



NATO after its Brussels Summit: Operational Progress amidst Strategic Confusion

Aylin Matlé and Alessandro Scheffler Corvaja

- ▶ While the Alliance is deeply troubled at the political level by the divisions emerging between its member states, these developments have not had a negative impact on actual alliance policy thus far.
- ▶ With the rapid-response elements and the Enhanced Forward Presence tripwire now in place, Alliance efforts are being shifting towards follow-on forces. Given the overall readiness of NATO's general forces, the task is thus becoming one of force generation.
- ▶ The NATO Command Structure reform is one of the landmarks of the summit and part of the larger effort to rebuild the alliance's credibility in the realm of collective defence. By putting JFC Brunssum in charge of Article V operations in the North and East again, the reform leads to a de-facto regionalization of the Command Structure.
- ▶ NATO and most of its member states are still struggling to get a grip on the cyber domain. At the same time, decision-makers have understood that national and allied cyber capabilities must be improved.
- ▶ Allies' abstention from the Nuclear Ban Treaty and the clear U.S. commitment to extended deterrence in its recent U.S. Nuclear Posture Review are two important recent successes for NATO's nuclear enterprise.

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Immediately after the NATO Summit in Brussels on July 11 and 12th 2018, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation invited a selected group of sixteen experts and officials from ten member states to its annual workshop on NATO's strategic agenda. Discussions focused on the Summit outcome and the ongoing implementation of NATO's Wales and Warsaw decisions. Participants were asked to provide concrete recommendations for German policy-makers on how Berlin could contribute to strengthening NATO's strategic outlook. The workshop, which was convened in its fifth iteration, took place at the Foundation's conference venue in Cadenabbia, Italy. To facilitate an open dialogue, discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule.

NATO: An Alliance of shared values and political unity still?

Despite the media coverage of the Brussels Summit suggesting otherwise, the gathering of NATO's heads of state and government did not bring about many surprises. In the run-up to the third major Summit since the Alliance adjusted its strategic outlook in Wales in 2014, many observers were worried that Donald Trump could repeat his performance of the G7-meeting in early June, hijack the gathering for his own political purposes, not sign the communique or even leave the Summit – and thus inflict lasting damage to NATO. The stage for a major confrontation had been set by last year's U.S. demands for concrete national plans on how to reach NATO's 2%-of-GDP-target and by the letters the U.S. administration had sent to those allies that did not present feasible plans.

National delegations had done their best to avoid any surprises and had agreed on the final communique already a week before the Summit. The first day of the Summit went according to plan. When Trump learned about the positive media coverage, his strategy changed: On the second morning of the Summit, Trump caused a media frenzy when he claimed the U.S. would "do its own thing" if European allies would not present credible defence spending plans by 2019. This was misreported as a threat that the U.S. might leave NATO. By that time, the U.S. President had already changed course again and was praising both the Summit and his relationship to allied leaders as fantastic and enormously successful. These chaotic and sometimes contradictory actions and statements followed a script that observers should be familiar with by now: Trump did not mince his words and lashed out at European allies – and in particular Germany – for continuing to fail NATO's 2%-goal. But the palpable outcome of the Summit, i. e. the communique, spoke a different, politically sound language. Despite allied fears about Trump's meeting with Putin a couple of days later, the final declaration even included much stronger language on Russia than in Warsaw.

NATO summit did not bring about many surprises.

President Trump reminded European allies of 2%-commitment, especially Germany.

Throughout the Summit, political leaders relentlessly emphasized NATO's political unity and its character as an alliance of values. The gap between such statements and the political reality in many member states is nevertheless striking. At home, allies are increasingly faced with "internal" nationalist, populist and autocratic tendencies – even at the level of government. Openly supporting Russian policy and in fact often promoted, courted and even sponsored by the Kremlin, these tendencies provide a direct challenge to allied strategic consensus. While non-interference in the internal affairs of an ally represents an unwritten rule of the Alliance, the degree to which such illiberal developments in the member states should be tolerated is unclear. While some argue that NATO should emphasize its democratic agenda more strongly and hold its member states accountable, others warn against meddling with other nation's internal affairs.

