity thus has its benefits. However, hostile actors may also read it as a lack of resolve. In the present case, at least two factors may encourage such a reading. The first relates to the uncertain parameters of the right of self-defense itself and the ambiguities that surround its application in space.²⁶ For example, could non-kinetic interference against space-based assets or services, such as signal jamming, rise to the level of an armed attack? If so, under what circumstances does such interference satisfy the gravity threshold required to constitute an armed attack?²⁷ Is it lawful to declare a space exclusion zone or to deploy “bodyguard” satellites to defend critical space-based assets in anticipation of an attack in the exercise of the right of self-defense? Having recognized the applicability of Article 5 to space attacks, NATO nations need to develop a shared approach to these and related questions in order to demonstrate unity and resolve.

The second factor relates to the geographical limits that Article 6 of the NAT imposes on the operation of Article 5 of the NAT. The first sub-paragraph of Article 6 deals with attacks on Allied territory. It is clear from the language of this sub-paragraph that armed attacks launched into the territory or islands of NATO members *from or through* space fall squarely within the ambit of Article 5. Armed attacks launched against their assets in space are caught by the second sub-paragraph of Article 6, which deals with attacks against the “forces, vessels or aircraft of any of the Parties.” While neither the notion of a vessel,²⁸ nor that of an aircraft,²⁹ extends to objects primarily designed for operation in outer space, the concept of ‘forces’ is broad enough to cover spacecraft and their personnel. There is a catch, however. The second sub-paragraph of Article 6 of the NAT refers to attacks taking place “in or over” Allied territories. This means that, at best, attacks against Allied forces in space are covered by Article 5 only whilst in orbit “over” such territories and above their airspace. Accordingly, the destruction of an Allied satellite may engage Article 5 if the satellite was orbiting over the territory of a NATO nation, but not if it was orbiting over the South China Sea, for instance.³⁰

²⁶Generally, see Christian Henderson, *The Use of Force and International Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

²⁷Matthew T. King and Laurie R. Blank, “International Law and Security in Outer Space: Now and Tomorrow,” *AJIL Unbound*, Vol. 113, 2019 p. 129.

²⁸This is reflected in Article 2(4) of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 2 November 1973, 1340 UNTS 184, which defines ships to mean “vessel of any type whatsoever operating in the marine environment and includes hydrofoil boats, air-cushion vehicles, submersibles, floating craft and fixed or floating platforms.”

²⁹Article 1 of Annex 7 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, 7 December 1944, 15 UNTS 297, defines aircraft as “[a]ny machine that can derive support in the atmosphere from the reactions of the air other than the reactions of the air against the earth’s surface.”

³⁰For further detail, see Aurel Sari, “NATO in Outer Space: A Domain Too Far?,” *Articles of War*, 1 October 2020, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/nato-outer-space/>

NATO nations thus face a dilemma. The geographical limitations imposed by Article 6 of the NAT on the operation of their mutual assistance commitment increases the vulnerability of their space assets to hostile maneuvers by potential adversaries, especially in the Southern Hemisphere where the Alliance has the fewest Space Surveillance Network (SSN) assets. To address this vulnerability, the Allies may consider Article 5 to be applicable to attacks against their space assets wherever they may operate, which is without any geographical restrictions. However, extending the scope of Article 5 to cover all around Earth may expose NATO to accusations that it seeks to militarize this domain. Also, such a move would lack credibility unless it is underwritten by the capabilities necessary to defend Western space assets and the services they provide.

Ignoring the matter is not an option. China and Russia are known for exploiting legal “grey zone” situations by conducting hostile operations below the traditional threshold of physical violence amounting to an armed attack.³¹ They are likely to test NATO’s legal readiness and political resolve in the space domain, for example, by using blind spots to undertake nefarious activities such as co-orbital jamming or RPOs. Strategic ambiguity on the geographical scope of application of Article 5 is likely to invite, rather than deter, such hostile probing.

Concluding Observations: Future Challenges and Opportunities

With a growing number of States ramping up their space arsenal, the vulnerability of space-based assets to a range of counter-space capabilities poses significant challenges to NATO. However, looking ahead to 2030, these challenges also present opportunities that the Alliance can seize to its advantage.

NATO may benefit from increased resilience built in the new generation of space assets available for Allied forces to counter threats to their space-based capabilities.³² For example, the new generation of European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) is expected to augment GPS and its European counterpart, Galileo, to improve the accuracy and reliability of positioning information.³³ The US has also been developing plans to protect critical infrastructure systems, networks and assets relying on PNT services from disruption and manipulation by

³¹See, for example, Lyle J. Morris et al, *Gaining Competitive Advantage in the Gray Zone: Response Options for Coercive Aggression Below the Threshold of Major War*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2019.

³²Madeline Moon, *The Space Domain and Allied Defence* (Report to the Defence and Security Committee, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 162 DSCFC 17 E rev. 1 fin, Oct. 8, 2017), para. 63, <https://www.nato-pa.int/document/2017-space-domain-and-allied-defence-moon-report-162-dscfc-17-e-rev1-fin>; Gregory L. Schulte, “Protecting NATO’s Advantage in Space,” *Transatlantic Current*, No. 5 (May 2012), p. 3.

³³“Developments in Hosted Payloads,” *Global Military Communication Magazine*, June/July 2018, p. 16

jamming or spoofing their signals.³⁴ Moreover, the US Air Force has been deploying Advanced Extremely High Frequency satellites, which are capable of protecting communications from jamming.³⁵

In addition, further strategic advantages can be gained by the increased use of decoys and other deception tactics in space. The U.S. Joint Doctrine on Space Operations acknowledges that deception is “likely a critical element of any space-system resilience effort.”³⁶ Decoys can be particularly effective in the space environment where there is less physical constraint on the shape, size, or number of decoys to keep them indistinguishable from non-maneuvering satellites, which makes it hard to detect the correct target.³⁷

Collective legal diplomacy represents another opportunity for the Alliance to maintain its competitive advantage. Although NATO does not have any intention to challenge or change the international legal framework for space activities, it can provide a forum to discuss and agree upon normative standards to close existing gaps in the interpretation and application of international law in space.³⁸ General John W. Raymond of the U.S. Space Force recognizes this potential for the development of international norms of responsible behavior in the exploration and use of space environment.³⁹ NATO has engaged in such collective legal diplomacy for cyber security through funding a multiple year project, which led to the widely acclaimed publication of Tallinn Manual and Tallinn Manual 2.0.⁴⁰ As the Brussels Communiqué has underlined, the Alliance remains committed to pursue its space operations in line with international law.⁴¹ It is in the collective interest of the Allies to develop shared understandings and expectations about how international law applies to space operations and to challenge the legality of hostile operations undertaken by peer and near-peer competitors.

³⁴Executive Order on Strengthening National Resilience through Responsible Use of Positioning, Navigation and Timing Services (Executive Order 13905, 12 February 2020).

³⁵Nathan Strout, “There’s a New Anti-Jamming Satellite in Orbit,” *C4ISRNET*, 8 August 2019, <https://www.c4isrnet.com/battlefield-tech/c2-comms/2019/08/08/theres-a-new-anti-jamming-satellite-in-orbit/>

³⁶*Joint Publication 3-14: Space Operations* (26 October 2020), I-10.

³⁷“Contested Space II: Countermeasures,” *SatelliteObservation.net*, 8 March 2018, <https://satelliteobservation.net/2018/03/08/contested-space-ii-countermeasures/>

³⁸Karl-Heinz Brunner, *Space and Security – NATO’s Role* (NATO Science and Technology Committee, Preliminary Draft Special Report, 2 March 2021), para. 72.

³⁹John W. Raymond, “NATO Space”, speech delivered at the Joint Air & Space Power Conference 2021, <https://www.japcc.org/nato-space-2/>

⁴⁰Michael N. Schmitt, ed., *Tallinn Manual 2.0 on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Operations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Michael N. Schmitt, ed., *Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴¹Brussels Summit Communiqué, para. 33.

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NATO'S CHINA PROBLEM

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's strategic minds are increasingly occupied with how to handle the People's Republic of China's rise as a maritime power in Asia, but this focus is misguided. China is already a maritime power in the North Atlantic, and its influence is rapidly growing. This influence does not represent a crisis for the Alliance but does require addition of China to the Alliance's strategic considerations within its area of responsibility. Additionally, the Alliance must account for extra-regional competition between the U.S. and the PRC which could draw in alliance commitments in the event of escalation between the two powers.

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ATO is turning its focus upon an increasingly powerful People's Republic of China (PRC).¹ Much of the public debate surrounding this late-discovered dilemma swirls around whether the Alliance should be talking about China at all, but an awakening appears to have taken place within the Alliance since China's first appearance in a 2019 NATO document.² The answer is far more nuanced than a simple binary solution. Ranging from the issue of alliance entanglement to domestic maritime infrastructure, the China question will likely, rightly, occupy a large, but still minority, share of NATO's attention for the foreseeable future. To be effective, that attention must be appropriately directed in order to guide purposeful dialogue and action. China's impact on NATO is broad and will continue to grow across the spectrum of defense as well as geoeconomics and political machinations, but in terms of areas where the Alliance could focus its immediate attention, the maritime domain is among the most important.

Why and Where Does China Matter for NATO?

China is the fastest growing maritime power on earth. It maintains the world's largest shipping fleet, most of the world's most important ports, and a world-class navy. Its fishing fleet far surpasses the size and production of any other. Entering what some have referred to as "a maritime century," China is well-positioned to increase its share of global trade and spread its influence across the seas.³ Its growing ability to project force abroad is telegraphed by its rapidly modernizing navy, especially its investments in amphibious landing ships and sophisticated aircraft carriers. NATO does not necessarily need to directly address China's increasing role as a maritime power in the Asia-Pacific region, because China's role is increasing as a maritime power in the North Atlantic region. The organization must have a clear and focused view of China, not because of its increasing power in the Asia-Pacific but because NATO will increasingly face Chinese maritime power in its own backyard.

How To Deal with a Systemic Challenger?

At present, NATO faces a serious challenge even in elucidating its position on China. In the 2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué, NATO leaders referred to "China's stated ambitions and assertive behavior" as "system challenges" to both the rules-based international order and to more nebulous "areas relevant to Alliance security." References to China's expanding nuclear arsenal, military modernization, and

¹Erlanger, Steven and Michael D. Shear, "Shifting Focus, NATO Views China as a Global Security Challenge," *The New York Times*, 14 June 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/14/world/europe/biden-nato-china-russia.html>

²Ryan Heath, "NATO's pivot to China," *Politico Global Translations*, 7 June 2021, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/global-translations/2021/06/07/natos-pivot-to-china-493144>

³Magnus Nordenman, "The Naval Alliance: Preparing NATO for a Maritime Century," *Atlantic Council*, June 2015, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/193011/NATOMaritime_finalPDF.pdf

cooperation with Russia follow, but it is not clear how NATO is expected to grapple with all of these challenges, several of which are more political than military. Further, it is unclear how NATO's partners should interpret this statement, or what actions they might expect from NATO in the future. NATO will likely be unable to wrangle 30 members into coherent action, or even shared threat perception, in the short term. The members of the European Union identify China as a "systemic rival" but also as a partner and a competitor. It is unclear whether NATO's perception is informing Europe's positions and policies, but without reconciling the two there is scant likelihood of the Alliance mustering meaningful action beyond talking points.

“China is the fastest growing maritime power on earth. It maintains the world’s largest shipping fleet, most of the world’s most important ports, and a world-class navy. Its fishing fleet far surpasses the size and production of any other.”

Maritime Economy and the Contest for Control of Eurasia

Critics of NATO's newly directed attention toward China sarcastically point to the Alliance's name. Asia, goes the waggish retort, is a long way off from the North Atlantic. An increasingly bellicose Russia on Europe's doorstep, some might argue, should be the Alliance's focus. However, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg recently noted that "We [NATO] see China coming closer to us from the Arctic to cyber space." Some reporting interpreted those comments as indications that China's capabilities are approaching parity with NATO's, but it seems equally plausible that the remarks referred to China's physical proximity.⁴ China's influence and military presence are increasingly global, and even if NATO remains myopically focused on its own backyard it will increasingly find that China is there. The old maxim of "trade follows the flag" has been usurped by flags following trade. China's vast investments across Europe as well as its far-flung citizenry will draw forward its military forces to ensure the continued success and safety of both. Take for instance the Chinese non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) in Libya in 2011. Beijing was able to marshal one of the most capable ships in the PLAN and transport aircraft of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), as well as state-owned enterprises like China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), to extract thousands of Chinese citizens from Libya roughly in the space of one week. A decade prior

⁴ BBC Editorial Staff, "NATO Warns of Military Challenge Posed by China," *BBC News*, 15 June 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57466210>

to that operation, such a thing would have been impossible.⁵ A decade past that operation, China's capabilities and financial interests have only grown. From its clearly-broadcast plans to become an Arctic power to its Belt and Road Initiative,⁶ China's interests and investments about the interests and borders of NATO members in North America and Europe.⁷

Of particular concern to NATO must be increasing Chinese control over critical maritime infrastructure. Seapower, after all, is not only generated by navies. In fact, navies are almost a supporting act in a much larger production composed of container shipping, oil tankers, fishing fleets, and shipbuilding infrastructure. Concentrated investment over the past decade bought Chinese state-owned enterprises controlling interest in ports across Europe. In fact, China now holds approximately 10 percent of combined European port capacity as well as a global monopoly on constructing the harbor container cranes that are vital to global commerce.⁸ In his 2020 book, *To Rule Eurasia's Waves*, Geoffrey Gresh details the flood of Chinese investment in these non-naval elements of seapower over the past decade, pointing out the close relations between the SOEs doing the investing and the PLA.⁹ While Chinese control of the Greek port in Piraeus has generated headlines, Chinese maritime infrastructure investment among NATO members has spread to Turkey, Spain, and Italy, and those investments are already bearing fruit both commercially and in keeping NATO members quiet on matters of Chinese interest such as Taiwan.¹⁰ While it is likely counterproductive to label all Chinese investment in Europe as pernicious, NATO members must also carefully review Chinese investment in strategic sectors.

The reason for a measured approach to Chinese maritime investment is that the real-world impact of this investment is yet unknown. While it is likely to produce conditions or behaviors conducive to Chinese interests in some respects, it is difficult to estimate with any degree of exactitude how China's economic interests could translate into military advantage, or if that is even within the realm of possibility in the near future.

⁵ Gabe Collins and Andrew S. Erickson, "Implications of China's Military Evacuation of Citizens from Libya," *Jamestown Foundation China Brief*, 11 March 2011, <https://jamestown.org/program/implications-of-chinas-military-evacuation-of-citizens-from-libya/>

⁶ Rush Doshi, Alexis Dale-Huang, and Gaoqi Zhang, "Northern Expedition: China's Arctic Activities and Ambitions," *Brookings*, April 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/northern-expedition-chinas-arctic-activities-and-ambitions/>

⁷ Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative," *Council on Foreign Relations*, Last updated 28 January 2020. <https://www.cfr.org/background/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>

⁸ Geoffrey F. Gresh, "To Rule Eurasia's Waves The New Great Power Competition at Sea. New Haven & London," *Yale University Press*, 2020, p. 85.

⁹ Gresh, p. 45.

¹⁰ Gresh, pp. 62-69.

China's Navy in Europe

Combatant vessels of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) have participated in live-fire exercises alongside the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean and Baltic Seas in recent years. Beijing has maintained a persistent presence in the Gulf of Aden for 13 years and maintains its only overseas base in Djibouti. The same deployed ships conducted port visits from Europe's arctic states to the Black Sea, and a host of others in between. These exercises and encounters will only become more common as China's navy strengthens its blue water capabilities and global logistics network. The navies of NATO will see PLAN ships in European waters more frequently. The vessels of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) will become an increasingly common sight in European waters as Chinese economic interests in the region continue to grow. In places like the Gulf of Aden, cooperation between NATO and China has been limited, but relations remain cordial. However, if relations worsen, the PLAN presence may become less benign and will require careful attention.

“Internally, NATO must strive to create institutional knowledge of the People's Liberation Army and its joint components.”

Emerging Russia – China Cooperation

Increasing cooperation between Russia and China presents another important facet of China's maritime power worth the Alliance's attention.¹¹ Bilateral naval exercises between the two span the globe and are increasingly complex, warfighting-oriented drills.¹² It would be wildly presumptuous to say that Russia-China relations are progressing toward real operational cooperation or, as some have claimed, an alliance; however, their deepening ties present the pair with a useful mechanism for geopolitical signaling that will likely see increased use as their opposition to the existing order continues. While opposition to the U.S. and NATO might bring Russia and China together on select issues and at identified times, their own bilateral mistrust, uneasy border, and troubled history will likely limit the operational potential for the relationship.¹³ All the same, NATO cannot afford to dismiss or ignore this dyad as it

¹¹ Reuters, “Russia, China extend friendship and cooperation treaty –Kremlin,” 28 June 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/russia-china-extend-friendship-cooperation-treaty-kremlin-2021-06-28/>

¹² Michael Paul, “Partnership on the High Seas.” German Institute for International and Security Affairs: *SWP*, 26 June 2019, https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2019C26_pau.pdf

¹³ Eugene Rumer and Richard Sokolsky, “Chinese-Russian Defense Cooperation Is More Flash Than Bang,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 17 June 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/17/chinese-russian-defense-cooperation-is-more-flash-than-bang-pub-84787>

looks to the future. As the far stronger partner, China “sees Russia as a key strategic partner in advancing China’s vision of a future international order.”¹⁴

Article Five Considerations

As rancor increasingly dominates U.S.-China relations and the two states’ militaries come into more and more frequent contact in the Asia-Pacific, potential for miscalculation, accidents, and conflict increase. China’s resistance to good-faith participation in conflict avoidance mechanisms and confidence building measures only magnifies the risk. Thus, even if NATO wished to avoid addressing China’s increasing role as a maritime power, it must acknowledge the risk of alliance entanglement in a potential conflict between the U.S. and China that would trigger NATO’s Article 5 commitment. As other NATO member states send ships into the Asia-Pacific, that risk grows. Some have gone so far as to postulate that the U.S. might establish linkages between NATO choices on China and the degree of its contributions to the Alliance, withdrawing support for continental concerns with Russia should its own goals vis-à-vis China not garner NATO backing.¹⁵

Coercion Against Extra-regional NATO Partners

Of critical importance will be NATO’s ability to support its partners against Chinese pressure and depredation. In recent years, China’s fishing fleets increasingly target African nations with which NATO maintains security cooperation and assistance relationships. The scourge of illegal fishing also threatens the economies and social stability of littoral states on the African continent, which has follow-on effects for European navies that will inevitably deal with the resultant illegal human migration, human trafficking, and smuggling that stem from these efforts to degrade good order at sea. Many NATO member states are reliant on Chinese seafood exports, and some export large quantities of maritime products to the Chinese market. If Chinese products are harvested illegally, or by companies employing slave labor, that creates a moral dilemma for their consumers and is detrimental to alliance members.

Responding without Overcorrecting

The answer to this broad maritime challenge is not to expand NATO’s operational remit to the Asia-Pacific. Many NATO members would be unlikely to support such a shift, nor would most be able to support it operationally if they did agree. Thus, most operational commitment would fall upon the handful of member states that maintain

¹⁴ Geoffrey F. Gresh, “To Rule Eurasia’s Waves The New Great Power Competition at Sea. New Haven & London,” *Yale University Press*, 2020, p. 85.

¹⁵ Sarah Raine, “NATO, China and International Security,” *Asia-Pacific Regional Security Assessment 2021*, London, *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 2021, p. 136.

sufficient naval force projection capability to operate independently in the Pacific, such as France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. On this subject, those that emphasize the “North Atlantic” aspect of NATO are correct. NATO’s operational focus should remain on its own region, while maintaining awareness of developments outside it.

Clarify

First on NATO’s list should be clarification of its own policies, both internally and externally. The key question being; what does ‘systemic challenger’ mean and how will our actions address that reality? Until the Alliance can reach internal consensus and credibly communicate this message to the world, credible action will remain out of reach. Non-allied partners will hesitate to buy-in on any NATO initiative potentially-directed toward Beijing without a clear understanding of the Alliance’s intentions.

Create Corporate Knowledge and Share It

Internally, NATO must strive to create institutional knowledge of the People’s Liberation Army and its joint components. Much like the way it built its encyclopedic understanding of the Russian military, the Alliance must foster development of a skilled corps of dedicated China analysts. And it is insufficient to simply create intelligence products for use at NATO headquarters. As emphasized in the *NATO 2030* report generated last year, alliance members need to share relevant information across relevant agencies as well as borders.¹⁶ Just as the challenge from China is not limited to military domains, information sharing must be ingrained in key sectors to ensure alliance members remain free of coercion or subversion.

There is some indication that this is happening at some levels of the Alliance, though perhaps more organically than by an intentional process. The NATO Defense College’s research division has published a number of works since 2018 focusing on various aspects of the Alliance’s dealings with China, ranging from NATO’s Indo-Pacific interests¹⁷ and COVID-19¹⁸, to the Russia-China axis.¹⁹

¹⁶ NATO, “NATO 2030: United for a New Era,” 1 July 2021, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf

¹⁷ Jean-Loup Samaan, *NDC Policy Brief No. 21*, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=611>

¹⁸ Bates Gill, “China in the COVID world: continued challenges for a rising power,” *NDC Policy Brief No. 20*, November 2020, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=664>

¹⁹ Marc Ozawa, “Russia and China: “axis of convenience” or “stable strategic partnership?,” *NDC Policy Brief No. 19*, July 2019, <https://www.ndc.nato.int/download/downloads.php?icode=603>

Maximize Alliance Partnerships

The Alliance could, and should, leverage its existing relationships in the Asia-Pacific to consult and coordinate on the issue of China's burgeoning maritime might. The Alliance has several partners in the Asia Pacific with whom it could increase information sharing and consultative mechanisms but has yet to put a concept in place. While NATO maintains several other defined regional initiatives such as the Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) partners like Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea fall within NATO's catch-all "Global Partners" designation.²⁰ Formalizing a structure for its maritime partners in the region could be an attractive option, though proposals for NATO to align exercises and other activities with such a structure would be best avoided to prevent overtaxing alliance capabilities.²¹

Conduct and Support Alliance Members' Independent Deployments to Asia

This is not to say, of course, that NATO member states have no reason to deploy their maritime forces into the Asia-Pacific. On the contrary, the Indian and Pacific Ocean territorial possessions and economic interests of states like the United Kingdom, France, and the United States demand that their navies maintain some degree of presence in the region. Other deployments, such as that announced by the German navy, as well as Dutch participation in the Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group 21 should also be welcomed and encouraged.

