Peace research perspectives on NATO 2030

A response to the official NATO Reflection Group

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Introduction: Shifting paradigms for a NATO that can deliver human and common security

Ian Davis

The ten essays in this volume are a critical response to the expert group report, NATO 2030: United for a New Era, that was publicly launched by the NATO Secretary General on 3 December 2020 (see Box 1). The co-chair of the report, Wess Mitchell, described its main message as being that "NATO has to adapt itself for an era of strategic rivalry with Russia and China, for the return of a geopolitical competition that has a military dimension but also a political one". This approach, however, is likely to help entrench a systemic three bloc rivalry between China, Russia and NATO-EU-US, with all the attendant risks – from nuclear war to missed opportunities to address the existential threat of climate change and future pandemics.

This direction of travel is hardly surprising given that the ten experts that wrote the NATO report represent what might broadly be described as the so-called realist paradigm: a world view that emphasises the role of the state, national interest and military power in world politics.[1] It is a perspective that dominates thinking within most transatlantic security think-tanks, academic studies of international relations and the 'defence establishment' (the collection of industrial partners government officials and ministers that are at the centre of security-related decision-making). This decision-making core has also been described as a military-industrial complex and in his farewell address in 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of the dangers of its "unwarranted influence".

After six decades of 'revolving door' practices, whereby senior officials, military staff and politicians rotate between government and arms and security companies, the military-industrial complex is now operating on steroids within the United States, with significant knock-on effects throughout NATO.

In contrast to the NATO report, the essays in this volume are written by a group of leading peace researchers, academics and civil society practitioners who broadly fall within a human security paradigm: a worldview in which the focus shifts from the state to a 'human–centric' vision. It is a multifaceted concept that embraces contemporary thinking from peace, post-colonial and feminist studies, and international humanitarian and human rights law. In the opening essay, Richard Reeve outlines how the human security approach emerged, how it relates to armed conflict and how that meaning has been co-opted and reshaped by military actors like NATO. While the NATO expert group report has a few things to say about human security (as well as climate change and gender), these progressive elements feel like add-ons with narrow interpretations rather than being applied as guiding principles. They are also likely to be the issues that are squeezed and further marginalised as the NATO document is debated further upstream towards consideration of a new Strategic Concept.

a human security paradigm: a worldview in which the focus shifts from the state to a 'human – centric' vision.

NATO leaders agreed at their December 2019 summit in London that Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg should head up a "reflection process" aimed at strengthening the alliance's political dimension. Stoltenberg named a panel of ten experts on 31 March 2020—five men and five women—to be co-chaired by Thomas de Maizière, a member of the Bundestag and former German defence minister and A. Wess Mitchell, a former assistant secretary of state for European affairs in President Trump's administration. In June 2020, the NATO Secretary General launched his outline for NATO 2030. The resulting expert group report, NATO 2030: United for a New Era, is expected to help frame further consultations over the coming months with allies, civil society, parliamentarians, young leaders and the private sector. Ultimately, these are expected to lead to Stoltenberg tabling a number of strategic level recommendations for consideration by the next NATO Summit in 2021, and then eventually the elaboration of a new Strategic Concept, as recommended in the expert group report.

Among the report's other 138 recommendations are that NATO should continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue with a "persistently aggressive" Russia; devote "much more time, political resources, and action" to the security challenges posed by China; coordinate information-sharing and collaboration on emerging and disruptive technologies; more explicitly integrate the fight against terrorism into its core tasks; take a coordinated approach with the EU in addressing challenges to the South; reaffirm its support for arms control while maintaining an "effective nuclear deterrence"; build on efforts to include climate change and other non-military threats such as pandemics in NATO planning on resilience and crisis management; reassert its core identity as an alliance rooted in the principles of democracy; strengthen transatlantic consultation mechanisms, including between the EU and NATO; outline a global blueprint for better utilising its partnerships to advance NATO strategic interests; strengthen measures to reach and implement decisions in a timely fashion; and take measures to strengthen NATO's political dimension.

Human security may be understood as a way of conceptualising or shaping a progressive policy agenda especially when traditional approaches to security are insufficient or detrimental to the elaboration of viable solutions to real world problems. Richard Reeve asks whether civil society should get behind NATO's embrace of human security or call it out as cynical co-optation. He concludes that, while NATO's embrace of the term is opportunistic, there is room for a conversation with NATO "on what we believe human security and wellbeing to be about and which actors ought to be involved". This collection of essays is intended to act as an entry point for such a conversation. A core thread is that a paradigm shift within NATO is now an urgent necessity.

In the second essay, Michael Brzoska describes the bias and omissions in the expert group's analysis of past events and future trends, especially in relation to Russia, arms control and violations of international law.

These omissions include Russian opposition to the extension of NATO to the East, the illegality of the Western wars in Kosovo and Iraq and Western contributions to the dismemberments of arms control arrangements. Brzoska concludes that such one-sided analysis "leads to one-sided policies, which are driven by the fear of others and ignorant of the threats imposed by one's own behaviour".

Brzoska also draws attention to the report's inadequacies in relation to climate change. Rather than exploring options for cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation, the report primarily focuses on the resulting security risks and the promotion of energy saving in member states' armed forces. However, this 'greening of the military' agenda not only results in such absurdities as adding solar panels to battle tanks, it shifts responsibility away from NATO member states to do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for which they are collectively responsible.

The third essay also provides a broad critique of the report—and it is a critique that is neatly summed up in Ray Acheson's opening sentence: "The NATO reflection report has a patriarchy problem". Acheson argues that the expert group has co-opted the human security and 'women, peace and security' agendas in order to reinforce rather than challenge or change the patriarchal structures and systems that have created the militarised world order. The essay draws on the concept of militarism—which seeks to explain a disproportionate emphasis on the military in national and international affairs—as well as highlighting how the pursuit of "cohesion" within the alliance has centred around stamping out any internal dissent over nuclear policy. While Reeve remains open to the possibility of engaging NATO on human security, Acheson rules this out, arguing that it "cannot be achieved through militarism and violence" and calls for nothing less than the abolition of NATO—or its replacement with "a truly democratic, decolonised, denuclearised and demilitarised global alliance for collective security".

Within NATO, militarism is arguably most deeply embedded in the US national psyche where it dominates domestic and foreign policy regardless of who is in the White House. This has enormous implications for NATO, given the US military leadership of the alliance. An American general is always Europe's Supreme Allied Commander (SACEUR)—a fact only partly counterbalanced by the political leadership, the NATO Secretary General, always being a European—and it is US nuclear weapons that have traditionally underpinned the core alliance 'deterrence and defence' posture.

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NATO has been described as a "hegemonic American protectorate",[2] and in the fourth essay Michael Klare examines the likely consequences of NATO adopting Washington's current pre-occupation with great power competition. The expert group embraces this radical transformation in US strategic thinking away from the post-9/11 counter-terrorism agenda (Afghanistan and Iraq are barely mentioned in the report) towards preparation for a "high-end fight against near-peer adversaries", specifically war with China and Russia. Klare warns that in adopting this agenda Europe will expose itself to "enormous new risks", including the risk of nuclear escalation. And even if a major war is avoided, Klare concludes that "the Pentagon's pursuit of permanent military supremacy and its reliance of combat plans involving direct attacks on Chinese and Russian territory will produce an environment of unremitting tension coupled with an increasingly costly and dangerous arms race".

How then should NATO respond to Russia and China? As regards Russia, the expert group report argues that NATO should continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue, but offers no suggestions as to how tensions in NATO/US-Russian relations can be lowered through measures designed to reduce uncertainty and build trust. To this end, in the fifth essay Ute Finckh-Krämer stresses the importance of confidence-building between NATO and Russia. There is no shortage of proposals for de-escalating NATO-Russia military risks, what appears to be lacking is the political will to develop them.[3]

As regards China, in the sixth essay John Gittings acknowledges the complexity in determining policy towards Beijing, but emphasises that the focus should be on dialogue and the search for common ground.

He also draws attention to the expert group's omission of nearly a decade of NATO-China military staff talks and suggests that there is "nothing to lose, and perhaps much to gain, by actively seeking to re-open this agenda". China is likely to be receptive to this. When asked about the NATO expert group report, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying rebutted the idea that China posed a threat to the alliance. "China has never practiced anything like 'coercive diplomacy' or 'intimidating diplomacy,'" Hua told reporters at a daily press briefing on 1 December 2019. "We hope NATO will uphold a correct view on China, look at China's development and domestic and foreign policies in a rational manner, and do more things that are conducive to international and regional security and stability. China stands ready to conduct dialogue and cooperation with NATO on the basis of equality and mutual respect", Hua concluded.

Dialogue with China might also include nuclear weapons and other strategic arms control policy, although the issue would need to be separate from the US-Russian talks. However, as Tom Sauer points out in the seventh essay, the expert group report blows hot and cold on these issues: on the one hand it reaffirms support for arms control in principle while on the other it stresses that NATO continues to have a critical role in maintaining nuclear deterrence, including continuing and revitalising the nuclear-sharing arrangements. Sauer points out that the group is wrong to claim that the nuclear ban treaty will not affect international law. The treaty's recent ratification means that it is now part of international law and is likely to further embolden the public majorities in "host" NATO member states that opinion polling suggest are in favour of withdrawing US tactical nuclear weapons.

He argues that NATO should de-collectivize the nuclear sharing policy and withdraw all remaining US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. This would enable NATO member states to be able to opt out of extended nuclear deterrence and sign the nuclear ban treaty.

The disregard for the perspectives of other states in the approach to nuclear policy is mirrored in NATO's approach to building stability in the South. In the eighth essay Martin Butcher outlines how NATO's partnerships in the South are largely based on self-interest and military security rather than being rooted in the complex mix of problems faced by countries in North Africa and the Sahel. Butcher argues that NATO member states need to look for bottom-up solutions that involve local communities and that are conflict sensitive.

The ninth essay by Hans-Georg Ehrhart discusses the issue of hybrid threats, which the NATO report suggests are central and imminent. As a starting point he calls for sharper consideration and definition of hybrid threats or hybrid warfare, and later questions the limited nature of the expert group's call for a paradigm shift in countering hybrid threats: "the report falls far short in only identifying parts of the shift and largely ignoring the variety of tricky political, theoretical, conceptional, judicial, ethical and practical questions the phenomenon of postmodern warfare raises for those that practice it, including NATO member states". Ehrhart concludes by arguing that the best remedy "to counter outside non-military interventions is to strengthen the resilience of our own societies by making them more fair, just and equal".

Dialogue with China might also include nuclear weapons and other strategic arms control policy

In the final essay Paul Ingram turns the NATO call for unity on its head and makes the case for greater diversity within the alliance, especially in relation to nuclear policy and towards Russia. In the NATO-Russia Council, for example, he argues that the effort invested in achieving NATO unity before issues are discussed with Russia creates "an experience for Russia of a take-it-or-leave-it, done-deal inflexibility" and as a result there are rarely constructive discussions. "As the stronger power in the uneasy relationship", Ingram argues, "NATO is in a better position to change the tune". He concludes by agreeing that while NATO does indeed need a period of reflection to assess its relevance to the unfolding 21st Century, the expert group "holds no hope of any genuine reassessment".

In the past 12 months the world has changed in a way that nobody anticipated, and we are now in an unprecedented global public health emergency on a scale not seen for a century. Although the scale of the impact from Covid-19 has taken most governments by surprise there were ample prior warnings of the risks of a new global pandemic. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-Cov-1) during 2002-04, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-Cov) since 2012 and ongoing, and the World Health Organization has been listing coronaviruses among the leading viral threats for many years.[4]

However, the level of preparedness as well as the actual public health strategies adopted in many countries appear to have been inadequate or deeply flawed.

More broadly, the virus has revealed fundamental flaws in the strategies many states employ to provide security for their people. In the 'new normal' it might have been expected that the NATO expert group would have looked beyond old concepts of national security in favour of human-centric and cooperative approaches to address public health threats. However, there has been little effort to address the imbalances in strategic thinking and allocation of resources—the annual budget for the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention is less than $7 billion, while the US defence budget is over $700 billion. To the contrary, the NATO report calls for a continuation of more of the same. Arguably, above all else, new efforts are needed to reduce the chances of nuclear war and achieve nuclear disarmament, address climate change and strengthen defences against future pandemics. Based on the expert group report, NATO is not up to this task, and is instead doubling down on the militarist approaches to security and conflict that have not worked. A more comprehensive and honest reflection of NATO is necessary by all of its members.

A more comprehensive and honest reflection of NATO is necessary by all of its members.

1 The literature on realism in international relations is vast. See, for example, Jonathan Cristol, 'Realism', Oxford Bibliographies, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0042.xml

2 David P. Calleo, 'The American role in NATO', Journal of International Affairs, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Summer/Fall 1989).

3 See, for example, 'Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on NATO-Russia Military Risk Reduction in Europe', European Leadership Network, December 2020, https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/8-2a-Russia-NATO-Statement-Final-Draft.pdf

4 See, for example, Richard Horton, 'Coronavirus is the greatest global science policy failure in a generation', The Guardian, 9 April 2020.