When it comes to the relationship between allies, NATO's political unity is suffering from the very transactional angle from which member states such as Turkey, but also the United States, have been approaching alliance politics in NATO in recent times. To preserve its long-term cohesion and viability, allies have to return to treating unity and solidarity as key values of the Alliance which should be acted upon and demonstrated more frequently and visibly. This would enable NATO to better confront the criticism that its values are more rhetorical than real.

NATO unity suffering from transactional approach some members adapt.

Force generation: Ensuring ready and able follow-on forces

In the implementation of NATO's Wales and Warsaw decisions, the alliance has reached a turning point. The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP)-battalions were mainly a question of NATO force generation, i. e. of getting the allies to commit existing high-readiness formations – even if some states often struggled to get these troops from nominal to actual readiness. Already with the Warsaw decision to expand the NATO Response Force from once 15,000 to 40,000 troops by adding an initial Follow On Forces Group (IFFG) to the VJTF and the Response Forces Pool (RFP), the focus started to shift towards the reinforcement of these rapid-response elements in case of a crisis, i. e. follow-on forces.

NATO's new "Four Thirties" initiative, which aims at keeping 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 frigates at 30 days' notice to move by 2020, is another step in the direction of committing allies to channel more of its resources into follow-on forces as those are the military elements which will have to be deployed to a crisis theatre rapidly. Given that allies currently do not dispose of this quantity of forces at the required level of readiness, the focus towards follow-on forces also means a shift from allied to national force generation – which means that allied nations will have to generate such forces. Because the VJTF and the NRF cannot win a potential conflict on their own, the existence of sufficiently ready follow-on forces is a key determinant of the credibility of collective defence.

„Four 30s“ initiative aimed at generating more national follow-on forces.

At its 2014 Wales Summit, NATO adopted Germany's Framework Nations Concept (FNC) as a way of generating the necessary forces to cope with the changed security environment. The idea is to have one larger, "framework" nation providing critical capabilities and infrastructure organized along clusters which smaller nations can then plug into. The FNC provides three advantages. First of all, it is a de-centralized bottom-up concept meaning that the participating states decide how and with whom to cooperate and which targets to reach. It is in that sense neither NATO-driven nor detached from NATO defence planning goals. Secondly, financing through the contributing member states guarantees un-bureaucratic funding. Thirdly, as opposed to most previous initiatives such as "Smart Defence", the focus of the

FNC is on efficacy instead of efficiency, i. e. the goal is not to save money but to put forces on the ground. Some of these advantages could have downside to them though. For example, at some point, the FNC should be embedded more thoroughly into NATO's institutionalized framework in order to prevent that the success of the concept is too contingent on national politics. There are signs already that support for the FNC in Germany is losing momentum as bureaucratic efforts are shifted to the implementation of the EU's PESCO. Due to limited resources in every ministerial apparatus, there is only so much bureaucratic bandwidth to be dedicated to ambitious projects such as the FNC and PESCO. Thus, the FNC's political visibility should be increased by ways of talking about the concept and its advantages more often and more prominently in public debates about Germany's role in NATO.

German FNC-concept focused on efficacy instead of saving money.

FNC's political visibility ought to be increased.

The FNC could also become too centralized and may lose its feedback loop to NATO and its capability and force generation needs. This could be prevented by linking the FNC and similar force generation initiatives to NATO's Graduated Response Plans (GRP). These plans, which are currently being prepared at SHAPE, determine which quantity and quality of capabilities are needed for what mission and where, thus taking into account the different troop requirements on NATO's various flanks (Northeast, East, South, Southeast).

Most importantly, all force generation efforts, national or otherwise, ought to prioritize efficacy over cost-saving approaches such as NATO's own Smart Defence initiative. At the same time, it is also important to remain realistic: It is unclear whether the "Four Thirties"-initiative, which is supposed to be implemented on top of force formations such as NRF and VJTF, is truly achievable in the aspired timeframe considering each member state's single set of forces.

NATO command structure: rebuilding credibility

One of the most visible landmarks of the Summit is the reform of NATO's command structure – a decision many allies had long been calling for. Two new headquarters will be established as a result: A Joint Force Command (JFC) for the Atlantic in Norfolk, Virginia, in the U.S. and a Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) in Ulm, Germany. The existing JFCs in Brunssum and Naples will receive clearly delineated functional – and implicitly also regional – responsibilities. JFC Brunssum's core mission will consist of deterrence and defence, with a resulting regional focus and area of operations in North-East Europe, the Baltic States and Poland. Naples will instead be responsible for crisis management – a task geared towards the South.