Beginning in 2018, several NATO member state's navies have participated as observers in U.S.-led maritime exercises designed to improve maritime security in the Asia-Pacific. One of the more visible examples being the Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT) exercise.²² Given the global reliance upon the maritime commons, NATO members should be seen cooperating to ensure a free sea and upholding the freedom of navigation outside formal alliance operations. And these deployments can still benefit the Alliance in terms of lessons learned as well as intelligence sharing.

Facing the Future Together

None of these actions will go unnoticed by Beijing. Even the limited public statements released have drawn a vicious riposte in Chinese media and from representatives of

²⁰ NATO, "Organization: Partnerships." Last updated 27 March 2020. <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/51288.htm>

²¹ Mirna Galic, "Opportunity Knocks for NATO and its Partners in the Asia-Pacific," *Atlantic Council*, 26 March 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/opportunity-knocks-for-nato-and-its-partners-in-the-asia-pacific/>

²² Gregory Johnson, "SEACAT 2020 Puts Regional Cooperation First on Agenda," *Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet*, 23 July 2020, <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/2286570/seacat-2020-puts-regional-cooperation-first-on-agenda/>

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. China's mission to the European Union was quick to fire back at NATO's June 2021 communiqué, claiming that it "slander[ed] China's peaceful development"²³ and denying the charge that China poses a "systemic challenge" but vowing to respond to perceived systemic challenges to its own goals.²⁴ It should be expected that Beijing will wield its influence and coercive power to exacerbate existing dividing lines within the Alliance in order to prevent NATO's ability to coalesce around a meaningful position where China's interests are concerned.²⁵ This will require concerted effort from Brussels to ensure that member states are reinforced against those coercive activities and that potential cleavages are addressed proactively.

There is no need for panic or breathless overreaction within NATO, but the Alliance will need to find new ways to work together and operate as China's maritime strength grows in its backyard. While Russia remains its rightful focus, practicality must also inform NATO's prioritization decisions. Russia remains a country with economic and demographic limitations on its ability to wage a conventional war against NATO. China, on the other hand, is amidst an attempt to seize the commanding heights of the world economy and is rapidly building military and naval strength. Combined with the opacity surrounding China's decision-making and political goals, this creates a situation that the Alliance must focus upon and prepare for. These preparations will not be received well by China, and the resulting backlash should be faced by a unified front within the Alliance. Whatever challenge may come, however, it will be best dealt with in the spirit of NATO's long-standing motto, "*Animus in consulendo liber*," or "A mind unfettered in deliberation." Honest and constructive consultation among allies will prepare the Alliance to meet this new maritime challenge.

²³ Mission of China to the EU (@ChinaEUMission), "The spokesperson of our Mission speaks on a question concerning the NATO Summit's Communiqué," *Twitter*, 15 June 2021, <https://twitter.com/ChinaEUMission/status/1404565606892986375>

²⁴ Op-ed., "China fires back at NATO's claims, says it won't sit back in face of systemic challenges," *Global Times*, 15 June 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202106/1226163.shtml>

²⁵ Meia Nouwens, "What next for NATO and China?," *International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Blog*, 18 June 2021, <https://www.iiiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/06/nato-china>

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BIDEN'S TRANSATLANTIC OFFSET

The United States and its allies are entering an era of strategic simultaneity for which the Transatlantic Alliance is ill-prepared. The prospect of concurrent conflict or pressure from opposing sides of the Euro-Atlantic region would stretch existing resources beyond commitments. It would also risk undermining Article 5 and 70 years of stability and prosperity for NATO in Europe. As the U.S. pivots to the Indo-Pacific, the Biden administration should pursue closer relations with the Alliance as a fourth offset strategy which seeks to bolster European defense and better align strategy at the national and multinational levels. In so doing, the United States can enhance the security and stability of the political West with a view towards the emerging geopolitical environment of the coming decades.

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“Strategy is the art of making use of time and space. I am less chary of the latter than of the former; space we can recover, time never.” — Napoleon¹

The uncertainty and complexity of the emerging security environment casts a long shadow over U.S. strategic interests. The so-called unipolar moment marked by military hegemony is over and multi-directional threat vectors increasingly abound.² The U.S. and its allies have been late to recognize this reality while the intentions and capabilities of strategic rivals have continued to evolve.³ In an era of heightened geopolitical competition with a rising China and revisionist Russia — plus the unlikely but extant potential for more substantive Sino-Russian convergence⁴ — the Transatlantic Alliance must now measure strategy and capabilities against existential scenarios.

Perhaps most concerning is the prospect of strategic simultaneity — dual pressure or crises from opposing sides of the Euro-Atlantic region. This could manifest below the threshold of conventional warfare with so-called hybrid tactics such as information operations, electronic warfare, civil unrest, cyber incursions, intellectual property theft, and undermining critical infrastructure. These tools are not new but they present threats on an indefinite timescale, creating friction with Western political decision-making cycles. So-called hybrid threats have increasingly targeted the Transatlantic Alliance over the past decade owing to the West’s post-Cold War strategic malaise and disengagement in its so-called periphery,⁵ the growing ambitions of strategic rivals, and accelerants such as emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs). Below-threshold threats should not be discounted as they could also set the theatre for conventional operations.

Simultaneous conventional crises in the Indo-Pacific and along NATO’s Eastern Flank — rapid incursions into Taiwan and the Baltic states, for example — would almost certainly stretch U.S. resources beyond commitments and overwhelm local

¹ David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon: The Mind and Method of History’s Greatest Soldier* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1966), p. 149.

² “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” NATO, 14 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm.

³ Ivo Munssen, “‘Inhaltlich lag Trump meist Richtig’: Der ehemalige amerikanische Spitzendiplomat Wess Mitchell fordert von Europa mehr Engagement in der Sicherheitspolitik,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 9 July 2021; Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China’s Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); and “Russia’s Military Modernization,” *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 30 September 2020.

⁴ Jeffrey Edmonds, Samuel Bendett, et al. “Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy in Russia,” *Center for Naval Analyses*, May 2021, <https://nps.edu/documents/115559645/122225231/2021+Dist+A+CNA+AI+and+Autonomy+in+Russia+May+2021.pdf/eed101c2-678b-130e-3c9b-08680356a6a2?t=1622817291960>; Bobo Lo and Edward Lucas, “Partnership Without Substance: Sino-Russian Relations in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 28 April 2021, <https://cepa.org/partnership-without-substance/>.

⁵ Wess Mitchell, “Tipping the Scales: Why Central Europe Matters to the United States,” *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 2006, <http://www.ncpathinktank.org/pdfs/CEPATippingtheScales.pdf>

defenses. This could create a territorial *fait accompli*, which would force the U.S. and its allies to choose between accepting redrawn borders or embarking upon a liberation campaign.⁶ NATO could theoretically protect the so-called ‘rimlands’ by bolstering its forward strategic presence,⁷ but it is unlikely to muster sufficient resources, reposture capabilities, or generate the necessary political will in the near-to medium-term. Strategic simultaneity could therefore present the U.S. with an impossible choice between upholding Article 5 and the most successful military alliance in history, or stymying the primary geopolitical rival.

“The Biden administration seeks more “stable and predictable” relations with the Kremlin, presumably in hopes of mollifying Russia to focus on China.”

The U.S. is preempting this dilemma by unambiguously pivoting to the Indo-Pacific.⁸ With limited resources, its presence in Europe will remain constant — if not decrease — in the foreseeable future. At the same time, no single Ally is better off defending or deterring against the challenges of the emerging security environment alone. The U.S. must therefore remain committed, even as it turns to China, to enhancing transatlantic collective defense and bet on NATO’s ability to quickly adapt again.⁹ As the Biden administration develops its national security strategy,¹⁰ it should pursue a ‘fourth offset strategy’ centered around NATO which aims to achieve asymmetrical advantages vis-à-vis potential adversaries and enhance defense and deterrence in Europe. This would not require increasing U.S. presence, but enhancing specific capabilities as well as encouraging greater transatlantic cohesion and coherence through better alignment of transatlantic strategy at the national and multinational levels. The conclusion of NATO 2030 and development of the next strategic concept¹¹ provides the right moment for the U.S. to pursue this objective.

⁶ “S.3936 – Taiwan Defense Act,” *U.S. Senate*, 10 June 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3936>; LTG (Ret.) Ben Hodges, Janusz Bugajski, and Peter B. Doran, “Securing The Suwałki Corridor: Strategy, Statecraft, Deterrence, and Defense,” *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 9 July 2018, <https://cepa.org/securing-the-suwalki-corridor/>; and Richard Hooker, “How to Defend the Baltic States,” *Jamestown Foundation*, October 2019, <https://jamestown.org/product/how-to-defend-the-baltic-states/>

⁷ Nicolas Spykman, *The Geography of Peace* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1944).

⁸ “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

⁹ “Remarks by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg,” *NATO*, 7 July 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_184735.htm.

¹⁰ “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance,” *The White House*, 3 March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/03/interim-national-security-strategic-guidance/>

¹¹ “Brussels Summit Communiqué,” *NATO*, 14 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

Historical Context

The U.S. Department of Defense has implemented three offset strategies since the end of the Second World War when peer or near-peer competitors have had overwhelming conventional advantages over the U.S. and its allies. Each offset has been predicated not on investing in defense spending overall, but establishing asymmetrical advantages in specific areas. President Eisenhower developed the first offset strategy¹² to counter Soviet conventional superiority by arming smaller U.S. ground forces with atomic weapons. This compelled the Warsaw Pact to quickly respond by developing a countermeasure designed to prevent NATO from using nuclear weapons early in campaigns.¹³

By the early 1970s, the Soviet Union had regained conventional superiority, and the prospect of Soviet forces overwhelming NATO in Central Europe precipitated the second offset strategy.¹⁴ The U.S. pursued an advantage through technological innovation. This included precision-guided munitions, stealth technology, long-range capabilities, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems which allowed the U.S. to penetrate multi-layered Soviet defense systems — long-lasting innovations which eventually helped overwhelm Saddam Hussein's regime in *Desert Storm* in 1991.¹⁵

The third offset strategy, officially known as the Defense Innovation Initiative,¹⁶ has been ongoing since 2015. It followed the recognition that near-peer strategic rivals had eroded U.S. asymmetrical advantages from the second offset in technological research, development, and implementation. Designed to support all domains of warfare, the third offset focuses on emerging technologies including autonomous learning systems, human-machine collaborative decision-making, assisted human operations, advanced manned-unmanned systems operations, and network-enabled autonomous weapons and high-speed projectiles. Rather than fund specific capabilities or projects, it will “see what germinates.”¹⁷

¹² Peter Grier, “The First Offset,” *Air Force Magazine*, June 2016, pp. 56-60.

¹³ Octavian Manea, “The Role of Offset Strategies in Restoring Conventional Deterrence,” *Small Wars Journal*, 4 January 2018, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jml/art/role-offset-strategies-restoring-conventional-deterrence>

¹⁴ Sam Seitz, “The Origins and Effects of the Second Offset,” *Politics in Theory and Practice*, 1 October 2019, <https://politicstheorypractice.com/2019/10/01/the-origins-and-effects-of-the-second-offset>

¹⁵ Joseph Felter, “It’s Not Just The Technology: Beyond Offset Strategies,” *Hoover Institution*, 15 March 2017, <https://www.hoover.org/research/its-not-just-technology-beyond-offset-strategies>

¹⁶ “The Third U.S. Offset Strategy and its Implications for Partners and Allies,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, 28 January 2015, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Speeches/Speech/Article/606641/the-third-us-offset-strategy-and-its-implications-for-partners-and-allies/>

¹⁷ Kathleen H. Hicks and Andrew Hunter, “Assessing the Third Offset Strategy,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 2017.

“NATO has long prioritized conventional over non-conventional or so-called hybrid threats.”

But the U.S. cannot face the dilemma of strategic simultaneity with the third offset strategy alone. The ebb-and-flow of measures versus countermeasures is accelerating, which could more quickly undermine the enduring military advantage of specific capabilities. The U.S. now faces two near-peer or peer competitors rather than one. For the first time in more than a century, an adversary has reached 60 percent of U.S. GDP.¹⁸ China has the world's largest navy, a significant stockpile of ground-based cruise and ballistic missiles, and highly-advanced integrated air and missile defense systems.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Russia continues to pursue an aggressive military modernization plan,²⁰ has a conventional overmatch in the Black Sea region, and has rapidly militarized Crimea and the Arctic.²¹ The Biden administration seeks more “stable and predictable” relations with the Kremlin, presumably in hopes of mollifying Russia to focus on China.²² But the Transatlantic Alliance cannot rule out the prospect of Russian revisionism inciting another crisis scenario to distract from domestic politics or enhance Russia's perceived global position.²³ Russia's military build-up along Ukraine's border in the weeks before the Biden-Putin meeting is a clear signal that the Russian bear is unlikely to be tamed. On its own, the technological innovation of the third offset cannot negate these realities.

A Transatlantic Offset

Allies are the United States' enduring asymmetrical advantage — and so the Biden

¹⁸ Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

¹⁹ “Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020: Annual Report to Congress,” U.S. Department of Defense, 2020, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>

²⁰ “Russia's Military Modernization,” *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, 30 September 2020, <https://www.iiiss.org/blogs/analysis/2020/09/rmm-introduction>

²¹ “Concerned about Ongoing Militarization of Crimea, Human Rights Violations in Eastern Ukraine, Speakers Tell General Assembly Minsk Agreements Must Be Fully Implemented,” *United Nations*, 20 February 2020, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12241.doc.htm> and Thomas Grove, “Russian Military Seeks to Outmuscle U.S. in Arctic,” *Wall Street Journal*, 25 May 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russian-military-seeks-to-outmuscle-u-s-in-arctic-11621935002>

²² Alan Cullison, “Biden Wants to Focus on China, but Putin and Russia Crises Remain a Distraction,” *Wall Street Journal*, 17 June 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-wants-to-focus-on-china-but-putin-and-russia-crises-remain-a-distraction-11623937240>

²³ Leon Aron, “Putinism,” *American Enterprise Institute*, Spring 2008, https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/20080508_Putinism_g.pdf?x91208 and Kier Giles and James Nixey, *et al.*, “Myths and misconceptions in the debate on Russia: How they affect Western policy, and what can be done,” *Chatham House*, 13 May 2021, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/05/myths-and-misconceptions-debate-russia>

administration should pursue a fourth offset strategy centered around closer relations with NATO. At issue is developing a more cohesive and coherent transatlantic approach to defense and deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic area and investing in transatlantic capabilities which build on the third offset and create near-term asymmetrical advantages for the West. While offset strategies have traditionally occurred decades rather than years apart, the fourth offset should not be viewed as entirely separate from the third, but as a force-multiplier of technological innovation which prepares the Alliance to respond to the multiplicity of threat vectors in the emerging security environment. To encourage greater policy alignment at the multinational and national levels, the following priorities could be reflected in U.S. national security strategy and NATO's strategic concept.

Enable NATO as a Forum For Consultation.

The Alliance's ability to offset emerging threats hinges upon its unity. Consensus is the source of NATO's strength but single-country blockages within the Alliance have inhibited the speed of decision and decision-making itself.²⁴ The U.S. should continue to raise within the NAC the NATO Reflection Group's recommendation of elevating single-country blockages to the ministerial level.²⁵ It should also continue to advocate for greater autonomy for SACEUR to act in his area of responsibility under peacetime conditions. More broadly, member states should recommit in the next strategic concept to using NATO more frequently as a forum for consultation and policy coordination.

Remove the Distinction Between Military and Non-Military Threats to NATO.

NATO has long prioritized conventional over non-conventional or so-called hybrid threats. While the Alliance has taken steps to adapt its non-military approach,²⁶ its most recent strategic documents and operational planning should unambiguously acknowledge the potential of the wide spectrum of tools which threaten to undermine the Alliance's political and military foundation. In other words, NATO should fully acknowledge the military implications of non-military threats. The challenge is that they present on undefined, long-term timescales. They constrict traditional time-space calculations in operational planning, enabling adversaries to almost

²⁴ Octavian Manea, "Wess Mitchell: 'The West needs to redevelop the tools and mindset of strategic competition,'" *Eastern Focus Quarterly*, 5 April 2021, <https://www.eastern-focus.eu/2021/04/wess-mitchell-the-west-needs-to-redevelop-the-tools-and-mindset-of-strategic-competition/>

²⁵ "NATO 2030: United for a New Era: Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General," *NATO*, 25 November 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf Reflection Group

²⁶ Michael Rühle and Clare Roberts, "Enlarging NATO's toolbox to counter hybrid threats," *NATO*, 19 March 2021, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/03/19/enlarging-natos-toolbox-to-counter-hybrid-threats/index.html>

instantaneously target or strike critical infrastructure and capabilities from distance with little or no warning. Adapting for the emerging security environment begins by eliminating tiering within the full spectrum of threats facing the Alliance — and then more fully incorporating all elements into NATO strategy, operations, and exercises.

Adopt a More Sophisticated Approach to Burden-sharing That Better Aligns Means and Ends.

The burden-sharing debate within the Alliance is not new. While it was more palpable and divisive under the Trump administration, the Biden administration has changed tone but not substance.²⁷ For European allies, this removes a convenient excuse for increasing burden-sharing and reaching the 2 percent defense-spending target agreed upon at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales.²⁸ Two concrete steps can help increase momentum and incentivize greater burden-sharing in support of transatlantic objectives. First, while sticky national budgets and domestic aversion to increasing defense-spending remain barriers in many European countries, European allies could follow the model of Japan by prioritizing spending on enablement of multinational rather than national capabilities.²⁹ Investing in collective defense rather than ‘national militarization’ could help consolidate domestic support for higher spending. Second, the Alliance should consider reframing how burden-sharing is calculated, which currently differs across member states and does not reflect all contributions to real military value such as cyber protection of critical infrastructure.³⁰ This does not mean eliminating or lowering the 2 percent target. But burden-sharing is the backbone of transatlantic defense and deterrence and should be incentivized as such.

Align NATO's Future Military Adaptation With a Measurable Goal Based on Space and Time.

Enablement in the Euro-Atlantic area is currently fraught with friction points that would inhibit the reinforcement of the Alliance's potentially most vulnerable regions. These inhibitors include border crossing customs and procedures, heavy equipment transport capacity, infrastructure, and coordinating structures between

²⁷ Aaron Mehta, “Biden admin wants new ‘tone’ with NATO, but the old challenges remain,” *DefenseNews*, 16 February 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2021/02/16/biden-admin-wants-new-tone-with-nato-but-the-old-challenges-remain/>

²⁸ “NATO: De Maizièrre zu künftiger Ausrichtung,” *Tagesschau*, 1 December 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJ5ka-zuYiI>

²⁹ Sheila A. Smith, “How Japan Is Upgrading Its Military,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 24 February 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-japan-upgrading-its-military>

³⁰ LTG (Ret.) Ben Hodges and Carsten Schmiedl, “Targeting 2%: The Logistics of a More Sophisticated Approach to Burden-Sharing,” *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 24 September 2018, <https://cepa.org/targeting-2-percent/>

and among host nations and multinational organizations.³¹ Multiple stakeholders and competing authorities also have a hand in military mobility; there is no single overarching organization that is responsible for enablement in a crisis. As the Transatlantic Alliance looks to improve mobility moving forward — including the positive news that more allies are joining the EU's PESCO project — it should identify and work towards a measurable mobility goal. In practice, of the Alliance should be able to reliably move a convoy, at least initially under peacetime conditions, anywhere on the European continent within a certain timeframe. This involves protecting transport routes through fully-integrated air and missile defense and securing critical infrastructure. Such a goal would help focus exercises and currently piecemeal multinational efforts to rapidly improve mobility to deter worst-case strategic simultaneity scenarios.

Deter Russia in Ukraine to Prevent Sino-Russo Convergence.

Strategic simultaneity will present a much greater challenge if Russia and China converge more substantively. Ukraine is the key to avoiding this scenario. The Transatlantic Alliance should not attempt to bargain 'stability and predictability' in exchange for greater Russian influence over Ukraine because allowing the Kremlin's westward imperialist expansion would only encourage more stable relations with China.³² The logic is that Russia and China are not natural partners and the Kremlin does not want to be perceived as the 'junior partner.' Cooperation is opportunistic rather than natural and so closing the door on Russian expansion in Ukraine would force the Kremlin to pay closer attention to China's activities on its other frontier.³³ NATO should therefore increase exercises with Ukraine, enhance deterrence by continuing to supply capabilities, and pursue a more assertive membership action plan for both Ukraine and Georgia to deter Russia in the greater Black Sea region.

Improve Situational Awareness Across the Euro-Atlantic Region.