NATO and human security: Obfuscation and opportunity

Richard Reeve

Human security as a concept has been around for getting on three decades. Like many post-Cold War ideas, it had become a little stretched and stained during the War on Terror and was beginning to look distinctly unfashionable by the time the resurgence of great power competition was noted in the 2010s. Yet the rippling failures of the 'forever wars', the looming existential terror of the climate crisis, and the very immediate concerns of pandemic disease have all propelled a resurgence of interest in human security in the last few years.

Neither NATO nor individual militaries have been immune to this second wave of human security. This short essay looks at how the human security approach emerged and how it relates to armed conflict, how that meaning has been co-opted and reshaped by military actors, and how NATO specifically is engaging with the concept. It concludes that, while it is right that NATO grapples with broader understandings of security, it does not follow that NATO should be given either the resources or the responsibility to tackle real human security issues. Indeed, the alliance would do well to consider how its core functions contribute to human insecurity before assuming that it is part of the solution.

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What is Human Security?

The human security approach came to prominence in 1994 when it was championed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its annual report on human development. It began as an effort by development economists, social scientists, international lawyers and feminists to move away from the military security of competing states and geopolitical blocs (of which NATO was by then the sole survivor) and to present a framework for understanding what security might mean for individuals. It aimed to stimulate ideas of how security practice and resources could be reshaped and redirected to promote wellbeing as much as provide protection.

So human security looked not just at how the UN and national governments could uphold freedom from fear, but also freedom from want, not least hunger, and freedom from the indignity of autocracy and rights abuses. It broke security down into seven categories: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. Latterly, the UN has placed emphasis on four complementary principles of people-centred security, comprehensive approaches to implementation, context-specific planning, and an orientation to preventing rather than resolving conflict and insecurity.

Over time, different components of human security have waxed and waned in global thinking. Environmental security – which was originally conceptualised more around clean air and safe water – has had a steep ascendancy in line with clear evidence of climate and environmental breakdown. Economic security hit critical mass with the 2007-09 financial crisis, austerity and mind-bending inequality. UN action on food insecurity won last year's Nobel Peace Prize. Health security is our current fixation. None of these insecurities are going away. Community security has perhaps waned on the international agenda since the 1990s surge in inter-ethnic conflicts and atrocities, but Myanmar, Xinjiang, Tigray and Karabakh show such concerns should remain paramount.

Human security in the mouths of soldiers

The military world has come late to the idea of human security but the terminology has increasingly been adopted by some European armed forces since the late 2010s. In the intervening quarter-century the term has been filtered through a number of other policy imperatives, including understanding the "human terrain" of counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the rise and fall of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) initiative, the growing significance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda since UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was passed in 2000, and the realisation that responding to the threat of climate chaos is a challenge and opportunity for military planners.

What has come out the other side is less an adoption than a co-optation of language, meaning something quite different.

What has come out the other side is less an adoption than a co-optation of language, meaning something quite different. For the UK armed forces, which began using the term in peacekeeping operations in 2014, human security has become shorthand for Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, including specific measures to protect women and children. It has also seemingly become conjoined with the military application of Women, Peace and Security, including responding to sexual violence in conflict, a priority of the 2010-15 UK coalition government.

The looking glass image of militarised 'human security' within the UK was rendered ludicrously real in April 2019 as soon-to-be-sacked Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson launched the Ministry of Defence's new Centre of Excellence for Human Security, in the MoD press office's own words, "in front of a backdrop of 100 personnel, armoured vehicles and AH-64 Apache Attack Helicopters". Human security had essentially become a muscular, patriarchal exercise in humanitarian intervention to protect the weak (foreign women and children) from their own menfolk.

NATO and human security

Human security appeared in NATO vocabulary at much the same time that it went mainstream in the British Armed Forces and appears to have superseded the alliance's adoption of Protection of Civilians (PoC) policy and operating concept in 2016-18. In 2019 NATO set up a Human Security Unit in the Secretary-General's office. It is headed by his Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security so, as in the UK, the two concepts are conjoined in NATO thinking.

As in the UK, NATO also includes within human security, [Cultural Property Protection](#) (i.e. protecting cultural monuments like Nineveh, Palmyra or the Bamiyan Buddhas from wanton destruction in war) and tackling human trafficking, a [NATO commitment](#) since 2004. Whereas the former of these has some resonance with the original human security focus on community (or cultural) security, the latter is potentially problematic in relation to human wellbeing and development. The human trafficking commitment began as part of a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation but has become, since the 2015-16 'migration crisis', attached to the European project to intercept, return and deter movement of asylum seekers from Western Asia to Greece. Treating the flight of refugees as a criminal issue of human trafficking is very much contrary to the humanitarian principles from which genuine human security derives.

The recent Reflection Group report on NATO's vision for 2030 adds little new to the idea of human security within NATO but clearly recognises that embracing and clarifying (sic) the relationship between human security and NATO's core mission is likely to help boost its appeal to non-traditional audiences, including civil society, and thus promote wider political support for the alliance. It recommends that:

"NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) should emphasise NATO's ongoing work on human security into its public messaging to highlight NATO's positive impact and relevance, especially to the concerns of the younger generation" (p.43).

While the commitment to getting better at protecting civilians and monuments during violent conflict seems sincere, and has its own strategic rationale, it is hard not to conclude that the term human security is opportunistic window dressing that conceals or obfuscates more than it reveals of NATO's intent.

Obfuscation and Opportunity

Should civil society, then, get behind NATO's embrace of human security or call it out as cynical co-optation? The answer perhaps depends on one's strategy. As it stands, the human security terminology used by NATO and the UK is confusing and threatens to undermine the very different use of the term by civilian academic and development workers. There is nothing wrong with protecting the most vulnerable or reducing the impact of violence on civilians, but that is rightly called Protection of Civilians. Relabelling PoC as human security threatens to turn a transformative approach of promoting wellbeing, freedom and development from a positive into a negative, static concept. It is defensive rather than preventive. It bends 'freedom to...' back on itself to become 'protection from...'.

Yet there is also an entryist opportunity in the co-optation of human security by NATO and other military actors. Since we each endorse it, there is room for a conversation on what we believe human security and wellbeing to be about and which actors ought to be involved. The expanding grab-bag of principles and agendas folded under the military human security umbrella suggests that the idea is far from fixed. There may be more useful approaches that can be included too.

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Or perhaps the end-point of the conversation that opens up is a recognition that real human security is not something that a military alliance, let alone one committed to weapons of mass destruction, can reasonably be tasked with delivering. Yes, NATO should work to rapidly reduce its carbon footprint. Yes, troops may bring useful expertise and labour to help respond to epidemics or natural disasters where normal resources fail.

But military actors should not be leading responses to threats and challenges that are not military in nature. And if those challenges to our human security are far larger than threats from militarised violence, NATO should not be competing for resources with those that really can protect us.

Bending history, risking the future

Michael Brzoska

The reflection groups analysis contains numerous statemens of facts and opinion on past events and future trends. As it comes from a group of people with similar backgrounds—mainstream politicians and academics from NATO member countries—it is no surprise that opinions found in the report are debatable. Thus, it is pretty risky to claim that NATO's involvement in Afghanistan stands out as one of the examples to prove that NATO "stands as history's most successful alliance" (p. 5).

But it is omissions even more than what is stated that reveals a worrying bias in the group's assessments. By not mentioning important facts, nor weaving them into their analysis, the group members provide a one-sided picture of how we have come to what the report aptly describes as "uncertain times" (p. 5). Unfortunately, this bodes ill for the future. It strengthens the view, already widely accepted in many NATO countries, of a Western world, with NATO as its "strategic anchor" (p. 5), that has been innocently drawn into quagmires created by evil others. The group missed the chance to present a reflection—which originally can be defined as giving back one's own image on a surface—based on a full assessment about how we have come to the current sorry state of insecurity in the world. Such an assessment by necessity needs to include a discussion of the responsibility NATO and its member states bear for the deterioration of global security that the group describes. It bodes ill for the future of NATO policy and action.

Omissions and their consequences are most obvious in the discussion of relations with Russia. The group members are justified in calling out Russia's aggressions towards Georgia and the Ukraine, the illegal annexation of Crimea, the increasing authoritarianism in Russia. But they are missing important events driving the downward spiral of Western-Russian relations, are hypocritical with respect to violations of international law and are biased in their assessment of Russia's relative military power.

Foremost among the events the report does not mention are Russian opposition to the extension of NATO to the East, the illegality of the Western wars in Kosovo and Iraq and Western contributions to the dismemberments of arms control arrangements.

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Post-Cold War NATO members clearly entered "at these nations' free request" (p. 8). But did NATO enlargement to the East represent "the closing of the geopolitical vacuum in Europe's East" (p. 8)? Russian leaders certainly thought differently. Already in December 1992 then-Russian foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev warned that Western arrogance in security matters would undercut liberals like him and strengthen the positions of hardliners in Russia. During the first round of extension the NATO-Russia Council was established, but no similar offers for cooperation were seen necessary by NATO members for later rounds of enlargement.

In 1998, NATO members decided to go to war against Serbia and Montenegro over Kosovo. While defendable from a human rights point of view, without UN Security Council authorization the war was illegal under the United Nations Charter. The same illegality marks the Iraq war of 2003, led by the USA and the UK, even though their governments tried to find legal arguments supporting their attack.

Thus, Russia has not been alone in violating international law. However, there is no reflection on this in the reflection groups' report and how it contributed to a Russian perception that big powers could ignore international law as enshrined in the UN Charter if they come up with some alternative justification of their linking.

The reflection group repeatedly calls on Russia to "return to full compliance with international law" (pp. 12, 25, 26). That is as it should be. But there is no similar call in the report for NATO member states' to fully comply with international law. Asking only Russia for compliance with international law reenforces the impression of a double standard in the groups demands.

In addition to rightly lamenting Russian aggressions, the reflection group also justifies continuing the course of improvements in Western military power by stating that "Russia maintains a powerful conventional military and robust nuclear arsenal that poses a threat across NATO territory" (p. 16). What the report does not mention is that the reverse is also true. NATO largely outspends Russia, regardless of whether one uses SIPRI data some alternative methods of estimation, such as purchasing power parities, or armed forces' personnel.

there is no similar call in the report for NATO member states' to fully comply with international law.

There are some areas, particularly on the Eastern flank of NATO, where the balance is different. But there are more areas of conflict and competition where Russian leadership has to fear Western superiority. This is particularly true for technology. While it is fair to state, as the report does (p. 18) that Russia is "now dedicating significant and increasing resources" into emerging military technologies, Western investment is by far greater. It is unfortunate that the group's members do not mention that Russia's total economy, which is dominated by oil, gas and other natural resources, is smaller than Germany's and less than one tenth the size of that of NATO member states. Again, the reflection group's analysis is marked by omission of what is important for an unbiased perspective of the situation.

The same one-sidedness marks the analysis of the deterioration of arms control. Russia definitely has a share here, as described in, partly disputable but often correct, detail in the report (pp. 36-38). But what about the Western contributions? No mention of the US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Western failure to ratify the extended CFE Treaty, the US lack of ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban nor the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty. It is commendable, that the report's authors conclude that "NATO should reaffirm its support for arms control" (p. 14). However, how likely is it that new agreements will come about without a clear-eyed perception of the past record of both sides?

More than 60 years after the presentation of the concept of the "security dilemma" and almost 40 years after the introduction of the concept of "common security", the members of the reflection group seem to be ignorant of the fact that seeking security without considering the effects of this strategy on the security of others is apt to be dangerous and fail.

Such one-sided analysis, which also marks other parts of the report, such as the assessment of Chinese aims and ambitions, has consequences. It leads to one-sided policies, which are driven by the fear of others and ignorant of the threats imposed by one's own behavior.

Another prominent example of this is the treatment of climate change in the report. The group paints a familiarly stark picture of the security consequences of climate change: "Climate change is becoming a threat multiplier. It is likely to accelerate resource scarcity and global food and water insecurity. As ocean levels rise, and the world's habitable landmass is reduced, migration flows could accelerate towards NATO territory. New theatres of competition will emerge as icecaps melt and new transport corridors open, such as the Northern Sea Route in the High North, which geopolitical rivals are seeking to control and exploit" (p. 19).

Such dangers obviously require a strong response. As the prime source of climate change is human-induced emissions of greenhouse gases, reduction of such emissions would seem as the first and most important measure. The energy sector, which produces a large share of emissions, is an obvious candidate for major change.

Such one-sided analysis... leads to one-sided policies, which are driven by the fear of others and ignorant of the threats imposed by one's own behaviour.

And since climate change is a global problem and can only be mitigated in international cooperation, reflection on how this could be achieved in a new era of "geopolitical competition" (p. 41) would have been very welcome.

But that was not what the group has provided. There is no call for member states to reduce emissions, rather, it is stated that "modulating emissions is primarily a national competency" (p. 14). The task of addressing the underlying cause of climate change is shifted to some unnamed "other international organisations" (p. 41). In the report's section on energy security (pp. 39-40), climate change and the beneficial effects climate change mitigation efforts might have on the security of energy supplies are not mentioned. Rather than exploring options for cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation or specific issues such as the Arctic, the danger for confrontations are stressed.