Command structure reform one of most visible outcomes of Summit.

The new JSEC in Ulm will serve as a central hub for the logistical effort behind collective defence. Its most important task is to deploy rapid response forces such as the VJTF and NRF as well as the subsequent follow-on forces across Europe to their area of operations. This means moving brigade- and division-sized forces through a contested environment, potentially threatened by Russian cruise missile strikes, and will need considerable training, exercises, and coordination. It also means a mind-set change for the allies, who will have to train and operate with civilian forces down to the community-level. It also creates ample opportunity for cooperation with the EU. Due to its central location in Europe, Germany has offered to host the new command, which will be co-located with an existing command in Ulm. While it will only include a peace-time staff of around 100 to 150 people, the co-location will enable it to quickly grow to several hundreds if activated.

Germany to host new command in Ulm.

JFC Norfolk fills the gap left by the former Supreme Allied Command Atlantic when it became Allied Command Transformation and is tasked with protecting NATO's sea lines of communications extending over the Atlantic deep into the Baltic Sea. It will play a decisive role in

enabling the necessary reinforcements across the Atlantic, but also for example in protecting sea cables. A new NATO maritime strategy reflecting these tasks is urgently required. JFC Norfolk will also have to re-introduce NATO as a player in maritime activities such as anti-submarine warfare and to establish good coordination mechanisms with JFC Brunssum – given that its responsibility begins just 12 nautical miles off the coast.

With the functional differentiation and de-facto regionalization of JFC Brunssum and JFC Naples, NATO strikes a delicate balance: On the one hand, the regionalization of the command structure makes perfect military senses. The commands benefit from receiving a specific mission and can develop a better dialogue with their relevant member states. This is particularly important for collective defence, where the cooperation with the local civil authorities is of utmost importance. Commands also profit in terms of situational awareness and regional expertise if they are primarily manned with officers from one region. Finally, a regional focus also makes it easier to draw from specific national force structure elements. But on the other hand, a regionalization is politically sensitive in an alliance of 29. It allows for nations to focus on the command that best mirrors their priorities – and thus to neglect the problems of their other allies. The doctrinal aspects can also not be underestimated in all this: A regionalization might well lead to less mindset-interopability between the member states and the development of different doctrinal strands.

Regionalization is politically sensitive in alliance of 29 member states.

Reaching consensus on the command structure is a political success for NATO. However, much will depend on the concrete implementation of the reform. On the land side, with JFC Brunssum and the Multinational Corps Northeast HQ in Szczecin, NATO is well on track. As part of a next step, NATO's overall effort to strengthen collective defence will primarily require more operational coherence. NATO's decisions since 2014 have concentrated on two extremes: on the very tactical level with the VJTF, the EFP and now "Four by Thirty" and on a fairly strategic level with the current command structure reform. The operational part of how to bring all these disparate elements together and provide the necessary reinforcements for the EFP tripwire are however still missing. The next steps will thus be to get the nations to put specific forces into the Gradual Response Plans.

A challenge in particular remains the air domain, where Europe would be heavily dependent on U.S. support, particularly in the early days of a conflict. Planners at NATO Air Command in Ramstein faces some daunting tasks: In the current environment, it would take weeks only to get the necessary number of forces in place. NATO has also never developed a standing integrated air defence in the East. At the same time, Russia is building A2/AD bubbles not only in Kaliningrad, but also in Crimea, Syria and the High North, and can threaten NATO forces across Europe with very precise missiles from land, sea and air – turning survivability into a key issue.

Air domain remains a challenge for NATO Europe.

NATO also still needs to strike a better regional balance. Its effort has so far mainly concentrated on collective defence in the North and East. But when it comes to its South-East, much remains to be done to make the command arrangements as clear as in the North-East. In political terms, maintaining the cohesion of the alliance will also mean that more has to be offered in the South when it comes to Projecting Stability. While the Hub was added to JFC Naples in 2017, it has so far received very little attention and has not generated any significant value.