The Alliance responds to crises at the speed of relevance. While NATO continues to pursue closer alignment of multinational and national-level indicators and warnings including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, gaps remain throughout the Euro-Atlantic area. Seams within the Alliance in intelligence-sharing, for

³¹ LTG (Ret.) Heiner Brauss, LTG (Ret.) Ben Hodges, and Prof. Dr. Julian Lindley-French, "The CEPA Military Mobility Project: Moving Mountains for Europe's Defense," *Center for European Policy Analysis*, 3 March 2021, <https://cepa.org/the-cepa-military-mobility-project-moving-mountains-for-europes-defense/>

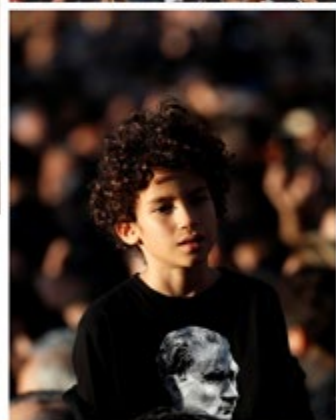
³² Jakub Grygiel, "Deter Russia in Ukraine and Avoid a Sino-Russian Dual Alliance," *The National Interest*, 16 April 2021, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/deter-russia-ukraine-and-avoid-sino-russian-dual-alliance-182898>

³³ "Brian Whitmore: 'Putin wants to party like it is 1815,'" *The Ukrainian Week*, 19 May 2019, <https://ukrainianweek.com/World/230289>

example, also exist through Five Eyes. The Alliance should consider developing a fully-integrated system of sensors across the Euro-Atlantic region that encourages greater situational awareness. The U.S. is pursuing Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) across all national military services and it should initiate discussions within the Alliance on developing a similar system across SACEUR's area of responsibility with the aim of achieving an 'unblinking eye'³⁴ to shorten NATO's response times and maximize capabilities in crisis scenarios.

³⁴ Jakob Palowski, "Gen. Hodges: We Need Constant Surveillance over the Baltic Sea," *Defence24*, 14 June 2021, <https://www.defence24.com/gen-hodges-we-need-constant-surveillance-over-the-baltic-sea-interview>

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UKRAINE MEMBERSHIP REVISITED: THE CASE FOR NATO'S STRATEGIC ADAPTION

Ukraine's NATO membership has moved over the last decade from unlikely to mission impossible. Thirteen years after the NATO Bucharest Summit promise that Georgia and Ukraine "will join" the Alliance and Russia's subsequent invasion of Georgia, and seven years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the political willingness of the 30 NATO member states remains insufficient to keep their 2008 promise. Russia's violation of Ukrainian territorial integrity makes Kiev's integration into NATO almost impossible. But the strategic rationale for Ukraine joining NATO remains as compelling as ever. Moreover, the arguments for a revised NATO strategy towards the Black Sea region are multiplying. The current Alliance's Strategic Revision process should be the first step towards a revised NATO policy towards Ukraine.

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Russian revisionism blocked Ukraine's path towards NATO membership from the outset by Moscow's political interference, passportization¹, and its role in separatist conflicts that enabled permanent military deployments impeded the freedom and sovereignty of newly independent countries Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Among these three countries, Ukraine quickly became the focus of Russian power projection due to its four unique geostrategic characteristics; its size geographically and economically, its geographic location as a key energy transit zone between rich European markets and Moscow, its possession of Soviet nuclear weapons, and its access to a vast Black Sea coastline with unique power projection capacity. At the same time, Ukraine's distinctive strategic position in relation to NATO was established by this very quartet of strategic assets-nuclear weapons, energy transit, and strategic access and capabilities. Today, with most of these capabilities stripped by Russia, what remains of Ukraine's strategic capacity? Thirty years after its independence, Russia stripped Ukraine of most of its strategic advantages. At the same time, because of the same Russian aggression, Ukraine has gained more modern strategic advantages that make it uniquely attractive as a NATO member.

From the outset of its independence in 1991, Moscow directly influenced Ukraine's very statehood and the country's foreign policy orientation towards NATO. The reasoning for Russia's power projection into newly independent Ukraine was highly strategic. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Ukraine, Kiev retained on its territory strategic assets once owned by Moscow: nuclear weapons, the Sevastopol base housing the former Soviet Black Sea fleet essential for access to the Mediterranean, and the pipelines that ensured most of new Russia's income that comes from Europe. With these developments, Ukraine, unlike Georgia and Moldova became a mid-sized European country, the largest in size out of all European countries, with a significant economic and industrial capacity.

In the first years of Ukrainian independence, Moscow stripped Ukraine of its Black Sea fleet, granted access to the Sevastopol base in Crimea, and started plans to build pipelines circumventing Ukraine to reduce dependence. Most importantly for Ukrainian statehood, however, in 1994 Russia convinced Ukraine to give up its nuclear weapons in exchange for the guarantee of Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. In this paradoxical exchange of nuclear weapons for something already existing, the United States and the United Kingdom signed the Budapest Memorandum. Ten years later, Moscow annexed Crimea and finalized the three pipelines through the Baltic and the Black Sea to circumvent Ukraine.

¹ Thomas Hoffmann and Andrey Makarychev, "Russia and the EU: Spaces of Interaction," *Routledge*, 30 June 2020.

Looking back, the Budapest Memorandum, which the United States and the United Kingdom signed as co-guarantors of Ukraine's territorial integrity and statehood, is from a realist's perspective the key event that led to the strategic losses Ukraine has suffered ever since. Just a few months before the Memorandum was signed, Cold War statesman and political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski argued—arguably the loudest and most eloquently—against that Memorandum and for Ukraine's strategic role for NATO.² Most famously, Brzezinski argued in “Premature Partnership” for Foreign Affairs that “It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire.”³

“From the outset of its independence in 1991, Moscow directly influenced Ukraine's very statehood and the country's foreign policy orientation towards NATO.”

To arrive at this famous conclusion, Brzezinski built in his article an inventory of Russia's aggressions against Ukraine. These aggressions, aimed at undermining Ukrainian statehood, were visible less than three years into Ukrainian independence. Brzezinski argues, the West ignored in its efforts to engage in a “premature partnership” with Moscow: the “Russian military command asserted its de facto right to intervene in the former Soviet republics if developments there were deemed to violate Russian interests or threaten regional stability”, Russia “focused on progressively stripping the newly independent states of economic autonomy and forestalling the emergence of separate armed forces”, “The Russian military has enforced a partition of Crimea and asserted unilateral control over most of the disputed Black Sea fleet”, “the open assertion of Russian territorial claims to portions of Ukraine,” “economic leverage has been applied [by Russia] through reductions and periodic cutoffs in the delivery of vital energy sources to Ukrainian industry,” “Moscow's use of the Russian settlers as a justification for claiming the right to intervene.”⁴

Regrettably, Brzezinski's article from 1994 had no effect on Ukraine's independence and foreign policy orientation. Ukraine signed the Budapest Memorandum under Western guarantee for something it already had—its independence—and merely

² Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Premature Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1994-03-01/premature-partnership>

³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Premature Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1994-03-01/premature-partnership>

⁴ Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Premature Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1994, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/1994-03-01/premature-partnership>

delayed Russia's invasion and its loss of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence, to the benefit of Moscow's imperialism. Nevertheless, the value of Brzezinski's article stems from the assertion of Ukraine's strategic value under multiple Russian threats. It also highlights that the Ukraine-Russia-NATO nexus has not factually shifted in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea. Rather, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Ukraine's Donbas region constitute a confirmation in what Brzezinski highlights as a continuum of Russia's policy towards Ukraine. It's only the West that shifted its threat perception of Russia from (premature) partner to challenge (but not threat) in 2014.

So what remains of Ukraine's strategic value today, three decades after its independence? Ukraine lost its territory, strategic access, was stripped of what remained of the naval forces, and was further economically crippled after Russia closed the Azov Sea in 2014. Indeed, not much is left of its strategic assets in Brzezinski's Realist view.

But warfare has changed significantly over the last few decades, with "grey zone warfare" and the employment of full-spectrum means becoming increasingly important. In 2021, Ukraine is as strategic to NATO as ever, and has achieved three significant gains that make it uniquely strategic to NATO. First, Ukraine shifted its threat perception after Russia invaded in 2014. Second, since 2014, Ukraine has accumulated seven years of direct combat experience with a regional superpower (and its proxies), which makes it a unique strategic player. Finally, Ukraine has managed to modernize and reform its military despite fighting an ongoing war and has embarked on a complex military modernization process, including replacing the naval forces seized by Russia in 2014.

Containing Russia: Impossible Without Ukraine

Russian aggression has been increasingly affecting all of NATO member states. Ukraine has been subjected to increased Russian aggression in all spheres, not only the military. In that sense, Ukraine has become progressively strategic to NATO as a buffer zone between the Alliance and Russia. Though the political willingness of NATO's 30 member states might not be sufficient to offer Ukraine a membership, the Alliance's understanding of the strategic advantages of an integrated Ukraine should be enhanced.

During the seven years of combat experience Kiev has accumulated since the annexation of Crimea and the onset of the war in the Donbas region, the country has been defending not only its national sovereignty and independence, but also the

entire Eastern flank of NATO. No NATO member state or non-member, for that matter, has extensive combat experience with Russian de facto and proxy forces. As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO's threat perception towards Russia has changed, and Russian aggression against NATO member states has increased. In NATO's efforts towards defense and deterrence, Ukraine's combat experience becomes even more valuable. Since 2014, NATO has struggled to enforce its Eastern flank and build resilience against Russian hybrid warfare, from political interference all the way to a possible Article 5 scenario. The Ukrainian military's experience and knowledge constitute valuable lessons for NATO's defense.

“Ukraine has accumulated unique combat experience against a regional superpower, and has gone through ample military modernization at the same time.”

Furthermore, despite territorial losses and sacrifices associated with seven years of conflict, Ukraine remains a major European power both geopolitically, as well as militarily. Its military industry places Kiev in the top military exporters worldwide.⁵ Its military force has been undergoing deep reforms and modernization during ongoing conflict. Ukraine's modernizing and investing in its military while also fighting a conflict makes it unique to NATO on a strategic level.

From a political perspective, Ukraine has paid the highest price for its public's Western orientation and wish to integrate into NATO and the European Union. But Russian aggression in 2014 has also sparked a radical political shift in Ukraine itself. Before the illegal annexation of Crimea, Ukrainian public opinion was divided between the Western and Eastern orientation-between those wanting to integrate into NATO and the EU and those who wanted closer ties to Russia.⁶ Today, a majority of public opinion in favor of joining NATO. This was not the case before 2014, when disinformation led to the belief that Romania, not Russia was a threat to Ukraine's national security.⁷ It is ironic that Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused Ukrainians to adopt a realistic threat perception. Russia has involuntarily shifted Ukrainian public opinion towards the West, with no return. Since 2014, Ukraine's public support has

⁵ Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova and Siemon T. Wezeman, “Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2020,” *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, 2021, https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/fs_2103_at_2020.pdf

⁶ Kathleen Holzwart Sprehe, “Ukraine Says ‘No’ to NATO,” *Pew Research*, 2010, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2010/03/29/ukraine-says-no-to-nato/>

⁷ Sergiy Solodkyy and Ileana Racheru, “Foreign Policy Audit: Ukraine-Romania,” *Discussion paper*, 2016, http://neweurope.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Aud_Ukr_Rom_eng_net.pdf

been increasing, from 34 percent in 2007 to 53 percent in 2019.⁸ This constitutes another major strategic advantage for the Alliance in the long run.

In other words, the Alliance remains protected from Russia's revanchism as long as Ukraine remains close to NATO and resists Russian aggression. By contrast, if Ukraine were to yield to Russian demands and be de facto absorbed into Russia, similar to Belarus, NATO would be significantly challenged. Recent history of Russian regional hybrid aggression against both NATO and non-NATO member states demonstrates a continued focus on the extended Black Sea region, with the invasion of Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014, Syria in 2014, the closing of the Azov Sea in 2018, and the Russian deployment of peacekeeping troops in Nagorno Karabakh. If history and geography are to be lessons, then NATO's weak spot is the Black Sea region that Ukraine is a key part of.

NATO's Need of Strategic Adaptation: The Black Sea Region

It is imperative that both Ukraine and NATO maintain and develop their resilience against Russian aggression until a political will for Ukraine's NATO integration is developed across all member states. For Kiev, that means becoming militarily more prepared, continuing its military modernization and democratic reforms, and bolstering its national defense with the support of its allies. For NATO, this means expanding and developing its military and political cooperation with Ukraine.

Beyond mere cooperation development, NATO is bound to raise its common understanding of Russia as an aggressor. This was confirmed by this year's NATO summit, when the Alliance and its member states named Russia as the first threat.⁹ With continued and increased Russian aggression against NATO territory over the last few years, more and more NATO members reluctant to acknowledge the threat to adjust their perception of it. The Skripal poisoning case in the United Kingdom, the espionage cases in Italy and Bulgaria, the Navalny poisoning and political imprisonment case, and the sabotage case in the Czech Republic all have contributed to NATO's increased defense. The 2021 NATO summit mirrored some of this momentum in the change in language vis-a-vis Russia and the onset of a revised NATO strategy to be adopted in 2022. According to the NATO Summit Communiqué, "Russia has also intensified its hybrid actions against NATO Allies and partners, including through proxies. This includes attempted interference in Allied elections and democratic processes; political and economic pressure and intimidation; widespread disinformation campaigns; malicious cyber activities [...] and illegal and

⁸ Sergiy Solodky and Ileana Racheru, "Foreign Policy Audit: Ukraine-Romania," *Discussion paper*, 2016, http://neweurope.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Aud_Ukr_Rom_eng_net.pdf

⁹ NATO Summit Communiqué, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

destructive activities by Russian Intelligence Services on Allied territory, some of which have claimed lives of citizens and caused widespread material damage.”¹⁰

Nevertheless, the next step in the Alliance's strategy, recognizing Ukraine's crucial role in Eastern European defense, as well as the fact that the Black Sea region suffers from concentrated Russian aggression, has not yet been taken. Though momentum has been building for a revised NATO strategy toward the east, this year's summit did not address concrete measures for deterrence in the region or the role of Ukraine for the Alliance. Yet, The 2021 NATO Summit announced the process for a new Strategic Concept of the Alliance, to be adopted in 2022.¹¹ This creates the ripe context for a regional NATO Black Sea strategy that addresses the role of Georgia and Ukraine for the Alliance.

The Black Sea region is and will remain the transatlantic community's weak spot. With three NATO member states bordering the Sea, multiple U.S. bases and capabilities in Romania and Turkey, and Ukraine and Georgia as the frontlines of defense against Russian aggression, the Alliance urgently needs to develop a regional strategy that addresses the imbalance between its Northern and Southern parts of the flank. The lack of a common threat perception toward Russia has hampered NATO deterrence in the Black Sea, as opposed to the Baltic Sea where countries share a threat assessment and ample cooperation mechanisms, and where NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence provides multinational tripwire forces on the ground. NATO needs to urgently address this capability and deterrence gap in the Black Sea and hence prevent further Russian aggression. Ukraine ought to play a crucial role in this strategy.

NATO's strategic adaptation to Russian aggression in the Black Sea should first and foremost focus on addressing the increasingly offensive military buildup in the Black Sea. Following the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia deployed and developed a multitude of advanced conventional and non-conventional air, maritime and land capabilities in the Black Sea that constitute a threat to NATO's Eastern flank and beyond. With the Azov Sea closure and the Kerch Bridge in 2018 Russia has essentially impeded free navigation in the Black Sea. Furthermore, the February-April 2021 Russian military buildup in the Black Sea has added further offensive military capabilities to the region. With this, Russia has magnified the imbalance of power in the Black Sea, and further impeded free navigation in the Azov and Black Sea. The only instruments NATO has at its disposal to contain Russian power and prevent further aggression in the region and towards the Alliance is to increase the cost of

¹⁰ NATO Summit Communique, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

¹¹ NATO Summit Communique, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

Russian aggression itself. Proportional deterrence mechanisms and the deployment of NATO troops and capabilities to increase the cost of future Russian aggression should be the core of NATO's Black Sea strategy.

At the same time, NATO's Black Sea strategy needs to develop cooperation mechanisms between the Alliance and non-NATO members Georgia and Ukraine. While the political environment is not yet ripe for Georgia and Ukraine to join, their security should gradually become integrated with Alliance structures. Unlike the strategic environment of the Baltic Sea, where NATO members form a common ground, the Black Sea cannot be secured without Georgia or Ukraine. To prevent further aggression, the Alliance's Black Sea strategy should establish shared monitoring and deterrence integrated mechanisms, allowing Georgia and Ukraine access to shared regional defense.

Some elements of NATO's regional security strategy have already been in place. NATO supports Ukraine with a Comprehensive Assistance Package of programs designed to increase Ukrainian interoperability and support the military modernization process. The Alliance's Tailored Forward Presence creates the basis for NATO Black Sea defense. NATO Air policing assists member states Romania and Bulgaria in ensuring a minimum of territorial defense. Over the last few years, NATO exercises in the region have grown in frequency and amplitude. All of these elements should constitute the basis for a comprehensive NATO strategy for the region, anchored in NATO territorial defense, as well as in an enhanced and deepened cooperation and capability sharing mechanisms for NATO partners Georgia and Ukraine. With these two key components, enhanced territorial defense and deeper military cooperation with Georgia and Ukraine, a NATO regional strategy against Russian aggression is essential for addressing the insecurity in the region and for securing the Alliance.

Finally, NATO's strategic adaptation towards Russia has been slowed due to a lack of a common threat perception across member states. Although momentum has been gained and will undoubtedly continue to increase, given the extent of Russian aggression, the Alliance's most effective deterrence tool is a stronger regional military cooperation around the Black Sea strategy. The region's track record demonstrates that the majority of the building blocks of Western defense already in place have bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation mechanisms. Most prominently, the United States security assistance to Black Sea allies and partners occurs along with bilateral strategic partnerships that Washington has in place with Romania, Georgia and Ukraine. Strategic partnerships and cooperation between Ukraine and Turkey and Ukraine and the United Kingdom constitute important recent steps for the consolidation of frontline states across Europe's Eastern flank. Multilateral cooperation mechanisms like the Poland-Romania-Turkey trilateral and the recent

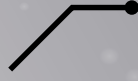
Georgia-Moldova-Ukraine cooperation are adding new dimensions to regional Black Sea security.

NATO should adopt its Black Sea strategy by forming coalitions with willing NATO members and partners. In addition to avoiding spoilers of the Alliance's defense, coalitions and groups of countries may be able to create shared capabilities across the Black Sea aimed at monitoring and early warning, as well as deterring future Russian aggression. Furthermore, groupings of countries contribute to building the political support for the Alliance's consensus on Russia and Ukraine in the future.

Conclusion

Looking back, Ukraine's strategic value to the Alliance has significantly changed since its independence. Indeed, Zbigniew Brzezinski's assessment of Ukraine under threat by Russia due to its strategic value remains the same. His warning on the Budapest Memorandum as endangering Ukrainian independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity also remains valid. Since then, however, Russia has focused its power projection on undermining Ukraine's path towards NATO membership. Moscow also managed to chip away significant parts of Ukraine's material assets: first its nuclear weapons, then the Crimean peninsula, and then its quality as a transit hub for Russian gas to European markets. In normative terms, Russian aggression against Ukraine has had the opposite effect, amplifying Ukraine's strategic value for the Alliance: Ukrainian support for NATO has been increasing, Ukraine has accumulated unique combat experience against a regional superpower, and has gone through ample military modernization at the same time. These modern strategic assets make Ukraine unique to NATO. As confirmed by the NATO 2021 Summit, member states are unanimously aware of the growing threat from Russia not only against Ukraine, but also against the Alliance. And though momentum for more NATO deterrence against Russian aggression is constantly building, the 2021 NATO summit has shown that its member states have not reached the consensual understanding that Ukraine has been defending not just itself for the past seven years, but also the Alliance.

Looking ahead, the Alliance has launched a year-long process in defining its new Strategic Concept, to be adopted next year. With a consensual assessment of Russia as the Alliance's most important threat, increased NATO deterrence on its Eastern flank is unavoidable. For the Alliance to strategically adapt to this threat, it must develop a regional Black Sea strategy to increase deterrence. The paths Georgia and Ukraine are taking towards NATO membership should play a crucial role in such a Black Sea strategy.



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NATO AND ITS CHANGING APPROACH TO SPACE

While space has been a part of NATO's interests since the beginning of the Space Age, it is just within the past three years that we have seen an increase in NATO's efforts to use space to meet its mission needs as an organization. This is due to an increased importance of space for national security globally and concurrent proliferation of counterspace capabilities. While NATO has started evolving its policy framework to meet these new needs, much work needs to be done to ensure that the Alliance has access to space capabilities when it needs them.

Victoria Samson*



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As space becomes increasingly important to national security priorities, geopolitical stability, and the smooth functioning of the global economy, how major actors approach space is changing as well. NATO's recognition of the importance of space to its mission, along with concerns about potential adversaries' intent and capabilities for space, echoes how and why several of its members have adapted their approach to space too. Over the past three years, NATO has been building up its policy framework to reflect this changed approach to space and while it has accomplished a lot in this area, still has some major gaps in how it views space. These lacunae should be filled while NATO has the luxury of thinking about these issues outside of a time of active conflict.

NATO's Interest in Space

Like for many national security infrastructures, space is critical for NATO in many areas, including position, navigation, and timing (PNT); early warning; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; environmental monitoring; and secure satellite communications.¹ A complicating factor for NATO is its own space needs versus those of its member states, many of which have their own military space infrastructures and priorities.

NATO currently does not operate any of its own satellites, but rather is dependent on the capabilities of its member states. It did operate some satellites during the early part of the Space Age in order to have its own secure and quick strategic communication network. The first NATO satellite was launched in March 1970 from Cape Kennedy; it was followed by 7 more satellites, all with the codename "NATO."² But by the early 2000s, NATO decided it would be better to just have direct access to communication satellites from the UK, France, and Italy via a program called SATCOM 2000, and stopped operating its own satellites.³ It made up the gap in satellite communication (SATCOM) capabilities by using information provided by a British-French-Italian consortium from 2005-2019.⁴ An agreement was signed in 2019 with France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States that would guarantee NATO access to military communication satellites (at a cost of 1 billion dollars for the access to those services through 2034).⁵

¹ NATO, "NATO's Approach to Space," last updated June 17, 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_175419.htm

² Kestutis Paulauskas, "Space: NATO's latest frontier," *NATO Review*, 13 March 2020, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2020/03/13/space-natos-latest-frontier/index.html>

³ "The Cold War: Defence and Deterrence," NATO, accessed 1 July 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/us/natohq/declassified_138278.htm

⁴ Wojciech Lorenz, "NATO Augments Its Space Policy," Bulletin of The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), 20 December 2020, https://pism.pl/publications/NATO_Augments_Its_Space_Policy

⁵ Lorenz, (NATO Augments Its Space Policy).