Obviously, the group could only agree on a tiny minimum of useful recommendations with respect to the challenges of climate change. "NATO has a role to play in increasing situational awareness, early warning, and information sharing, including by considering the establishment of Centre of Excellence on Climate and Security" (p. 14). Contrary to its silence on the need for comprehensive new strategies of energy production to mitigate climate change, the report lauds NATO member states' efforts to improve energy efficiency in their military as well as NATO's Green Defence strategy of 2014 which it recommends revising and continuing.

While it is helpful that NATO promotes energy saving in member states' armed forces, it is obvious that this can only be a minor contribution to what is necessary to avoid the negative consequences of climate change. But expect no discussion of these needs in the report.

There is a stark imbalance in the report's lack of acknowledgement of the sources of climate change on the one hand and the stress on the security risks of climate change on the other hand. It shifts responsibility away from NATO member states, who are collectively responsible for more than half of global greenhouse gas emissions. By omission of the origin of the problem, the report locates the source of the security problems of climate change exclusively in poor countries of the South. True, people in these countries are most likely to suffer from resource scarcity, food and water insecurity and climate-related disasters. But the source of their troubles with climate change are those countries which produce greenhouse gases.

The recommendations in the report on how to deal with climate change not only fall way short of what is needed they also reenforce an irresponsible view of its security consequences.

There is a stark imbalance in the report's lack of acknowledgement of the sources of climate change on the one hand and the stress on the security risks of climate change on the other hand.

Instead of recognising the responsibility of its member states, they depict NATO as an organisation that should not be concerned about climate change until it produces large-scale humanitarian suffering or affects NATO member states' geopolitical interests.

In the end, the presentation of climate change in the report is based on the same premise as the discussion of the relationship with Russia. On the one hand, there is the well-intentioned and flawlessly acting West, and on the other there are threatening forces. It largely remains in the dark how and why these threats arose. There is not even a suggestion that the West had anything to do with the creation of these dangers.

Strategy and policy that is based on such grave omissions is guided by ignorance of the full spectrum of the options to defuse dangerous situations. Exploring the past without fear to find mistakes one has made oneself, and reflecting on their effect on others, can help to identify ways to change dynamics which lead to security challenges. Neglect of such reflection carries the danger of confounding causes and effects. Only seeing others as threats to security is a bad guide for the preservation of peace and security.

The patriarchal militarism of NATO's reflection group

Ray Acheson

The NATO reflection group report has a patriarchy problem. Given that NATO is primarily a military alliance, this is not surprising. But for a report that is looking ahead for the next decade, it offers retrogressive views not just on human security and the so-called Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, but also in terms of how it addresses concepts such as "cohesion" what it considers to be the biggest threats to NATO, and how it thinks the alliance should best deal with those challenges. Overall, the report embraces patriarchal approaches to "security", dissention within NATO and where the alliance should go from here. The recommendations further entrench NATO members in a militarist pursuit of dominance, rather than true community and cooperation either internally or internationally.

NATO members should reject this approach. The abolition of NATO would be the most straightforward way to allow its individual members to pursue genuine collective security with others. In the interim, NATO members that authentically care about peace, justice, international law, human rights and dignity, and cooperation need to renounce the violent masculinities[1] espoused in this report, including by rejecting nuclear weapons and working to remove all weapons of mass destruction from NATO's doctrine. They could also withdraw from NATO and adopt feminist foreign policies, finding common ground with other members of the world community for the nonviolent pursuit of peace and justice.

NATO, WPS and human security

A one-page section in the 67-page report deals with "Human Security and Women, Peace and Security" (WPS). These subjects come across as an afterthought of the report's authors, who were perhaps seeking to check the 'gender box' that is increasingly a staple of checklists within many intergovernmental agencies. This suspicion deepens when reading the text, in which NATO both simultaneously positions itself as a progressive leader in respecting "human dignity" while making it clear that any efforts within these agenda items are exclusively for public point-scoring, not for serious policy development.

The report urges NATO members to promote the alliance's "work" on human security by including it in public messaging, especially to the "younger generation". It suggests NATO should "leverage existing partnerships with civil society organisations" in order to "build a group of emissaries for its work in human security and in WPS, including female role models from countries where NATO has made a positive contribution". It goes on to assert, "The personal stories, experiences, and engagement of such a group would provide NATO with a strong asset in ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the Alliance's constructive role in promoting stability and addressing drivers of conflict" (p.43).

Note that it doesn't suggest NATO actually *address* drivers of conflict—just that it should spend more time telling people that it does. However, NATO does not address root causes of conflict. NATO members themselves drive many of the ongoing conflicts in the world. Their individual and collective policies of militarism, and the violent masculinities these policies reflect and further entrench, are part of the root causes of conflict. Rather than working within the human security and WPS agendas in order to prevent conflict, or seek nonviolent, non-militarised solutions to conflict, NATO reflexively turns again and again to weapons, war, aggression, and threats in order to promote and protect its interests.

The challenges posed by institutionalising WPS

The WPS agenda has, to a large extent, become about strategically instrumentalising women's participation in order to legitimise existing practice. Academics Marie Bell and Milli Lake have well-articulated this problem, noting that "Adding certain excluded groups into existing institutions will ultimately reinforce the same patriarchal, capitalist, and militarist logics of hierarchy and exclusion that denied those groups access to power in the first place".[2] While women's participation—and gender diverse people—is imperative and should be automatic, the way that the WPS agenda has been implemented over the past twenty years unfortunately has reinforced rather than challenged or changed the underpinnings of militarism throughout security discourse and practice.

Rather than challenging the patriarchal structures and systems that have created the militarised world order, once inside these systems, most women tend to actively maintain it in order to maintain their positions. Nor do many of these women believe they should have to "carry the burden" of changing policies or structures. In a study from New America about women's participation in the US nuclear weapon complex, for example, several women interviewed felt they were dismissed by male colleagues on the assumption that they would favour weapon cuts or disarmament. They had to prove, as former NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller said she sought to do, that "women aren't afraid of nuclear weapons".[3]

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As feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe says, "You can militarise anything, including equality".[4] You can also apparently whitewash anything, including NATO's role as an aggressor in international politics. In its section on human security and WPS, the reflection group's report asserts that "emphasising the value of human dignity and security differentiates NATO from authoritarian rivals and terrorist groups, which are among the world's human rights abusers" (p.43). Yet NATO members have led and been involved in bombing raids that have killed civilians and destroyed cities and towns leaving civilians without housing, hospitals, food, schools, or basic water and sanitation.[5] NATO members are also, for the most part, hostile towards or lacklustre about the current international political process to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, which is essential for protecting civilians and achieving human security.[6]

In keeping with this position, the report recommends that NATO continue to prioritise "military necessity" over protecting civilians. It admits that NATO forces could perhaps improve in terms of their "sensitivity to the need to protect vulnerable populations and sites" (p.43), but falls far short of suggesting that NATO stop bombing populated areas, or that its members stop leading wars of aggression, carrying out extrajudicial killings through drone strikes, or allowing their soldiers and military contractors to commit war crimes with impunity.[7]

If NATO wants to legitimately incorporate human security and WPS into its strategy, it cannot remain a military alliance. Human security cannot be achieved through militarism and violence. It is built through equity, justice and safety for all; through investments in housing, education, food, water and sanitation, and environmental protection; it is built through initiatives to end racism, sexism, homophobia and ableism. Rather than developing a cadre of "female role models" to propagandise about its commitment to human security, NATO should divest from weapons and war and support local women and gender diverse peacebuilders in their efforts to prevent conflict and overcome institutional and systemic oppressions and inequalities.

The patriarchal authoritarianism of "policy cohesion"

In contrast, the reflection group report argues exclusively for a more militaristic approach to most of the challenges it highlights, urging NATO members to spend more on militarism and repeatedly asserting that "cohesion" on issues is indispensable for members' collective security. Both of these elements reinforce a patriarchal approach to security.

Demands of unity as obedience in nuclear policy

The report's authors assert that NATO has always unified its members behind a "common strategic vision" (p.7). This vision, crafted decades ago by a group unabashedly referred to as the "Wise Men Group", set "strength and solidarity" as the pillars of NATO. While economic and political cooperation are said to be important to NATO's cohesion, militarism has come to be its reigning tenet.

When the report asserts that "political divergences within NATO are dangerous" (p.9), it frames this primarily in the context of perceived aggression from Russia and China—which the authors argue seek to exploit differences between NATO members. It also frames this in the context of nuclear weapon policy, which the authors see as instrumental to NATO's security. They argue that NATO has historically used "strategy and statecraft to forge compromises and enable common action in a way that serves the good of all Allies". However, a look at how NATO came to identify as a nuclear weapon alliance indicates that rather than "compromise" reached through "statecraft", the process was more like obedience reached through intimidation.

As Kjølv Egeland points out,[8] NATO's first strategic concept, adopted in 1950, "eschewed an atomic strategy".[9] Denmark's foreign minister refused to accept any positive references to nuclear weapons in the concept and said it was imperative that NATO not use any language "that could be argued to stand in the way of an effective ban on nuclear war".[10]

Over time, the US government cajoled other NATO members into supporting a nuclear mission for the alliance, in large part to help legitimise US possession and deployment of thermonuclear weapons developed in the 1950s.

While public opinion overwhelmingly stood against nuclear weapons, NATO's acceptance of the bomb was seen as paramount to "spreading the burden" for maintaining a policy of nuclear deterrence.[11] The United States drafted a new strategic document for NATO that explicitly endorsed the use of nuclear weapons by NATO forces, promising to respond to "Soviet aggression" with a "devastating counter-attack employing atomic weapons".[12] The document was quickly and quietly adopted in 1954 at a last-minute meeting scheduled in Paris.

Not all NATO members were happy with this development. The Canadian government, for example, said the document "seemed at one fell swoop to undercut whatever possibility existed within NATO for consultation in advance of the atomic sword being unsheathed, to increase greatly the potential of that sword being used, and to sideswipe Canada's own defence posture".[13] Such concerns were dismissed. From here, the US government urged the United Kingdom to help it convince NATO members of the "technical and moral justification" of including nuclear weapons in the new strategic concept in 1957.

As nuclear weapons became part of NATO's doctrine, some members expressed a willingness to host US nuclear weapons on their territories in "nuclear sharing" arrangements. Others, however, opposed the idea of NATO becoming so nuclearised.

The Danish and Norwegian prime ministers, for example, "declared nuclear weapons non grata on their territories" and called for disarmament talks with the Soviet Union, a halt to all nuclear weapon testing, and postponement of the decision in NATO about stationing nuclear weapons in non-nuclear countries.[14]

When the Canadian government refused to host US nuclear weapons, the US government responded with a patriarchal attack against the Canadian prime minister, slandering his government with sexualised slurs such as "impotency," "coquettish indecision," and desire to preserve Canada's "nuclear virginity".[15] The next Canadian government immediately accepted the US warheads, despite public protests. However, Canada, along with Denmark, Portugal and Norway, continued to oppose NATO becoming a nuclear force, with the four governments insisting they would not contribute human or financial capital towards it. Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Spain refused to participate in nuclear sharing, and Denmark issued "footnotes" to NATO communiqués in the 1980s opposing nuclear weapons.

This dissention is what has led to the mantra of the importance of "cohesion" in NATO. The 1991 strategic concept presented nuclear weapons as "a material manifestation of transatlantic bonds between Europe and North America".[16] This was a deliberate move by the United States to ensure that dissent within NATO over nuclear weapons would no longer be tolerated.

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The technique of badgering your allies into accepting your position—despite their own interests, or the opinion of their publics that vote for them, or their own historical, moral, and political positions—is classic patriarchy. So is the assertion that dissent or disagreement will undo the entire alliance. This scaremongering tactic alleges that it is the dissenter's fault if there is breakdown within the alliance, rather than it being the fault of the aggressor demanding to get their way. This is not compromise or statecraft, this is bullying.

Similarly, when Germany considered ending its nuclear sharing relationship with the United States in 2009, US and UK officials said this was a "selfish gambit implying that it wanted 'others to risk nuclear retaliation on its behalf'".[17] This was when NATO adopted its catch-22-esque mantra that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. The language came directly from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in response to the request from Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Norway to have a serious debate within NATO about denuclearisation.[18]

For the pro-nuclear states in NATO, reversing the nuclear sharing agenda would lead to NATO losing its "nuclear culture" and put the three nuclear-armed allies under increased "moral pressure" to disarm.[19] As Egeland explains, "NATO's organisational identity as a nuclear alliance has been leveraged to discredit advocates of denuclearisation".[20] The nuclear-armed members of NATO are keen to ensure that the alliance remain nuclearised in order to guard against pressure for disarmament—and the reflection group concurs with this strategy. "Maintaining political cohesion and unity must be an unambiguous priority for all Allies" (p.14) they argue.

Doubling down on militarism

While the report's stated vision is of "a world in which a plurality of worldviews and fundamental differences of opinion are no obstacle to dialogue and cooperation" (p.11), such a vision is at odds with the way that NATO has handled its nuclear policy issues. It is also at adds with the rest of the report's entrenchment of militarism as the primary solution to emerging and persistent challenges.