The EU and defence: towards force generation?

In late 2017, EU member states re-launched the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Its aim is to deepen defence cooperation among willing member states and to jointly develop and field defence capabilities. Even if PESCO may achieve this aim, it might still disappoint the ambitious member states, chief among them France. Their vision of PESCO was a vanguard of European defence, including only the most ambitious and capable member states and focusing on operations. The PESCO they get now focuses on capability development, is very committed to remaining complimentary to NATO, and includes almost the entire EU. Germany and the EU's atlanticist member states have in this sense won the battle. As a result, France has introduced the European Intervention Initiative (EII) outside of the EU framework which combines the exclusivity and operational focus that PESCO does not deliver.

NATO had initially welcomed PESCO as a boost for its European pillar. But already at the Munich Security Conference in 2018 the Secretary General warned that it had to remain complementary to NATO and should not serve as a discriminatory tool to third-party states. The first fear appears unjustified: The re-emergence of collective defence as the primary mission of NATO, the focus of CSDP missions on security rather than defence, and the low appetite for ambitious crisis management in both institutions all mean that a de-facto division of labor has emerged. PESCO's projects are very balanced and some are in fact more important for NATO – such as military mobility. The focus on capability development rather than force generation and the participation of many atlanticist allies will guarantee that PESCO remains complimentary to NATO. The discrimination argument, by contrast, could represent a real problem. The participation of non-EU states in PESCO projects is possible, but it remains unclear how this will work if a project is co-financed by the European Defence Fund (EDF) from the EU's common budget. Establishing a relationship with the United Kingdom, Europe's largest military power, which plays an essential role in NATO's European pillar, will be essential – and Britain's expulsion from the Galileo satellite system project serves as a warning in this regard. The EDF's focus on the EU defence-industrial base also collides with the highly integrated transatlantic defence market and risks cutting out UK and US firms from European projects. Finally, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence must remain closely coordinated with the NATO Defence Planning Process to avoid decoupling and duplication. Germany also has a particular interest in ensuring that its European impetus does not come at the expense of its engagement for the FNC, which as opposed to PESCO has already delivered concrete and laudable results.

NATO warns that EU's PESCO has to remain complementary to the Alliance.

Participation of non-EU states in PESCO has to be considered in light of Brexit.

In its infancy, still: allied cyber security

While NATO released a Cyber Defence Pledge in July 2016 already, the domain has so far remained strictly within the purview of member states. To add substance to the pledge, NATO will have to deal with five essential issues: Firstly, as member states are procuring cyber capabilities and reporting about what they acquire for which purpose is voluntary, it has yet to be determined how to monitor the implementation of NATO's Cyber Pledge. Secondly, (public) attribution of cyber-attacks is still a national prerogative and remains difficult at 29. A third pressing issue is the improvement of NATO's situational awareness through standardized alliance-wide intelligence sharing. Fourthly, developing cyber skills, investing more in education and training ought to be emphasized, too. NATO must attract more qualified people, however. As things currently stand, it is not so much a lack of technology, rather a lack of qualified personnel, which hampers the organization to develop its cyber capabilities. Finally, cooperating more closely with the European Union (EU), which unlike the alli-

Cyber domain remains in purview of member states still.

ance enjoys regulatory powers, could add some flesh to NATO's muscles in this domain. All five issues show that coordination between allies and cooperation at a NATO-level are still in their infancy. Especially smaller states with more limited resources could profit from closer cooperation and "lessons learnt" from more experienced partners. NATO could function as a coordinating body. The high number of recommendations voiced by experts about what NATO and individual member states should do to improve the allied cyber posture speaks for itself. It demonstrates that this domain is still in its infancy – both at an allied and in most cases on the national level. An unanimous recommendation aims at attribution. Just like in the case of the Salisbury attack, allies should speak out more often and make their attributions of cyber-attacks publicly. Instead of searching for a "smoking gun", allies should pursue a "common sense approach" in determining who attacked them. Putting together the technical analysis and plausible intent ('who is interested in attacking us?') should be enough to arrive at a conclusion that could then be published. Yet, this approach should not be applied light-mindedly as pointing to possible perpetrators prematurely could undermine alliance member's credibility and thus NATO's. Hence, in following this approach, allies should coordinate more closely with one another, i. e. sharing intelligence findings without leaking them before having arrived at a common stance. This way and in a best-case scenario, the intelligence picture would be more dense as compared to intelligence findings gathered by only one ally. First signs indicate that Germany is willing to pursue a 'naming and shaming' approach with countries such as Russia.