“The growing use of, and reliance on, space for national security has led more countries to look at developing their own counterspace capabilities that can be used to deceive, disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy space systems.”

An increasing number of countries are looking to use space to enhance their military capabilities and national security. The growing use of, and reliance on, space for national security has led more countries to look at developing their own counterspace capabilities that can be used to deceive, disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy space systems. NATO, like many of its member states, is concerned about counterspace capabilities, especially those of alliance competitors Russia and increasingly China. There is strong evidence that Russia has embarked on a set of programs since 2010 to regain many of its Cold War-era counterspace capabilities.⁶ Since 2010, Russia has been testing technologies for RPO in both LEO and GEO that could lead to or support a co-orbital ASAT capability, and some of those efforts have links to a Cold War-era LEO co-orbital ASAT program. Additional evidence suggests Russia may have started a new co-orbital ASAT program called Burevestnik, potentially supported by a surveillance and tracking program called Nivelir. The technologies developed by these programs could also be used for non-aggressive applications, including surveilling and inspecting foreign satellites, and most of the on-orbit RPO activities done to date match these missions. However, Russia has deployed two “sub-satellites” at high-velocity, which suggests at least some of their LEO RPO activities are of a weapons nature. Russia is almost certainly capable of some limited DA-ASAT operations, but likely not yet on a sufficient scale or at sufficient altitude to pose a critical threat to space assets. While Russia is actively testing what appears to be a new DA-ASAT capability in their Nudol system, it is not yet operational and does not appear to have the capability to threaten targets beyond LEO. Russia appears highly motivated to continue development efforts even where military utility is questionable, due at least in part to bureaucratic pressures.

There is strong evidence indicating that China has a sustained effort to develop a broad range of counterspace capabilities. China has conducted multiple tests of technologies for rendezvous and proximity operations (RPO) in both low earth orbit (LEO) and geosynchronous orbit (GEO) that could lead to a co-orbital ASAT capability. However, as of yet, the public evidence indicates they have not conducted

⁶ For a more in-depth analysis of Russia, China, the United States, and France’s counterspace research and development, please see *Global Counterspace Capabilities: An Open Source Assessment*, ed. by Brian Weeden and Victoria Samson, Secure World Foundation, April 2021, <https://swfound.org/counterspace>

an actual destructive coorbital intercept of a target, and there is no public proof that these RPO technologies are definitively being developed for counterspace use as opposed to intelligence gathering or other purposes. China has at least one, and possibly as many as three, programs underway to develop direct ascent anti-satellite (DA-ASAT) capabilities, either as dedicated counterspace systems or as midcourse missile defense systems that could provide counterspace capabilities.

Much of the conversation on what NATO should be able to do as an alliance has been driven by concerns about an aggressive Russia and an increasingly powerful China limiting NATO members' access to or use of space capabilities. This counterspace proliferation is occurring at a time where many countries are developing various kinetic and non-kinetic counterspace capabilities, not just NATO states of concern, and in fact, three NATO members have stood up military space organizations since 2019 (the United States, France, and the United Kingdom) as part of their national responses to counterspace proliferation.

In November 2019, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gave some insight to the Alliance's thinking regarding China. He noted that while there is "no intention to move NATO into, for instance, the South China Sea," they do worry about China's "significant military capabilities which affect our security," and that furthermore, China's investments in other parts of the world (the Arctic, Africa, cyberspace) is bringing China closer to the Alliance and thus "we need to assess the consequences for our security of the rise of China. There are opportunities, but there are also some challenges. And I welcome the fact that NATO Allies have agreed that we have to address this together."⁷

NATO Policies Related to Space

Because of this increasing interest in and understanding of the importance of space to NATO's mission of collective deterrence and worries about intentions and capabilities of peer competitors, the Alliance has spent the past few years putting in place policies that acknowledge the importance of space to the organization. NATO needs to have resiliency and continuation of capabilities even in times of conflict or rising tensions.

The North Atlantic Council approved a policy on space support in NATO operations in May 2018, which gave it guidance on how the NATO command structure can integrate space support into its operations.⁸ Two months later, at the Brussels Summit

⁷ NATO, "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs," 19 November 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_170972.htm

⁸ Flavio Giudice, John Patrick, Robert Kroeger, Stephanie Vrac; "The Continued Evolution Of Space Effects And Capabilities Within Nato Trident Exercises," *The Three Swords Magazine*, Issue No. 32, 2019, https://www.jwc.nato.int/images/stories/_news_items_/2019/three-swords/NATOSpaceSupport2019.pdf

in July 2018, NATO leaders agreed to develop a NATO space policy in recognition of the changing role that space plays in the organization's defense and deterrence.⁹

A year later, at the Defense Ministers' meeting in June 2019, the NATO members adopted NATO's space policy, a document which as of writing (July 2021) has not been released to the public, so it is difficult to say exactly how it shapes the Alliance's space efforts.¹⁰ At the time of the policy announcement, Stoltenberg said, "We can play an important role as a forum to share information, increase interoperability, and ensure that our missions and operations can call on the support they need."¹¹ The NATO space policy in theory also allows NATO to serve as a forum for allies to consult on space issues, although it is not clear exactly how these consultations would be undertaken.

“If the Alliance can continue to prioritize sharing information and capabilities as they are appearing to do so right now, space can become a solid part of NATO's efforts to ensure geopolitical stability and international security.”

At the NATO leaders' meeting in London in December 2019, NATO members declared space a fifth operational domain after air, land, sea, and cyberspace. The leaders announced, "We have declared space an operational domain for NATO, recognizing its importance in keeping us safe and tackling security challenges, while upholding international law."¹² By declaring space an operational domain within NATO's collective defense mission, NATO planners will gain the ability to ask for the services and capabilities they need, thus requiring members to provide the necessary space capabilities while ensuring fair burden sharing. It is important to note that this is very different from declaring space a warfighting domain, like the way the United States has done. Alexandra Stickings explains, "By declaring space to be an operational domain, it appears that NATO is focusing on the integration and interoperability of assets belonging to different member states, and with a focus more on these assets as enablers of military operations (such as for communications and ISR) rather than those with the capability of denying space to adversaries."¹³ Furthermore, NATO has stated repeatedly that it does not intend

⁹ Paulauskas, (Space: NATO's latest frontier).

¹⁰ NATO, (NATO's Approach to Space).

¹¹ NATO, "NATO Defence Ministers approve new space policy, discuss readiness and mission in Afghanistan," 27 June 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_167181.htm

¹² NATO, (NATO's Approach to Space).

¹³ Alexandra Stickings, "Space as an Operational Domain: What Next for NATO?" *RUSI*, 15 October 2020, <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/rusi-newsbrief/space-operational-domain-what-next-nato>

to weaponize space; as Stoltenberg said, “Our approach will remain defensive and fully in line with international law. NATO has no intention to put weapons in space.”¹⁴

Building upon this further, in October 2020, NATO defense ministers established a NATO Space Centre at the Allied Air Command already existing in Ramstein, Germany, with the goal of it coordinating Allies’ efforts, supporting NATO missions and operations, and sharing information.¹⁵ It is intended to allow NATO to streamline requests to national space entities so that NATO commanders have ready access to space services and data when needed.

Most recently, in June 2021 at the Brussels Summit, NATO leaders announced, “We consider that attacks to, from, or within space present a clear challenge to the security of the Alliance, the impact of which could threaten national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security, and stability, and could be as harmful to modern societies as a conventional attack. Such attacks could lead to the invocation of Article 5.”¹⁶

Recognizing the need to be able to determine activities on orbit, NATO also announced at the 2021 Brussels Summit that it would be developing a Strategic Space Situational Awareness System (3SAS) at NATO headquarters.¹⁷ Prior to that, it had been dependent on SSA capabilities of individual member states, as there was no NATO-wide SSA program.

Future for NATO in Space

As part of NATO’s mission success strategy, NATO leaders acknowledge the importance of space, and are developing policies to strengthen the Alliance’s space capabilities. However, there are still issues that must be worked out in order to fill gaps in governance.

To begin with, there is no collective threat-assessment process, which may hinder the Alliance’s ability to reach consensus on the nature of a threat and consequently how to deal with it. It is further complicated by the fact that the international community has not yet figured out how it should respond proportionally to threats to space capabilities. The laws of armed conflict for space have not yet been worked

¹⁴NATO, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs,” 19 November 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_170972.htm

¹⁵ NATO, (NATO’s Approach to Space).

¹⁶ NATO, “Brussels Summit Communiqué, “Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels,” 14 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm

¹⁷ NATO, “NATO and Luxembourg boost Alliance Space Situational Awareness,” 15 June 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185365.htm

out to the point where it can be said that there is a general consensus on how to approach this. There are two efforts right now that are hopefully complementary: the MILAMOS (Manual on International Law Applicable to Military Uses of Outer Space) manual and the Woomera manual. These international efforts are trying to clarify how existing international law applies to outer space, with a focus on how to apply law on the resort to the use of force by and against States (*jus ad bellum*) and the law of armed conflict (*jus in bello*) in outer space. While they are not creating the norms themselves, they are identifying existing state practices and how they apply to military space activities. They are still attempting to finish their documents, which, once completed, could aid in the Alliance's thinking on this matter. NATO must, however, determine in the meantime how it should respond as an alliance and should have been discussing it beforehand, so it is not only making its decision as part of an emergency response.

Additionally, so much of how actions in space are viewed are shaped by what one thinks about the actor's intent that it is very possible that consensus may not be easily reached about the nature of an action. This is where multiple sources of SSA, both at the national and intergovernmental level and by commercial providers, can be helpful: generate enough sources of data and eventually a narrative emerges that most can agree with. It is hoped that NATO's new SSA effort can expedite these conversations once it is operational.

At the most recent Brussels Summit, the leaders did announce that actions in space against NATO member states could trigger an Article 5 response. This is an important first step to having a deterrent policy but is not enough. In order to make sure that there is not any inadvertent escalation, NATO member states need to determine what those actions might be; broad categories are fine, but there needs to be some foresight and analysis about this. For example, we have already seen non-destructive counterspace being used in active conflicts (like jamming and cyber-attacks) and not triggering an Article 5 response, so it is fairly clear that there is some level of interference that NATO members are perhaps not happy with but can accept. Along those lines, the Alliance must think about what its priorities are for protecting its space capabilities in order to determine which ones might be tied to an Article 5 response. It is not helpful to say that 'any' interference with 'any' space asset could lead to it – that is far too broad a description and does nothing to deter interference that could be escalatory.

Stoltenberg said in November 2019 that “We will always consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether to trigger Article 5, and we will not give the advantage to any potential adversary that will specify exactly what is the threshold for triggering

Article 5.”¹⁸ But surely there is an interim ground between spelling out exactly what the Alliance members do not want to see happening and having overly vague warnings about interference with space capabilities.

Then there is the question about where to respond. The United States has opted to respond to attacks in the time and place of its choosing, but not necessarily in space. Its 2017 National Security Strategy warns, “[A]ny harmful interference with or an attack on critical components of our space architecture that directly affects this vital U.S. interest will be met with a deliberate response at a time, place, manner, and domain of our choosing.”¹⁹ Is this a model for how NATO will respond to interference with its space capabilities?

Benjamin Silverstein has also pointed out what is perhaps a bureaucratic issue but still one that needs to be sorted as NATO evolves its use of space as an organization. He notes, “Article 6 of the Alliance’s foundational text affirms that allies may only invoke collective defense in response to armed attacks against territory, vessels, forces, or aircraft stationed on allied territory, in the Mediterranean Sea, or in the Atlantic north of the Tropic of Cancer. Even the most creative interpretations fail to include satellites within this demarcation.”²⁰

A clear-cut agreement between the international community as to what is considered responsible/irresponsible behavior would be helpful in this case. Instead of having to create a response from scratch every time a new type of activity takes place in orbit, NATO members could have guidelines to compare their actions against. At present, there is no firm agreement on what is irresponsible behavior on orbit. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST)²¹ prevents the placement of weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on the Moon and bans military installations on the Moon and other celestial bodies, but is silent about weapons in or targeting space. The United Nations has discussed space security for decades now but has been stuck on whether a treaty banning weapons (as Russia and China have proposed) would be helpful or if the focus should be on responsible actions, not technologies (as the United States and its allies have argued for). In December 2020, the UN General Assembly passed UNGA Resolution 75/36, which called for countries to submit to the UN Secretary-General what they deem to be the threat to space, what they see

¹⁸NATO, “Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs,” 19 November 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_170972.htm

¹⁹ National Security Strategy of the United States of America, December 2017, p. 31, <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

²⁰ Benjamin Silverstein, “NATO’s Return To Space,” *WAR ON THE ROCKS*, 3 AUGUST 2020, [HTTPS://WARON-THEROCKS.COM/2020/08/NATOS-RETURN-TO-SPACE/](https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/NATOS-RETURN-TO-SPACE/)

²¹ UN, “Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies,” 1967, <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/outerspace-treaty.html>

as responsible/irresponsible behavior in orbit, and what they think should be the next steps forward.²² Reading through the national submissions, a few points of agreement crop up about not deliberately creating debris on orbit and no non-consensual close approaches, so it could be said that there is potential for international consensus on this issue.²³ Much work still remains to be done, and NATO could contribute to this discussion. Frank Rose has suggested, “NATO should task the Arms Control and Disarmament Committee to examine what role the Alliance could play in developing norms of behavior to encourage responsible use of outer space.”²⁴

NATO is at the edge of a new space governance, both in how it approaches space and how it coordinates its space efforts with those of its members. While it still has to develop exactly how space fits into its deterrent strategy, it has taken important steps recently to allow its connection to space to evolve. If the Alliance can continue to prioritize sharing information and capabilities as they are appearing to do so right now, space can become a solid part of NATO’s efforts to ensure geopolitical stability and international security.

²² UN, “UNGA Res. 75/36, Reducing Space Threats Through Norms, Rules And Principles Of Responsible Behaviours,” 7 December 2020, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/36>

²³ UN “Report of the Secretary-General On Reducing Space Threats Through Norms, Rules And Principles Of Responsible Behaviors (2021), United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs” accessed July 4, 2021, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/outerspace-sg-report-outer-space-2021/>

²⁴ Frank Rose, “NATO and Outer Space: Now What?” *Brookings Institute*, April 22, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/22/nato-and-outer-space-now-what/>

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THERE IS NO EASY SOLUTION TO THE WESTERN BALKANS' DISINFORMATION CHALLENGE

The Western Balkan countries are currently among the most vulnerable to an intentional, Kremlin-supported campaign of disinformation within the European region. The vulnerability of the Western Balkans is exacerbated for several reasons: the countries are not completely integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structures; they harbor the legacy of ethnic and religious tensions from the conflicts of the 1990s; the region continues to experience dysfunctions within its information space; and it is plagued by the unresolved Kosovo issue. Tackling a problem of this magnitude demands a comprehensive approach by governments and media associations supported by the international community.

Daniel Sunter*



* Daniel Sunter is a founder of the defense and security portal, Balkan Security Network, which connects editors, analysts and journalists in the region and promotes fact-based reporting.

The Western Balkan countries are currently among the most vulnerable to an intentional, Kremlin-supported campaign of disinformation within the European region. The recent U.S.-led exercise DEFENDER-Europe 21, held in Southeast Europe, turned out to be a large target of those efforts.

This annual, large-scale multinational exercise designed to build interoperability and readiness among the U.S., NATO, and other military partners was portrayed by pro-Kremlin narratives as a continuation of the 1999 NATO conflict with Serbia and as such, were further efforts at what the narratives described as acts of “ethnic cleansing.” Pro-Kremlin narratives that label NATO and the U.S. as threats often portray these activities as provocative against Serbia and Russia.

Last year’s largest European exercise, DEFENDER-Europe 20, was targeted in a similar fashion. As an example of their false rhetoric, these sources declared that American soldiers were alleged to be immune to the COVID-19 virus as they marched towards Russia’s border. The sources went on to say that the exercise equated to the mid-twentieth century Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.

Messages of this kind have been frequently seen throughout the information space of the Western Balkans. Additional narratives focus on promoting Russian military might, on so-called conspiracies aimed at negatively amplifying perceptions of the U.S. and its allied nations’ threats to the local population, and the alleged military, moral, and technological inferiority of the West, especially the U.S., NATO, and the European Union (EU).

Due to voids in the region’s information space, including the extensive presence of sensationalized, tabloid-style journalism, a low level of media literacy, click-bait logic, the lack of fact-checking expertise, and general journalistic shortcomings, these false messages are highly visible to the region’s population. Despite the existence of different media outlets in each country, information is shared fluidly due to solid familial, cultural, and historical ties, in addition to the fact that these countries share a common language. Some experts trace the source of this interconnectedness to something they now refer to as the Yugosphere, a reference to the fact that the area was previously nationally known as Yugoslavia.

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“Increasing anti-Western sentiments in the Western Balkans, especially among the Serbian population, is an important element that contributes to the effectiveness of foreign influence campaigns.”

After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Western Balkans became a space for geopolitical competition. Experts on Russian political history point out that Moscow sees the Western Balkans as a playground for its anti-Western campaign to undermine NATO integration and EU enlargement. Kremlin propaganda activities in the region range from diplomatic initiatives and energy sector domination to defense cooperation and pandemic “ventilator” diplomacy. These activities are designed to impact Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, and Montenegro.

Some of these initiatives were short-lived and of limited success, while others, for instance the ongoing disinformation campaigns, continue to have a wide impact.

The political initiative called the “Alliance of Neutral States of the Balkans” is aimed at undermining the region’s inclusion into NATO and has been promoted intensively in Montenegro, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. This initiative was promulgated publicly by Sergey Zeleznyak, a high-ranking official of the ruling United Russia party who frequently toured the region.

In 2016, Montenegrin authorities uncovered an alleged coup d’état attempt in Montenegro. According to authorities in Podgorica a group of 14 people including two Russian military intelligence agents were involved in terrorism and creating a criminal organization as part of an attempt to overthrow the government and undermined the country’s NATO membership bid.

The accession of Montenegro and North Macedonia to NATO in 2017 and 2020 respectively made the four-country initiative short-lived. Serbia, as the largest country of the region, joined the NATO program Partnership for Peace in 2006, as it simultaneously proclaimed military neutrality. This model was followed by the Republika Srpska, the Serb entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As a result of the unresolved Kosovo issue, Serbia is pursuing a foreign policy known as the “four pillars” that is aimed at developing a balanced political, economic, and security partnership with the European Union and the United States, as

well as with China and Russia, the latter two which support Belgrade's opposition to Kosovo independence.

This environment has proven to be fertile ground for foreign influence and disinformation campaigns. The latest EU's European Parliament report on the issue of regional disinformation has labeled Serbia as the "launchpad of disinformation" in the Western Balkans.

Defense cooperation is used to strengthen influence at the political level and in the information space; it is also being used to send a political message to the West.

Serbia's first joint exercise with Russia, SREM-2014, included airdrops of armored personnel carriers from Il-76 heavy transport aircraft over the plains of Vojvodina, not far from the country's border with NATO member Croatia. A year later it was replaced by the joint Russian-Serbian-Belarus "Slavic Brotherhood" counter-terrorism exercises that have taken place every year since 2015. An exception was made in 2020, when Belgrade decided not to participate due to the complex political situation in Belarus, which included hypothetical conflict scenarios with NATO forces that required bombing locations close to the border with Poland and Ukraine.

SLAVIC SHIELD 2019 was another military exercise the Russian armed forces established that they knew would resonate with local audiences and continue to send a highly volatile message to the West. Russian forces deployed an advanced surface to air system, the S-400, to the Serbian Air Force base of Batajnica, near Belgrade.

The magnitude of defense cooperation between the two countries was further increased by strategic military donations. Russia incorporated Serbia into its international military assistance program and became the largest foreign donor to the Serbian armed forces. A donation of 30 T-72MS tanks and 30 BRDM-2MS armored vehicles was completed in May 2021. Russia also donated six MiG-29s while Belarus provided four additional MiG-29s.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided another opportunity to exert influence in the Western Balkans, advertise scientific superiority, and present the EU and NATO as ineffective organizations. Road disinfection vehicles and 87 military medical experts were deployed to Serbia in April of 2020, and were shown in multiple news outlets cleaning hospitals and streets. A month later a similar activity followed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Vaccine diplomacy continued as batches of the Sputnik V vaccines was provided to Serbia, followed by a strong information campaign aimed at advertising the superior

performance and effectiveness of these jabs. In addition, in June 2020, a manufacturing line for the Sputnik vaccine was launched in Serbia.

“On a broader scale, international organizations need to improve the coordination of their regional efforts, as well as expand the ways in which strategic communications approaches can be used in highly contested areas.”

At the same time the Western COVID-19 manufacturer Pfizer was portrayed as corrupt, while the vaccine was alleged to be problematic and deadly, and NATO member states portrayed as selfish, without a sense of international solidarity in times of global pandemic. Montenegro, as a new NATO member state, was specifically targeted by the Russian-supported media with these claims in order to convince the country to revoke its NATO member status.

Information efforts are conducted in a binary, black-white fashion. Any challenges and problems which the Kremlin faces are either ignored or minimized. This includes the very low public trust in Sputnik V vaccines among Russian citizens and the low vaccination turnout in Russia resulting in record high new cases of COVID-19.

How Western societies, including the U.S., EU and NATO should respond to information campaigns and disinformation efforts are the subject of numerous analysis, studies, and conferences. While there is growing consensus on what the challenges are, there is not as much agreement on how to address them. In regions like Western Balkans, the issue of disinformation is linked to numerous societal voids and challenges that demand a holistic approach.

