

Alliance Reborn: An Atlantic Compact for the 21st Century

The Washington NATO Projectⁱ

Executive Summary

We have an open but fleeting moment to forge a more effective Atlantic partnership. We must seize it now. European and North American allies have allowed their relations become discordant, yet the times demand vigor and unity. Courageous decisions need to be taken to breathe new life and relevance into the Atlantic partnership, which must be recast to tackle a diverse range of serious challenges at home and abroad.

Reaching consensus on long term strategy should be of high priority. Leaders should go beyond providing direction to the NATO institution and take a higher plane, charting in an Atlantic Compact the future of their partnership in ways that relate the security, prosperity and freedom of their people and their nations to the world as a whole.

I. A 21st Century Atlantic Partnership

- With the Cold War over and new powers rising, some argue that the transatlantic partnership has had its day. We disagree. Our achievements may not always match our aspirations, but the common body of accumulated principles, norms, rules and procedures we have built and accumulated together – in essence, an *acquis Atlantique* -- affirms the basic expectations we have for ourselves and for each other.
- For sixty years this foundation has made the transatlantic relationship the world's transformative partnership. North America's relationship with Europe enables each of us to achieve goals together that neither can alone – for ourselves and for the world. This still distinguishes our relationship: when we agree, we are usually the core of any effective global coalition. When we disagree, no global coalition is likely to be very effective.
- Our partnership remains as vital as in the past, but now we must focus on a new agenda. Today's strategic environment is complex and unpredictable. North America and Europe still face the menace of terrorism and the potential for conflict between major states. Yet a host of unorthodox challenges demand our urgent attention.
- These challenges require us to affirm our mutual defense commitment within a wider spectrum of security; reposition our key institutions and mechanisms, particularly U.S.-EU partnership and NATO; and connect better with other partners.
- Five strategic priorities loom large. Together, Europe and North America must
 - tackle immediate economic challenges while positioning economies for the future;
 - build transatlantic resilience – protect our connectedness, not just our territory;
 - address the full range of international security challenges we face together;
 - continue to work toward a Europe whole, free, and at peace with itself;
 - reinvigorate transatlantic efforts to preserve a habitable planet.
- NATO is indispensable yet insufficient to this agenda. A new U.S.-EU framework, anchored by a clause of mutual assistance, and other institutional innovations are needed. In a companion report we will address U.S.-EU partnership in greater detail.

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Two Immediate Tests

The Strategic Priority of Afghanistan and Pakistan

- Visions of a more effective, resilient partnership will be moot if allies fail to quell terrorism and turmoil in the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands. Afghanistan has become a crucible for the Alliance. NATO's credibility is on the line.
- We must be clear regarding the threat, our goal, and our strategy:
 - Terrorist threats to the U.S. and Europe directly linked to the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands present the most immediate acute danger to transatlantic security today.
 - Our goal is to prevent any attacks and ensure that this region never again serves as a base for such threats.
 - Our strategy must have various components:
 - greater understanding that NATO's engagement in Afghanistan follows from the Alliance's invocation of its Article 5 collective defense clause on September 12, 2001;
 - more effective, integrated international coordination, working from Afghan priorities, coupled with political engagement of local leaders;
 - a broader region-wide approach geared to stability in Pakistan and beyond.

Relations with Russia: Engagement and Resolve

- Western coherence and effectiveness is also hampered by divisions over Russia. The West should advance a dual track strategy with Moscow. The first track should set forth in concrete terms the potential benefits of more productive relations. The second track should make it clear that these relations cannot be based on intimidation or outdated notions of spheres of influence but rather on respect for international law, the UN Charter and the Helsinki principles. NATO should be integral to both tracks.

II. A New NATO

In essence, a new NATO needs a better balance between missions home and away; will be indispensable but insufficient to current and future security challenges; must therefore stretch its missions and connect better with partners; and, depending on specific contingencies, must be prepared to be the leading actor, play a supporting role, or simply join a broader ensemble.

NATO's Missions: Home and Away

- NATO is busier than ever, but many see an Alliance adrift. A new consensus is needed on the challenges to our security and NATO's role in meeting them.
- If NATO is to be better, not just bigger, we must transform its scope and strategic rationale in ways that are understood and sustained by parliaments and publics. We must change the nature of its capabilities, the way it generates and deploys forces, the way it makes decisions, the way it spends money, and the way it works with others.
- NATO needs a new balance between missions home and away. For the past 15 years the Alliance has been driven by the slogan "out of area or out of business." Today, NATO operates out of area, and it is in business. But it must also operate in area, or it is in trouble.
- NATO today faces a related set of missions both home and away.
 - *At home*, it is called to
 - maintain deterrence and defense;
 - support efforts to strengthen societal resilience against threats to the transatlantic homeland;

- contribute to a Europe that truly can be whole, free and at peace.
- Away, it is called to
 - prevent and respond to crises;
 - participate in stability operations;
 - connect better with global partners to cover a broader range of capabilities.
- These missions share five common requirements. All require
 - intensive debate to sustain public and parliamentary support;
 - improved capabilities that are deployable;
 - better synergy between NATO and partners;
 - better cooperation between civil and military authorities;
 - matching means to agreed missions.
- NATO remains the preeminent transatlantic institution for deterrence and defense. In all other areas, however, it is likely to take only a selective lead, play a supporting role or work within a larger network of institutions. Knowing where and when NATO can add value is critical to prioritization of resources and effort.