The reflection group sees NATO as a military alliance, not a security alliance. It frames security in exclusively military terms, emphasising for example the importance of the 2014 pledge of NATO states to spend two per cent of GDP on militarism, and 20 per cent of their annual military spending on "major new equipment". The report urges NATO members to compete "with efforts underway by large authoritarian states" (meaning China and Russia) to achieve dominance in "emerging and destructive technologies" (p.13). While the report recognises the risks posed by such technologies, it doesn't urge NATO members to work for their prohibition or regulation but instead urges them to "reap the fruits" of these technologies and seize the "historic opportunities for strategic advantage" (p.29).

The report also recommends NATO maintain its nuclear catch-22, urging it to "reaffirm its support for arms control while maintaining an effective nuclear deterrence". It suggests that in response to the "threat posed by Russia's existing and new military capabilities", NATO should "continue and revitalise the nuclear-sharing arrangements that constitute a critical element of NATO's deterrence policy" (p.13).

The reflection group recommends that an updated NATO strategic concept should strengthen "deterrence and defence, including nuclear deterrence" (p.23) arguing, "Nuclear weapons have been a critical pillar of NATO's collective defence since its inception" and that "nuclear sharing arrangements play a vital role in the interconnection of the Alliance and should remain one of the main components of security guarantees and the indivisibility of security of the whole Euro-Atlantic area" (p.36).

Once again doubling down on the idea that any dissent over nuclear policy is a threat to the alliance as a whole, the report authors go on to assert that due to China and Russia's nuclear weapon modernisation (without acknowledging the modernisation programmes of France, the United Kingdom, or United States), and the deterioration of the Cold War-era arms control framework (without acknowledging the United States is responsible for most of said deterioration), "it is critical to sustain nuclear deterrence and conventional defence capabilities in the 21st century as the bedrock of NATO security" (p.37).

So basically, the report's authors are saying that because there is a higher risk of the use of nuclear weapons and less constraints on their development and use, we should invest more in nuclear weapons, rather than commit to their prohibition and elimination—which is the only way to ensure these weapons are never used. The reflection group even urges NATO members to recommit to the (nuclear-armed state) position on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, "namely that it will never contribute to practical disarmament, nor will it affect international law" (p.37).

Of course, as of 22 January 2021, this treaty is international law. There is nothing that nuclear-armed or nuclear-supportive states can say that will change that fact. Not liking a treaty does not undermine a treaty's existence—or its efficacy. The "practical" effects of the treaty are already being felt, including within NATO states, where parliamentarians, cities and towns, and financial institutions have all begun to support the treaty and change policies and practices in order to comply with its provisions.

Building community

Beyond the absurd position on the TPNW, however, the overarching problem with the reflection group's report is that it asks NATO members to continue to invest in militarism above anything else. This is the same strategy NATO has employed for decades—but where has all of this militarism gotten us? NATO has become a war machine; its members have been bullied into supporting a nuclear mission over the opposition of their own populations and politicians; they have been cajoled into investing ever more in weapons and preparedness for war than in the pursuits of peace. The reflection group approaches China and Russia as threats that must be contained, accusing them of violating international rules and norms and manipulating other countries within their spheres of influence. Yet, the same can be said about many NATO members, which also engage in nuclear weapon modernisation, wars of aggression and occupation, arms exports and sales, economic warfare, and border imperialism.

the overarching problem with the reflection group's report is that it asks NATO members to continue to invest in militarism above anything else.

The gamesmanship reflected in this document reflects the pursuit of Cold War-style hegemony by Russia and the United States. Meanwhile, other states are caught in the middle—including NATO members. Do they support one side or the other in this Thunderdome-esque match? Or can they get around this polarising death match to pursue work that is actually in the interests of all humanity? Can other NATO members challenge US hegemony to forge a less militarised path for the alliance, or are they forever beholden to the most violent of their members?

NATO's obedience in boycotting the TPNW has been a strategic error. Joining the Treaty offers an opportunity for NATO members individually to embrace collective efforts for peace and security, while bringing the alliance as a whole towards a denuclearised future. If NATO members were to join this Treaty, they would be signalling that they are determined to pursue a different path for the alliance—one where security and peace are prioritised over militarism.

Abolish military alliances, build peace alliances

There are ways to achieve collective security that do not necessitate "military prowess" and rely on the threat of massive nuclear violence. This involves building and maintaining real community, which requires reciprocity, trust, and understanding.

It requires us to live in relationship with others, not simply to demand that everyone else obey our commands or conform to our way of thinking.

Governments that say they believe in the rule of law, in cooperation and dialogue—which is most NATO members—need to embrace plurality rather than unanimity. The reflection group asserts that without "cohesion", NATO's members will face all challenges alone. But this is not how the rest of the world operates; it's not how activists operate. The demand for unanimity is a patriarchal, authoritarian approach to an alliance—and it will ultimately fail.

NATO should be abolished as an institution. It has been corrupted by the military pursuits of its most aggressive members; its framework of operation, as is made clear in this report, is one of violence, fear, and patriarchy. But the members of NATO could seek to establish a truly democratic, decolonised denuclearised, and demilitarised global alliance for collective security if they so wished. They could do by withdrawing from NATO and establishing feminist policies and partnerships with countries committed to nonviolence, equality, and global justice. They may find that in such a pursuit, they have more allies around the world—and less threats—than they currently see themselves facing.

> *Governments that say they believe in the rule of law, in cooperation and dialogue—which is most NATO members—need to embrace plurality rather than unanimity.*

Endnotes:

1 The phrase violent masculinity does not refer to men but to gendered norms that idealise militarisation and violence as imperative to strength and power.

2 Marie Bell and Milli Lake, "On Inconvenient Findings," Duck of Minerva, 5 January 2021.

3 Heather Hurlburt, Elizabeth Weingarten, Alexandra Stark, and Elena Souris, The "ConsensualStraitjacket": Four Decades of Women in Nuclear Security, New America, 2019.

4 Julian Hayda, "Women Now At Top of Military-Industrial Complex. A Feminist Reaction," WBEZ 91.5 Chicago, 8 January 2019.

5 For example, the US-led bombardment of Mosul, Iraq and Raqqa, Syria in 2016–17, which also included other NATO members participating in the Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve. See for example Rasha Jarhum and Alice Bonfatti, We Are Still Here: Mosulite Women 500 Days After the Conclusion of the Coalition Military Operation (Geneva: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2019).

6 Ray Acheson, "Impacts, not intentionality: the imperative of focusing on the effects of explosive weapons in a political declaration," Reaching Critical Will, 14 February 2020.

7 For example, US and UK drone strikes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen have killed and injured thousands of civilians, including children—see The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/projects/drone-war. US contractors, such as Blackwater in Iraq, have murdered civilians with impunity—see Jeremy Scahill, Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary (New York: Basic Books, 2008).

8 Kjølv Egeland, "Spreading the Burden: How NATO Became a 'Nuclear' Alliance," Diplomacy & Statecraft 31, no. 1 (2020): 143–67.

9 Andrew M. Johnston, Hegemony and Culture in the Origins of NATO Nuclear First-Use, 1945–1955 (London, 2005), 133.

10 Poul Villaume, Allieret med forbehold (Copenhagen: Eirene, 1995), 503. Translation from Danish by Kjølv Egeland.

11 Egeland, "Spreading the Burden".

12 NATO, "The Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Five Years" (MC 48) (1954), § 3(b).

13 Brian Buckley, Canada's Early Nuclear Policy (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), 116.

14 Egeland, "Spreading the Burden," 151.

15 Janice Cavell, "Like Any Good Wife," International Journal 63, no. 2 (2008): 398.

16 Egeland, "Spreading the Burden," 157.

17 Franklin Miller, George Robertson, and Kori Schake, "Germany Opens Pandora's Box," Centre for European Reform, February 2010, 2.

18 Egeland, "Spreading the Burden".

19 David S. Yost, "The Future of NATO's Nuclear Deterrent," NATO Defence College, Workshop (2010), 6 and David S. Yost, "The US debate on NATO nuclear deterrence," International Affairs 87, no. 6 (2011): 1411.

20 Egeland, "Spreading the Burden," 160.

By embracing America's strategic vision, NATO exposes Europe to increased nuclear risk

Michael T. Klare

The high-level "Reflection Group" appointed by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to generate a new strategic vision for the seventy-year-old Alliance was instructed to devise a blueprint that would unite all its members in a common mission, thereby ensuring NATO's continued utility. Instead, the group produced a report, "NATO 2030: United for a New Era", that appears intended more to guarantee the continued participation of the United States than to protect the best interests of NATO's European members. By embracing the American military's preoccupation with "great power competition", the report essentially commits all Alliance members to a costly, all-consuming military competition with Russia and China that will expose them to an ever-increasing risk of nuclear war.

As indicated in the report, the greatest danger facing NATO in the years ahead is not terrorism or the threat of Chinese/Russian aggression, but rather disunity within the Alliance, and especially the divide between the United States and NATO's European members.

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"Recent years have seen Allies engaged in disputes that partly reflect anxieties about their long-term strategic futures", it states. "Some Europeans worry that the United States is turning inward – or that its commitment to their continent will diminish as it increases focus on the Indo-Pacific" (p.5). It follows from this that to survive and flourish, NATO must embrace a long-term mission that will unite its members and ensure the continued participation of the United States. But at what price? For the Reflection Group, this means adopting a security posture that fully accords with Washington's geopolitical interests but is ill-suited to Europe's.

To fully appreciate the nature of this disjunction, it is necessary to understand the radical transformation of US strategic thinking. When President Trump entered the White House, the American military was almost entirely focused on defeating Islamic terrorists in North Africa and the Middle East, while devoting relatively little attention to developments in Europe and Asia.

Under the prodding of Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, however, those priorities were completely reversed: Instead of maintaining its focus on counter-terror operations, the US military was now enjoined to prepare for all-out war with America's great-power competitors, Russia and China. "Although the Department [of Defense] continues to prosecute the campaign against terrorists," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) in 2018, "long-term strategic competition – not terrorism – is now the primary focus of U.S. national security".[1]

Mattis's new strategic outlook was enshrined in the National Defense Strategy (NDS) of 2018, the Pentagon's overarching doctrinal statement. According to the NDS, the United States must overcome two major strategic challenges: the emergence of great-power competitors intent upon challenging America's dominance of the global order; and a revolution in military technology, enabling those rivals to counter US forces on near-equal terms.

"The *National Defense Strategy* acknowledges an increasingly complex global security environment, characterized by overt challenges to the free and open international order and the re-emergence of long-term, strategic competition between nations", it avows. In particular, "China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors, while … Russia has violated the borders of nearby nations…". At the same time, "the security environment is also affected by *rapid technological advancements and the changing character of war"*. Although the United States once enjoyed uncontested superiority in all "domains" of warfare, its technological advantage has been eroded as its competitors have invested in advanced combat technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, autonomy, cyber, and hypersonics.[2] (Emphasis in the original).

Given these challenges, the Pentagon's task was clear: to gear up for full-scale, "multi-domain" combat with well-equipped adversaries, and to ensure America's continuing superiority in every field of military technology. "Our military remains capable, but our competitive edge has eroded in every domain of warfare – air, land, sea, space, and cyber", Mattis told the SASC. Accordingly, "the National Defense Strategy prioritizes major power competition and, in particular, reversing the erosion of US military advantage in relation to China and Russia". This means, in particular: "modernization of nuclear deterrence forces and nuclear command, control and communications (NC3) capabilities; additional missile defense capabilities; … continuing increased procurement of certain preferred and advanced munitions; [and] investment in technological innovation to increase lethality, including research into advanced autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, and hypersonics".[3]

This outlook has governed US strategic thinking ever since the NDS was released in 2018. Hence, in a September 2020 address at the RAND Corporation, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper reiterated many of the points outlined by Jim Mattis in his 2018 SASC testimony. "Today, in this era of great power competition, the Department of Defense has prioritized China then Russia, as our top strategic competitors", he stated. As a consequence, the US military must enhance its capacity to succeed in "*a high-end fight against near-peer adversaries*".[4] (Emphasis added).

Nor has this outlook changed under the incoming Biden administration. "I believe the 2018 NDS correctly identifies strategic competitions with China and with Russia as the primary challenges animating the global security environment", Lloyd Austin, Joe Biden's nominee for Secretary of Defense, affirmed in written answers to questions submitted by the SASC in January 2021.[5]

In consonance with the National Defense Strategy, each of America's military services – the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps – have revised their planning for future combat operations. In place of their prior focus on counterinsurgency and counter-terror operations, all are now laser-focused on great-power conflict, specifically war with China and Russia.

Every weapon they buy is designed for use in that "high-end fight against near-peer adversaries". Every major military exercise they engage in is a preview of what they expect in a major confrontation with Chinese and/or Russian forces. Every interaction with the militaries of other nations, or with alliances like NATO, is intended to integrate them into US plans to fight and defeat China and Russia in all-out warfare.