Increasing anti-Western sentiments in the Western Balkans, especially among the Serbian population, is an important element that contributes to the effectiveness of foreign influence campaigns. The campaigns are based on a number of elements including the conflicts of the 1990s, a perceived sense of a lack of international balance when addressing the responsibility for wars and war crimes, and the unresolved issues of the 2020 Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, which include both countries' political situations as well as what can be expected as a result of the talks. As a result, general support for EU integration, although above 50 percent, is in decline, while Russia and China enjoy their status as the friendliest nations.

According to Council of Europe research, the whole region is plagued by poor media standards, a lack of media ownership transparency, political influences over media regulatory authorities, a high rate of hate speech, the poor quality of investigative journalism, and weak mechanisms to support media associations.

Defense, security, and other topics related to NATO, the EU, or the U.S. European Command are frequently technical in nature and demand a high level of expertise. However, this is also what is most frequently missing among many media editors in highly competitive 24-hour, digital media click-bait environments, especially in the Western Balkans. The results of the current approach, which relies on press releases to provide information to the public, are not sufficient enough to increase the presence of fact-based narratives in disinformation spaces.

Tackling a problem of this magnitude demands a comprehensive approach by governments and media associations supported by the international community. Some work has started. For instance, in 2020, Serbia adopted a media strategy intended to tackle the issues of media independence and ownership, financial sustainability, and privatization of state-owned media outlets. However, in general, this area of problem solving is still at the early stages of implementation. The poor quality of reporting demands new approaches for supporting young journalists and analysts by educating and training them in accepted journalistic standards and providing them with the support needed to produce quality content. Several initiatives are already taking place and are supported by various international institutions, but there is a substantial need for further development and coordination in order to achieve these journalistic goals.

Another challenge related to disinformation resilience is the low level of media literacy throughout the region. According to the latest surveys, the media literacy of Western Balkans societies is at the bottom of the chart when compared to other parts of Europe. The EU has launched multiple initiatives to tackle this issue, but as stated above, the majority of these programs are still in their infancy stages.

Nevertheless, new programs are coming into play. In Serbia, the EU launched an effort to provide technical assistance to public service broadcasters and support to the Ministry of Culture and Information in preparing teaching manuals for the entire pre-university education system. This 2020 effort was supplemented by EU's hosting of the very first Western Balkan conference on media literacy in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October of the same year. The attendance of the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, exemplified the importance that the EU places on the region.

Fact-checking is another important aspect of tackling the challenge of disinformation. Regional networks of fact-checking initiatives have been established in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, and began partnering with large social media platforms like Facebook. However, fact-checking and debunking are reactive in nature. It takes place once disinformation has already been published and the target audiences have been exposed to the disinformation. For this reason, new proactive initiatives and approaches are needed to address the myriad challenges in the information space and increase the visibility of fact-based narratives.

Increasing the visibility of factual information requires the development of local and regional coalitions of cross-border cooperative platforms that empower, educate, train, and produce content which resonates with local audiences while building networks of quality reporters.

On a broader scale, international organizations need to improve the coordination of their regional efforts, as well as expand the ways in which strategic communications approaches can be used in highly contested areas.

Strategic communications have to be sensitive to strategic, political, social, generational, and/or technological changes at both the national and international levels. In areas that present a myriad of vulnerabilities, such as the Western Balkans, the list of specialist expertise must be expanded to include experts who understand local cultures, the cross-border nature of information flows, perceptions, inter-ethnic tensions, and the specific media space voids.

IDEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS IN TURKEY BY POWER, POLITICS, AND RELIGION

This article aims at analyzing the various ideological interventions, prompted by the pandemic in Turkey, in the fields of power, politics, and religion. In a country and a context where politics and religion are closely connected, and a particular Turkish experience with few parallels in the Muslim world, our investigation will be two-fold: how to calculate the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the Turkish political field, and secondly, how has the religious world reacted in backing up politics in its response to this crisis. We are seeking to understand the effects of the crisis on the established power, and on the orientations of national and international policy in the context of a health crisis. Lastly, we need to examine the role of religion in the management of the crisis.

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Like most countries in the world, Turkey experienced the full force of the spread of Covid-19, which has been in the headlines since March 2020. Iran was one of the first countries to be heavily affected, and as its neighbor, Turkey officially declared its first coronavirus case on 11 March 2020, and the first death linked to the virus on 17 March. According to *Worldometer* data, in May 2020 Turkey ranked 41st in the number of people infected by the virus (133,721 cases) and 33rd in terms of coronavirus deaths.¹ Furthermore, Turkey was distinguished by having the fastest infection rate in the world, though this was partly due to its increased capacity for screening. In fact, it was one of the ten first countries to have backed, and implemented large-scale testing. However, the Turkish Medical Association (*Türk Tabipleri Birliği*, TTB) asserted that “the real level of infection was even higher as only people who tested positive were officially recorded, people treated for Covid-19 on the basis of clinical symptoms were not being counted.”² On 1 June, when the country embarked on a progressive though nonetheless limited emergence from a long lockdown³, the official numbers were these: 1,964,364 tests carried out, 162,120 cases confirmed, 125,963 recoveries, and 4489 deaths.⁴ By 9 November 2020 Turkey saw the arrival of a second wave, and the numbers given by the Ministry of Health, although incomplete, pointed to increased numbers of infections and deaths. On 5 December 2020 the figures were these: 19,517,084 tests carried out, 533,198 cases confirmed, 427,242 recoveries, and 14,705 deaths.⁵ So in the autumn of 2020, while several European countries such as France and the United Kingdom locked their populations down again, Turkey implemented new, weak measures designed to restrict the activity of certain businesses (cafés and restaurants, hairdressers, sporting venues, etc.) which were to shut at 10 p.m. And there was similarly the reintroduction of a partial lockdown for persons aged over 65, only allowed to go out between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. in some large cities like Ankara and Istanbul. From 18 November 2020 a partial curfew limited outings at the weekend to between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. and other limitations were imposed, but it seemed that everything was being done to avoid a total lockdown which could damage the country’s already precarious economy. However, the worsening situation obliged the authorities to toughen its control measures. A near-total lockdown at weekends was imposed throughout the country, and a weekday curfew between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. The failure to include in the statistics asymptomatic

¹ “Türkiye, koronavirüste tanı ve can kaybında dünyada kaçınıcı sırada?”, *Birgün*, 8 May, 2020, <https://www.birgun.net/haber/turkiye-koronaviruste-tani-ve-can-kaybinda-dunyada-kacinci-sirada-300054>

² Evren Balta and Soli Özel, “La bataille des chiffres, un faible taux de mortalité en Turquie,” *Institut Montaigne*, 20 May 2020, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/blog/la-bataille-des-chiffres-un-faible-taux-de-mortalite-en-turquie>

³ Jean-François Pérouse, “Wuhan de la Turquie à l’épreuve de la pandémie,” *Analyses pluridisciplinaires sur la crise sanitaire Covid-19 en Turquie*, cited by Balci, Bayram. Kaya, Sümbül. (2021) *Analyses pluridisciplinaires sur la crise sanitaire COVID-19 en Turquie*.

⁴ See the official site of the Turkish Ministry of Health for further detail: <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

⁵ See the official site of the Turkish Ministry of Health for further detail: <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>

positive cases prompted questions about the reliability of figures issued by the Health Ministry. During the first wave of the pandemic the Turkish Medical Association recorded figure much higher than those given by the State, but during the second wave the Association's website coincided with official figures.⁶

“The management of the crisis was not without an impact on Turkish foreign policy. While the crisis exaggerated tensions and divisions in domestic politics, the coronavirus offered Turkey a chance to end its isolation in international politics.”

This article aims at analyzing the various ideological interventions, prompted by the pandemic in Turkey, in the fields of power, politics, and religion. In the context of a country where politics and religion are intimately connected, and of a particular Turkish experience with few parallels in the Muslim world, our investigation will be two-fold: how to calculate the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the Turkish political field, and secondly, how has the religious world reacted in backing up politics in this crisis. We shall be investigating the effects of the crisis on the established power, and on the orientations of national and international policy in a health crisis. Lastly, we need to examine the role of religion in the management of the crisis. First, however, let us look at the state of the country when the crisis first hit Turkey.

In terms of methodology, this research is based on a qualitative survey carried out in times of Covid in Istanbul, in particular on the basis of interviews with mosque staff and neighborhood leaders. It is also based on the observation of daily life during a period of confinement, as well as by the analysis of official declarations from the government and the President of the Republic, Turkey's Religious Affairs General Directorate (Diyanet), medical and health authorities, religious brotherhoods, and associations such as the Turkish Medical Association.

The Reinforcement of Political Polarization

Many studies have sought to investigate the effects of the nature of regimes on the management of a health crisis.⁷ This approach, which consists in asking if a democratic regime manages a pandemic better or worse than a totalitarian regime, seems to us to be somewhat off-target and unoriginal, a kind of avatar of the much-debated

⁶ For further detail please see: <https://www.tb.org.tr/kollar/COVID19/index.php>

⁷ Rachel Kleinfeld, “Do Authoritarian or Democratic Countries Handle Pandemics Better?” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 2020, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/03/31/do-authoritarian-or-democratic-countries-handle-pandemics-better-pub-81404>

theory of democratic peace. The simplistic, binary notion that the transparency of democracies ensures that people will obey a lockdown yet in authoritarian regimes it is easy to confine a population already used to surveillance and the limitation of fundamental liberties just does not work. If the media argue that China and Iran will emerge less well than some liberal democracies like Germany, then Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom are counterexamples. We believe that this debate is influenced by many extra-political parameters such as size and demographic composition, as well as the culture of social relationship with sick and vulnerable populations, two vital features which, quite properly in Turkey's case, have had a role in the management of the crisis. The youth of the population and family solidarity, meaning that old and young live under the same roof, have been two crucial factors in the fight against the pandemic in Turkey.⁸ And what is more, access or lack thereof to medical materials and how crowded hospitals are have a direct bearing on strategies for managing the health crisis. In contrast, it is easier to analyze the way in which the fields of government and politics invest ideological issues in Covid-19. We will see that this health crisis is also a test that strengthens political polarization.

From the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 the Health Minister Fahrettin Koca, a doctor by training, was more center stage in the media than the President. As other researchers have observed, Erdoğan seemed to have decided to manage the crisis in a non-polarizing way since the Health Minister was seen more as a bureaucrat using scientific language than as a politician. Similarly, quarantining pilgrims returning from Mecca could be viewed as an action hostile to his own political base. Some of the tweets and speeches of the President of the Republic aimed at reviving a feeling of national unity against Covid-19 to arouse public support, as is evidenced in the following extract:

“Our state and all our institutions are working continually to serve the nation. I hope, inshallah, that we shall get through this difficult process. As long as we follow the rules and instructions and definitely continue to stay at home.”⁹

We must also remember that if Erdoğan is still in power it is thanks to a political alliance, the popular alliance (*Cumhur İttifakı*) made in February 2018 between the AKP and the extreme right Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP). The extreme right does not concur in the idea advanced by Oytun Erbaş, a specialist in experimental medicine, that Turkish genes are resistant to Covid-19.¹⁰

⁸ Evren Balta and Soli Özel, “La bataille des chiffres, un faible taux de mortalité en Turquie,” *Institut Montaigne*, 20 May 2020, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/blog/la-bataille-des-chiffres-un-faible-taux-de-mortalite-en-turquie>

⁹ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech on 22 March 2022. For detail see: <https://www.tecb.gov.tr/en/>

¹⁰ Oytun Erbaş, “Corona virüs Türklere bulaşmıyor,” *Yeniçağ*, 5 March 2020, <https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/oytun-erbas-corona-virus-turklere-bulasmiyor-270766h.htm>

Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the MHP and hence one of the pillars of the government, supports the public health action being implemented. For him, it is by way of an appeal to national unity in the face of Covid-19, and by the power of science and prayer coupled with respect for the public health measures implemented by the government, that the virus can be conquered.¹¹ He also urges the people of Turkey to distrust “opportunists, provocateurs and the back market.”¹² According to Vincent Geisser, “health nationalism set in train by political leaders only works in terms of mobilization and social representation because it attaches itself to the ordinary nationalism which is widespread in the population.”¹³ This applies to our context in which ordinary nationalism is everywhere and transcends class. This Turkish ‘hygiene-nationalism’¹⁴ is also seen in fund-raising campaigns established by the government on a national scale with the slogan ‘We can do it for ourselves’ (*Biz Bize Yeteriz*).

“In terms of foreign policy, the initiatives taken by the government to aid a hundred or so countries around the world in order to restore its image and to revitalize its foreign policy can be considered as a half success.”

However, these appeals to national unity to fight the coronavirus are pious hopes and the political polarization which existed before is strengthened by the health crisis. One of the first sources of tension between government and the opposition concerns the measures taken by the government to address the pandemic and this shows that the opposition has not embraced the measures proposed and indicates a lack of trust in such public action. The Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - CHP) criticized the state’s slowness and tentativeness in taking lockdown measures. In fact, from 3 February 2020 flights to and from China and Iran were suspended and the land borders with neighboring countries were closed. The closure of non-essential businesses and stadiums (in a country where football is a second religion) was quickly decided on, though in practice this was patchy. The selective

¹¹ TRT Haber, “Devlet Bahçeli: İşabetli tedbirler alındı,” 17 March 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/devlet-bahceli-isabetli-tedbirler-alindi-467809.html>

¹² TRT Haber, “Devlet Bahçeli: İşabetli tedbirler alındı,” 17 March 2020, <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/devlet-bahceli-isabetli-tedbirler-alindi-467809.html>

¹³ Vincent Geisser, “L’hygiéno-nationalisme, remède miracle à la pandémie? Populismes, racismes et complotismes autour du Covid-19,” *Migrations Société*, 2020/2 no. 180.

¹⁴ Vincent Geisser, “L’hygiéno-nationalisme, remède miracle à la pandémie? Populismes, racismes et complotismes autour du Covid-19,” *Migrations Société*, 2020/2 no. 180.

lockdown, strictly imposed only on the age ranges of less than 20 and more than 65 years old, the age categories not required to keep the economy turning and the most vulnerable to the virus, was also the subject of heavy criticism by the opposition. The real political tensions, however, related to two other issues: measures to support businesses most affected by the forced economic slow-down, and the release of prisoners almost at the end of their sentences to ease prisons, major sites of contamination.

Some opposition municipal authorities, notably the metropolitan authorities in Ankara and Istanbul, encouraged by their electoral victory in March 2019, launched initiatives to collect money for the most-needy.¹⁵ Perfectly legal, these solidarity campaigns, which are common in Turkey, are not without political, and even electoral, design in the main towns that implemented them. All local authorities of all political hues did this, including and above all the AKP, which could thus construct and maintain a strong client list link with its supporters. The government was very displeased with this opposition initiative. On the direct intervention of President Erdoğan, collecting money in the context of the fight against Covid-19 by any organization other than that designated by the state – as it happens, the above-mentioned campaign ‘We can do it for ourselves’ – was prohibited. True to his discourse of demonizing the opposition, he accused the initiative of separatism, aiming to set up a state within the state.¹⁶ To set an example, he donated seven months of his salary as President of the Republic to swell the national campaign. Thus, while the battle against Covid-19 could have been an occasion for solidarity and real unity setting aside ideological conflicts and divisions, the crisis was certainly the umpteenth lost opportunity for a coming-together of the government, on the one hand, the opposition, and the section of the population which is unfavorable to it on the other.

Lastly, the government did not lighten the repression of its opponents in any way. Arrests continued, especially of local elected representatives in Kurdish towns, like the mayor of the town of Siirt from the pro-Kurdish HDP, who was replaced in May 2020 by a representative appointed by the State.¹⁷ And further, some bloggers and other critics of government management of the pandemic were arrested, and some imprisoned.¹⁸ In sum, the crisis and its management did not generate conformity

¹⁵ Vahap Coskun, “Devlet içinde devlet olmak,” *Perspektif*, 8 April 2020, <https://www.perspektif.online/tr/siyaset/devlet-icinde-devlet-olmak.html>

¹⁶ Hamdi Fırat Büyük, “Turkish President Accuses Municipalities of Forming ‘Parallel State’,” *Balkan Insight*, 1 April 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/04/01/turkish-president-accuses-municipalities-of-forming-parallel-state/#gsc.tab=0>

¹⁷ Hürriyet, “5 belediye başkanı görevden alındı, Siirt ve Iğdır’a kayyum,” 16 May 2020, <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/5-belediye-baskani-gorevden-alindi-siirt-ve-igdira-kayyum-41518904>

¹⁸ Diego Cupolo, “Turkey cracks down on journalists, others as coronavirus rumors spread,” *Al Monitor*, 7 April 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/04/turkey-journalists-social-media-pandemic-crackdown.html>

to the measures taken by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, or to his government, but instead reinforced existing conflicts and divisions.

The Health Crisis as an Opportunity to Emerge from Diplomatic Isolation?

The management of the crisis was not without an impact on Turkish foreign policy. While the crisis exaggerated tensions and divisions in domestic politics, the coronavirus offered Turkey a chance to end its isolation in international politics. As a consequence of this changing paradigm, Turkey has become unpopular with its neighbors, and even its traditional allies appear disturbed.

It is true that Turkey is a full member of NATO and is still officially a candidate to join the EU, but for some time the country has had tense relations with the two pillars of the western alliance, the United States and the European Union. In the first case, there is disagreement over Syria, and divergence over Russia.¹⁹ In the second case the argument also relates to the issue of Syria, and also to the decline in the rule of law in Turkey which damages realistic chances of a rapprochement between Ankara and the European Union.²⁰ Even so, the fundamental problem lies in the migrant crisis, used to exercise pressure. Thus, in the context of multiple disagreements with the European Union, and knowing how touchy the Europeans are about this issue, Erdoğan has not hesitated to play the migrant card as a weapon by urging refugees in Turkey to cross over the Greek border in order to seek refuge in a Europe that does not want them.²¹

Turkey does not have better relations with its immediate neighbors. Having been cordial before the Syrian crisis, they are now complicated with Greece, with Syria obviously, and also with Egypt, Cyprus and Israel.²² The picture is less dark in respect of Russia, but even there, links are uncertain, ambiguous and by no means immune to new excuses.²³ Nonetheless, Turkey has installed a ‘corona diplomacy’ to come to the world’s assistance, to re-dynamize a foreign policy bogged down in a fair number of tricky situations. Turkey has sent various forms of medical aid to a very large number of countries, to regild its image among its own population and the international community alike. For instance, Ankara included Western countries

¹⁹ Mehmet Yegin, “Turkey between NATO and Russia: The Failed Balance,” *SWP*, 30 June 2019, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2019C30/>, inst the Pn the Fi.’ (Figure 2 of Turkey, Mevress conference with the

²⁰ Bill Park, “Turkey’s isolated stance: an ally no more, or just the usual turbulence?” *International Affairs*, Vol.91 N.3 (2015), pp.581-600.

²¹ Berkay Mandracı, “Sharing the Burden: Revisiting the EU-Turkey Migration Deal,” *International Crisis Group*, 13 March 2020, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/sharing-burden-revisiting-eu-turkey-migration-deal>

²² Aydıntaşbaş et al. “Deep Sea Rivals: Europe, Turkey and the New Eastern Mediterranean Conflict Lines,” *European Council on Foreign Relations*, May 2020. https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/eastern_med

²³ Seçkin Köstem, “Russian-Turkish cooperation in Syria: Geopolitical Alignment with Limits,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 2020.

in its corona diplomacy, responding to a NATO appeal it sent aid to Spain, Italy and even the United Kingdom. In the Middle East, Iran received virus screening kits, masks and other protective equipment, as did Algeria, Yemen and Iraq, and Libya for the territories controlled by the Government of National Accord, which is allied with Ankara. More symbolic and unexpected, aid has been sent to Israel and to Armenia, whose nationals stranded in Turkey were helped to make the journey back to their native country. How does Recep Tayyip Erdoğan benefit from this medical aid policy?

We suggest that this resort to coronavirus diplomacy is a resource for the presidency in respect of domestic policy, since it also transmits to his own people the image of a country which is doing well and is able to help other countries even while its own economy is shaky. Thus, the message carries reassurance to a section of the people who, at the same time, are encountering difficulties in getting masks for themselves.²⁴

The ‘corona diplomacy’ was also vigorously criticized by the opposition because the aid packages sent to Italy and Spain flagged up the presidency rather than the Turkish Republic, as can be seen on Figure 1. If the ‘corona diplomacy’ can be seen as an instrument of soft power, thereby highlighting his leadership qualities, it is a matter of the soft power of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This approach reveals a personalization of the Turkish state.²⁵ It is also the intention of the Presidency to valorize Islam through this aid programme since the bundles shipped carried a quotation from Mevlana, a Sufi Turco-Persian poet of the 13th century who died in Konya, ‘After despair, countless hopes. After darkness, countless suns.’ (Figure 2). The official wording on these aid parcels also stresses that Islam insists on solidarity as a fundamental principle.²⁶

²⁴The sale of masks was forbidden in the country during the first wave of the health crisis and the state then distributed 5 masks per week per person free of charge through pharmacies. Faced with an insufficient logistical system the government changed tack several times before authorising the sale of masks.

²⁵Erdi Öztürk, “Turkey’s Use of the COVID-19 Battle as a Religious Soft Power Instrument and its Limitation” *IFEA*, 9 June, 2020, <https://ifea-istanbul.net/index.php/tr/etkinliklerimiz/guncel-etk/turkey-s-use-of-the-covid-19-battle-as-a-religious-soft-power-instrument-and-its-limitation>

²⁶Anadolu Agency, “Covid-19: Turkey sends medical aid to more than 30 counties,” 16 April 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/turkey-sends-medical-aid-to-tunisia-to-address-covid-19/2303355>

Figure 1



Figure 2



Turkish armed forces deliver this medical aid, though they seem to be keeping a low profile in the management of Covid-19 at the national level. Even while it is hard to estimate the effects of Turkey's 'corona diplomacy' it seems to us important to note that it has not served to extract Turkey from its isolation. In fact, in parallel to this medical aid as a manifestation of soft power, there has also been a return to, or a continuation of, the 'hard power' implemented since the failed coup d'état of 15 July 2016. In effect, the Turkish army has multiplied its military operations outside the national territory in the context of the battle against the PKK in Iraq and Syria. In the middle of the health crisis the Turkish military presence in Libya illustrates further the development of Ankara's offensive regional strategy, in which the Turkish military henceforward takes a central role.²⁷ Turkish military support, with its air-power, its drones and its mercenaries, has been decisive in turning the course of the war in favour of the Government of National Accord, GAN. This action in Libya has been an opportunity for Turkey not only to strengthen its position but to give a demonstration of power showcasing superior Turkish technology.