Allies could and should coordinate more closely in cyber realm.

'Mission creep' to be continued: NATO's engagement in Afghanistan

NATO's training mission in Afghanistan appears to have been forgotten by Western publics despite the fact that the Alliance is still present at the Hindu Kush with 16.000 troops. While allied forces enter their 15th year of stabilizing Afghanistan, many problems NATO has faced from the outset of its mission remain the same. Three of them need to be solved if NATO ever hopes to complete its mission: first, corruption is still omnipresent in the country, though at least the presidency is no longer a symbol of this problem. Corruption prevents the development of sustainable democratic structures and foils any efforts to establish 'good governance'. The second major problem is the continued ineffectiveness of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, which continue to depend on US and Western support both in terms of fighting and training. Thirdly, the country is still troubled by Taliban insurgents. Since a couple of years, ISIS fighters have gained ground in Afghanistan, too. These three challenges have been recognized by allied forces. Thus, the US and other NATO forces are limiting their activities to helping build national forces, providing air and logistical support, advising on a tactical level and ensuring the funding of Afghan security forces now. The alliance has also finally stopped to operate on one-year timelines and agreed on a long-term effort by ways of committing to stay in Afghanistan until at least 2024. Defining a broader time frame allows allied forces to stay as long as is necessary until the insurgency is stifled and a peace agreement is reached. NATO's unwritten long-term strategy conveys to the Afghans that the 'West' is not leaving as long as the country is struggling with unrest and instability. Given that a withdrawal would lead to a humanitarian crisis and likely force allies back in, NATO will ultimately have to plan for a permanent Kosovo-like presence with possibly round about 3,000 to 4,000 troops. To convince their publics to stick around for such a long time, allies will have to make the case that Afghanistan would likely turn back into a safe haven for terrorists if allied troops were to be withdrawn today – the very argument for the initial intervention. If such an assessment were to conclude that Afghanistan risked turning into a hotbed for international terrorism again, NATO would have sufficient reason to continue its mission there. Finally, NATO allies should beware of the risk that an early withdrawal from Afghanistan would fundamentally undermine the Alliance's willingness and ability to conduct any more ambitious missions as part of its Projecting Stability pillar.

US and NATO forces limiting their activities in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan must not become safe haven for international terrorism again.

NATO's nukes: can we make the argument?

NATO's renewed emphasis on collective defence and deterrence as well as a soberer approach towards nuclear issues in the member states have led to a nuclear consolidation in recent years: The Warsaw Summit declaration included some of the strongest language on nuclear deterrence in recent decades, and NATO was able to keep all allies from joining the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. The recently published U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) made a clear case for extended deterrence. Finally, the amount of discussion on nuclear issues in the Alliance has been steadily increasing, and even France has become unusually open about it.

[Latest US Nuclear Posture Review makes clear case for extended deterrence.](#)

The most daunting challenge in the nuclear domain is certainly how to respond to Russian modernization and doctrinal adaptation in the nuclear domain. This question is epitomized by the ongoing Russian violations of the INF-treaty and the resulting U.S. decision to leave it as its most symbolic aspect. But the INF-turmoil is nested in a broader dispute about the right answer to Russia's nuclear arsenal and posture, which have been strengthened by the stationing of improved Iskander-missiles on the Kola peninsula and in Kaliningrad, the deployment of dual-capable maritime assets and nuclear anti-ship missiles, and the development of very precise conventional deep strike missiles. Russian exercises and its posture also suggest that it has adopted an nuclear "escalate-to-de-escalate"-doctrine. The Trump administration's NPR had already included a strong condemnation of Russian INF-violations and used them to justify U.S. nuclear modernization, including the development of new low yield nuclear warheads and submarine-launched cruise missiles.