> *Every interaction with the militaries of other nations, or with alliances like NATO, is intended to integrate them into US plans to fight and defeat China and Russia in all-out warfare.*

This, essentially, is the vision that the NATO Reflection Group incorporated wholly and uncritically in its November 2020 report. "The main characteristic of the current security environment is the re-emergence of geopolitical competition", it states. "In the Euro-Atlantic area, the most profound geopolitical challenge is posed by Russia.... The growing power and assertiveness of China is the other major geopolitical development that is changing the strategic calculus of the Alliance" (pp.16-17). Read further, and the language appears strikingly familiar to that found in the Pentagon's 2018 *National Defense Strategy*. So, too, is the NATO report's discussion of "emerging and disruptive technologies", emphasizing the race to weaponize AI and other cutting-edge technologies. If you embrace that report, it means you have embraced Jim Mattis's plan for continued US military supremacy in an unending power struggle with China and Russia.

In so doing, moreover, Europe will expose itself to enormous new risks. Until now, the European powers have responded to Russian aggression in Crimea and eastern Ukraine through a mixture of diplomacy, economic sanctions, and, via NATO, the strengthening of allied forces in exposed states like Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

As far as can be determined, this has deterred Moscow from undertaking any further aggressive moves, save those conducted in cyberspace. But the US military, in accordance with the NDS, has been training and equipping itself for a future confrontation with Russia that would entail attacks on high-value targets within Russian territory from the very onset of battle – attacks that would most likely be launched from bases in western Europe, making them critical targets for Russian counterattacks.[6] These missile and artillery exchanges would, in all likelihood, commence with "conventional", non-nuclear weapons, but as the magnitude of destruction spiraled upward, there is no certainty that they could be contained at the conventional level; indeed, nuclear escalation would be more likely than not.

To fully grasp this danger, it is necessary to examine the US Army's planning for a war against Russia in Europe, as spelled out in its 2018 document, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations*. While it is hard to summarize a 100-page document in a few words, the basic plan calls for the Army to concentrate its "long-range fires" (artillery and ballistic missiles) on Russian command centres, troop concentrations, and "anti-access, area denial" (or homeland defence capabilities) at the very onset of battle and, once those are destroyed, to employ armoured forces to smash through remaining Russian defences and occupy key sites in Russia, forcing Moscow to surrender.

As indicated in the document, "In the event of armed conflict…. Army long-range fires converge with joint multi-domain capabilities [air and naval strikes] to penetrate and dis-integrate enemy anti-access and area denial systems to enable Joint Force freedom of strategic and operational maneuver…. Convergence against the enemy's long-range systems enables the initial penetration [of Russian territory]. This sets the conditions for a quick transition to joint air-ground operations in which maneuver enables strike and strike enables maneuver…. Army forces, having penetrated and begun the disintegration of the enemy's anti-access and area denial systems, exploit vulnerable enemy units and systems to defeat enemy forces and achieve friendly campaign objectives. As part of the Joint Force, Army forces rapidly achieve given strategic objectives (win) and consolidate gains".[7]

The problem with this, as anyone who can read between the lines will understand, is that Russian leaders are not likely to permit American or US/NATO forces to "penetrate" Russian territory, demolish Russian military forces, and "win," i.e., defeat the Russian Federation. Indeed, Russian military doctrine states very clearly that in the event of an existential threat to the Motherland, Russia will respond with nuclear weapons – perhaps with so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons at first, aimed at US/NATO bases in western Europe (but powerful enough to incinerate adjacent towns and cities), but just as likely to involve strategic, city-busting bombs.[8]

As Vladimir Putin stated in a March 2018 address to the Federal Assembly, "I should note that our military doctrine says Russia reserves the right to use nuclear weapons solely in response to a nuclear attack, or an attack with other weapons of mass destruction against the country or its allies, or *an act of aggression against us with the use of conventional weapons that threaten the very existence of the state*".[9] (Emphasis added).

A similar strategy, it should be noted, has been devised for a future conflict with China. In this case, however, US forces would fire ballistic missiles – many of them expected to possess hypersonic velocities – at the Chinese mainland from ships and islands in the Pacific.[10] How China would respond to conventional attacks on its homeland cannot be foreseen, but here, too, the risk of nuclear escalation is bound to be substantial.

Even if the US, China, and Russia manage to avoid going to war with one another in the years ahead, the Pentagon's pursuit of permanent military supremacy and its reliance of combat plans involving direct attacks on Chinese and Russian territory will produce an environment of unremitting tension coupled with an increasingly costly and dangerous arms race. This will poison US relations with those two countries and create a Cold War-like ambience in which every incident and dispute has the potential to ignite a major crisis – and war. Normal trade relations and cooperation on issues of global significance – climate change, pandemics, migrations – will prove increasingly difficult. The nations of Europe may wish to escape this corrosive and dangerous environment, but by embracing the Mattis doctrine of great-power competition with China and Russia – as suggested by the Reflection Group – they will become little more than accessories to America's drive for global dominance.

> *the Pentagon's pursuit of permanent military supremacy and its reliance of combat plans involving direct attacks on Chinese and Russian territory will produce an environment of unremitting tension*

Endnotes:

1 Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, Statement for the Record, Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), 26 April 2018, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mattis_04-26-18.pdf

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9 Vladimir Putin's Address to the Federal Assembly, Moscow, 1 March 2018, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58848

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The importance of confidence-building between NATO and Russia

Ute Finckh-Krämer

The members of the reflection group describe the relationship between NATO and Russia in dark terms and are even more pessimistic with respect to the future (p. 25). Even though discussion of the rise of China gets much space in the report, it is said that at least until 2030 Russia "will most likely remain the main military threat to the Alliance" (p. 25).

The group recommends continuing the "dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue" between NATO and Russia. What is largely missing, however, is a reflection of what contributed to reduce what the group sees as NATO's main military threat in the past and what might work in the future.

A case in point is the discussion, or rather neglect of a discussion, of confidence and security building measures. Except for one mention in a recommendation of what the NATO-Russia Council should message to Russia (p. 26), the report is silent on this important instrument for threat reduction and political understanding.

Confidence-building measures as an instrument for risk reduction and contribution to security in Europe were a central part of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975.[1] Already in this document from the Cold War era central aspects of confidence-building are specified in the chapter on Questions relating to Security in Europe, in particular prior notification of major military manoeuvres, prior notification of other military manoeuvres, exchange of observers and prior notification of major military movements.

Arms control and disarmament are seen in a close relation to confidence-building measures.

After the end of the Cold War the CSCE became the OSCE, which is the key organisation for confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs) in Europe.[2] The OSCE played a central role in the 1990s during the withdrawal of most of the US troops and US nuclear weapons from Germany and other European NATO member states and during the complete withdrawal of former Soviet, then Russian troops and weapons from the territory of former non-Soviet member states of the Warsaw Pact, which was dissolved in 1991. Notable treaties supporting this process were the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (negotiated already in the final years of the Cold war), the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty.

The CFE Treaty lost its significance when the post-Cold War troop reductions in Europe were finished. As NATO continued to exist and former Warsaw Pact states and former Soviet Republics applied for membership, these treaties were complemented in 1997 by the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

Many experts hoped that the combination of these treaties and documents would help to prevent and de-escalate possible crises. The Ukraine war 2014 showed that this expectation was wrong. NATO countries suspended contacts and regular meetings which were based on the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

The United States under President Trump not only withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which was originally a bilateral treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States, but also from the multilateral Open Skies Treaty (OST) despite urgent appeals from European member states including Ukraine to remain. The US withdrawal from the OST entered into force shortly before the end of the Presidency of Donald Trump (on 22 November 2020). The Russian Foreign Ministry announced inversely on 15 January 2021, that it would begin the domestic procedure for withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty.[3]

The erosion of confidence-building measures and the withdrawal from important arms control regimes alarmed not only peace and conflict experts, but also European diplomats and members of the armed forces.

From June to December 2020 a track II dialogue of about 40 experts from Russia, European NATO countries and the United States—most of them scientists, former diplomats or senior members of the military forces—took place, focussing on maintaining strategic stability and risk reduction.

They presented at the beginning of December 2020 a paper with recommendations in seven categories:[4]

- Re-establishing practical dialogue between Russia and NATO, including direct contacts between the military commanders and experts of Russia and NATO member states.
- Developing common rules that will reduce the risk of unintended incidents on land, air and sea.

- Enhancing stability by increasing transparency, avoiding dangerous military activities, and providing dedicated communication channels that would avoid escalation of incidents that might occur.
- Utilizing (and possibly supplementing) the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act to codify restraint, transparency and confidence-building measures.
- Exploring possible limitations on NATO and Russian conventional force deployments in Europe to enhance transparency and stability.
- Establishing consultations between Russia and US/NATO on the topics of intermediate-range missiles and ballistic missile defence, in order to prevent a new nuclear missile race in Europe.
- Preserving the Open Skies Treaty.

Conflict experts and many diplomats know that in times of conflict intensive contacts are crucial for risk reduction and prevention of escalation by misunderstanding or accident.

Conflict experts and many diplomats know that in times of conflict intensive contacts are crucial for risk reduction and prevention of escalation by misunderstanding or accident. It was a serious mistake of NATO (and EU) member states to interrupt contacts as a reaction to the Russian annexation of Crimea and the support of insurgent actors in Eastern Ukraine. The proper reaction in a crisis is to use all official and unofficial channels to de-escalate and discuss confidentially and publicly different positions and present explicitly and to the point the position of each side.

At the moment the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) between Russia and the United States is extended by Russia and the United States for five years. The participation of the United States and Russia in the Open Skies Treaty is crucial for the preservation of that treaty as a central element of confidence-building measures in Europe and between the two major nuclear powers. President Biden and his administration should save this treaty just as they are working with Russia to save the New START treaty.

Preserving the existing arms control treaties will be an important contribution to European and international security and give a new chance for disarmament, arms control and nonproliferation in a world on which Ban Ki-Moon, who was at that time Secretary-General of the United Nations, said in 2013, "The world is over-armed and peace is underfunded".

Endnotes:

1 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/c/39501.pdf

2 https://www.osce.org/arms-control

3 Carnegie Moscow: Open Skies without Russia https://carnegie.ru/commentary/83727

4 Recommendations of the Participants of the Expert Dialogue on NATO-Russia Military Risk Reduction in Europe, http://iskran.ru/wp-content/uploads/Statement-on-Russia-NATO.pdf

Rethinking NATO's China policy to avoid a new cold war

John Gittings

Policy towards China has always been a complex matter to determine—as has Chinese policy towards the outside world for Beijing—and today this is even more so. On the one hand, there is widespread and justified dismay at China's behaviour in Xinjiang and Hong Kong, and concern at the possible consequences of the self-assertive nationalism increasingly displayed since Xi Jinping came to power. On the other, there is—or there should be—disquiet at the sweeping hostility to China shown by some Western politicians, and even more over the claim by influential voices that a "new cold war" is on the way or has already arrived, and by the failure to acknowledge that such a war could lead to disaster. Chinese analysts point from their perspective to what they regard as the demonization of their country, and to policies that appear designed to limit its legitimate growth and influence. All of this presents a challenge requiring careful and balanced calculation, weighing those issues which may appear intractable against others where dialogue could be productive (and taking account of previous discussions between NATO and Beijing).

Unfortunately, the comments on China in this experts' report tend towards the routine and do not appear to reflect sustained thinking. It may be relevant that none of the listed authors seem to have specialist knowledge of China.

The question arises as to how far NATO policy is being dictated by shifts in the bilateral relationship between the US and China

As the report acknowledges, China was not even mentioned in NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept, and while there have been substantial changes since then in Chinese external and internal policies, several issues now regarded as of concern were already present then without attracting NATO's attention.

US-China relations

The question arises as to how far NATO policy is being dictated by shifts in the bilateral relationship between the US and China which may now be in transition following the election of President Biden. It has been obvious since the victory of the Chinese Communist Party that policies towards Beijing of the European NATO members have often been constrained by US policy—most visibly in the first two decades of the cold war. Though less obvious, this is still a factor. It is no secret that NATO was under pressure from the Trump administration in 2019-20 to harden its policy on China. Initial signs from Washington since President Biden's inauguration indicate a more judicious attempt to separate positive from negative elements in the relationship, and a matching effort from Beijing in a number of recent statements. This is a trend that should be reflected and encouraged in NATO policy, which indeed should help to advance any such positive change rather than merely keep in step with it.

Strategic balance

Some of the perceived problems arise from the fact that China has "joined the world" — as indeed Western policies from the Nixon visit onwards encouraged it to do. Inescapably the time was bound to come when China would acquire the strength and self-confidence to present itself as a great power on equal terms, in a military as well as economic sense, thus challenging by the simple fact of its existence the primacy assumed by the only power that had dominated since the end of the cold war. This is now an accomplished fact: the question is how best to find ways of working with a stronger China at home and abroad to tackle those issues of common concern that challenge the entire globe, while not ignoring areas of disagreement.

China under Xi Jinping

China as Number One?