Home Missions

- ***Deterrence and Defense.*** To strengthen Article 5 preparedness NATO nations should:
 - ensure a fully capable NATO Response Force (NRF) available in and out of area;
 - exercise appropriate reinforcement capabilities within the NATO area to improve capacities neglected over the past decade; such exercises should be fully transparent and sized appropriately;
 - invest in essential infrastructure in appropriate allied nations (especially in the newer allies) to receive NATO reinforcements (including the NRF);
 - consider positioning additional NATO common assets, for instance NATO's Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system, in a new member state;
 - consider the creation of another NATO multinational corps composed of new members in central Europe.
- ***Transatlantic Resilience.*** NATO is likely to be a supporting player in more robust overall efforts at both homeland and societal security in the North Atlantic space, to include:
 - guarding the approaches;
 - enhancing early-warning and air/missile defenses;
 - improving counterterrorism activities;
 - strengthening transatlantic capabilities for managing the consequences of terrorist attacks or large-scale natural disasters;
 - cyberdefense;
 - biodefense;
 - political consultations on energy security;
 - incorporating transatlantic resilience into the NATO Strategic Concept.
- ***Europe Whole, Free and at Peace.*** NATO allies have an interest in consolidating the democratic transformation of Europe by working with others to extend as far as possible across the European continent the space of integrated security where war simply does not happen. Yet the situation today is different, and in many ways more difficult, than at the end of the Cold War. The West must keep its door open to the countries of wider Europe. NATO governments must remain firm on the Bucharest Summit commitments to Georgia and Ukraine and to follow through on subsequent pledges of further assistance to both countries in implementing needed political and defense reforms. NATO and the EU should work with the states in the region, including through invigorated efforts at "forward

resilience,” to create conditions by which ever closer relations can be possible and the question of integration, while controversial today, can be posed more positively in the future.

Away Missions

- ***Crisis Prevention and Response.*** If the Alliance is to continue to play an effective role in this area, NATO needs a deeper pool of forces that are capable, deployable and sustainable. Maintaining the operational effectiveness of the NRF is essential to NATO’s credibility and should not be beyond the means of allied governments. Yet allies are stretched thin, and there is no easy fix. Either defense budgets must be increased for personnel, training and equipment; or spending on existing force structure and unnecessary command structure and bureaucracy must be re-mixed to prioritize deployable forces and force multipliers such as Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms and helicopters.
- ***Stability and Reconstruction Operations.*** Although many of these capabilities exist within the EU, NATO and the Partnership for Peace, they are not organized into deployable assets. Consideration should be given to the creation of a NATO Stabilization and Reconstruction Force (SRF), an integrated, multinational security support component that would organize, train and equip to engage in post-conflict operations, compatible with EU efforts.
- ***Connect Better with Others:*** NATO’s effectiveness depends on solid partnerships. NATO should establish a truly strategic partnership with the EU and meaningful partnerships with the UN, the OSCE and the African Union; and establish an Assistant Secretary General for Partnership to improve current partnerships and operationalize the Comprehensive Approach.

Internal Reforms

- ***Change the Way NATO Makes Decisions***
 - Apply the consensus rule only in the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and when voting on funding in budget committees.
 - Develop an opt-out option for nations whereby they can join consensus in the NAC on an operation but choose not to participate; in return they also do not participate in the decision-making for that operation.
 - Delegate authority to the Secretary General for internal matters.
 - Merge the NATO International Staff and International Military Staff.
 - Revamp the NATO Military Committee.
- ***Change the Way NATO Spends Money***
 - Use NATO’s “Peacetime Establishment” review to cut static command structure and outmoded NATO agencies or field activities, and redirect savings to mission support.
 - Expand use of common funds to cover some costs for participating in NATO missions.
 - Expand use of common funds to procure common equipment for operations.
 - Coordinate procurement with the EU to fill common capability shortfalls.
 - Create a NATO-EU working group, including defense industry representatives, to build a strong, complementary transatlantic defense industrial base.
- ***Streamline to create a three-level Command Structure***
 - Strategic: Allied Command Operations (ACO), with an American Supreme Commander (as currently structured);
 - Allied Command Transformation (ACT), with a European Supreme Commander and two Deputies, one charged with defense planning and acquisition and one (U.S. dual hatted as Deputy Commander of U.S. JFCOM) charged with transformation.