[Alliance has to react to Russian nuclear modernization.](#)

In Brussels, allies were thus already well aware that the U.S. was losing its patience with Russia and wary about future U.S. unilateral steps in this regard. They also knew about the global implications of the INF-question and that "China hawks" in the Pentagon were happy to see the INF-Treaty collapse. The allies themselves had been much more hesitant to speak up on the INF-violations and had indeed partly been skeptical about the allegations – even though the Brussels declaration included an acknowledged that Russia's breach of the INF was the most "plausible explanation". While part of this hesitance certainly also stemmed from the very limited intelligence shared by the U.S., it was primarily motivated by a lack of possible responses: Given that Russia was obviously not willing to return to compliance with the treaty, the only bargaining chips seemed to be a new dual-track decision or an extension of nuclear sharing eastwards. This would have meant violating the INF-treaty or the NATO-Russia Founding Act – a step that nobody was ready to take at this point.

[US withdrawal from INF forces European allies to take a stance.](#)

The U.S. decision to leave the treaty now forces the allies to take a stance – if not today then certainly once the U.S. might attempt to field intermediate range missiles in Europe at a later stage. Additional trouble might result from the upcoming U.S. Missile Defense Review if it was to actually link missile defence to Russia. The move presents a maximal gamble by the Trump administration: rather than unify, any such decision is much more likely to throw the Alliance into disarray and to question its hard-fought nuclear consensus. Allies are now left with only bad choices: On the one hand, excluding a stationing of intermediate range missiles or similar means would undermine the U.S. bargaining position vis-a-vis Russia and thus make a collapse of the treaty more rather than less likely. On the other hand, not excluding the stationing will expose them to strong domestic pressure and risks to set off an arms race if the U.S. should not be able to force Russia back into compliance. The fact that they are not sure whether the U.S. initiative is actually in good faith does not make it any easier.

The most promising approach for the time being is to work on improving the credibility of NATO's current deterrence posture – thus reducing the requirement to field additional nuclear forces and assets in Europe. The flexibility of Russian nuclear thinking requires an adaptation of NATO's planning processes and particularly of the coordination between nuclear and conventional deterrence. The U.S. has been working intensively to integrate conventional and nuclear thinking and capabilities. U.S. European and Strategic Commands have already stepped up their cooperation in this regard, but this national coordination needs to be extended to allies. NATO will have to increase the number and intensity of their relevant exercises, even if some allies will remain skeptical. Finally, NATO also has to address the vulnerability of its nuclear posture against new threats: While the NPR contains a sentence on potential conventional (cyber) attacks against its nuclear Command and Control-structure, allies still have to come to a common understanding what this means for NATO's nuclear posture.

NATO must improve
credibility of its
current deterrence
posture.

When it comes to the legs of NATO's nuclear deterrence, the military usefulness of the U.S. forward-deployed nuclear weapons in Europe and the associated nuclear sharing-arrangements also continue to be questioned. The lasting uncertainty about the immediate successor for the German Dual-Capable Tornados adds fuel to these misgivings. While the future Franco-German fighter will be dual-capable, many worry about the prospect of extending the lifetime of the DCA-Tornados until the mid-2030s. With only 5–10% of them likely to penetrate modern Russian air defences, they hardly present a credible deterrent. Others extend this critique even to modern DCA such as the F-35, who are also not immune to Russian air defences and long-distance stand-off strikes. These doubts about the military usefulness of the DCA are not new and NATO's nuclear principles are more important than its nuclear posture. Posture can easily be adapted, but to rebuild NATO's nuclear acquis would be impossible once it were lost. This makes it unlikely that such a key pillar of the Alliance will be fundamentally questioned. But if the fielding of new capabilities is to be avoided, the DCA must remain credible – and Germany thus needs an alternative plane as soon as possible.

Pillars of NATO's
nuclear deterrence
are questioned.

Finally, member states continue to dodge nuclear deterrence in the public sphere. While states have committed to publicly make the case for NATO's nuclear dimension, even nuclear and nuclear-sharing member states remain silent and avoid a public debate – often due to fears that they might lose this debate. The perceived delegitimization of NATO's nuclear dimension by President Obama's Prague vision still presents a heavy legacy in this regard. NATO has withered the first storm of the Ban Treaty campaign, but to ensure ongoing support (or at least not outright antagonism) for its nuclear dimension, governments have to honor their pledge and make a case for nuclear deterrence.