Until the last decade, the dominant view in Beijing was that China should be content to "remain as number two"—and indeed that the position of "number one" was problematic, as the US had discovered. This view was always challenged by a vein of argument expressed in the popular saying that "China Can Say No" and that Beijing should become more assertive on the world stage. This was partly fuelled by historical grievances about the depredations of foreign imperialism, especially regarding Japan. Such views were always strong in some social strata, and at times received official encouragement. What we are now witnessing is the domination of this second view, with more vocal support from official opinion-formers, which is also expressed in terms of a marked increase in China's military capability and the adoption of a more forward strategic outlook, moving away from the traditional emphasis on defensive strategy.

the question is how best to find ways of working with a stronger China at home and abroad to tackle those issues of common concern

This shift causes apprehensions among China's immediate neighbours, but they are also wary of ill-considered Western actions that would ratchet up tensions and cause more instability in the region. They would generally prefer to see these issues addressed through dialogue on Asia-Pacific security—a subject that Beijing has been willing to discuss.

Human Rights

The most pronounced shift in recent years, as widely perceived and deplored, has been in the greater constraints imposed on freedom of expression generally, and on human rights for minorities (we may now include the Hong Kong people as well as the indigenous populations of Tibet and Xinjiang in the category of minorities). This shift accentuated trends that were already there. Freedom of the mainland Chinese press to expose corruption and abuses was at its greatest around the turn of the century and has declined since then. Advocates of democracy were always subject to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, although they did have some access to legal defence which has now been further curtailed. However, it has to be observed that the most perfunctory passage in the present report is that dealing with human rights —one "boilerplate" sentence and no more. It is a matter of record that NATO members' concern with human rights outside (and sometimes even within) the treaty area has often been selective. It is admittedly difficult to raise with Beijing those issues which it regards as internal matters, but they may be addressed less directly in the context of their effect upon regional relations.

"Moderate" opinion in Beijing

More moderate voices in the Chinese government, media and foreign relations establishment have become circumspect and are now heard less often, but they still exist. There is evidence that the arguments are still being made: within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, there are both "wolf warriors" and those who adopt more constructive language. Calls for cooperation with the US, and the suggestion that there is more common ground than division between the two powers, are being made more frequently and positively following the inauguration of President Biden. This should not be written off as tactical posturing although there is an element of that in all diplomatic activity. As the past has shown, the dominant "line" in Beijing can change very sharply, and future shifts are possible again if the external context also changes.

The future relationship

Dialogue with China

The passage dealing with China in the report concludes with a brief acknowledgement of the need to "continue to seek relations with China" in a number of vital areas including the climate crisis. However, the manner in which this is done amounts to relegating the subject of dialogue to a footnote (although statements by the Secretary-General at the time of the 70th anniversary summit took a slightly more positive attitude). Remarkably, the report ignores altogether the record of the NATO-China military staff talks between 2010 and 2018, in which a wide range of subjects were addressed (as listed by NATO in 2018), including: "North Korea, the South China Sea, Maritime Security and Counter Piracy, the security perspective on Central Asia - in particular in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the European security landscape, China's defence and military reforms, NATOs partnership policy and finally, possible areas for more practical cooperation between NATO and China".

There is nothing to lose, and perhaps much to gain, by actively seeking to re-open this agenda. Other issues worth discussing with Beijing could be identified in preliminary and back-channel contacts. These might include nuclear weapons policy, detaching this from the US-Russian equation and looking creatively at, for example, "no-first-use" and "non-use" options.

Proposed consultative body

The NATO report proposes the formation of a consultative body to "discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China". This is a sensible idea: such a body should not however limit its enquiry to identifying security issues, but should explore the opportunities for dialogue in these and other areas, and seek to identify possible counterparts in China. To do so effectively, the membership of the proposed body should cover a wide and varied range of China analysis and expertise.

Avoiding a "new cold war"

It cannot be emphasised too strongly that a new cold war in East Asia would be a disaster for all concerned. The potential flashpoints for a conflagration which have been "left over" from the old cold war in that region do not need to be enumerated. To accept such a barren relationship is not just a zero-sum game but one that could lead to a lose-lose result which every effort should be made to avoid. Some NATO members have historically attempted to play a bridging role between the US and China, and in a multi-polar world the opportunity for a more nuanced approach is much greater than in the past. Overall, at a time of rapid upheaval and change on the international scene in so many areas, this is a time for exploration and creative thinking towards China that seeks to achieve results. The urgency for this is heightened by the dual challenge of global pandemic and climate crisis that the world now faces.

De-collectivize NATO's nuclear weapons policy

Tom Sauer

There is a consensus that NATO should 'adapt' to the changed circumstances. That was also the main reason why NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg ordered the [NATO 2030 report](#), which was delivered by ten external experts in November 2020. With respect to nuclear deterrence and nuclear arms control and disarmament, the report blows hot and cold. On the one hand, it underlines that arms control has an important role to play; on the other hand, it stresses "that NATO continues to have a critical role to play in maintaining both conventional and nuclear deterrence and defence through Allied arsenals and via U.S. forward deployments in Europe"... "Nuclear sharing arrangements play a vital role in the interconnection of the Alliance and should remain one of the main components of security guarantees and the indivisibility of security of the whole Euro-Atlantic area". These recommendations correspond to the existing NATO policy and will therefore not change anything.

The external circumstances, however, did change. The main novelty in the field of nuclear deterrence and nuclear arms control and disarmament is the entry into force of the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) (TPNW) that forbids the development, acquisition, possession, transfer, testing, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Since 22 January 2021, nuclear weapons are illegal under international law, at least for the 52 states that have signed and ratified the Treaty. The advocates of the Treaty expect that the nuclear-armed states and their allies understand the signal to take the pledge of nuclear elimination—under art.6 of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT)— much more seriously. They expect nothing less than fundamental change on behalf of the nuclear-armed states and alliances in the direction of nuclear elimination.

On the TPNW, the NATO 2030 report was again not able or willing to recommend any change and stated that "the allies should recall their position on the TPNW, namely that it will never contribute to practical disarmament, nor will it affect international law". The latter is simply wrong: the TPNW is from now onwards part of international law, whether you like it or not. And the former is impossible to predict, and in all likelihood also wrong. By the way, did the NPT—the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime according to the opponents of the TPNW—contribute to practical disarmament ?

Another effect of the TPNW is that the societal interest in nuclear disarmament around the world, including in NATO member states and in particular the so-called host nations (especially Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany), is on the rise.

> *Since 22 January 2021, nuclear weapons are illegal under international law, at least for the 52 states that have signed and ratified the Treaty.*

There have always been majorities in favor of withdrawing the US tactical nuclear weapons stationed on their territories. But the percentage of people in these countries in favor of signing the TPNW have now reached the level of 75-80%. One wonders how long these democratic states will withstand public pressure to adapt to the changed circumstances.

The other change in the external environment since the previous NATO Strategic Concept (2010) is the take-over of Crimea by Russia in 2014. As a result, under pressure of the East European member states the emphasis on nuclear deterrence became stronger at the NATO Warsaw Summit in 2016. At the same time, deterrence and reassurance was even more strengthened in the form of conventional means and troops, including from the United States. As the credibility of a deterrent depends on the capabilities and the intention to use them, conventional deterrence is much more credible than nuclear deterrence. Each day that nuclear weapons are not used on the battlefield, the norm against using these weapons becomes stronger. And the TPNW makes the immoral and illegitimate use (and even the threat of use) of nuclear weapons illegal, and therefore further strengthens the norm. Every day, it becomes more difficult for a US president to authorize the use of these catastrophic (and now also illegal) weapons. In addition, the Baltic states are so small that using nuclear weapons may simply annihilate these states, hardly an attractive prospect for their citizens. President Putin is fully aware of this, which further undermines NATO's nuclear deterrent effect.

As a consequence, given the aversion of public opinion in the host nations for the stationing of US nuclear weapons on their territory, and given the entry into force of the TPNW, and the lack of credibility of deterring Putin with nuclear weapons in the Baltic region, NATO should change its nuclear weapons policy in the next Strategic Concept by diminishing and delegitimizing the role of nuclear weapons—or more specifically, by de-collectivizing the policy and withdrawing all remaining US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. De-collectivizing the policy means limiting NATO's extended nuclear deterrence to those nuclear-armed states who like to continue to do so with nuclear arsenals not deployed on other's territory and only with the explicit consent of the receiving state. NATO member states should be able to declare without any constraint that they do not want to be covered by the nuclear umbrella. The existing footnote policy by NATO member states Denmark, Norway, Spain, Iceland and Lithuania that states that they do not want nuclear weapons on their soil could be enlarged to the demand not to be covered by extended nuclear deterrence. The latter implies not attending the Nuclear Planning Group meetings anymore. All this would make it possible for those opting out to sign and ratify the TPNW, as recommended by 56 former Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defense (including two former NATO SG) as well as former US Secretary of Defense William Perry, and at the same time remain a member of the alliance. Also a Harvard study shows that NATO membership and supporting the treaty are not incompatible.

NATO should change its nuclear weapons policy in the next Strategic Concept by diminishing and delegitimizing the role of nuclear weapons

Here are some steps the allies could take vis-à-vis the TPNW in the interim phase:

- Change the rhetoric and tone vis-à-vis the TPNW from being dismissive to at least a neutral or positive tone, like [the Belgian government declaration of 30 September 2020](#), and like a resolution adopted by the Spanish parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee in December 2020. [The North Atlantic Council statement on the TPNW of 15 December 2020](#) is the opposite example.

- Establish a "Group of Friends of the TPNW" in the Alliance.

- Be present as an observer at the first meeting of the States Parties in January 2022 to engage with the TPNW States Parties without committing themselves to anything yet.

- Contribute (also financially) to the assistance of victims of nuclear weapon tests, as demanded by the TPNW.

- Vote in favor (or at least abstain) on TPNW resolutions in the UN General Assembly in the Autumn of 2021.

At an institutional level, NATO may still present a united front about its status as a 'nuclear alliance', but [cracks in the NATO nuclear wall](#) are becoming visible. NATO's nuclear weapons policy has always been controversial. The multilateral force debate in the 1950s and 1960s and the Euromissiles controversy in the 1980s are just two historical examples.

Notice that the two NATO member states causing most trouble right now—the Netherlands (by having participated in the TPNW negotiations in 2017 against US instructions but under pressure of the Dutch parliament and civil society) and Belgium—are host nations of US atomic bombs.

The longer these tactical nuclear weapons stay on their territory, the more controversy they are likely to yield, especially after the entry into force of the TPNW that forbids the stationing of nuclear weapons on other states' territory, a mechanism that is only practiced by one nuclear-armed state in the world, namely the United States.

The proposed five-year extension of New START will give the Biden administration time to start follow-up negotiations with the Russians. Ideally, the scope of those negotiations should be extended to tactical nuclear weapons (as well as missile defence and possibly long-range conventional weapons). As the Russians have already withdrawn their tactical nuclear weapons from Eastern Europe in the beginning of the 1990s, the Americans should withdraw their tactical nuclear weapons to their homeland before starting the follow-up New START negotiations.

Of course, the United States, the United Kingdom and France prefer the status-quo. The latter helps legitimizing their own nuclear weapons policies at home, not only by pointing to the outside threats (Russia, China, Iran,...), but also to the demands of the allies. Without the European allies, US advocates of the expensive modernization program of the B-61 bomb—costing more than US $10 bn for 400 bombs—may not have won the debate. And without Japan and the European allies, the Obama administration in all likelihood would already have announced a no first use or a sole purpose doctrine.

Consequently, the allies are at least as much responsible for the current status-quo with respect to NATO's nuclear weapons policy as the three NATO nuclear-armed states. Is it not time for the allies to start acting as non-nuclear weapon states, according to their formal stature under the NPT ?

If NATO really wants to differentiate itself from the authoritarian rivals, it should stop its practice of nuclear deterrence

Ironically, and apart from arms control, the NATO 2030 report recommends to incorporate the concept of human security. It states that "emphasizing the value of human dignity and security differentiates NATO from authoritarian rivals" (p.43). But does permanently threatening to cause a combination of genocide and ecocide by fighting a nuclear war seem to be in line with 'human security' ? If NATO really wants to differentiate itself from the authoritarian rivals, it should stop its practice of nuclear deterrence, which corresponds to threatening to commit mass murder. From a Realist point of view, that is of course a non-starter. But the current status-quo with respect to nuclear arms control and disarmament is also in nobody's interest, except for those whose job or career depends on it.

To begin with, NATO could withdraw the US nuclear weapons from Europe, announce a no first use policy, and de-collectivize NATO's nuclear weapons policy without endangering the security of its member states. On the contrary, the more nuclear weapons are delegitimized, the better. If not, we will in all likelihood end up with more nuclear armed states and more chance that nuclear weapons be used again, either in an authorized, unauthorized or accidental way. Most NATO citizens understand this logic. If NATO is not able or willing to change its current nuclear weapons policy, which is regarded as illegal by many, its overall legitimacy will further decline in its own base.

NATO and the South: the need for de-securitised solutions

Martin Butcher

The vision process in the 'NATO 2030: United for a new Era' report traces a path for the Atlantic Alliance into the future. The "out of area or out of business" debate of a few years ago is well and truly over. Africa, at least the Mediterranean coast and the Sahel beyond, is now seen as a completely legitimate area for NATO engagement. NATO has identified two immediate threats from the East and the South, and links the two in a number of ways.