- ACT's duties would also include doctrine and training for the comprehensive approach and transatlantic resilience and defense.
 - Operational: three Joint Force Command (JFC) headquarters in Brunssum, the Netherlands; Naples, Italy; and Lisbon, Portugal. Each JFC should be able to deploy a robust Joint Task Force, and there should be at least two Combined Air Operations Centers (CAOC) with a deployable CAOC capability.
 - Deployable: three joint deployable HQs, replacing most or all of the current six fixed component commands. If additional HQs are needed, they might be sourced from High Readiness Force HQs already in existence in some allied nations.
 - Potential savings from cuts in command structure would be used by NATO to help procure common items for deployment.
- ***Generate Appropriate Military Capabilities***
 - Deployable Conventional Forces. Forces that cannot deploy are of little utility for missions home or away. Allies must be able to deploy
 - light and heavy armored forces;
 - initial intervention forces, including the NATO Response Force (NRF);
 - special operations and stabilization forces -- increasingly needed yet currently inadequate to the long or unique nature of modern military operations.
 - Force Enablers. Three multipliers should be approved for common funding:
 - Strategic and Theater Lift -- including aerial refueling and transport helos;
 - Network Enabled Command, Control and Communications (C3);
 - Interoperable Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms.
 - Missile Defense has emerged as a potentially important requirement for future deterrence against missile threats from Iran and possibly other countries. Should transatlantic diplomacy succeed in stopping Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons, interceptor deployment may not be necessary. Yet current U.S. and allied efforts should continue now for two reasons. First, such efforts are prudent given the lead time necessary for deployment. Second, should diplomacy fail and Tehran acquire nuclear weapons capability, a defensive response is likely to be a more palatable and effective option than an offensive military response. As diplomatic efforts are reinvigorated, the Alliance needs to
 - follow through on its 2008 Bucharest Summit commitments to explore how planned U.S. missile defense sites in Europe could be integrated into current NATO plans;
 - develop options for a comprehensive missile defense architecture to extend coverage to all allied territory and populations not otherwise covered by the U.S. system; and
 - work with the U.S. for Russian participation.
 - Nuclear Forces. We support the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons. None of our considerations contradict initiatives such as Global Zero. When it comes to practical implementation, however, it is important to keep the following in mind:
 - Historically, the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe has been a preeminent symbol coupling European and North American security. For this reason, a unilateral U.S. decision to withdraw its nuclear weapons could be seen in Europe as a U.S. effort to decouple its security from that of its allies and thus question the very premise of the Atlantic Alliance.
 - If such a step is to be considered, the initiative should come from Europe. If European allies are confident that European and North American security is sufficiently coupled to no longer require the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, the U.S. is unlikely to object to their removal.

- When addressing the question, allies should also consider future requirements and keep in mind that once such forces are withdrawn, it will be all but impossible politically to return them.
 - If reductions or eliminations are considered, allies should seek equivalent steps by Russia.
- **Match Missions to Means.** NATO cannot expect any growth in resource availability. It must enhance and deliver more capabilities from the same resources and redouble efforts to cut existing spending on questionable static command structure or NATO agency/field activities that no longer can be justified as nations face budget pressures. NATO should
 - develop a new approach to how operations are funded and essential capabilities are fielded;
 - increase the deployability, and thus the usability of its overall force, including its 12,500 person formal command structure, little of which is deployable;
 - look for capabilities where the pooling of assets by some members can be agreed, such as the C-17 consortium initiative among 12 members and partners;
 - increase the number of multinational units comprised of national forces, including niche forces;
 - establish a NATO-EU working group to flesh out and implement the Comprehensive Approach;
 - establish an industry/NATO/EU group to collaborate on procurement of common items;
 - press allies to shift defense budget spending away from personnel and infrastructure to investment, training, and readiness.
- **Rethink Functional and Geographic “Areas of Emphasis.”** For good reasons the Alliance has resisted ‘divisions of labor’ in the past. Yet, persistent low defense investments create serious gaps that cannot be closed in the near term. Therefore coordination along both functional and geographic lines may be wise, with central organizing principles and procedures.
 - o Functional areas of emphasis should be explored along the lines of stability operations/special operations forces and major combat forces.
 - o A geographic view might look at NATO and EU regions of emphasis. For example, NATO is charged with responsibility for collective defense of allied territory as well as operations in south Asia, particularly Afghanistan. The EU has taken the lead on most crisis response operations in Africa and is assuming more and more missions in the Balkans outside of NATO itself.
 - o Neither functional nor geographic roles should be considered exclusive domains. Rather these should be regarded as lead and support domains, such that transatlantic partners reinforce each other with an array of capabilities.

ⁱ **The Washington NATO Project** is a cooperative effort by four U.S. think tanks: [the Atlantic Council of the United States](#); the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) (CSIS); the [Center for Technology and National Security Policy](#) (CTNSP), [National Defense University](#) (NDU); and the [Center for Transatlantic Relations](#) (CTR) at [the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies](#) (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University. *Lead Author* Daniel Hamilton; *Co-Authors* Charles Barry, Hans Binnendijk, Stephen Flanagan, Julianne Smith, James Townsend. Issued February 2009. The full text of *Alliance Reborn* is available at each center’s website.