For Ankara these military operations constitute a means of situating itself as an undeniable actor in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, and to signal to other regional and international powers that it is ready to deploy its technological superiority in a context of high geopolitical tension. The Turkish presence in Libya also illustrates the General Staff's adherence to a new military doctrine given the name 'Blue Homeland' (*Mavi Vatan*). It is based on three principles: the militarization of foreign policy (recourse to the army); the long-distance defense of Turkey particularly by control of its maritime frontiers in the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, and the development of a solid arms industry to implement this strategy. This concept has oriented Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's foreign and defense policies in a political context in which, with the aim or re-establishing its legitimacy, the governing party has allied itself with the nationalist (and tending towards sovereigntist) extreme right called '*Ulusalci*', which favors a rapprochement with authoritarian authorities such as Russia, China and even Iran to the detriment of the West. Thus, the Covid-19 crisis has not stopped Recep Tayyip Erdoğan embarking on other battles. The simultaneous use by the President of *hard power* and *soft power* has been keenly criticized by the opposition, but the President's muscular language on foreign policy, particularly about the East Mediterranean crisis, enjoys real popular support. However, society remains polarized on most questions of internal policy during the coronavirus crisis, but not in the religious sphere, where the attitude of 'religious power' in the country, that is to say the management of

²⁷ It must be emphasised nonetheless that even if long before the health crisis Parliament had approved a motion allowing President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to send military forces into Libya to support the Government of National Accord, the GAN of Fayeze El-Sarraj recognized by the UN, which is fighting the forces of the putschist Marshal Khalifa Haftar, it is clear that the war has been pursued during a full health crisis.

religious affairs in the pandemic, has not stirred up as many divisions in the nation, perhaps even the opposite.

Religious Authorities in the Fight Against the Pandemic

There are at least two reasons why religion must be considered in order to understand the effects of a pandemic like coronavirus on society in general as well as on Turkish society in particular. The first reason is that, facing such a scare believers and even a number of unbelievers, in such circumstances, find solace in spirituality in order to understand, accept and get over the event; they turn towards God or towards his representatives on earth, the authorities or religious guides.²⁸ The second reason is that all religions, because they assemble people, for prayers or collective movements or pilgrimages can be a means for the pandemic to spread, as was the case in Korea and France for the first outbreaks of the disease. At the same time, the influence and the strength of persuasion that religions exert over the faithful can be efficient partners in the fight against infection. These two factors, the clergy addressing the population and their mobilization in order to limit the effects of the disease have been visible in practically every country in the world, regardless of religion. In Turkey, where the main religion is Islam, has seen the Diyanet as the main actor in reassure and mobilize the faithful against the pandemic. In addition, there are numerous religious brotherhoods and Islamist intellectuals who express themselves through television channels, publications, and internet sites.

Among these actors, undoubtedly the most influential in Turkey is the Diyanet, the most powerful and the most widespread throughout the country. In fact, the Diyanet functions like a giant ministry with 130,000 employees, managing 84,000 mosques and thereby exerts a powerful influence over believers. It is an unavoidable religious actor, managing the religion and organizing pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina.²⁹ Through the voices of its thousands of imams and muezzins working all over the country this institution gives the tone, dictating the individual and collective attitudes to be adopted in confronting exceptional events such as epidemics and earthquakes as well as certain political crises.

Turkish Islam is also represented by a large number of Sufi brotherhoods. Among the main ones we can name the Naqshbandiyya, founded by Bahâ'uddin Naqshband and which has a network of agencies around the whole world. In Turkey it is divided

²⁸ Kali Robinson, "How Are Major Religions Responding to the Coronavirus?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, 19 March 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-are-major-religions-responding-coronavirus>

²⁹ Emir Kaya, *Secularism and State Religion in Modern Turkey. Law, Policy Making and the Diyanet*. London, New York: I.B Tauris, (2018).

into three branches,³⁰ of which the biggest in terms of the number of followers is the Menzil community, named after the village in the province of Adıyaman where the founder established his headquarters. Another branch of the Naqshbandiyya is led by Osman Nuri Topbaş, who is to be found at the Mahmud-Hüdayi-Vakfi foundation, where the headquarters are located in Üsküdar. Finally, the community of İsmailağa, located in the neighborhood of Fatih in Istanbul, makes up the third group. This last branch has the particular characteristic of maintaining good relations with President Erdoğan,³¹ who visited it on 13 January 2020.³² The differences in dogma between these movements are insignificant, since they all interpret and live Islam in the light of the teaching of their master and founder Naqshbandiyya Bahâ'uddin Naqshband.

Finally, Islam in Turkey is also a media ecosystem relaying the analyses of more or less influential Muslim intellectuals. Among these, we can name Abdurrahman Dilipak, who writes in the strongly Islamist daily paper *Yeni Akit* and Hayrettin Karaman, an editorialist on the newspaper *Yeni Şafak*, who is just as fundamentalist. At the opposite end of the spectrum is İhsan Eliaçık, who embodies a new movement in Turkish Islam, that of anticapitalistic Muslims or leftist Islamists.

More than ever, the Diyanet, the religious arm of political power, quickly imposed restrictions on meeting places and the introduction of new practices such as preventive measures and social distancing. The call to prayer has been modified somewhat since, at the end of his call, the imam adds a phrase reminding people that the pandemic is still around and that the duty of the faithful is to combat it by staying at home. The banning of collective prayers in mosques has been the most important decision taken in conjunction with the political powers. Similarly, all collective religious assemblies were banned, notably the pilgrimage to Mecca, once the health risk was really confirmed. In any case, the Saudi authorities closed all the holy sites which made the grand *hajj* impossible in July 2020. Furthermore, still wishing to limit the spread, funerary practices have been simplified: quicker prayers before a restricted group and a very swift burial. To better spread information about the new rules, the Diyanet has made use of the media but above all its territorial coverage is assured by the imams. All of them have followed its recommendations, some having anticipated them and they reproached the institution for its lack of reactivity. Other currents in Turkish Islam such as the main brotherhood movements already mentioned had invited the faithful to practise the same caution using preventive

³⁰ Svante E. Cornell, "The Naqshbandi-Khalidi order and political Islam in Turkey," *Hudson Institute*, May 2015, <https://www.hudson.org/research/11601-the-naqshbandi-khalidi-order-and-political-islam-in-turkey>

³¹ Cumhuriyet, "Resmi Gazete'de yayımlandı: İsmailağa Vakfı kuruldu!" December 2020, <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/resmi-gazetede-yayimlandi-ismailaga-vakfi-kuruldu-1796150>

³² On the content and commentaries on this visit, see: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/395243/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-dan-ismailaga-cemaatine-ziyaret>

measures and social distancing.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, several comments can be made which point to what Turkey might be like when the coronavirus crisis is over, although the end is not yet in sight. Firstly, in terms of domestic policy, the management of the crisis has not really affected the nature of current political power, which was and remains authoritarian. This authoritarianism might well be accepted by some of the population who would recognize the good management of the health situation and the avoidance of many deaths, for the infringement of liberties thus far, since the confinement, has not been as strict as in other countries. In fact, the government can be proud of having managed the crisis well even if criticism is expressed and there is still the question of the reliability of statistics. This careful management has pulled the rug from under the feet of the opposition including two new groups – the *DEVA* and *Gelecek* parties, dissidents from the AKP - which appeared during the crisis. These parties have not had time to build themselves up throughout the country and their programs and the leaders' speeches have been overshadowed by the mobilization during the pandemic. Thus, those in power, whose mandate finishes in 2023, can feel reassured. There will be no need to organize early elections to renew their legitimacy.

Secondly, in terms of foreign policy, the initiatives taken by the government to aid a hundred or so countries around the world in order to restore its image and to revitalize its foreign policy can be considered as a half success. The success in dealing with the first wave is due to the fact that the country showed strong capability in its sanitary reaction which is reassuring as regards the image that it can give of itself.

Finally, there are two points to highlight regarding the religious dimension of the crisis. The pandemic has revealed and demonstrated the osmosis between the AKP and the Diyanet. The latter has worked hand in hand with the government during this crisis, proving its loyalty to the point that it seems to be a branch of the party rather than an institution of the state, above the political debate. Despite this, the Diyanet has not failed in its public service mission. Its recommendations to the faithful facing the crisis were proof of common sense and scientific rationality by taking confinement measures and making Islamic practices conform to recommendations from the order of doctors. In so doing it has privileged public health over the practice of the faith, which has not been the case everywhere else.

IS RE-CALIBRATION FEASIBLE IN TURKEY-EGYPT RELATIONS? LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES

The ideological dimension of the bilateral Turkey-Egypt ties constitutes a particular focal point in terms of predicaments, which could be quite tricky to overcome. Yet, it seems that the geopolitical necessities tighten the noose for Turkey to feel obliged in fixing the strained relations with the Sisi administration. It is also evident that the first step towards a compromise is expected to be taken by Ankara. Within this context and providing a brief background, this piece aims to lay out specific policy contexts to discuss the possibility and limits of recalibration between Turkey and Egypt based on a 2016 visit to Cairo in which numerous interviews with the political and academic elite were conducted.

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Those who closely follow Turkish foreign policy developments would recall that the beginning of summer 2016 was a busy time for Turkish diplomacy, particularly with countries with which Turkey has had strained relations. 27 June for instance, was a historic day as Turkey and Israel announced that they had reached an agreement to restore diplomatic relations six years after the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla incident. The same day, President Erdoğan sent a letter to President Putin, in an effort to restore relations, expressing his deep regret for the shooting down of the Russian warplane by a Turkish F-16. These two developments clearly indicated Turkey's renewed interest in reinvigorating a foreign policy constrained by uneasy relations with its once allies. It was an attempt to bring back the "zero-problem" policy, which has been an absolute lost cause for a long while. Given this demonstrated enthusiasm back then, the following question was: Who would be the next? One country was at the top of the list: another nation that has perceived Turkey as a "meddlesome country" - Egypt. Indeed, the possibility that diplomatic initiatives could be expanded in a way that includes Egypt was also endorsed by then Prime Minister Yıldırım's statement that "relations with Egypt could be normalized",¹ which was welcomed by the Egyptian side, too.² Nevertheless, nothing has been materialized so far in fixing the relations between Ankara and Cairo. Having fallen into the throes of 'crisis fatigue' as it has been trying to survive within the chaotic environment, particularly of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey has been now facing geopolitical realities the likes of which it has never encountered.

The possibility of recalibration in Turkey-Egypt relations, again, makes the headlines after five thorny years. It looks like that the geopolitical necessities tighten the noose for Turkey to feel obliged in fixing the strained relations with the Sisi administration. By all means, it will not help Turkey to break the vicious circle of 'precious loneliness' to a full extent but may ease the tensions to some degree. Besides, it is also evident that the first step towards a compromise is expected to be taken by Ankara, and if there are any concessions to be made in this effort, it is supposed to be on the Turkish side.

Potential Restoration?

A solution is desired. Notwithstanding, after eight years of severe deterioration of relations down an ever-descending slope, it is not at all easy to restore Turkey-Egyptian relations and bring about the old heydays of solidarity. In this regard, the ideological dimension of the bilateral Turkey-Egypt ties constitutes a particular

¹ "Turkey voices readiness for normalization with Egypt", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 28 June 2016, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-voices-readiness-for-normalization-with-egypt-101033>

² "Mısır, Başbakan Yıldırım'ın açıklamalarını memnuniyetle karşıladı," *TRT Haber*, 28 June 2016, <http://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/misir-basbakan-yildirim-in-aciklamalarini-memnuniyetle-karsiladi-258768.html>

focal point in terms of predicaments, which could be quite tricky to overcome. Nevertheless, the Middle East is increasingly marked by shared regional challenges, such that both sides are at least aware that they need each other's support rather than sapping each other's strengths. At this point, there have been certain expectations from both sides. Within this context and providing a brief background, we aim to lay out specific policy contexts to discuss the possibility and limits of recalibration between Turkey and Egypt. The analysis here reflects the authors' thoughts based on a 2016 visit to Cairo in which numerous interviews with the political and academic elite were conducted between 30 May and 6 June.³ In this respect, this analysis is also a reflection of two countries' stranded relations that have been frozen in the same dynamics for a long time.

“After eight years of severe deterioration of relations down an ever-descending slope, it is not at all easy to restore Turkey-Egyptian relations and bring about the old heydays of solidarity.”

From Partnership to Disengagement

Once firm regional partners as the two main actors in the region, Turkey and Egypt have been in a severe crisis suffering from lack of trust for the past several years and in particular since the ouster of Egypt's first democratically elected president Morsi following a *coup d'état* on 3 July 2013. At that time, Turkey was one of the few countries with a solid opposing reaction, clearly refusing to recognize the new military regime. That was a consistent strategy from a normative point of view. However, this was later followed by the exchange of high-pitched reciprocal Turkish and Egyptian statements accusing the other side of toppling a democratically elected leader in one case and interfering in another country's domestic affairs in the other.⁴ As a result, bilateral relations ultimately collapsed near the end of 2013; the status of diplomatic relations was reduced to the level of *charge d'affaires*, with almost no bilateral engagement since then.

This process caused a sort of *emotional disengagement* in the full sense of the phrase. In a process in which there has been no other alternative backchannel on hand. Moreover, it has been possible to be labelled as an agent of Turkey in contemporary

³ Abdel Monem Said Aly, Amr Musa, Amr Shobaky, Bahgat Korany, Laila el-Baradei, Muhammed Abdel Kader, Mustafa el-Labbad, Nabil Fahmy, Nadia Mostafa, Tariq al-Bishri are among the interviewees.

⁴ Osman Bahadir Dincer & Mehmet Yegin, “It is Time for Turkey to Fix its relations with Egypt”, *GMF Analysis*, 13 February 2015, <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/it-time-turkey-fix-its-relations-egypt>

Egypt if one is somehow in touch with Turks or asks for reconciliation with Turkey. Similarly, one could be portrayed as anti-AKP in Turkey if they criticize the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) or ask for reconciliation with the Sisi administration in Egypt. This is how low bilateral relations since 2013 could be caricatured. Both political and diplomatic relations and societal ties have so far been severely damaged, and the risk of absolute disengagement is not still improbable (or out of context / not eliminated).

Regional Requirements vs Sapping Each Other's Strengths

Beyond the exchange of formal accusations, the much-deteriorated Turkish-Egyptian relations have been characterized by many practical situations, particularly in regional politics. These two actors have sapped each other's power by adopting opposite poles in various regional challenges, such as Syria, Palestine, and Libya. To cut to the chase, Turkey and Egypt have been playing a zero-sum game, even though the opposite – i.e., collaboration - is required if regional countries are to tackle the accumulating challenges. At a time when the importance of inter-state relations is greater than ever, considering common challenges like civil conflicts spinning out of control; the proliferation of irregular armed groups and non-state actors, the refugee problem, economic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the continuation of impaired relations has not been a luxury these countries (notably Turkey) can afford.

Beyond regional challenges that must be addressed jointly, the respective country contexts also matter, particularly in regional foreign policy. For instance, the shrinking space for maneuvering in Turkish foreign policy, especially in the framework of the Arab 'uprisings' repercussions and regional realpolitik, makes moves for re-calibration necessary on Turkey's part. On the other hand, Egypt also understands that it has to proliferate its foreign policy relations as its dependency on the Gulf – which have been experiencing a malfunctioning oil economy - is no longer promising for the foreseeable future. Thus, in deference to substantial regional problems and restricted maneuvering spaces in foreign policies, it is not reasonable that these two actors in the region are currently not on speaking terms. Furthermore, the partnership between Turkey and Egypt could not be compensated by alternative alliances. As Abdel Monem Said Aly underscores, "We cannot afford the costs of the hostilities".⁵ Nonetheless, it is tremendously challenging to be glib in projecting a bright future for Turkey-Egypt relations given the ideological components of the stranded state of affairs.

Ideology Matters: Political Islam

The particular characteristics of the disrupted Turkish-Egyptian relations are that they have an ideological dimension. During the period between 2011-2013, the

⁵ Authors' interview, 2 June 2016, Cairo.

overreliance on political Islam as a unifying ideology hailed by the Morsi government and a majoritarian understanding of democracy led Turkey to exclude complex dynamics in Egyptian politics, which in turn decreased the support that liberal, nationalist and leftist political streams render to Turkey and the two countries bilateral relations. When ideology matters, it is not easy to employ rational diplomatic approaches in repairing bilateral relations.

“First and foremost, the Egyptian side explicitly expects recognition from the Turkish side.”

Preceding Turkey-Egypt relations had been governed much more by pragmatism with a lack of chemistry between the Mubarak regime and the AKP rule, at least in ideological terms. Ideological proximity is an unprecedented driving force when things do go right. During the Morsi term, Turkish-Egyptian bilateral relations exhibited an exceptional dynamism in favorable terms which had not previously been witnessed before. Yet, the AKP’s ruling elite had a misconception that Islamist peers would smoothly succeed and remain in power as they had done in Turkey. Thus, when the *coup d’état* took place, the end of MB rule served as a harbinger for the end of the good relations between Turkey and Egypt since the impact of ideological shifts on bilateral relations was devastating in the moment of crisis.

In the ensuing period, the Rabia sign, which became a popular symbol in protests against the military coup in Egypt among sympathizers of the MB worldwide, also became the motto of the Turkish government’s die-hard stance in the Egyptian case. The Turkish ruling elite heightened their tone of criticism in a path-dependent manner to mobilize the domestic audience and counter-criticism at home. However, as the situation of the MB deteriorated inside Egypt (i.e. brutal crackdown on the two camps of MB advocates in al-Nahda Square and Rabaa al-Adawiya Square and the ensuing declaration of the MB as a terrorist organization – which in itself was an attempt to remove it from all spheres of life in Egypt), the same also occurred within Turkey-Egypt relations. In one sense, the fate of political Islam in Egypt became the fate of Turkish-Egypt relations.

From Strategic Silence to Constructive Steps

A continuous pervading lack of trust between the parties has been evident throughout the eight years since the fall of the MB. On account of this, steps must first be taken to

rebuild this trust. The fissures have been deepening since 2013 due to the lack of communication. In the beginning, it may have been the right thing to do to maintain a strategic silence, as it prevented further deterioration of the botched relations. However, it is now an impediment to improving relations. While trying to keep their strategic silence on certain sensitive issues, this should be accompanied by bolder steps. Moves to be taken have to be tuned in line with reciprocal expectations. At this point, if there is still a common denominator for both sides, it is the need to break this vicious cycle and engage in qualified self-critique rather than full denial.

Egypt's Expectations

First and foremost, the Egyptian side explicitly expects recognition from the Turkish side. This was first demonstrated by Egyptian foreign ministry officials stating that “it must be clear that recognizing the legitimacy of the Egyptian people’s will, represented in the June 30 revolution, is the starting point for improved relations with Turkey.”⁶ It is a matter of question whether it is appropriate to label June 30th as a revolution or see it cross-societal mobilization against the MB and to its unilateral policies in certain cases, but this is at least what the official Egyptian position is. Additionally, our interviews suggest that though it seems very unlikely if, one day, the regime and MB will sit at the same table willing to make a compromise, Egypt will carry this out by itself and not with any external interference, since the MB issue is considered an internal affair. It has been observed that “MB anxiety” is one of the basic parameters outlining the Egyptian regime’s viewpoint. Seeing it as a part of their internal affairs, the Egyptian regime does not welcome Turkey’s statements of support for the MB and objects to any attempt on behalf of the Turkish side to give the MB a special place in terms of conditions improving the bilateral relations.

Egypt has also repeatedly asked that Turkey prevent the MB’s political activities (i.e. allowing them to hold a quasi-parliament in Istanbul) and media activities against the regime in Egypt broadcasting from Istanbul.⁷ Data collected from our interviews suggest that Turkey could initiate the deal by terminating the MB’s political and media activities in Turkey. Indeed, Egyptians emphasize that they are not much interested in MB members’ presence in Turkey as their continued political activities. Concurrently, while Turkey could retain its moral stance on the MB, terminating political support to the organization may positively respond to the Egyptian side. It seems that Turkey has already started to take some concrete steps in this regard. However, Turkey should show more accentuated effort to eliminate the expression/

⁶For the statement by foreign ministry spokesperson Ahmed Abu Zeid see: “Egypt demands that Turkey recognize 2013 ‘revolution’ to rekindle ties” *Middle East Eye*, 29 June 2016, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypt-demands-recognition-2013-revolution-reconciliation-turkey-1349162919>

⁷Shaimaa Magued, “The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood’s transnational advocacy in Turkey: a new means of political participation”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 45:3, (2018) pp. 480-497.

perception which has been repeatedly voiced by many for so long that “Qatar is funding and Turkey is hosting the MB.”

Almost everyone in Egypt is aware that first, the MB cannot be wiped out despite their history of oppression and intimidation, and that, second, nearly a decade-long crisis cannot go on forever. In this type of crisis environment, the MB’s presence will eventually be accepted, as it has happened multiple times before. Yet, due to concerns respecting foreign intervention, Turkey’s attitude has been leading to adverse reactions. Even if there could be an inner reconciliation, this makes the process more difficult and slower. In this respect, Turkey may contribute to the normalization of the MB in the political and social sphere by politically distancing itself from the MB. The perception that the MB is an organization supported by foreigners against the will of the Egyptian people is one aspect that prevents the normalization of the MB as a domestic social and political component in Egypt. This fact increases in importance when we consider that the Egyptian regime utilizes the fear of foreign powers to consolidate its power on the one hand and delegitimize the MB on the other. Here it should also be noted that, in one of the cases filed against the MB, the organization members are accused of conducting espionage on behalf of foreign powers, at least on paper.