The report says:

"When NATO's neighbours are more secure, NATO is more secure. NATO has long recognised the existence of threats and diffuse risks to Allied security from the 'South', in addition to threats from the 'East'. A clear cut separation between the two flanks is losing relevance, however: the South and the East are joined at the seams (and geographically through the Western Balkans) with regard to Russia, which is acquiring an increasing role in the Mediterranean region. In the next ten years, therefore, the 360-degree approach to security will become an imperative and the South will likely grow in importance for NATO" (p.34).

NATO's definition of security for its neighbours is one that serves the interests of NATO itself, and is not rooted in the complex mix of problems faced by countries in North Africa and the Sahel

However, it is clear from a reading of the report that NATO's definition of security for its neighbours is one that serves the interests of NATO itself, and is not rooted in the complex mix of problems faced by countries in North Africa and the Sahel nor in comprehensive, conflict sensitive long term solutions to those problems. The perspectives of women and girls, and of other marginalised groups are missing.

The report is concerned only with the security threats that NATO perceives as emanating from there and military preparations NATO considers necessary for the defence of Europe.

The report's proposals build on past decisions and analyses. In 2016, at the Warsaw Summit, NATO noted events in the neighbouring global South not as issues in their own right, but as security threats to NATO. The Summit communique says:

"The continuing crises and instability across the Middle East and North Africa region... as well as the threat of terrorism and violent extremism across the region .. demonstrate that the security of the region has direct implications for the security of NATO. .. We are adapting our defence and deterrence posture to respond to threats and challenges, including from the south."[1]

This approach has been reiterated by Secretary General Stoltenberg, speaking at an online event:

".. NATO is ready and capable of dealing with threats from whatever direction. We cannot focus on one direction. We need to be prepared for threats, challenges from the east, from the south, from the west, from the north. .. I agree that that's geographical directions, but from a security perspective, it's a bit artificial to put that into these categories. Because when you speak about the east, we often think about Russia. And we see a more assertive Russia in the east, but we see them also in the south. We see much more Russian presence now in North Africa, in Libya, in other parts of North Africa, in the Middle East, in Syria."[2]

This approach is all too redolent of NATO's security strategy for North Africa during the Cold War, when the region was regarded as little more than a potential battleground with the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact and their allies. France's colonial war in Algeria, something which they sought to frame at the time as a battle against communism and extremist fanatics was a foreshadowing of post-colonial wars in which western nations seek to reduce complex situations combatting violent extremism. The NATO intervention in Libya, framed initially as a mission to protect civilians, led to a catastrophic outcome of state failure, endless combat and significantly worsened security for Libya, its region and Europe all. The lesson should have been learned. A more nuanced approach is needed, but in NATO 2030, that is not evident.

The framing of NATO's southern flank strategy is problematic in a number of ways, and is likely fail to provide security for Africans or Europeans unless these flaws are corrected. The assumption by NATO that the littoral African states and those to the south across the Sahel can be treated as nothing more than a source of various threats, and that those threats can be guarded against and even defeated without reference to the situation in those states, and how the serious crises they face can be resolved, is simply wrong.

Combating inequalities in society has a far greater role to play in building peace in the region than military force

NATO and its member states have to seek to work cooperatively with the people and the states of the region to resolve their crises, and end their support for states which are both incompetent and abusers of human rights. Otherwise, NATO's South – as the 2030 paper describes it – will continue indefinitely as a source of instability and armed violence. It is also important that the Maghreb and Sahel are not seen primarily through a military lens, but that the multiplicity of economic, social, governance and other issues that have produced a complex mix of armed violence and military conflict are addressed as the principal method of reducing the causes of violence. Combating inequalities in society has a far greater role to play in building peace in the region than military force.

The situation across the Sahel is spiralling out of control at an accelerating pace. Millions of people are displaced because of escalating violence. They are affected by poverty, hunger, poor governance and lack of access to basic services and rights, further compounded by the effects of climate change.

Millions are in a state of permanent insecurity. Persistent droughts have contributed to famines and to political destabilisation with increasing conflict for land between pastoralists and farmers. And they are further exacerbated by environmental degradation in soil and water resources. A fast-growing population makes these issues worse. Large numbers of young men with little stake in society and lacking the means to provide for themselves or a family make easy pickings for militias and criminal gangs, providing a large pool of recruits who can easily be armed, turning environmental, social and economic issues into security ones.

Across the whole of North Africa, a region with porous borders, these crises and developing security issues cannot be confined to one country. An obvious example is the NATO intervention in Libya in 2011, which saw well-armed and well-trained Touareg soldiers return to Mali and begin a rebellion, which soon provided a battleground for extremist groups, and led to another intervention by NATO member states which continues to this day. This situation benefits criminals who smuggle people, drugs and other commodities, such as cigarettes and gold. A political or security crisis in one country too often becomes a source of destabilisation for neighbours. And when people are displaced between countries which are all desperately poor, the economic situation is worsened throughout the region. Conflict and armed violence in the region compound the humanitarian crisis, in part by disrupting supply routes and causing food shortages. A lessening of humanitarian support from governments undergoing donor fatigue, and a populist lack of sympathy for some of the world's neediest people, only serve to makes things worse.

Poor, often dictatorial, governance exacerbates an already bad situation left by colonialism and a post-colonial settlement imposed from Europe. Disputes like that between the Sahraouian people of the Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco are sources of instability, and instability in the region to NATO's south is too often met by violent repression which itself feeds armed resistance.
Support by NATO member states for governments which oppress their people, including arming security forces responsible for human rights abuses do nothing for NATO security, nor for those whose governments are armed. They reinforce the power of the elites, but as has been obvious since the Arab Spring, the elites lack any form of legitimacy in the eyes of most of their people. The end result is to reduce the security of Africans and of NATO. This situation is deeply unstable. NATO cannot simply attempt to project stability southwards, as the report suggests, even if it cooperates with the more economically oriented EU.

Too often the complex issues of the region are boiled down to one security issue for Europe, and that issue is migration. Through the lens of migration prevention—and within that lens, terrorism prevention—the answer too obviously looks to European eyes asthe deployment of navies to prevent boats crossing the Mediterranean. Or one that involves paying the countries of the African side of the Mediterranean to prevent people leaving their shores. But these are sticking plasters on symptoms. Migration is a poverty and inequality problem, not a security one.

NATO should be concerned, the report says, with Russian and Chinese influence in its southern flank. But those countries largely portray their engagement as supportive. China, for example, is often looking to economic engagement more than military engagement, although in eastern Africa that is beginning.

Beijing may be motivated by self-interest, but if it helps build prosperity then they are closer to the roots of the issues facing the states of the Maghreb and the Sahel than is NATO with its vision of military security as the top priority, and the attraction of alliances with China and Russia will be strong.

If Europe truly wants to engage in activity and policy that will build stability to its south, it has to address the panoply of economic, governance and social issues exacerbated by climate threats in partnership with the people of the region. It has to look for bottom-up solutions that involve communities, and be truly comprehensive and sensitive to the root causes of conflict. This means: (a) engaging with women and girls as an integral part of those communities; (b) working with other marginalised groups to ensure that policies work for all citizens, and within polities that have the support of the governed; (c) an end to propping up illegitimate regimes and facilitating conflict and human rights abuses through arms sales; and (d) long term development and sustainable economic growth done in a way that reduces conflict between different actors.

> *It has to look for bottom-up solutions that involve communities, and be truly comprehensive and sensitive to the root causes of conflict.*

NATO's 2030 paper has the appearance of wanting to do more of the same. Looking at "the south" as a region where solutions to complex problems can be securitised and treated simply as a counter-terrorist response to extremist violence. But another decade of pursuing these failed ideas will not make things better, it will continue to make the situation worse. If NATO is to engage in Africa, the alliance needs to take a conflict sensitive approach to its work in the south with local organisations, strengthen local capacity to act for democracy, economic growth, enhance human and civil rights and improve governance. Doing this will significantly reduce the pool of those ready to take up arms, or those wanting to flee for a better life, and do more to solve the security problems that currently exist than all the military task forces NATO could ever put together.

Endnotes:

1 Warsaw Summit 2016, NATO Heads of State and Government Communique, para 25, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm

2 Keynote speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Sciences PO Youth & Leaders Summit, NATO 2030 - Safeguarding peace in an unpredictable world, 18 January 2021, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_180707.htm

Hybrid warfare and NATO's primary role

Hans-Georg Ehrhart

Since its very existence, NATO has proved to be flexible enough to adapt to new security threats and challenges. Nevertheless, its purpose and legitimacy have been questioned by some recently, given urgent challenges such as climate change, the coronavirus pandemic and authoritarian trends in some member states. Historically, NATO has assumed three main roles. Firstly, collective defence of the transatlantic region plus, following the Harmel report in 1967, détente and arms control. Secondly, collective defence plus cooperative security and crisis management, following the end of the Cold War. Thirdly, collective defence plus counter-hybrid warfare, following Russia's annexation of the Crimea and its destabilizing efforts in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

In their report, the Reflection Group members call for another paradigm shift in how to think about security in NATO and for the organisation to upgrade its ability to understand and manage the transboundary threats that will shape its environment over the long term (p.22). Hybrid threats are identified as central and imminent (p. 11). However, the report remains rather opaque as to what "hybrid" really means. Over more than 60 pages the report dwells on issues such as Russia, China, terrorism, climate change and so forth, and in one paragraph, hybrid and cyber threats. It mentions three aspects of collective defence: conventional, nuclear and hybrid, which should be at the forefront of consultation and decision-making on security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

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The report refers to the term "hybrid" 53 times on 20 pages. There is talk about hybrid warfare, hybrid tactics, hybrid activities, hybrid threats, hybrid attacks, hybrid incidents, hybrid conflicts, hybrid methods, hybrid tool kits and hybrid operations. Everything seems to be hybrid. Adding to the confusion, the report on the one hand states that hybrid and cyberattacks "are not, themselves, threats". But on the other, that they "may trigger Article 5" (p. 45). While the members of the group come to the correct recommendation that it is important to reflect "on the increasing role of hybrid threats by NATO adversaries" (p. 23), they provide more confusion than clarity for doing so.

What should be included in a proper reflection? The first step is to consider and seek to define the essence of hybrid threats or hybrid warfare. While it is generally understood as an exchange with the objective of political gains between adversaries with a mixture of military and non-military means, there is no agreement between experts about what hybrid warfare really is. For some it is nothing but the combination of regular (also called traditional or conventional) and irregular warfare that has already been exercised since the Peloponnesian War. For others it is just a buzz word with no explanatory power. Others in turn think it is a new form of warfare. In its Wales Summit Declaration, NATO described hybrid warfare threats as present when a "wide range of overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures are employed in a highly integrated design".[1]

If this is correct, it is nothing else than the application of a comprehensive approach for the objective of political gains against adversaries, i.e. an approach many modern states and NATO itself are striving for. The differentiation made by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg when he spoke about Russia's application of the comprehensive approach in Ukraine as "the dark reflection of our comprehensive approach"[2] confirms this analysis.

The second step necessary for a proper reflection is to problematize the term of hybrid warfare. For one, it is a vast, imprecise and unspecific term that is often used synonymously with hybrid threats. A threat may lead to war, but it is nevertheless not equal with it. Furthermore, each war is more or less hybrid because it involves political, economic, social and psychological aspects in addition to military means. Another argument against the usefulness of this notion is that it is often used as a political term to denounce Russia's aggression against Ukraine rather than as a concept describing warfare in general. As mentioned, Russia is not the only actor using hybrid tactics and a comprehensive strategy.

That is why some prefer the notion of postmodern warfare. The prefix "post" is generally used when something is changing qualitatively but cannot yet be put under an appropriate single heading because it is part of a historical process. Postmodernism is a cultural term that differs from modernity with its attributions of rationality, state order and truth. Attributes of Post-Modernism such as "anything goes", "diversity", "post-truth" or the "end of meta-narratives" describe the changing quality of postmodern warfare more precisely. The social context of postmodern warfare is an emerging world society that is trying to respond to security risks driven by the contradictions of globalization, evolving post-industrial societies and their transition to information societies.

Against this background postmodern warfare is characterized by asymmetric civil-military approaches, risk transfer policies and a more extensive application of information power. Four interlinked drivers play an important role. Firstly, information power which not only functions as a force multiplier but also as a force modifier. Secondly, networked approaches and forms of organization which make actors more adaptable and agile. Thirdly, indirect and covert approaches to minimize or transfer one's own risks. Fourthly, adequate military technologies supporting postmodern warfare such as C4ISTAR[3], precision guided munitions, drones, robotics and cyberattacks. Also to be added to the equation are the use of proxies and activities which are not acts of warfare per se, such as the support of external protest movements, training and material backing of insurgents, certain forms of cyber operations, covert operations by special forces or information operations and propaganda. These so-called grey zone conflicts take place on a continuum between traditional war and peace in which a vast variety of methods, means and instruments are used in a coordinated way in order to achieve political and normative objectives. Hence, the way of warfare becomes postmodern. The specific postmodern quality is the coordinated and networked approach and its people-centric application, including the cognitive domain.