Allies have to
make case for allied
nuclear deterrence.

In addition to the numerous suggestions that were made throughout this paper, several priorities for NATO allies in general and Germany in particular are recommended in the following section:

- ▶ Political foundations and think tanks should be tasked with better translating communiqués to the broader public, thereby forging talking points about the outcome of a Summit and arguments supporting why NATO is still a viable organization. In addition, national governments should become more apt at communicating with their publics to explain to them NATO's current mission.
- ▶ Increasing defence spending to at least 1,5 % of GDP by 2024 is essential for maintaining German credibility. The current low levels of defence spending are both a political and a military liability. At the political level, it creates an open flank in times of severe transatlantic tensions, and risks spill-over effects into other areas such as trade. It also puts

German low levels
of defence spending
both political and
military liability.

Germany's aspired and expected leadership role in the Alliance into question, as well as its seriousness to follow-up on its commitments. At the military level, both current and envisioned levels of defence spending make it impossible to prepare the Bundeswehr for the central role it plays in European conventional deterrence and defence – entailing the disposition of three full-fledged and ready divisions over the medium term.

- The German framework nation concept has taken a bit of a backseat and is in desperate need of some more political capital. The “Four by Thirty”-initiative provides a perfect opportunity to re-introduce the project as a way of generating the necessary formations. Efficacy should hereby always be prioritized over cost-saving approaches.
- Given the Bundeswehr's new focus on collective defence, the regionalization of the Command Structure will mean that most of Germany's attention and resources will go towards JFC Brunssum and the new JSEC in Ulm. To maintain NATO's political cohesion at 29, Germany, as one of NATO's leading powers also needs to make sure that JFC Naples and the entire Projecting Stability task are not completely sidelined or pursued only in a CSDP context.
- The new JSEC, which will be effectively double-hatted with an existing German command, can serve as a perfect example of how NATO can draw from national force structures. NATO cannot afford to go back to a command structure with 16,000 positions and double-hatting can provide an economical way to fill the gaps between the NATO command and the NATO force structure.
- EU-NATO cooperation has made some important steps forward since 2016 and the new EU initiatives have the potential to make the EU a player in the force generation process. As a central proponent of PESCO and through its influence on the EDF, Germany has to make sure that these projects reflect the integration of the transatlantic defence market and do not become mere discriminatory tools to protect the EU's defence industrial base. Establishing close links particularly to the United Kingdom, Europe's strongest military power, remains a must if a decoupling of European and NATO initiatives is to be avoided.
- The cyber IQ of staffers at NATO but also, and more importantly, national decision-makers, ought to be raised. Allies are well advised to use NATO more intensively to coordinate their cyber policies. To tighten bonds between NATO and member states in the cyber domain, national decision-makers should be brought into exercises, including on tactical and technical levels, not only on a strategic level. Raising awareness of the importance of cyber as a domain for the Alliance can be supported by think tanks as well as political foundations such as the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation.
- As cyber security does not equate cyber defence, and since the former is not in NATO's domain yet, allies should consider bringing together their interior ministers regularly to coordinate more closely what individual nations are doing in the realm of cyber security. It could even be contemplated to establish a NATO committee of interior affairs.
- As of last year, SHAPE has a mandate to monitor and coordinate allies' situational awareness capabilities in the cyber domain. Considering that cyber-attacks usually follow a military 'playbook', NATO members should consider widening SHAPE's mandate to include offensive cyber operation capabilities to be better prepared for attacks and to have retaliatory means to deter strikes in the first place.

EU-NATO cooperation has come a long way since 2016.

Establishment of NATO committee of interior affairs ought to be considered.

- › NATO urgently needs to figure out a common response to Russian INF-violations and its ongoing modernization program if it wants to contain the fallout from the U.S. decision to leave the treaty. To reduce the need for additional nuclear forces, NATO should focus on increasing the credibility of its current nuclear posture. NATO's European governments also should make a stronger case for nuclear deterrence in public. As long as member states continue to dodge the issue, they will always remain defensive when any changes to their nuclear posture is needed.

Common response to
Russian INF-violations
urgently needed.

Imprint

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