It is worth noting that Egyptian elites emphasize that Egypt did not try or want to hurt Turkey, despite Turkey’s insistence on supporting the MB and allowing them to continue activities in Turkey. They remark that Egypt could have raised the PKK and Armenian issues in return for Turkey’s standing behind MB, but they chose not to. They lend credence to this claim that the Ambassador of Egypt in Armenia did not participate in the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the so-called “Armenian genocide” in 2015, pointing out that even countries holding good relations with Turkey attended. Some assert that this attitude held by Egypt up until the present is itself an indicator that Egypt is willing to reconcile and rebuild relations, whereas some others, such as Amr Mousa, hold that Egypt will never put this card on the table considering the two countries’ long historical ties.⁸ Consequently, it does not matter whether these issues constitute a gesture of goodwill or a threat. Either way, they should be taken seriously, and the enactment of these ideas should be prevented by pursuing necessary policies related to Turkey’s relations with the MB.

Turkey’s Expectations

As indicated, any attempt by Turkey to include the MB in bilateral relations could be self-defeating. In this regard, it may be more beneficial for Turkey not to mention

⁸ Authors’ interview, 3 June 2016, Cairo.

matters related to the MB in official reports and speeches. However, even though Turkey should not emphasize bilateral relations with the MB, the Egyptian administration should be conscious that the MB has also evolved into a delicate issue in Turkish domestic politics. It is a helpful note that in the aftermath of the *coup d'état*, the interim Prime Minister in Egypt, Hazem Beblawi, stated, “We have to explain what is going on here to Turkey.”⁹ This statement is illuminating in that it demonstrates the intricate way Turkey-Egypt relations have evolved since 2011 to be well beyond the conventional modality of bilateral relations. In this regard, any attempt by Egypt to loosen the pressure on the MB would have positively impacted Turkey-Egypt bilateral relations. Hereby, there could have been a greater chance for Egypt to settle its MB issue in its natural course and without foreign pressure. However, the Egyptian administration should not forget that any constructive undertaking will still serve as a political gesture towards Turkey. In addition, such a move would also contribute to Egypt’s standing in the international arena, considering that the regime’s handling of the MB affairs has attracted criticism from many international players, such as the US, the EU and numerous international human rights organizations.

The other expectation of Turkey from the Egyptian side is that it will do its best to stop the hate campaign against Turkey in the media – which is mainly under the control of the regime - because this undermines the grounds for trust between the two countries. It should not be taken lightly that early opposition against Turkey following the *coup d'état* has turned into a general hatred campaign aimed at the country. At this point, a Turkish diplomat’s observation that Egyptians attribute any bad things in the country to Turkey is quite illuminating. Nevertheless, there are still beliefs to the extent that ‘Turkey wants to destabilize Egypt’, or ‘Turkey prepares to launch another revolution in Egypt through the MB.’¹⁰ Such views are often delivered through media in the lacunae of diplomatic communications. This situation displays the slippery ground upon which the dynamics of existing bilateral relations currently rest.

An Alternative Remedy: The Second-track

Bolder steps to be taken in line with reciprocal expectations generally coalesce around the MB. Considering the highly ideological dimension of the issue, restoring relations may take time. If conflicting ideologies characterize a path dependency, then taking political U-turns is perceived as complex and costly. Thus, while parties work on bolder steps, they should not ignore the practicality of Track II diplomacy

⁹ Cansu Camlibel, Dismayed Egypt ambassador is still hopeful of Turkish ties, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 22 July 2013, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/dismayed-egypt-ambassador-is-still-hopeful-of-turkish-ties-51149>

¹⁰ Authors’ observation in Cairo.

as a means through which preparatory steps could be taken to improve prospective bilateral relations. Opening dialogue channels via the second track and increasing the number of stakeholders would undoubtedly assist in minimizing the fragility of the relations by serving to institutionalization means which would provide swift and reasonable ways for recovery. Trust-building is a definite necessity and possible through elites in the existing state of affairs. Additionally, considering that one consequence of the Arab Spring movement is that the youth have become an important political actor in Egypt, where almost half of the population is under the age 24, new communication channels with young people could be opened. Alternative channels could present alternative perspectives offsetting the pejorative stance of the state-controlled or influenced media.

It has been too late, and indeed many things would never be recovered, but it is apparent that Turkey-Egypt relations need some initiatives if they are to be rekindled. Since ideological fissures regarding the MB are of critical importance, it is evident that responsibilities fall upon both sides' political leaders, not only in improving Turkey-Egypt relations but also in facilitating the normalization of political and social life in Egypt. While Egypt needs dialogue concerning internal affairs, Turkey should not deprive itself of its dialogue regarding the existing sensitivities in Egypt. This can be achieved by first changing its policies and overcoming the perception that Turkey is taking aside. However, if the political landscape is not yet ready, the parties should at least allow second track channels to operate. Either way, the actors need to understand that this is not a stalemate between two rivals. The two countries should take measures to prevent the further systematic deterioration of bilateral relations between the two nations, taking into account cultural, economic, and societal aspects as well as regional considerations.

SPOTLIGHT TURKEY: A PIVOTAL SWING STATE IN NATO

Turkey's geostrategic location at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, and its dual identity as both a European and Asian state is unique in the world. The country safeguards strategic waterways and offers NATO critical staging bases and logistical support to extend its reach in the Middle East. With its dual identity, multi-axial foreign policy and hybrid political regime, Turkey also emerges as a pivotal swing state in shaping the contours of a stronger Transatlantic Alliance in the emerging new global world order marked by growing power competition between Western liberal democracies and Eastern autocratic regimes.

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Three decades after the publication of Samuel Huntington's *The Third Wave*, which detailed the global spread of democracy since the 1970s, the spread of democracy seems to be ending and instead, authoritarian diffusion appears to be rising around the world. This global democratic backsliding raises concerns that we may be experiencing the beginning of a "reverse wave," which Huntington in 1991 warned might be triggered in part by the weakening of democratic powers and the revival of powerful non-democratic states. As Huntington warned, China and Russia emerged today as outspoken actors with global ambitions giving new politico-strategic impetus to NATO's 2030 Agenda in a global context marked by "aggressive multipolarity". Secretary General's vision for NATO 2030 calls for strengthening political cohesion within NATO to protect the international rules-based order, which Jens Stoltenberg warned "is being challenged by authoritarian powers"¹ including Russia and China.

In the middle are the swing states, countries that have the capacity for a great deal of influence over international processes, but have not decided which vision of the new global order they will embrace. It is thought that the course of these countries will determine the trajectory of the new global order.² Located at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, Turkey with its dual identity, multiaxial and assertive foreign policy and hybrid political regime emerges as such a pivotal swing state in the emerging multipolar global order driven by power competition between liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes. Assuming maintaining Turkey's western orientation and electoral democracy would benefit all parties, Turkey's NATO allies would need to recognize Ankara for what it is and not what it would like it to be, recognize their own mistakes on the way, and finally act responsibly.

Unipolar Moment is Over

From Ankara's perspective, the American unipolar moment is over. There is a huge transfer of economic power from West to East, and reduction in the relative dominance of the U.S. and Europe. The U.S. is likely to remain as the top military power for quite some time. But the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq in 2003 and the NATO-led military intervention of Libya in 2011 have made it all clear that superior military power does not automatically turn into geopolitical influence, which is considered as prerequisite for unipolar stability.³ The world is witnessing the concurrent rise of a number of states existing in different regions which, nevertheless,

¹ Secretary General sets out vision on NATO's future with the Council on Foreign Relations, *NATO*, 1 March 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_182157.htm

² Daniel Kliman and Richard Fontaine, "Global Swing States: Brazil, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and The Future of International Order", *The German Marshall Fund Policy Paper* (2012), <https://www.gmfus.org/publications/global-swing-states-brazil-india-indonesia-turkey-and-future-international-order>

³ Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.

interact on a consistent and continuous basis. The result is an emerging hybrid world order that can barely be explained in terms of the traditional Western-centric polarity. Along with many other emerging powers, Ankara considers the rise of the rest as an opportunity to counterbalance its dependency on West and to expand its strategic autonomy. This does not mean, however, that Turkey wants a wholesale departure from the Euro-Atlantic security community. Although the incumbents do not consider Turkey as part of the Western civilization, they are well aware that the protection of economic and security linkages with the West is essential for their survival.

“Turkey’s strong intergovernmental and economic ties to the West as an EU aspirant as well as a NATO and Council of Europe member, failed to promote Turkey’s democratization.”

Autocratic Linkages Are Growing

Turkey has sought to expand its strategic autonomy by forming intergovernmental, military, and economic links with autocratic powers, such as Russia, China, Iran and Qatar, which provided incumbents alternative sources of political and economic support.⁴ The earlier attempts to build alternative intergovernmental linkages out of NATO had occurred in 2010 when the Chinese-Turkish joint military drills, known as Peace Mission 2010 and sponsored by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), took place in Turkey. Two years later, Turkey became a dialogue partner with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and has expressed an interest in obtaining observer status or even joining as a full member. Turkey’s contract with the black-listed Chinese company, China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corporation for a T-LORAMIDS air missile program in 2013, had eventually backfired in November 2015 under the intense pressure of the NATO and its members. In his visit to Beijing in 2019, President Erdoğan stressed that Turkey and China share a “common future vision” and re-mentioned Turkey’s desire to join SCO, which he first discussed with Russian leader Vladimir Putin back in January 2013.

Turkey’s estrangement from the West following the abortive military coup attempt on 15 July 2016 changed the external opportunity structure in favor of China and Russia. Several high-level Chinese delegations to Turkey and the strategic coordination between China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Turkey’s Middle Corridor Initiative

⁴ Serdar San and Davut Akca, “How Turkey’s Democratic Backsliding Compromises the International Dimension of Democratization,” *Digest of Middle East Studies* 30 (2021), pp. 34–52, Doi: 10.1111/Dome.12223.

(MCI) — stretching through the Caucasus and Central Asia, all accelerated and promoted strategic cooperation between two countries that have started back in 2010.⁵ In November 2016, Turkey and China signed an agreement to align China's BRI with Turkey's MCI. Turkey's geostrategic location with trade access to Europe, Iran and Russia gave Turkey primary position within the framework of the BRI, and as a result the volume of China's FDI in Turkey has, since then, increased more than threefold.⁶ The trade volume between China and Turkey has also improved significantly reaching to 24 billion US dollars as of 2020, as Beijing became Ankara's second-largest trading partner. Turkey and China have also engaged in developing alternative connectivity and information linkages. In 2017, Turkey signed The Belt and Road Digital Economy International Cooperation Initiative to build an interconnected Digital Silk Road. In the same year, Turkey's leading GSM operator Turkcell and Chinese technology giant Huawei signed an agreement in 2018 to collaborate on smart cities. In 2019, Turk Telekom partnered with Huawei to build the country's 5G Network and claimed to set world record for single user 5G smartphone speed. In May 2021, two countries agreed during State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi visit to Ankara to further promote the synergy between China's BRI and Turkey's MCI, to strengthen strategic cooperation in various fields including connectivity, infrastructure construction and investment and to deepen communication and coordination for achieving the security and stability in the Middle East.

Russia has also skillfully exploited the new external opportunity structure after the failed coup for its own benefit. Russia's full-throated support for President Erdoğan during and after the coup has deepened bilateral security cooperation culminating into the arrival of the Russian S-400 air-defense system in Turkey on the date of the third anniversary of the abortive coup. While economic linkages in the areas of trade, investment, energy, and tourism have asymmetrically strengthened Russian leverage, intergovernmental linkages between two countries are also expanded thanks to several high-level state visits and formal bilateral agreements, such as the High-Level Russian-Turkish Cooperation Council.⁷

Adaptive Authoritarianism in Full Swing

Turkey's strong intergovernmental and economic ties to the West as an EU aspirant as well as a NATO and Council of Europe member, failed to promote Turkey's

⁵ Chan Yang, *Developments in China–Turkey Relations: A View from China Critical Sociology*, (2019), 1–11. Gökhan Tekir, (2020). Turkey and The Belt and Road Initiative in Economic Corridors in Asia: Paradigm of Integration? A Reflection For Latin America (Bogotá : Universidad Externado De Colombia, 2020), pp. 383–412.

⁶ Gözde Yılmaz and Nilgün Eliküçük Yıldırım, "Authoritarian Diffusion or Cooperation? Turkey's Emerging Engagement with China", *Democratization*, 27:7, (2020), pp. 1202–1220, Doi:10.1080/13510347.2020.1777984.

⁷ Ziya Oniş and Şule Yılmaz, "Turkey and Russia in a Shifting Global Order: Cooperation, Conflict and Asymmetric Interdependence in a Turbulent Region," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No.1 (2016), pp. 71–95.

democratization. Under a populist and charismatic leader effectively mobilizing masses by anti-establishment and anti-Western appeals and plebiscitarian and clientelist linkages, Turkey has experienced one of the most dramatic cases of democratic backsliding in the world over the last two decades. A reasonably level playing field between incumbents and the opposition in Turkey is seriously limited through the incumbent manipulation of state institutions and resources, politicization of the judiciary and weakening of judicial autonomy, extensive clientelism, increasing corruption, and restrictions on civil liberties and fundamental freedoms, including the restriction of political functions of the mass media.⁸ Turkey's 2010 constitutional referendum, August 2014 presidential elections, November 2015 parliamentary elections, the 2017 constitutional referendum, and June 2018 snap presidential and parliamentary elections were found unfair by international observers in terms of opposition's access to media.⁹ State control of the Internet that began in 2007 through filtering social content and denying access to specific Internet resources was complemented with the growth and spread of what Deibert and Crete-Nishihata¹⁰ refer to as second and third generation information controls including legal restrictions, content removal requests, the shutdown of websites and social media platforms, prosecution of internet users, as well as enhancing state surveillance and information campaigns led by a troll-army and automated bots.¹¹ In 2020, Twitter suspended 7,340 accounts in Turkey that are affiliated with the youth wing of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), which were used for cheerleading the party platform, especially during the 2017 Turkish constitutional referendum, which consolidated President Erdoğan's power.¹² The change of Turkey's governing regime from a parliamentary system to a presidential system *alla Turca* further personalized power, eroded the remaining crumbs of legislative oversight and judicial independence, paralyzed bureaucracy and completely de-institutionalized policy-making.¹³

Western Leverage Fading

Turkey's strong Western linkage failed to prevent its democratic backsliding at least partly because its Western partners were unsuccessful to strengthen those secular

⁸ Tuba Eldem, "Transformation of Media Sector from Above and its Implications for the Freedom of Media in Turkey", in S. F. Krishna-Hensel (Edt), *Authoritarian and Populist Influences in the New Media*, (Routledge, 2017), pp. 83-115, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315162744>

⁹ Eldem, Transformation of Media Sector

¹⁰ Ronald J. Deibert and Masashi Crete-Nishihata, "Global governance and the spread of cyberspace controls", *Global Governance*, Vol. 18, (2012), pp. 339-361.

¹¹ Tuba Eldem, "The Governance of Turkey's Cyberspace: Between Cyber Security and Information Security, *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (2020), pp. 452-4465, Doi:10.1080/01900692.2019.1680689

¹² Shelby Grossman et al., "Political Retweet Rings and Compromised Accounts: A Twitter Influence Operation Linked to The Youth Wing of Turkey's Ruling Party", *Stanford Internet Observatory*, 11 June 2020, https://fsi-live.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/20200611_turkey_report.pdf

¹³ Günter Seufert and Sinem Adar, "Turkey's Presidential System After Two And A Half Years: An Overview Of Institutions and Politics," *SWP Research Paper 2021/Rp 02*, Doi:10.18449/2021rp02

democratic forces at the expense of Muslim populists. “We basically have turned a blind eye to Erdoğan’s drive towards an authoritarian, one-man system of rule in Turkey,”¹⁴ told Eric Edelman, a U.S. ambassador to Ankara from 2003 to 2005 and a deputy secretary of defense under George W. Bush. It was, however, more than turning a blind eye. The Bush administration presented Turkey under Erdoğan as a poster child for “moderate Islam” in its Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative. The U.S.’ forward strategy in the Middle East has converged well with Erdoğan’s willingness to play an exemplar role in the region. Erdoğan told several times that he heads towards the Middle East and Eurasia in accordance with the mission he has undertaken as “one of the co-chairs of the Broader Middle East Project”.¹⁵ Anti-establishment Muslim populists seem to put Western capitals under a spell at least for a while that neither Washington nor Brussels were very vocal when hundreds of journalists, scholars, members of civil society organizations, politicians, and retired and active duty military officers were all put in jail in waves of controversial coup-conspiracy operations known as Ergenekon and Sledgehammer running throughout 2008-2013.¹⁶ Obama Administration even went ahead to formulate a model partnership to carry the U.S.–Turkey alliance beyond a military and strategic one. The partnership actually never materialized as two leaders began diverging not only in their reactions to the military coup in Egypt in 2013, but also in their choice of partners on the ground in Syria since 2014. President Obama’s long-delayed embrace of Turkey’s elected government that survived the military coup attempt in July 2016 and Washington’s refusal to extradite Pennsylvania-based preacher Fetullah Gülen, the mastermind of the coup, heightened the sense in government that the U.S. is increasingly out to undermine Turkey, a view that gained widespread support from an otherwise divided Turkish population.¹⁷ Although preacher Gülen denies playing any role in the abortive coup, Turkish public has long been aware of Gülen’s wage of decades-long war of position against state establishment. Gülen was first prosecuted in 1999, well before the AKP came into power in 2002, for systematically trying to attack the most vital points of the secular state, including the army, which led him to flee to America. Despite the fierce opposition of State Department attorneys Patrick Meehan and Mary Catherine Frye, preacher Gülen,

¹⁴ Michael Crowley, “Did Obama Get Erdogan Wrong?”, *Politico*, 17 July 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/did-barack-obama-get-recep-tayyip-erdogan-wrong-turkey-coup/>

¹⁵ “BOP Eş Başkanlığı Görevini Kim Verdi!”, *Yeniçağ*, 30 August 2012, <https://www.yenicaggazetesi.com.tr/-/72228h.htm>

¹⁶ Tuba Eldem, “Democratic Control And Military Effectiveness Of The Turkish Armed Forces”, In A. Croissant & D. Kuehn (Eds), *Reforming Civil-Military Relations In New Democracies: Democratic Control And Military Effectiveness In Comparative Perspectives*, (Springer, 2017), pp.171-192, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53189-2_9 ; Tuba Eldem, “Guardians Entrapped: Demise Of The Turkish Armed Forces As A Veto-Player”, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, (Toronto: University Of Toronto, 2013).

¹⁷ Tim Arango and Ceylan Yeginsu, “Turks Can Agree on One Thing: U.S. Was Behind Failed Coup”, *The New York Times*, 2 August 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/03/world/europe/turkey-coup-erdogan-fethullah-gulen-unit-ed-states.html>

having only five years of formal education, was recognized by the U.S. as “an alien of extraordinary ability” in the field of education, and granted a Green card after he attached twenty-nine letters of reference to his June 18, 2008 motion, including two from former CIA officials George Fidas and Graham Fuller, and one from former U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Morton Abramowitz.

“The Biden administration should use caution when applying sanctions, embargoes, or isolation mechanisms to Turkey if it really wants to retain its Western orientation and electoral democracy.”

Responsible Policy Needed

To move forward, Washington and Ankara must isolate the intractable issues, offer mutual security assurances, and refrain from policies that could undermine the Westward orientation of Turkey, which would have not only severe adverse military and strategic consequences, but also domestic political costs for Turkey’s political regime. The challenge is to keep Turkey’s democracy and civil society vibrant while keeping anti-American sentiment under control until the national elections in June 2023. Turkey’s 2023 elections, which will take place on the republic’s centennial, will be the most critical election in the history of Turkish democracy. The Turkish people will elect a leader that will mold the republic’s second century and at the same time, decide whether Turkey should remain committed to a transatlantic alliance of democracies. Political regime theories suggest that the incumbents’ chances of leaving office declines considerably if a leader rules for longer than three terms and a change in power then becomes more likely through external shocks.¹⁸ As Seda Demiralp argues, Turkey’s consistent economic decline since 2016 presented such a shock that costed the AKP its first major defeat in the 2019 elections.¹⁹ In addition, the COVID 19 pandemic may present a second shock, placing a heavy burden on the already suffering Turkish economy and further limiting the redistributive capacity of the populist machinery. Erdoğan’s popular support falls at its historical low and his populist discourse based on anti-establishment appeals does not appeal to youth. Turkey’s shift towards presidential regime has also paradoxically constrained incumbents’ room of maneuver by “providing the otherwise divided opposition a joint

¹⁸ Barbara Geddes, “Authoritarian Breakdown: Empirical Test of a Game Theoretic Argument,” paper presented at APSA (September 1999).

¹⁹ Seda Demiralp, “Covid-19, Populism, And Political Change in Turkey,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.19, No.4 (2021), 121-130.

anchor of resistance” and solidifying opposition making it more difficult for him to drive a wedge between its factions.²⁰

As Turkey is reaching a crossroads, its Western allies need to act responsibly refraining from any discourse or action that may trigger an opportunity for the incumbents to increase their approval ratings through a ‘rally round the flag’ effect.²¹ Previous research has shown that the rally round the flag phenomenon creates incentives for political leaders who face domestic discontent to engage in diversionary and risky foreign policy moves, sometimes even initiating wars to solidify public support prior to elections. More common than diversionary wars are invocations of diversionary threat and scapegoating — rhetorical emphasis on risks to the nation which divert citizen focus from more serious and credible domestic concerns.²² Under these conditions, a sound and responsible policy is needed to keep anti-Americanism and possible foreign policy adventurism in check.

Where to Now?