The third step of proper reflection is to ask why there is an increasing preference for postmodern warfare using the whole spectrum of military and non-military means and methods, including by NATO member states. The answer is twofold: because of the vulnerability of modern societies, and because it can be done. Firstly, this kind of warfare is supposed to limit war or to keep it at bay by acting from a safe distance or to keep it in a grey zone, at best under the threshold of inter-state war by proceeding clandestinely or using plausible denial tactics.

Secondly, it is politically, financially and in terms of own casualties much less expensive than regular war.

This may contribute to a more "humane" way of warfare. Given the consequences of regular warfare the postmodern way is obviously the lesser evil. Nevertheless, it is problematic given the many contradictions and negative consequences (including incidental ones) it may cause. There is a dialectic relation between limiting and de-bounding effects of postmodern warfare. So, it offers more room for manoeuvre by reducing risks and costs. But at the same time, it contributes to blur existing limits such as between war and peace, front and hinterland, regular and irregular, state and non-state, civil and military, friend and foe, and internal and external security.

So, the fourth and final step is to expound the problems of postmodern warfare and ways to deal with them. From a perspective of international law, war and peace are a dichotomy grasping two completely different conditions. Experts have put this binary perspective into question alluding to today's challenges. The German historian and political scientist Herfried Münkler, for example, assumes that we may have to live with two notions of war. One in which peace is the contrary of war, and one in which war is permanently interwoven with peace.[4] Thus, do we have to look for a different understanding of peace in an era, "when wars never end"?[5] One proposition is that the traditional distinction between war and peace does not fit today's reality anymore. If this were true, we would have to live in a permanent state of conflict or war.

Member states should respect and strengthen international law including the law of war, and, by this, evade the slippery slope towards hybrid or postmodern warfare.

The modern achievement of international law, such as the UN Charter and the law of armed conflict that are supposed to regulate war, would be weakened if not discarded.

This is not to deny the ongoing changing way of warfare. The report's request for a paradigm shift in how to think about security is highly appropriate. However, the report falls far short in only identifying parts of the shift and largely ignoring the variety of tricky political, theoretical, conceptional, judicial, ethical and practical questions the phenomenon of postmodern warfare raises for those that practice it, including NATO member states. One important political question for example is how to reduce the tension between limiting and de-bounding tendencies of postmodern warfare in favour of a new restricting peace and security order? Can liberal peace theory help to solve the problems ingrained in postmodern warfare, especially given its people-centric nature? Does something "third" exist between peace and war and, if yes, how can it be grasped conceptually and tackled concretely? How does postmodern warfare influence the international law of armed conflict? What does it mean to behave ethically in a postmodern war? Which practical strategies and means contribute to stop and overcome the blurring of boundaries between peace and war?

Whether NATO striving for a comprehensive approach leading to postmodern warfare is the right answer is questionable. On the one hand, it is obvious that regular war would lead to unacceptable damages given the high vulnerability of modern societies.

On the other hand, even hybrid or postmodern warfare may escalate into armed inter-state conflict. NATO's primary role should be to prevent any kind of war. Member states should respect and strengthen international law including the law of war, and, by this, evade the slippery slope towards hybrid or postmodern warfare. NATO needs to be more self-reflective when it comes to assessing hybrid threats and promoting transatlantic security because security should be approached from a more differentiated perspective.

Yes, there are looming threats out there in the world and they have become more people-centric. While NATO countries need to have a strong enough defence posture against military threats in the transatlantic region the best remedy to counter outside non-military interventions is to strengthen the resilience of our own societies by making them more fair, just and equal.

Endnotes:

1 NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, Press Release, Paragraph 13.

2 Jens Stoltenberg, Key Note Speech, 15 March 2015,
   https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_118435.htm

3 Command, Control, Communicate, Computing, Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Targeting.

4 Herfried Münkler, Kriegssplitter. Die Evolution der Gewalt im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert. Berlin: Rowohlt
   Verlag, 2017, S. 329.

5 Lawrence Freedman, Can There be Peace with Honor in Afghanistan? In: Foreign Policy, 26. Juni,2017,
   http://foreignpolicy.com/author/lawrence-freedman/

Concluding reflections on the value of false unity

Paul Ingram

NATO statements frequently claim the organisation's success and adaptability to changing circumstances. Yet it displays an inflexible continuity that survives major changes in context and disruptive populist leaderships. This tendency is supported by giving prime airtime to those who reflect back the established internal perspectives.

The NATO 2030 report is a cold and familiar dish. It simply asserts the efficacy of existing or past practice, such as nuclear sharing arrangements (recommendation 11, p.38) offering little to no justification or evidence to back up its recommendations. When it claims that, "NATO should conduct a historical review of the Alliance's successful approach to nuclear détente and deterrence policies during the Cold War era" (recommendation 5, p.37), it reveals deep and flawed assumptions that the approach was successful, betraying a particular and contentious perspective. That NATO contained the Soviet Union and avoided nuclear exchange does not demonstrate its approach was any more successful than alternatives that were not attempted, nor that the risks involved were acceptable. Many of the architects of the original strategies, including Henry Kissinger, acknowledge that it involved a fearsome gamble, and that it would be dangerous and deeply irresponsible to return to Cold War dynamics. Some of these nuclear architects have been involved in the efforts to move away from these practices and redouble efforts to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

It has been a decade since the last NATO Strategic Concept, years marked by repeated reference to a deterioration in strategic relations to justify raising military spend and pressuring those NATO allies reluctant to do so, modernising nuclear arsenals and to resist disarmament. To read the Reflection Group's report you would think that this is all down to a more aggressive Russia, a more confident China and to emerging disruptive technologies. But particularly the first. All of us have a tendency to seek external blame for our misfortunes, but we do well to consider more complex explanations including our own agency.

It is undeniably true that Russia is a source of friction within the international community and appears willing to use malicious and brutal measures that undermine international law to gain advantage over others. The report claims that NATO's objective should be to subdue these threats, to "break the stalemate with Russia on NATO's terms", and "maintain a technological edge" over any competitors (recommendation 8, pp.26-27). This of course sets up the perfect conditions for an arms race.

There seems to be no attempt to assess the trajectory that led to Russian behaviour, nor any consideration of how NATO or its members may have contributed to the situation. NATO is the most powerful military alliance the world has ever seen.

It is inevitable therefore that it will be seen as a severe threat to any states that resist its overwhelming influence, or those that see NATO members using their power to skew the rules or international outcomes in their own favour. To describe resistance to outcomes on NATO's terms as aggression is itself aggressive. Instead, the Alliance needs to redouble its efforts to reach out and reassure other members of the international community of its intentions, to listen to their concerns and treat them with respect. The onus is on the Alliance, as the most powerful party, to do so.

The report claims that, "NATO's attempts to build a meaningful partnership and involve Russia in creating a post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security architecture have been rebuffed" (p.16), failing to reflect that the partnership was offered exclusively on NATO's terms. Attempts by Russia to create a post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security architecture on their own terms have been resoundingly rebuffed by NATO. Such one-sided analysis is not only irresponsible, but also dangerous.

There seems to be no attempt to assess the trajectory that led to Russian behaviour, nor any consideration of how NATO or its members may have contributed to the situation.

In the field of arms control, the report lays on thick the accusations of infractions by Russia, but many of the charges could equally well be levelled at NATO's nuclear weapon states, all three of whom are heavily investing in new generations of nuclear weapons and novel, disruptive technologies. It has been the United States more than Russia that has consistently walked away from the architecture over the last two decades. The report squarely lays the blame for the collapse of the INF Treaty on Russia, but it was the United States that prematurely withdrew from it having failed to exhaust its dispute mechanisms.

This is not to reflect all the blame onto the United States, rather to encourage a more open and nuanced explanation for the joint challenges we face in retaining and developing the European arms control architecture the report rightly identifies as a crucial element in stability, peace and security. Russia is a challenging partner in this endeavour that we must try harder to engage constructively. A hostile or prejudiced approach will only drive further modernisation and resistance from a state that sees itself as the bulwark against global political domination by NATO members.

Equally, whilst focused on external threats, there is no mention in the report of the threat from within, a glaring omission when NATO's most powerful, lynchpin member is only now starting to recover from the trauma of having a leader more interested in sewing division and hatred at home and abroad. So-called populist and anti-democratic forces have been gathering public support across NATO states, and in some cases are in government. This is a major challenge with no easy answers, but failing to identify the problem is unconscionable.

The report claims, "the hard work of achieving cohesion, which can often seem cumbersome and frustrating, is a trifle in comparison to the benefits that accrue from it" (p.10). Effective military action demands a clear mission and objectives, as well as strategy, so the attraction of unity is so intuitively obvious that it can appear a tautology when governing a military alliance. When you are a hammer everything looks like a nail.

As a military alliance focused on its own and potential adversaries' capabilities, threats are everywhere, and when one in particular emerges and plays ball it becomes a convenient rallying cry for more defence spending and greater unity. But whose unity, and what are its costs? More often than not it is a call to European allies, seen as the principal beneficiaries, to walk in lock-step with Washington, the principal sponsor. Those voices calling for higher European military spend and tough action against Russian infraction are seen as loyal, whilst those with more nuanced approaches to Russia divisive.

The report recommends that the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) should be used as the "main platform to deliver political messages to Russia... underscoring the steadiness of Allied defence and deterrence postures" (recommendation 6, p.26). The NRC was created to facilitate dialogue. In practice its format contributes to the problems. The effort invested in achieving NATO unity before issues are discussed with Russia in the Council creates an experience for Russia of a take-it-or-leave-it, done-deal inflexibility from a NATO unable to break its fragile consensus. As a result, there are rarely constructive discussions within the Council, more an exchange of opposing positions and a stalemate. NATO has joint responsibility for creating this system that has perverse incentives for Russia to attempt to break consensus and exploit differences of view between allies, or to engage in unconventional approaches as a means to containing Alliance power. As the stronger power in the uneasy relationship, NATO is in a better position to change the tune. It is more than talking that is needed here.

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It may appear counter intuitive, but it may be rational to reject the most fundamental recommendation and instead tone down the relentless push for unity within the Alliance. The report itself states that NATO is founded upon a belief in "a world in which a plurality of worldviews and fundamental differences of opinion are no obstacle to dialogue and cooperation" (p.11). Yet it claims that unity is essential otherwise adversaries, explicitly named as Russia and China, will seek to exploit differences between allies and pick off individual states (p.9). This is a simple fallacy, and is the opposite of the truth. Papering over differences, forcing states into a one-size-fits-all policy creates a brittle position that encourages adversaries to seek division. Celebrating diversity and making a virtue of it not only strengthens the expressed values of the Alliance, but could deliver a more robust Alliance, with greater flexibility and sustainability in its processes. NATO could more effectively develop a shared understanding of the problems arising from Russia's tactics whilst accommodating very different responses to them from different parts of the Alliance. This would better reflect the polarities within the policy complexities.

Take, for example, NATO's dual track approach—deterrence and dialogue. The balance between the two objectives has dynamically divided member states according to their strategic position, legacy and politics, as well as their relationship with nuclear weapons, at times a source of internal friction within the Alliance because of the requirement of a joint position.

Instead of insisting on unity the Alliance could openly acknowledge these differences as expressions of the inevitable tension between the two approaches, and encourage its members to express their positions openly but with respect for the differing positions of their allies.

The glaring problem in current practice is NATO's enduring track record of placing overwhelming emphasis on deterrence (and in particular nuclear deterrence) at the expense of arms control and dialogue, and pressurising its member states to accept this imbalance in the name of unity. The report appears to endorse this approach, talking of the need to actively strengthen deterrence capabilities considerably, whilst "remain[ing] open to discussing peaceful co-existence and to reacting positively to constructive changes" where possible and realistic (p.12). As if the passive nature of the dialogue was not enough to downgrade it, the report conditions it, such that, "to be productive, such dialogue must be firm on principles and conducted from a position of unity and strength" (p.26).

The glaring problem... is NATO's enduring track record of placing overwhelming emphasis on nuclear deterrence... at the expense of arms control and dialogue, and pressurising its member states to accept this imbalance in the name of unity.

As a result, and contrary to claims from the Alliance and this report, NATO has become an enemy of progressive attempts to create the global conditions for nuclear disarmament. The report's recommendation to continue an antagonistic response to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, for example, on the basis that, "it will never contribute to practical disarmament, nor will it affect international law" (recommendation 6, p.37), is deeply disrespectful both to those 122 countries that endorsed the Treaty and the 51 that have ratified (so far).

Moreover, now that it has entered into force, the statement is factually incorrect. Whether we like it or not, the TPNW is now part of international law since 22 January 2021, one that directly binds those states who have ratified. NATO's continued refusal to recognise this reality puts it and its members on the wrong side of the law, undermining any criticisms they may have for others, such as Russia, that appear to have a partial respect for it.

NATO does indeed need a period of reflection to assess its relevance to the unfolding 21st Century, but the expert group report is regressive, and holds no hope of any genuine reassessment. The Alliance needs instead to consider how it can genuinely improve its contribution to global security in a manner that recognises the interdependencies between states within the international community.

Peace research perspectives on NATO 2030
A response to the official NATO Reflection Group