First, the Biden administration should use caution when applying sanctions, embargoes, or isolation mechanisms to Turkey if it really wants to retain its Western orientation and electoral democracy. History indicates that these methods often prove counterproductive. The CAATSA sanctions announced by the United States on Turkey on 14 December, 2020, for its purchase of Russian S-400 missile system, may strengthen Turkey’s quest for strategic autonomy in national arms production as has been the case back in the 1974 US arms embargo over Cyprus, or what worse may also push Turkey back to Russia as a preferred and reliable source of weapons, enhancing rather than eroding Russia’s defense industry. Moreover, requiring the removal of S-400s from the Turkish territory to lift the sanctions would also be very costly, especially given the deep anti-American sentiment in the country, often fuelled by incumbents and pro-government media.

The ongoing legal proceedings undertaken by the U.S. District Court in New York against Turkish state bank, Halkbank, for an alleged plot to evade Iran sanctions continue to hang over Turkish economy creating another element of uncertainty to already troubled bilateral relationship. A conviction of Halkbank may lead to Turkey’s already struggling financial industry collapsing, raising unpredictable domestic political consequences. The financial hardships may, undermine incumbents’ political prospects or on the contrary might only boost incumbents’ popularity at the ballot box by fueling

²⁰ Seufer and Adar, Turkey’s Presidential System.

²¹ John E. Mueller, “War, Presidents, and Public Opinion”, (New York: Wiley, 1973).

²² Alrababa’h, Ala and Lisa Blaydes, “Authoritarian Media and Diversionary Threats: Lessons from 30 Years of Syrian State Discourse”, *Political Science Research and Methods*, (2020), pp. 1–16. doi:10.1017/psrm.2020.28.

rampant anti-Americanism and nativism.

The second message for the Biden administration in all of this is that, if it really wants to restore America's lost soft power, it should think twice about its enthusiasm for an "alliance of democracies" as an instrument to advance its own interests. Global public goods problems cannot be resolved without the active participation of the major non-democracies and neither Turkey nor any other swing state wants to be forced to make win-lose choices between the US and its rivals. A reconsideration of an "alliance of democracies" is also imperative not least because there is a justified degree of skepticism about the quality of America's own democracy at home but also democracy promotion abroad. The promotion of a liberal democratic rule-based world order requires consistent and principled action. Instrumentalization of liberal democratic norms for strategic ends, inconsistency or selectiveness in democracy or human rights promotion, perceived hypocrisy or double standards create high reputational cost for any major normative power. For a rule-based system to work "rules must be visibly observed by their principal and most powerful advocates" tells a 2015 Chatham House paper. Rule breaking actions, such as the invasion of Iraq without UN authorization; the failure to close the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, the presidential 'war on terrorism' directives ordering lethal drone strikes on adversaries in the Middle East and Pakistan; Edward Snowden's revelations of illegal NSA surveillance activities "open the door for others to pursue a 'might is right' approach."²³ Inconsistency or selectiveness in democracy or human rights promotion, such as the U.S. disavowal of Hamas after it won the free and fair Palestinian elections, its refusal to use the word "coup" after the military coup in Egypt due to the financial aid implications; its ongoing close relationship with theocratic dictatorships and reluctance to sanction Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul cast a long shadow over America's claim to be the principal democracy and human rights promoter.

²³Chatham House London Conference, *Challenges to the Rules-Based International Order*, 2015, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/media_wysiwyg/London%20Conference%202015%20-%20Background%20Paper%20-%20Session%20One.pdf

REVISITING THE LIBYA INTERVENTION AND THE IDEA(L) OF RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

The mechanisms of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as agreed by the world leaders in 2005 were expected to prevent mass atrocities by forming a consensus-based international response that includes the use of force. In early 2011, for the first time, the coercive element of R2P was put into force in Libya by a UNSC resolution. However, the apparent pursuit of a regime change in Libya by the intervening powers has eroded trust in the Western coalition, shattered the belief in humanitarian missions, alienated the non-Western world, and thus broken the fragile consensus. The Libya debacle has strengthened the argument that it is very unlikely, if not impossible, to detach a humanitarian intervention from power politics, and prevent its misuse

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Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi at the time issued a warning to Benghazi's people as his troops marched to retake the city from the rebels on 15 March 2011: "We are coming tonight. We will find you in your closets. We will have no mercy and no pity."¹ This sounded like a clear and imminent threat of mass slaughter if pro-Gaddafi forces captured the city. As a response, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution to protect civilians in Libya, demonstrating a rare international consensus on the use of force for humanitarian purposes, without objection, not to repeat the horrors of Rwanda (1994) and Srebrenica (1995). What enabled this consensus was the newly developed doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which was to replace the old and discredited notion of humanitarian intervention.

The Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya was the first of its kind to implement the coercive mechanism of the doctrine.² Despite the ongoing civil wars and the mass atrocities occurring in other parts of the world such as Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, South Sudan, and Somalia where the humanitarian situation is no less devastating than in Libya, no similar global response has been discussed since then. What has prevented the international community from using R2P's coercive mechanism in these and other cases? Does the intervention in Libya have anything to do with it?

Responding to Mass Atrocities

Humanitarian emergencies generate moral cries and compel international actions. Searching for mechanisms to prevent mass atrocity crimes the international community has come up with the concept of Responsibility to Protect, a new doctrine to replace the contentious concept of humanitarian intervention.³ It was an attempt to reconcile the tension between humanitarian intervention and state sovereignty by claiming that with sovereignty comes responsibility and that national governments are primarily responsible for protecting their citizens from mass atrocities. If they fail in doing so the responsibility to protect would pass on to the international community.

At the 2005 World Summit, R2P was adopted by the UN General Assembly in its Outcome Document stressing that each state has the responsibility to protect its citizens, specifically, from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and

¹ Maria Golovnina and Patrick Worsnip, "U.N. Approves Military Force; Gaddafi Threatens Rebels," *Reuters*, 18 March 2011, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-55670020110318>

² United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 (2011), 17 March 2011.

³ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: Development Research Centre, 2001).

ethnic cleansing. Besides, it was affirmed that the international community has the responsibility to use appropriate means to help protect populations from these mass atrocity crimes, and the Security Council is prepared to take collective action under Chapter VII.⁴ Endorsement of R2P by UN institutions continued in 2006 when the Security Council reaffirmed the World Summit Document rendering R2P, according to some, an “emerging norm.”⁵ With this decision, the Security Council pledged its commitment to address mass atrocities since “systematic, flagrant and widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law may constitute a threat to international peace and security.”⁶ R2P includes, among others, a coercive mechanism of direct military operation, a form of humanitarian intervention, which must be preceded by a Security Council resolution as was the case in the Libya intervention of 2011. As such, the case of Libya was to set a new precedent for internationally endorsed humanitarian military interventions with the implementation of the newly developed doctrine of R2P.

“It appears that an UN-sponsored intervention has turned Libya into a failed state.”

From Consent to Contestation

The year 2011 was marked by popular uprisings throughout the Arab world against decades-old dictatorial regimes. On 15 February 2011, one month after the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia and a mere four days after the resignation of another dictator, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, protests broke out in Libya too, demanding the resignation of Gaddafi. The peaceful demonstrations that started in Benghazi rapidly reached all major cities. The government responded brutally. Hundreds of protestors were killed in the first days of the demonstrations.⁷ This triggered the opposition to create militias. By the end of February, National Transitional Council (NTC) was formed as an umbrella rebel organization with the purpose to act as the political face of the rebellion. The events turned into a civil war in the first days of March as Gaddafi urged his loyalists to kill the rebels at the spot, referring to them as cockroaches.⁸

⁴ United Nations, *2005 World Summit Outcome*, Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, 24 October 2005, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/A-RES-60-1-E.pdf>

⁵ United Nations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, 2004.

⁶ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1674 (2006), 28 April 2006.

⁷ “Libya: Governments Should Demand End to Unlawful Killings,” Human Rights Watch, 20 February 2011, www.hrw.org/news/2011/02/20/libya-governments-should-demand-end-unlawful-killings

⁸ “Defiant Gaddafi Issues Chilling Threat,” *ABC News*, 23 February 2011, <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2011/s3146582.htm>

The resolution, underlining the Libyan government's responsibility to protect its population, defined the events as "crimes against humanity," and concluded that the situation in Libya constituted a "threat to international peace and security." The resolution, then, called for a no-fly zone to be established in the Libyan airspace, and it authorized the member states to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under attack.⁹ Resolution 1973 was adopted with 5 abstentions including the permanent members of the Security Council, Russia, and China. However, by not vetoing the resolution in Security Council, Russia, and China gave tacit support for the ensuing military operation. The decision demonstrated an exceptional international consensus on the use of force for humanitarian purposes.

Resolution 1973 was the first of its kind for the implementation of the coercive mechanism of R2P. Thus, its effectiveness in averting humanitarian catastrophes and maintaining international consensus was tested. However, when NATO forces, undertaking the responsibility act, began a military operation in Libya by referring to the UNSC resolution on 19 March 2011, the international consensus collapsed.

Instead of imposing a no-fly zone over Libya, blocking any arms from entering the country, and protecting the civilian lives as the Resolution 1973 envisioned, NATO allied itself with the rebels to oust Gaddafi even at the cost of more civilian casualties. This meant that the NATO operation in Libya overreached the Security Council mandate.¹⁰ NATO's stated aim of protecting civilians did not match with the conduct and outcome of the operation on the ground. This, inevitably, raised criticism, particularly from countries that were already sceptical of the purpose utility of R2P. Critics had simple questions: what was the goal in Libya? Was it the protection of civilians as ruled by the UNSC resolution or a regime change?

By the end of the operation, even the initial supporters of the resolution were questioning how the UN-mandated intervention to protect civilians and prevent mass atrocities resulted in a regime change and turned Libya into a failed state.

The Making of a Failed State

Intervention to Libya was initially described as a "model intervention" by the proponents of R2P.¹¹ They initially seemed to have a point; after all, unlike the Kosovo

⁹ UNSC, Resolution 1973.

¹⁰ Richard Falk, "Libya After Qaddafi," *The Nation*, 26 October 2011, <https://www.thenation.com/article/libya-after-qaddafi/>; Christopher Hobson, "Responding to Failure: The Responsibility to Protect after Libya," *Millennium* vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 433-454.

¹¹ Ivo Daalder and James Stavridis, 'NATO's Success in Libya,' *The New York Times*, 30 October 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/31/opinion/31iht-eddaalder31.html>; Alex Bellamy and Paul Williams, "The New Politics of Protection? Cote d'Ivoire, Libya and the Responsibility to Protect," *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 4 (2011), pp. 825-850; Thomas G. Weiss, "RtoP Alive and Well after Libya," *Ethics & International Affairs* vol. 25, no. 3, (2011), pp. 287-292.

intervention in 1999, which took place without the approval of the UN Security Council, the Libyan intervention took place under a UN mandate, and therefore started without controversy. Secondly, the fact that Russia and China did not veto the resolution was welcomed in the Western world raising hopes for uncontested internationalization of R2P.¹² Thirdly, the governments of intervening parties and prominent scholars were confident that the intervention met the just war criteria and the norms of R2P, such as the just cause, right intention, and last resort.¹³ However, the prevailing optimism was quickly interrupted as the military operations proceeded. The simultaneous overreach (to seek regime change) as well as violations (breaching the arms embargo, aiding rebels) of the Security Council mandate seriously damaged the credibility of R2P, especially throughout the non-Western world. Also, the catastrophic situation in Libya such as extreme lawlessness, unchecked militias, rivaling governments, Islamic extremism, and systematic violations of human rights after the NATO intervention has raised speculations, going beyond the Libya case, whether foreign intervention ever results in more good than harm.

“The Libya intervention has revived contentious issues surrounding the concept of humanitarian intervention and broken the fragile consensus on the doctrine of R2P.”

After the killing of Gaddafi, the rebel forces declared de-jure control over Libya. Yet, a centralized government authority has never been established. Competing authorities and institutions claiming control in different parts of the country have emerged, all fighting each other. Since the intervention, Libya has been embroiled in a civil war to which foreign mercenaries from Russia, Sudan, Chad, and finally Turkey and Syria have been brought in which rendered Libya a vast arena of international proxy wars.

A strong executive force has never been formed because dozens of rebel factions are at odds with each other and refuse to unite under a single government. This led to different armed groups having control over streets, districts, towns, and cities with a general sense of anarchy and sporadic fighting. In the absence of legitimate central authority, Libya has also become a playground for the Islamic State (IS) especially in 2015 and 2016. Thousands of fighters from Libya joined IS's fight in Syria, and

¹² Sarah Brockmeier, Oliver Stuenkel, and Marcos Tourinho, “The Impact of the Libya Intervention Debates on Norms of Protection,” *Global Society*, vol. 30, no.1, (2016), pp. 113-133.

¹³ James Pattison, “The Ethics of Humanitarian Intervention in Libya,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 25 no. 3 (2011), pp. 271-272.

subsequently returned home to establish IS-controlled areas.

In Libya, two governments have emerged claiming authority after a decade of intervention amid civil war, elections, agreements, and ceasefires. In the West, there is the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), based in Tripoli. In the East is its rival, the Libyan National Army (LNA) headed by Khalifa Haftar and backed by Russia. They neither resemble a functioning state. It is not certain whether the latest Geneva ceasefire and the transitional government will hold. It appears that an UN-sponsored intervention has turned Libya into a failed state.

The Spill-over Effects on Syria

The overreach of the Security Council mandate in Libya has also rendered R2P ineffective to be initiated in other cases of gross human rights violations by breaking the consensus on R2P. No Security Council resolution to prompt the use of force under the UN Charter invoking R2P could have passed since then although there were pressing cases for international action. The Syrian civil war has been demonstrative of the international community's failure to respond mass atrocities in the aftermath of the Libya intervention.¹⁴ In Syria, since 2011 almost half of the population has been displaced, the death toll surpassed 250 000, and a fanatical Islamic State was established in rebel-held territories committing crimes against humanity and engaging in terror activities all over the world. But so far, no international intervention has taken place invoking R2P to protect civilians. The overreach of the Security Council mandate in Libya has had a negative impact on the credibility of R2P destroying "the prospects for future legitimate uses of the Responsibility to Protect."¹⁵

While Western powers declared the Assad government as illegitimate and proposed Security Council sanctions Russia and China as permanent members adamantly opposed to the Western motions.¹⁶ Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov explained their reluctance in the Syrian case by references to the Libya intervention: "The international community, unfortunately, did take sides in Libya and we would never allow the Security Council to authorize [in Syria] anything similar to what happened in Libya."¹⁷ Taking their lesson from Libya, Russians were concerned that the Western powers were essentially interested in regime change in Syria not really seeking humanitarian objectives. Russia and China vetoed various Security Council

¹⁴ Natalie Tocci, "On Power and Norms: Libya, Syria and the Responsibility to Protect," *Global Responsibility to Protect*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2016), pp. 51-75.

¹⁵ Falk (2011).

¹⁶ Charles Ziegler, "Russia on the Rebound: Using and Misusing the Responsibility to Protect," *International Relations* vol. 30, no.3 (2016), pp. 346-361.

¹⁷ Sergei Lavrov, Interview with ABC (Australia) television network, 31 January 2012, www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2012/s3420041.htm

resolutions presented by Western powers that attempted to prompt Chapter VII of the UN Charter invoking R2P. In the meantime, Western powers routinely accused Russia, the chief supporter of the Assad government apart from Iran, of obstructing international law which was countered by Russia suggesting that it was actually the West that has undermined international norms while Russia has merely preferred the preservation of the established international order.¹⁸

The willingness of Western powers seemed to have also been shaken after the Libya case. It was increasingly heard in the West that direct military intervention in Syria would have had adverse repercussions on regional politics and impossible to carry out so long as the Russians and Iranians were involved in favor of the Assad government.¹⁹ Concerns were raised if a military intervention could have an impact on the ground, whether it may trigger more violence and facilitate a post-conflict peace as they had learned from the Libya experience. So Western leaders have opted for indirect ways of attaining regime change in Syria by supporting anti-regime forces largely stationed in Turkey.

Reviving Scepticism about R2P

As the military operations progressed in Libya, initial doubts of non-Western leaders were replaced by harsh criticisms towards the intervening parties. Russian President Vladimir Putin asserted that the West cannot be trusted on implementing the R2P, and cited Libya as a learning experience for Russia.²⁰ Russians further claimed that the Western utilization of R2P as a pretext for intervention in a situation where they had covert goals in mind has significantly tarnished the credibility of R2P.²¹ The critics from Russia have underlined the instability after the death of Gaddafi and questioned the success of ousting dictators through foreign intervention. Foreign Minister Lavrov said: “What we are seeing now only goes to show that regime change, especially through the use of force from outside, never leads to any good anywhere. Libya has turned into a territory without a central government, a country fragmented into districts controlled by different armed groups.”²² While Russia has always been on the sceptics group concerning R2P, the Libyan experience has

¹⁸ Vladimir Baranovsky and Anatoly Mateiko, “Responsibility to Protect: Russia’s Approaches,” *The International Spectator* vol. 51, no.2, (2016), pp. 52-54.

¹⁹ Elisabeth Bumiller, “Military Points to Risks of a Syrian Intervention,” *New York Times*, 11 March 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/03/12/world/middleeast/us-syria-intervention-wouldbe-risky-pentagon-officials-say.html; Nick Hopkins, “Cameron’s Urge ‘to Do Something’ in Syria Resisted by Defence Staff,” *The Guardian*, 11 December 2012, www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/dec/11/syria-british-military-opposesrole

²⁰ Ziegler (2016), p. 350.

²¹ ‘NATO Interference in Libya Caused More Casualties – Lavrov,’ *Russia Today*, 6 October 2011, <https://www.rt.com/russia/lavrov-nato-libya-victims-201/>

²² Natalia Piskunova, “Russia and the Humanitarian Intervention Debate,” Paper presented at 12th ECPR General Conference, Hamburg, 22-24 August 2018.

further increased Russian adherence to absolute state sovereignty as well as a more conservative interpretation of international law.²³

China with significant reservations concerning a military operation had abstained in the voting for Resolution 1973, regretting it instantly as NATO started to target Libyan soldiers indiscriminately while supporting the rebels. The state media condemned the military operation claiming that “although it is under the name of protecting human rights and civilians, it is for their own economic and political interest.”²⁴ In this line, the spokeswoman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, Jiang Yu, stated that “the original intent of the UNSCR 1973 was to protect the security of the Libyan people. We strongly oppose the arbitrary use of armed force causing even more civilian casualties and an even bigger humanitarian disaster.”²⁵

Similarly, India was not satisfied with the way NATO interpreted the Security Council mandate and suspicious of the motives of the intervening parties. India's Ambassador to the UN reflected these concerns arguing that NATO “casually shifted its objective from protecting civilians to overthrowing the regime.”²⁶ Brazil also strongly objected to the implementation of the no-fly zone by NATO. To address the problematic implementation of R2P while also stimulating a dialog between interventionists and sceptics to find a common ground Brazil advanced the idea of Responsibility While Protecting though it didn't generate much debate.²⁷ Some were quite harsh in their criticism, including President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, whose government had voted in favour of the resolution, but then declared: “We strongly believe that the resolution is being abused for regime change, political assassinations and foreign military occupation.”²⁸ Overall, it appears that the Libyan intervention has revived discussions about the best way to deal with humanitarian crises between the West and the rest of the world.

Conclusion

The mechanisms of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as agreed by the world leaders

²³ Dogachan Dagi, “The Russian Stand on the Responsibility to Protect: Does Strategic Culture Matter?” *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* vol. 7, no.3 (2020), pp. 370-386.

²⁴ “Libya Conflict: Reactions around the World,” *The Guardian*, 30 March 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/30/libya-conflict-reactions-world>

²⁵ “Libyan Leader should Stand Down as He has ‘Lost Legitimacy, Says Obama,” *The Guardian*, 3 March 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/03/libyan-leader-stand-down-obama>

²⁶ Simon Adams, “Libya and the Responsibility to Protect: Results and Prospects,” *Global Policy Journal*, March 28, (2014).

²⁷ Charles Ziegler, “Contesting the Responsibility to Protect,” *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 17, no.1 (2016), pp. 90-91.

²⁸ “South Africa Says NATO Abusing UN Resolution on Libya,” *Reuters*, 14 June 2011, <http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFJJOE75D0F720110614>

in 2005 were expected to prevent mass atrocities by forming a consensus-based international response that includes the use of force. The Libya intervention of 2011 was hailed as a model for preventing severe human rights abuses in the rest of the world with global consent. Yet, the euphoria after the approval of Resolution 1973 was disappointingly short-lived.

The Libya intervention has revived contentious issues surrounding the concept of humanitarian intervention and broken the fragile consensus on the doctrine of R2P. It has sharpened the division between the advocates of intervention for humanitarian concerns and its sceptics. The hopes for convergence with Russia and China on the traditionally sensitive issues of humanitarian intervention and national sovereignty have diminished with the intervention in Libya. As such, the question of how to respond to mass atrocities has become more complicated and building a new consent on it seems less likely.

The apparent pursuit of a regime change in Libya by the intervening powers that resulted in a failed state has eroded trust in the Western coalition, shattered the belief in humanitarian missions, and alienated the non-Western world. As a result, the R2P has transformed from being an agreed-upon moral and, to some extent, legal code to a contested practice of the Western powers in which strategic considerations are believed to reign supreme. Consequently, the operational and political consequences of intervention such as extreme lawlessness, unchecked militias, rivalling governments, Islamic extremism, and systematic violations of human rights have reopened the question of whether foreign intervention ever results in more good than harm.

As a result, despite the ongoing conflicts, civil wars, and ensuing mass atrocities in other parts of the world, which have not been less grievous than those in Libya, the international community was not able to invoke R2P's coercive mechanism. The implementation of Responsibility to Protect in Libya more than a decade ago resulted in R2P's failure to prevent mass atrocities elsewhere with global consent and prevented a new humanitarian consensus ever since. The Libya debacle has, consequently, strengthened the argument that it is very unlikely, if not inherently impossible, to detach a humanitarian intervention from power politics, and prevent its misuse.

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